NARRATIVES OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE GERMAN NOVEL, 1926-1959

Melina Marie Mandelbaum

KING'S COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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DECLARATION

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the MMLL Degree Committee.

Parts of Chapter Two have appeared in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, April 2021: Mandelbaum, Melina, 'Administering Exclusion: Statelessness, Identity Papers, and Narrative Strategy in B. Traven's *Das Totenschiff* (1926)', pp. 186–204.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores narratives of citizenship in the German novel from the Weimar Republic to the post-war era, 1926 – 1959. As an inherently contested concept, citizenship presented an important terrain for many of the twentieth century's key political struggles. The main body of the dissertation is divided into three parts, each of which interweaves close readings of one or two novels with the discussion of a major change in German citizenship law and the historically informed study of a theme or concept that relates to citizenship also beyond the temporal and local bounds of the dissertation.

In the first chapter, in which I discuss Marieluise Fleißer's *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier* (1931) and Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi, eine von uns* (1931), I analyse the place of gender and the body in the politics of citizenship during the period following the introduction of the female franchise in Weimar Germany, and investigate an historic connection between narratives of sexual violence and the constitution of sovereignty. In the second chapter, based on readings of B. Traven's *Das Totenschiff* (1926) and Anna Seghers' *Transit* (1944), I look at the history and narratives of the passport as the primary bureaucratic signifier of citizenship, as well as the conscious production of statelessness under National Socialism. In the final chapter, in which I discuss Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob* (1959), I explore the nexus between socialist citizenship, ideologies of progress, and phenomena of psycho-social division.

The three chapters are embedded in a broader historical analysis provided in the introduction and conclusion. In approaching citizenship through the lens of creative fiction and the intimate insight into socio-cultural imaginaries and practices it offers, I aim to contribute to the growing field of interdisciplinary citizenship studies and to promote a deeper understanding of how contestations over citizenship have been staged not only administratively and physically, but also symbolically.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BGB	*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*, Bundesrepublik Deutschland
DS	Traven, B., *The Death Ship* (London: Panther, 1980)
DT	Traven, B., *Das Totenschiff*, (Frankfurt am Main: Diogenes, 1983 [1926])
G	Keun, Irmgard, *Gilgi, eine von uns* (München: dtv, 1989 [1931])
GG	*Grundgesetz*, Bundesrepublik Deutschland
MFG	Fleißer, Marieluise, *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier: Roman vom Rauchen, Sporteln, Lieben und Verkaufen* (Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 1931)
MJ	Johnson, Uwe, *Mutmassungen über Jakob* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959)
RuStAG	*Reichs- and Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, Deutsches Reich
StAG	*Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, Bundesrepublik Deutschland
StGB	*Strafgesetzbuch*, Bundesrepublik Deutschland
T	Seghers, Anna, *Transit* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1974 [1944])
ZV	Fleißer, Marieluise, *Eine Zierde für den Verein: Roman vom Rauchen, Sporteln, Lieben und Verkaufen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1972)

INTRODUCTION

Narratives of Citizenship in the German Novel

1. Reading the State: Novels and Citizenship in European History

In his seminal book *Seeing Like a State*, first published in 1998, the political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott scrutinises a central struggle found in both ancient and modern forms of statehood: that between mobile and settled populations. Why, Scott asks, do states appear to have been hostile to 'people who move around' throughout their history? After extensive analysis, Scott's response to this puzzle increasingly crystallises around the concept of legibility. 'The more I examined these efforts at sedentarization', he reflects, 'the more I came to see them as a state's attempt to make a society legible, to arrange the population in ways that simplified the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and prevention of rebellion'.[1] Following his initial insight, Scott begins to analytically elevate legibility to a central test of statecraft as a whole:

> Suddenly, processes as disparate as the creation of permanent last names, the standardization of weights and measures, the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers, the invention of freehold tenure, the standardization of language and legal discourse, the design of cities, and the organization of transportation all seemed comprehensible as attempts at legibility and simplification.[2]

Scott dedicates a mere half page of his voluminous study to the topic of citizenship. He still makes clear, however, that he also understands this institution as primarily aimed at fulfilling the function of legibility: the concept of a uniform, homogeneous citizenship, he finds, is one of the principal revolutionary political simplifications of the modern era.[3]

Scott's analysis is but one expression of an increasingly established line of thought that has been pursued by a variety of thinkers since the nineteen-seventies. Other theorists of nationalism and the state, among them Michel Foucault, Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha, or Ken Alder, started their enquiries based on research questions, methodologies, and paradigms

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[1] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), p. 2.
[2] Scott, p. 2.
[3] Scott, p. 32.

that differ from Scott's. Notwithstanding their discrepancies, however, the findings of these and many other scholars still appear to coalesce in the common conviction that legibility, or its neighbouring concept, narrativisation, is to be understood as a, if not *the*, principal explanatory factor of modern political organisation. In this dissertation I am building on these strands of political theory, starting from the premise that citizenship is narrative in at least two respects. As an administrative form, firstly, citizenship is designed to frame populations in a narrative structure that is comprehensible to the forces wishing to rule them. As a communal practice, secondly, citizenship depends on its continued narrativisation to sustain itself: only through narrative are populations able to understand themselves and others as part of a community of citizens.

If citizenship, following Scott's argument, is to be understood as a framework and practice focused on *simplification*, my investigation into novelistic representations of citizenship could be regarded as focused on *re-complexification*. While any exercise in simplification necessarily excludes, or must blind itself to, those aspects and phenomena which do not fit into its classifying structure, my study of literature presents an attempt to give space to some of the facets of citizenship which escape the boundaries of its official codification. The novels examined in the course of this dissertation are not understood as aimed at increasing citizens' legibility to the state; they may, however, be seen as concerned with making citizens more legible to themselves. As I will discuss in more detail below, this approach stands in contrast to some existing studies in which novels, and the realist novel in particular, are primarily read as literary technologies of citizenship: a means of socially taming and inducting the individual into the norms of the national collective.[4]

Since the mid-1980s, the close historical link between the genesis and popularisation of the novel and the emergence of modern citizenship and its attendant concept, nationalism, has received growing attention. Benedict Anderson is probably the most famous proponent of the claim that nations are 'imagined communities', enabled and sustained in great part through the rise of the printing press. The wide distribution of shared narratives which this technological invention facilitated, Anderson maintains, made possible a sense of citizenship as a 'deep, horizontal comradeship' that was formerly unknown within large, diverse, and dispersed populations.[5] Anderson argues that the novels emerging in the eighteenth century became instrumental in the process of political change which had begun to grip Europe from the turn

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[4] Janice Ho, *Nation and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century British Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 17.
[5] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 7.

of the fifteenth century, around the time of the Reformation, arguing that they aided in bridging socioeconomic divisions and facilitated the vision of a community of equal citizens.

The media revolution unfolding between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries not only changed how populations understood themselves as a group, but also fundamentally altered their view of political leaders, as historians such as David Bell have pointed out. In this regard, the eighteenth century represents a second critical developmental juncture for both the novel and citizenship, with a number of radical cultural and political shifts taking place which mutually relied upon and reinforced each other. While the development of the printing press in Europe dates back to the mid-fifteenth century,[6] engagement with printed material remained very limited in the Atlantic world until the late seventeenth century. Besides low literacy rates, the free flow of printed information was inhibited by harsh political censorship. Book markets were dominated by voluminous works of jurisprudence and theology as well as Greek and Roman classics, which were meant to be studied 'slowly, intensively, and repetitively'.[7] This changed around the turn of the eighteenth century, when the volume of novels and travel literature expanded exponentially across Europe. By the mid-eighteenth century, the novel had established itself as the dominant literary genre, changing not only the way readers related to printed texts, but also how they related to their rulers. European monarchic rule, until then deriving its legitimacy solely from royal inheritance and established religious authorities, began to alter its face with the wide availability of printed information. Periodicals now provided daily reports on the political leadership, and novels mediated relationships of proximity and intimacy between readers and previously distant sovereigns, thus creating spaces in which political power structures could be experienced and scrutinised in new ways.[8]

The eighteenth-century media revolution is sometimes imagined as 'a serious, egalitarian, proto-democratic' moment, in which 'rational discussion and debate generated a rigorous critique of existing power structures'.[9] The reality, however, was certainly more complex than this. The increase in the pace, volume, and diversity of published products was not driven merely by a quest for a broadening of public education or attempts at furthering general political emancipation. Instead, readers' pursuit of entertainment and the publishing

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[6] The history of printing in East Asia can be traced back to a far earlier date, namely to the Chinese Han dynasty, 206 BC – 220 AD. See, e.g., Michael F. Suarez, *The Book: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 574–76.
[7] David A. Bell, *Men on Horseback: The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2020), p. 39.
[8] Bell, p. 10.
[9] Bell, p. 42.

industry's pursuit of profit played a substantial part in the development of the print world.[10] The political impact of the media revolution on readers was equally multifaceted. While the wider availability of the printed text, on the one hand, gave rise to a new experience of emotional connectedness between strangers, it could be argued that, on the other hand, the changed reading methods brought about by this development also introduced an element of casualness into such connections. Rather than continuing to study texts intensively and repeatedly, readers could now, due to the ready availability of cheaply bound books, periodicals, and pamphlets, peruse texts rapidly and haphazardly. This, in turn, impacted the ways in which they bonded with the characters encountered on the page, and, potentially, in real life as well.[11]

The concrete political impact of novels can be argued to have been as diverse as the genre itself, and has, in past studies, been alternately shown to reach from the disciplinary, via the subversive, to the utopian. Yet beyond the great variety of political agendas and styles of the novel, some common traits can be identified which make the genre relevant to the study of citizenship. While all mass printed products constitute instruments of mediation between a broader public sphere and the individual, the novel stands out in this regard by putting this relationship at the heart of its concern. In its preoccupation with the encounter between the 'problematic individual' and the 'contingent world',[12] the novel presents a particularly suitable vehicle for the exploration of citizenship: a concept that denotes an individual political identity as well as a specific expression of communal organisation and is primarily concerned with the relationship connecting both.[13]

While the 'legal fiction'[14] of citizenship relies on the assumption of clearly delineated boundaries between the individual and the collective, and, by extension, between the spheres of private and public life, the novel reveals these boundaries to be mobile and porous. The understanding of citizenship as an identity whose boundaries have become increasingly unstable resonates with a number of critical social science approaches that have proliferated since the 1990s. Étienne Balibar's account of citizenship, for example, addresses the complex interdependence between the citizen and their social environment:

> The citizen, properly speaking, is neither the individual nor the collective, just as he [sic] is neither an exclusively public being nor a private being […]. The citizen is unthinkable as an 'isolated' individual,

[10] Bell, p. 42.
[11] See Bell, p. 42.
[12] Ho, p. 16.
[13] See Ho, p. 3.
[14] Dimitry Kochenov, *Citizenship* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019), p. 13.

> for it is his active participation in politics that makes him exist. But he cannot on that account be merged into a 'total' collectivity […]. Likewise, the citizen can only be thought if there exists, at least tendentially, a distinction between private and public: he is defined as a public actor [but] cannot be confined to the public sphere, with a private sphere […] being held in reserve.[15]

As a genre, the novel captures this interplay between the interior and exterior, between what Janice Ho has called the 'dual locations of citizenship',[16] while simultaneously questioning the existence of a tidy dichotomy between them. The critical examination of conceptual binaries embedded in certain official narratives of citizenship will, accordingly, form a recurring theme throughout the present analysis.

My dissertation is structured around an exploration of five novelistic case studies, which I relate to three moments of rupture in German citizenship legislation. Zooming in on particular instants of socio-political change between the era of the Weimar Republic and post-war Germany, 1926–1959, my aim is not to present a comprehensive genealogy of narratives of citizenship as found in the German novel. Rather, I seek to exemplify and analyse some of the ways in which the lived experience of citizenship has been shaped, and, in some instances, burdened, by narrative practices and legacies which remain unexpressed in the concept's legal codification. Novels offer an intimate insight not only into established socio-cultural practices, but also into the social imaginaries that underlie them. John Thompson, basing his thinking on Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort's work, defines social imaginaries as 'the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life'.[17] The study of social imaginaries thus provides an opportunity to intervene constructively in debates on citizenship: a concept that has presented an important terrain for many of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries' key political struggles. In approaching citizenship through the lens of creative fiction and the unique insight into socio-cultural visions and practices that it offers, I aim to contribute to the growing field of interdisciplinary citizenship studies and to promote a deeper understanding of how contestations over citizenship have been staged not only administratively and physically, but also symbolically.

The main body of the dissertation is divided into three parts, each of which interweaves close readings of one or two novels with the discussion of a major change in German citizenship law and the historically informed study of a theme or concept that relates to citizenship also

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[15] Étienne Balibar, 'Citizen Subject', in *Who Comes After the Subject?*, ed. by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), pp. 50–62 (pp. 50–51); see also Ho, p. 16.
[16] Ho, p. 16.
[17] John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 6.

beyond the temporal and local bounds of the dissertation. In the first chapter, in which I discuss Marieluise Fleißer's *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier* (1931) and Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi, eine von uns* (1931), I analyse the place of gender and the body in the politics of citizenship during the period following the introduction of the female franchise in Weimar Germany, and investigate an historical connection between narratives of sexual violence and the constitution of sovereignty. In the second chapter, based on readings of B. Traven's *Das Totenschiff* (1926) and Anna Seghers' *Transit* (1944), I look at the history and narratives of the passport as the primary bureaucratic signifier of citizenship, as well as the conscious production of statelessness under National Socialism. In the final chapter, in which I discuss Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob* (1959), I explore the nexus between socialist citizenship, ideologies of progress, and phenomena of psycho-social division. In what follows, I will contextualise my analysis through a brief review of the conceptual history of citizenship in Germany and beyond, and of the relevant scholarly literature concerned with citizenship and creative fiction.

2.1 Citizenship: Concept, History, Debates

By problematising simplification, literature points straight to the heart of historical and contemporary definitions of, and debates about, citizenship: the themes of equality and universality. In what remains an influential reference point in contemporary citizen studies, the sociologist T.H. Marshall, in 1950, defined citizenship as 'a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed'.[18] More recently, Rogers Smith summarised, concordantly, that citizenship, in its 'most common usage', refers to participation in a body of 'equal community members'.[19] The simplification which Scott found implied in citizenship's formal structure is closely connected to its equalising claim, which has been citizenship's central and most contested feature since at least the French Revolution. Based on the premise of universalism – the notion that human beings are born free and equal – liberal citizenship

[18] Thomas Humphrey Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class: And Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 253.
[19] Rogers Smith, 'Modern Citizenship', in *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, ed. by Engin Isin and Bryan Turner (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 105–15 (p. 105).

assumes that members of a polity are recognised as bearing the same rights and obligations, regardless of religious belief, gender, class, race, ethnicity, or sexuality.[20]

It is almost a commonplace today that, throughout its history, citizenship's high theoretical aspiration of inclusivity has not manifested in an equivalent execution. The sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, in his analysis of the concept, summarised some of the many exclusionary binaries produced by modern citizenship to distinguish between those who have been deemed fit for belonging, and those who have not: 'bourgeois and proletarian, man and woman, adult and minor, breadwinner and housewife, majority and minority, White and Black, European and non-European, educated and ignorant […] and of course the ur-category which all of these others imply – civilized and barbarian'.[21] The universalist claims of citizenship, Wallerstein concludes, are a mere 'linguistic mirage, an oxymoron'.[22] Wallerstein's critique forms part of a larger trend in citizenship studies which has drawn attention to the hegemonic practices and discourses underlying the concept and history of citizenship. '[B]ourgeois individualism, phallocentrism, Eurocentrism, [and] heteronormativity' are among the many exclusionary principles which are increasingly seen as having been cloaked by citizenship's universalist rhetoric throughout its history.[23]

While the above traits point to a continuity in the history of European citizenship, the concept has also seen a myriad of transformations in the course of the past 2000 years. Since its inception in Ancient Greece, citizenship has been conceptualised in very different ways. In the Greek city-state, the *polis*, citizenship was mainly a marker of belonging and political participation; in the Roman Empire, it was defined in more legalised terms of public and private rights. In medieval urban centres, citizenship became strongly related to the practice of virtues and military service; with the development of the nation-state, legalistic and democratic connotations were further developed. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, citizenship has increasingly been connected to social rights and the development of the welfare state.[24] Even though the history of citizenship is usually traced back to classical times, the current understanding of the concept primarily draws on more recent legacies of political liberalism. In European memory, these are mainly marked by three great revolutions and their attendant

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[20] See Ho, p. 9.
[21] Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Citizens All? Citizens Some! The Making of the Citizen', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45.4 (2003), 650–72 (p. 652).
[22] Wallerstein, p. 652; see also Ho, p. 9.
[23] Ho, p. 9.
[24] Jet Bussemaker and Rian Voet, 'Citizenship and Gender: Theoretical Approaches and Historical Legacies', *Critical Social Policy*, 18.3 (1998), 277–307 (p. 283); see also Marshall.

founding documents, all of which centred around aspirations of universality: the 1688 Glorious Revolution with the English *Bill of Rights*; the 1776 American Revolution with the *Declaration of Independence*; and the 1789 French Revolution with the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*.[25]

The French Revolution, in particular, is usually seen as being determinant of our contemporary understanding of citizenship. Scholars of modernity broadly agree that the events around 1789 led to a profound change in the individual's place in society, both by introducing new concepts into political thought and by rendering earlier political notions obsolete.[26] In a radical break with the traditions of antiquity, the individual has since been seen not as acquiring communal membership in the course of their life, but as having been born into the nation-state and the ownership of rights and obligations. It is the pure fact of birth, 'the very natural life', Giorgio Agamben argues, 'that, inaugurating the biopolitics of modernity, is placed at the foundation of the order [and] vanishes into the figure of the citizen, in whom rights are preserved'.[27] In this connection between nativity and nation, the individual became the locus of sovereignty, inextricably linked to the politics of the collective. As Ruth Mandel notes:

> It was perfectly possible, in the classic context, to be a nonpolitical being, unconnected to the confines and sovereignty of the *polis* or state. Modernity's vision changed this, where the sovereignty into which the individual is born becomes one and the same and appropriated by the state.[28]

Both the nativist tenets of citizenship and the hegemonic implications following from them stand in a relationship of tension to the concept's liberal aspirations. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation, this tension expresses itself most violently in the figure of the refugee or stateless person. It is, however, also at the root of legal questions about the suitable processes of citizenship acquisition, which in Germany have been a matter of intense debate for over a century.

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[25] Ho, p. 9.

[26] See, e.g., Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, ed. and translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Meridian (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1951); Roger Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Volume I (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1978).

[27] Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, p. 127.

[28] Ruth Mandel, 'Practicing German Citizenship', in *The Anthropology of Citizenship*, ed. by Sian Lazar (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), pp. 292–308 (p. 304).

2.2 Citizenship in Germany: 'Bürger', 'Staatsbürger', 'Staatsangehöriger'?

In his influential work *Die verspätete Nation*, which will be discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation, Helmuth Plessner considers the historical impact of what he believes to be Germany's delayed process of nation building.[29] There is overwhelming agreement among historians today that the 'Sonderweg' thesis Plessner entertained is dated. Yet it is still often observed that Germany, as opposed to countries such as France or the USA, lacks a nationwide, democratic watershed moment which could have served as a historical anchor-point for a cohesive concept of German citizenship. Since its unification into the German Empire in 1871, Germany has seen five different constitutions and six different forms of state, each of them associated with variations in the conceptualisation and practice of citizenship. With Germany having been, within the past 120 years, 'monarchical and republican, democratic and dictatorial, federal and unitary, divided and unified' it is 'hardly surprising', Peter Pulzer notes, 'that the roles of the state and the citizen and the rival claims of order and liberty are subject to dispute and misunderstanding'.[30] One legacy of this 'broken constitutional history'[31] could be seen to resonate until today in uncertainties and ambiguities around the concept of German citizenship – a term which, in its current usage, is not fully captured in any of the possible translations: 'Bürgerschaft', 'Staatsangehörigkeit', or 'Staatsbürgerschaft'. In an acknowledgement of the inadequacies of the German terminology, some scholars, such as Jürgen Mackert and Hans-Peter Müller in their introductory work *Citizenship: Soziologie der Staatsbürgerschaft*, have reverted to using the English concept alongside its German translations.[32]

While the term 'Staatsbürgerschaft' is usually accepted as providing the closest approximation to citizenship, it is often overlooked that this translation lacks the concrete legal basis that it has in countries such as the UK, Canada, and the USA. In one of the key reference works on the subject, *Die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit: Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft*, the legal scholar Ingo von Münch notes that, in everyday language, 'Staatsbürgerschaft' is regularly associated with political rights, particularly the right to vote.[33] Yet even though it is

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[29] Helmuth Plessner, *Die verspätete Nation: Über die Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1962).

[30] Peter Pulzer, 'The Citizen and the State in Modern Germany', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*, ed. by Eva Kolinsky and Wilfried van der Will (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 20–43 (p. 20).

[31] Pulzer, p. 20.

[32] *Citizenship: Soziologie der Staatsbürgerschaft*, ed. by Jürgen Mackert and Hans-Peter Müller (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000).

[33] Ingo von Münch, *Die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit: Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), p. 18.

an accepted term in German political discourse, it is not anchored in the country's political constitution or other legal frameworks. Criticising the frequent misuse of the term 'Staatsbürgerschaft' even in legislative circles, commentators note:

> Der Begriff der Staatsbürgerschaft […] ist dem gesamten geschriebenen deutschen Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht unbekannt und taucht im Grundgesetz allein in Art. 33 adjektivisch auf, wo es bezeichnenderweise um die Diener und nicht um die Bürger des Staates geht. Staatsangehörigkeit, nicht Staatsbürgerschaft ist der zutreffende Begriff nach dem Recht der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.[34]

There is thus a peculiar split in the German language between the legal concept of citizenship or nationality ('Staatsangehörigkeit'), on the one hand, and the political concept of citizenship ('Staatsbürgerschaft'), on the other. In this dissertation, I am interested in both the legal and political aspects – in 'Staatsangehörigkeit' and in 'Staatsbürgerschaft' – as well as in the socio-cultural practices associated with them. The term 'citizenship' covers all three of these dimensions and will accordingly be used throughout the following analysis.

Notwithstanding the terminological differentiation necessary today, the concepts of 'Bürgerschaft', 'Staatsbürgerschaft', 'Nationalität', and 'Staatsangehörigkeit' have been closely intertwined and have codeveloped throughout the past 200 years of German history. In the first half of the nineteenth century, only three German states – Austria, Bavaria, and Baden – adopted citizenship laws. Austria's progressive civil law code of 1811, the *Allgemeines bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*, showed the vision of a society of equal 'Staatsbürger', who would acquire their status 'by descent from a male or single female citizen, marriage to a male citizen, employment by the state […] or by 10 years' uninterrupted residence without a criminal conviction'.[35] The Bavarian constitution of 1808, heavily influenced by the French *code civil*, distinguished between 'Staatsbürgern' – those possessing full political rights – and 'Eingeborenen'. All male citizens who were over 21, economically self-supporting and either Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist were considered 'Staatsbürger'.[36] The constitution states in §8:

> Ein jeder Staatsbürger, der das 21ste Jahr zurückgelegt hat, ist schuldig, vor der Verwaltung seines Kreises einen Eid abzulegen, daß er der Constitution und den Gesetzen gehorchen - dem Könige treu seyn wolle. Niemand kann ohne ausdrückliche Erlaubniß des Monarchen auswandern, in das Ausland gehen oder in fremde Dienste übergehen, noch von einer auswärtigen Macht Gehalte oder Ehrenzeichen annehmen, bei Verlust aller bürgerlichen Rechte.

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[34] Cited in Münch, p. 19.
[35] Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 44.
[36] Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, p. 45.

Baden introduced the concept of citizenship by adopting the *code civil*, which it maintained until its replacement by the German *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* of 1900.[37] While Prussia's legal codification of 1794 employed the term 'Bürger' to describe a class distinct from the aristocracy and peasantry, it did not refer to citizenship, subjecthood, or the related issues of naturalisation and expatriation.[38] As Andreas Fahrmeir summarises, outside of the three states that adopted citizenship laws – Austria, Bavaria, and Baden – an individual's relationship to the state was determined not by citizenship or nationality, but by 'membership in a corporation, regulated by the rules for the acquisition of a town's *Bürgerrecht* (burgher) or *Beisassen* (resident)-status, domicile in a village or admission to a guild'.[39]

With regard to citizenship, the German Empire founded in 1871 saw more continuity with Prussian history than with the legal initiatives of the now incorporated states of Bavaria and Baden. Distinct from republican countries, the Empire itself had come into being 'not through popular acclamation or plebiscite, but through Prussian military victories'.[40] The constitution did not contain a catalogue of human rights, as the draft constitution offered by the revolutionaries of 1848-9 had done. Instead of focusing on consolidation of the citizenry, it was primarily designed as a contract among the princes of the existing German states, all of whom kept their crowns until the founding of the Weimar Republic in 1918.[41] Matters of nationality were first regulated in a comprehensive interstate framework in the *Gesetz über die Erwerbung und den Verlust der Bundes- und Staatsangehörigkeit*, which had come into force in January 1871, originally applying only to the states of the North German Confederation. State citizenship remained the primary point of reference throughout the German Empire and the Weimar Republic, before it was abolished under Nazi rule in 1933. Prior to this transition into the unitary German state that became directly responsible for granting citizenship, German citizenship was held through possession of state citizenship, which was also listed in the passport.[42]

The *Reichs- and Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* (*RuStAG*), which entered into force in January 1914, marks a key moment in German citizenship legislation. Signed by Wilhelm II on his *Hohenzollern* yacht in July 1913, the *RuStAG* survived the end of the Imperial era as well as the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist regime and, until the introduction of

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[37] Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, p. 46.
[38] Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, p. 44.
[39] Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, p. 46.
[40] Pulzer, p. 20.
[41] Pulzer, p. 20.
[42] On exceptions for Germans residing abroad or in colonies, see Brubaker, p. 115.

major revisions in 1999, formed the primary basis of citizenship legislation in the united German Federal Republic.[43] While each regime change came with some amendments, the *RuStAG* became one of the oldest effective acts of citizenship legislation worldwide.[44] This is all the more remarkable since the imperial government conceded that, in spite of extensive parliamentary debates in 1913, the *RuStAG* showed a strong continuity with even older Prussian legislation. The Secretary of the Interior, Clemens von Delbrück, suggested accordingly that

> die zahlreichen Veränderungen, die das neue Gesetz gegen das alte aufweist, zu ihrem kleinsten Teile von grundsätzlicher Bedeutung sind. Sie sind zum Teil juristisch-technischer Natur, sie haben zum Teil den Zweck, Unebenheiten zu beseitigen, die sich im geltenden Recht gezeigt haben, und bringen grundlegende Veränderungen eigentlich nur bezüglich der Bestimmungen über den Verlust der Staatsangehörigkeit.[45]

While perhaps downplayed as a detail by Delbrück, it is precisely the introduction of a change to the regulations on loss of nationality which, later, would often be credited with having laid the foundations of a distinguishing feature of German citizenship legislation: its reference to ethnicity and descent, or *ius sanguinis*. Preceding legislation, following the *ius soli* principle, had given primacy to residence as a marker of state membership, with the implication that Germans residing abroad automatically lost their citizenship after 10 years. Protocols of contemporary parliamentary debates show that there was overwhelming cross-party agreement on the undesirability of the involuntary deprivation of German citizenship.[46] Some commentators, such as von Münch, argue that the resulting legislation, which rendered descent from German heritage the primary requirement for citizenship, was mainly driven by a wish to remedy what was perceived as an unjust exclusion from German nationality.[47] Other scholars, such as Eli Nathans, have drawn attention to the legal framework's early attempts at promoting racialised exclusion.[48] Mary Fulbrook points out that, while the law was not originally ethnically exclusive, the precedence it attributed to 'blood' over 'soil' still had problematic legacies reaching to the late 1990s, when the law was significantly reviewed.[49]

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[43] East German efforts to revise this legislation will be discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation.
[44] Münch, p. XXII.
[45] Cited in Münch, p. 38.
[46] See Münch, p. 35 ff.
[47] Münch, p. XXV.
[48] Eli Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship in Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).
[49] Mary Fulbrook, 'Legacies of a Significant Past: Regimes, Experiences, and Identities', in *The Routledge Handbook of German Politics & Culture*, ed. by Sarah Colvin (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 34–47 (p. 45).

Despite the continuities in citizenship legislation carried forward by the *RuStAG*, each historical period and each regime was accompanied by distinctive goals and policies regarding German citizenship and naturalisation. Yet, while the concrete rights and duties of citizens have changed since the nineteenth century, citizenship has consistently offered a number of privileges, such as 'protection from expulsion, superior access to the more privileged forms of work, and, in the nineteenth century, a clearer right to marry'.[50] An increasing percentage of male citizens were granted the right to vote in the course of the nineteenth century, and this political privilege was extended to women in 1918 – a topic which will be discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation. For men, military service was an additional implication of citizenship throughout most of German history.[51]

Just as citizenship itself is narrative, any accounts of its development over time constitute acts of narrativisation, too. In the past 40 years of scholarship, the history of German citizenship has been told in a number of ways. Roger Brubaker, in his still influential work *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, argued in 1992 that there has been a relatively continuous pathway towards ethnic exclusivity since the nineteenth century. Brubaker believes this to be a result of a broad societal consensus on the Fichtean ideal of ethnic German nationality, which he contrasts with the republican ideology of France. As opposed to the German cultural yearning for ethnic unity, France's revolutionary heritage, Brubaker maintains, has motivated more openness towards immigration.[52] Helen Williams, emphasising the lack of provisions for acquisition of German nationality by *ius soli* prior to 2000, agrees that the history of German citizenship law has 'diverged significantly from European norms'.[53] Focusing on international communalities rather than differences, Andreas Fahrmeir, in his comparative study of Germany and Britain, finds a number of historical similarities between the citizenship and naturalisation policies of German states and those of Britain, particularly in the way that they have been shaped by a system of international treaties.[54] In his work of 2001, *Einbürgern und Ausschließen*, Dieter Gosewinkel proposes that Germany's history of state-building has rested on four main pillars. One is the increasing centralisation of state power; a second the introduction and expansion of uniform rules and

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[50] Nathans, p. 5.
[51] Nathans, p. 5.
[52] Brubaker; see also Nathans, p. 6.
[53] Helen Williams, 'Citizenship', in *The Routledge Handbook of German Politics & Culture*, ed. by Sarah Colvin (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 119–32 (p. 119).
[54] Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizens and Aliens: Foreigners and the Law in Britain and the German States 1789-1870* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2000); see also Nathans, p. 6.

legislation that allowed for the replacement of status relationships with a system of individual rights; a third, the effective policing of borders, mainly against entry from outside; and a fourth, the focus on ethnicity in naturalisation processes.[55] Despite these historical continuities, however, Gosewinkel emphasises that the imperial 1913 citizenship law was not 'das Vehikel des Rassestaates, und es begründet keine Kontinuitätslinie zur nationalsozialistischen Volkstumspolitik oder ließ diese gar als zwangsläufige Konsequenz erscheinen'.[56] Eli Nathans, in his 2004 study, focuses on the societal and political struggles which have driven and been influenced by Germany's changing citizenship legislation. In doing so, he pays particular attention to the role of the historical exclusion of women in the history of citizenship formation.

3.1 Citizenship and Literature

In the social sciences, the concept of citizenship gained particular attention in the early 1990s, when its political implications appeared to present themselves with a new sense of urgency.[57] Political theorists Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman diagnosed a 'return of the citizen' in 1994, and an 'explosion of interest in the concept of citizenship' in the political and social sciences.[58] The authors see this interest as sparked by contemporary international and transnational developments, such as the end of the Cold War, and, in Western nations, the curtailment of the welfare state, as well as the phenomenon of increasingly ethnically diverse national populations. The effects of rising human mobility and an ever more closely connected global economic system, together with a gradual reconceptualisation of the nation-state as a politically and culturally constructed entity, initiated debates that reconsidered citizenship as a 'complex and often-contradictory affiliation within as well as across states'.[59] While still understood as membership in a political community, bestowing both rights and obligations,

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[55] Dieter Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschließen: Die Nationalisierung der Staatsangehörigkeit vom Deutschen Bund bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001); see also Nathans, pp. 8–9.

[56] Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschließen: Die Nationalisierung der Staatsangehörigkeit vom Deutschen Bund bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, p. 426.

[57] See Katja Sarkowsky, *Narrating Citizenship and Belonging in Anglophone Canadian Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 8.

[58] Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, 'Return of the Citizen: A Surevey of Recent Citizenship Theory', *Ethics*, 104.2 (1994), 352–81 (p. 352); see also Sarkowsky, p. 9.

[59] Sarkowsky, p. 8.

this led to the concept of citizenship becoming increasingly uncoupled from its earlier attachment to the unit of the nation-state, allowing its connection to new communities of reference. Katja Sarkowsky, in line with Kymlicka and Norman, notes that concepts such as 'diasporic or transnational citizenship mirror the diversification of citizenship that emerged due to [the] fundamental rethinking of the scope of citizenship' in the early 1990s.[60]

Around the same time, an emerging interest in citizenship could be observed in literary and cultural studies, especially in the Anglophone context. In these disciplines, the global socio-political developments as well as the attendant debates in the political and social sciences were taken as an occasion not only to engage with the boundaries of nationhood and of various given group identities, but also with the boundaries of their own fields of enquiry.[61] The increased interest in citizenship on the part of literary and cultural studies thus also marked a more structural point of renewed disciplinary opening up to questions of the role of literature and literary studies in broader socio-political debates. Focusing on North American literary studies, Brook Thomas notes a rise in academic articles and monographs on the topic of citizenship throughout the 1990s, observing that 'the issue of concern for literary critics overlapped with those of social scientists'.[62] David Chariandy and Sophie McCall, in a special issue of the journal *West Coast Line* dedicated to citizenship and literary studies, attribute the field's increased attention to citizenship to a 'newfound awareness of the complex and sometimes conflicted stakes of this term, and of the need to engage in citizenship debates in ways that are both historically grounded and intellectually flexible'.[63]

In the wake of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, a number of studies have investigated the realist novel as an ideological instrument of state formation, 'a means of inducting the subject into the norms of the national collective insofar as the novel narrates how the unlimited desires of the protagonist – mirroring the boundless energies of capitalist modernity – are tamed via the processes of socialization'.[64] The *Bildungsroman* in particular, as a prominent genre of nineteenth-century realist fiction, has been read as a conservative form aimed at consolidating existing political authorities and practices. Joseph Slaughter proposes that the *Bildungsroman* presents 'the novelization of citizenship' by staging protagonists as

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[60] Sarkowsky, pp. 8–9.
[61] Sarkowsky, p. 9.
[62] Brook Thomas, *Civic Myths: A Law-and-Literature Approach to Citizenship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 3.
[63] David Chariandy and Sophie McCall, 'Introduction: Citizenship and Cultural Belonging', *West Coast Line*, 59 (2008), 4–12 (p. 5); see also Sarkowsky, p. 9.
[64] Ho, p. 16.

'recognizable subjects of legal citizenship'.[65] Nancy Armstrong reads the realist novel as an ideological technology that 'produce[s] individuals who want to submit to the state' by aiding the state's endeavours of converting the 'bad subject' into the 'exemplary citizen'.[66]

The study of citizenship through literary and cultural lenses also gave rise to the conceptualisation of a specifically cultural citizenship, marking an attempt, primarily in North America, to 'reconcile the critical potential of literature with its long-standing instrumentalization in citizenship education'.[67] Martha Nussbaum, for example, stresses the central role of literature in citizenship education, regarding it as a crucial tool in the nurturing of skills such as compassion and the ability to imagine oneself as another.[68] Commenting more critically on the interweaving of citizenship, cultural education, and the need for institutional transformation in the United States, Renato Rosaldo observes in 1994 that

> The ideal of cultural citizenship grows out of the conviction that, in a plural society, one group must not dictate another group's notion of dignity, thriving, and well-being. Cultural citizenship also implies a notion of the polyglot citizen. Curriculum debates bring up questions of 'Who's the we?' in a plural society and offer hopes of bringing about cultural decolonization by recognizing the value of cultural life […].[69]

Addressing a context similar to Rosaldo's, Donna Palmateer Pennee uses the notion of 'literary citizenship' to emphasise the need for educational reform driven by a diversification of the national literary canon.[70]

The contributions of literary and cultural studies to the citizenship discourse have significantly helped to loosen the theoretical tie between the nation-state and the concept of citizenship. Since the 1990s, a gradual liberation of the concept from its original legal denotation could be observed. In the process, citizenship has acquired a more and more metaphorical meaning, evoked to address a diverse range of issues of social inclusion, agency, and community. However, symbolic and metaphorical understandings of citizenship are never

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[65] Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 86; see also Ho, p. 16.
[66] Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 36–37; see also Ho, p. 16.
[67] Sarkowsky, p. 10.
[68] Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); see also Sarkowsky, p. 10.
[69] Renato Rosaldo, 'Cultural Citizenship and Educational Democracy', *Cultural Anthropology*, 9.3 (1994), 402–11 (p. 410).
[70] Donna Palmateer Pennee, 'Literary Citizenship: Culture (Un)Bounded, Culture (Re)Disributed', in *Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy, and Canadian Literature*, ed. by Cynthia Sugars (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004), pp. 75–85.

entirely divorced from the term's original meaning, and *vice versa*: just as the metaphor continues to depend on the simile of the legal concept, the material meaning of citizenship has always included its symbolic charge. The concept of citizenship thus contains a highly complex network of interdependent meanings, which are reducible neither to their material nor to their immaterial components. In the same way that state borders, as the traditional demarcation lines between different nationalities, are not merely solid, geographically locatable lines, citizenship – even in its narrower meaning of nationality – is not only a legally defined concept.[71] The borders of states, and the laws of citizenship formed within them, are also dynamic acts of discourse, which constantly generate new forms of meaning and of identity, which include as well as exclude, generating new material and non-material implications in the process.

While citizenship only properly entered the fields of literary and cultural studies in the 1990s, literary fiction's engagement with the many facets of the concept certainly precedes their theorisation. When understood as an umbrella term covering a variety of aspects relating to the communal belonging not only of individuals, but also of the groups they are part of, the concept of citizenship can fruitfully be mapped onto a plethora of literary texts from the late eighteenth century onwards.[72] This is owed to at least two structural links connecting citizenship and literature. On the one hand, literature and citizenship both emerge from, engage with, and form integral parts of the social imaginary. Further expanding on Thompson's notion of the term, Charles Taylor describes the social imaginary as 'the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations'.[73] On the other hand, citizenship itself is always 'storied', inevitably relying on many of the narrative and imaginative instruments that are the stuff of fiction. David Chariandy, for example, emphasises that

[71] With regard to borders, see Hannelore Roth, 'Die Nation als Körper – der Körper als Nation: Zur Dynamik von territorialen und symbolischen Grenzen in Ernst von Salomons "Die Geächteten"', in *Sarmatien - Germania Slavica - Mitteleuropa: Vom Grenzland im Osten über Bobrowskis Utopie zur Ästhetik des Grenzraums*, ed. by Sabine Egger, Stefan Hajduk, and Britta Jung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), pp. 213–32 (p. 214); also on borders, see Claudia Bruns, 'Die Grenzen des "Volkskörpers": Interrelationen zwischen "Rasse", Raum und Geschlecht in NS-Geopolitik und Kunst', *Feministische Studien*, 33.2 (2015), 177–96 (p. 178).
[72] Sarkowsky, p. 11.
[73] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 23.

> we inevitably tell stories about citizenship. Of course, this does not mean that we have the ability to conjure up citizenship through individual imaginative inspiration or the intercession of some fitful muse, but rather that we narrate citizenship itself in ways that inevitably reflect our sidedness and desires.[74]

Given the immediate reliance of any social processes on narrative acts, this study is grounded on the proposition that literature, as an art form epitomising some of the most advanced expressions of narrative expertise, can be understood as one technique of theorising these processes in a structured fashion.

3.2 Citizenship in German Literature

In Germany, literature, its academic study, and democratic struggles have historically been closely entangled. The work of one of the founding fathers of *Germanistik*, Jacob Grimm, illustrates the intimate connection between philological, historical, and political interest that drove the development of the discipline.[75] For Grimm, a unified German language was at the heart of the programmatic need for a nation-wide linguistic consolidation. A democrat and member of the Assembly in the *Paulskirche*, Grimm saw linguistic standardisation as a necessary basis of bourgeois emancipation from the divisive politics of regional petty princes. The considerable political importance attributed to language and literature by Grimm and many of his colleagues supported a wider cultural process in which the German language was almost sanctified, as Michael Townson notes:

> The objective pursued by Grimm and the early *Germanisten* was not only to evoke the unity of a (mythical?) past and to establish the unity of a German language as a symbol of the unity of the German people, but also to restore to the German people their language in all its richness. The concept of *Sprachnation*, the nation defined and represented by its language rather than by any political entity, led to the German language being regarded as a supreme national value which became endowed with almost religious significance […].[76]

With Germany lacking a tradition of territorial coherence and unified central governance due to the division and fragmentation it experienced for most of its history, language came to play a particularly relevant role in its nation-building efforts.[77] Martin Durrell observes that nineteenth-century German nationalism was essentially ethno-linguistic: in the absence of a

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[74] David Chariandy, 'Black Canadas and the Question of Diasporic Citizenship', in *Narratives of Citizenship: Indigenous and Diasporic Peoples Unsettle the Nation-State*, ed. by Aloys Fleischmann, Nancy van Styvendale, and Cody McCarroll (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2011), pp. 323–46 (p. 327).
[75] Michael Townson, *Mother-Tongue and Fatherland: Language and Politics in German* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 92.
[76] Townson, p. 94.
[77] Townson, p. 1.

common state, the national community was imagined primarily through a common language.[78] 'Uns knüpft der Sprache heilig Band, | Uns knüpft ein Gott, ein Vaterland | Ein treues deutsches Blut', Theodor Körner declares in his poem *Jägerlied*, published in 1810.[79] While language plays a central role in all national endeavours across the globe, in Germany, the importance of a unified language went beyond that which it has held in many other polities, as Eric Hobsbawm notes:

> For Germans […] their national language was not merely an administrative convenience or a means of unifying state-wide communication […]. It was more even than the vehicle of a distinguished literature and of universal intellectual expression. It was the *only* thing that made them Germans […] and consequently carried a far heavier charge of national identity than, say, English did for those who write and read the language.[80]

In contemporary discussion of German national identity, a distinction is often made between 'Volk', 'Staatsnation', and 'Sprachnation'. Respectively addressing the nation as an ethnic, political, and linguistic entity, these categories overlap to varying degrees depending on the analytical context.[81] In some of the Anglophone scholarship discussed above, the concept of citizenship is increasingly seen as simultaneously encompassing and overcoming distinctions such as these. While historically not free from racial implications, citizenship is now often proposed as an alternative to more ethnocultural paradigms of belonging that are tied to the concept of the nation.[82]

The concept of citizenship arrived much later in German Studies than in the English Literature departments of the USA, Canada, and the UK, and it has not always been associated with the same concerns. Discussions about canon revision and the need for decolonisation of national curricula, for example, have not usually been interlinked with notions of citizenship in the way that they have been in Anglophone contexts.[83] Rather than on citizenship, the focus of scholarship has mainly been on the related concepts of 'Nation' and 'Heimat', with critical voices noting that the creation of otherness continues to be associated with a denial of access to these communal forms. In the 2019 essay collection *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum,* the

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[78] Martin Durrell, 'Die Rolle der deutschen Sprache in ideologischen Konstruktionen der Nation', in *Standardsprache zwischen Norm und Praxis: Theoretische Betrachtungen, empirische Studien und sprachdidaktische Ausblicke*, ed. by Winifred Davies and others (Marburg: Francke Verlag, 2017), pp. 54–75.
[79] Theodor Körner, *Knospen: Leyer und Schwert* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1810), p. 43.
[80] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 103.
[81] Townson, p. 1.
[82] See, e.g., Ho, p. 2.
[83] See *Diversity and Decolonization in German Studies*, ed. by Regine Criser and Ervin Malakaj (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

editors, Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah, articulate a critique of the concept 'Heimat' that strongly resonates with related critiques of citizenship:

> 'Heimat' hat in Deutschland nie einen realen Ort, sondern schon immer die Sehnsucht nach einem bestimmten Ideal beschrieben: einer homogenen, christlichen weißen Gesellschaft, in der Männer das Sagen haben, Frauen sich vor allem ums Kinderkriegen kümmern und alle anderen Lebensrealitäten schlicht nicht vorkommen.[84]

Other essays in the same volume, such as those concerned with 'Arbeit', 'Privilegien', and 'Sprache', discuss central aspects of citizenship, too, illustrating how formal nationality does not necessarily entail a subjective experience of citizenship.

In her 2004 book *Becoming Black*, Michelle Wright distinguishes between 'Others from Within' and 'Others from Without'. Describing the subject position of Afro-Germans in contemporary German discourse, Wright argues that discrimination against those who are constructed as 'Others from Without' is based on speech acts of exclusion from the national community. Commenting critically on the ideological implication of the academic field of *Germanistik* in the creation and perpetuation of a national culture of whiteness, Nicole Coleman has noted in her 2021 study, *The Right to Difference*:

> Germanistik emerged in the nineteenth century as a national philology that engaged in a homogenizing mission to create a foundation for a German state. Thus, assimilation or exclusion of all non-German authors aligned closely with the creation of a distinctly 'German' culture as the subject matter of Germanistik. German literature and language in schools exhibited patriotism and nationalism, which was made possible by suppressing voices that challenged the homogeneous image of a German nation […].[85]

Since the early 2000s, critical research on topics such as 'Heimat', nationalism, exile, and migration has proliferated in German Studies. In this context, tropes closely related to citizenship, such as the passport and national borders, have received increasing attention.[86] The study of citizenship as an everyday political identity which affects the experiences even of those not crossing state frontiers, however, is still in its early stages. Two edited volumes in particular show the growing interest in the nexus of literature and citizenship in German studies, too: *Staatbürgerschaft, Staatenlosigkeit und Exil* (2018), edited by Doerte Bischoff and Miriam Rürup, presents perspectives on citizenship of literary scholars alongside those of

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[84] *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum*, ed. by Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah (Berlin: Ullstein, 2019), p. 9.

[85] Nicole Coleman, *The Right to Difference: Interculturality and Human Rights in Contemporary German Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021), pp. 16–17.

[86] See, e.g., *Figuren des Transnationalen: (Re-)Visionen der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. by Svetlana Arnaudova and Doerte Bischoff (Dresden: Thelem, 2020); Jesper Gulddal, 'Passport Plots: B. Traven's *Das Totenschiff* and the Chronotope of Movement Control', *German Life and Letters*, 66.3 (2013), 291–306.

historians and cultural researchers.[87] The *Handbuch Literatur & Transnationalität* (2019), edited by Bischoff and Susanne Komfort-Hein, systematically explores the connection between literary studies and concepts of the transnational, often discussing citizenship in the process.[88]

While recent years have seen a rapid growth in the number of single-authored studies on the connection between citizenship and fiction in Anglophone countries, there has not yet been a comprehensive, monograph-length analysis of twentieth-century German literature.[89] Focusing on the period between 1926 and 1959, this dissertation is intended to play a part in the closure of this gap. Beyond promoting further involvement of German studies in current discussion of citizenship and contributing to a new reading of the novels analysed, my PhD presents an epistemological intervention into current social science discourses. Throughout the three chapters of the dissertation, I argue that novels offer a distinct insight into some of the processes of knowing and acting politically found in quotidian and purportedly private settings by showing how the narratives behind these processes mirror the grand political narratives that underlie the construction of statehood.

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[87] *Ausgeschlossen: Staatsbürgerschaft, Staatenlosigkeit und Exil*, ed. by Doerte Bischoff and Miriam Rürup (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

[88] *Handbuch Literatur & Transnationalität*, ed. by Doerte Bischoff and Susanne Komfort-Hein (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

[89] For anglophone examples, see, among others, Amy Dunham Strand, *Language, Gender, and Citizenship in American Literature, 1789-1919* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008); Carol Fadda-Conrey, *Contemporary Arab-American Literature: Transnational Reconfigurations of Citizenship and Belonging* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014); Donette Francis, *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship: Sexuality and the Nation in Contemporary Caribbean Literature* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Janice Ho, *Nation and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century British Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For a German study focusing on the eighteenth century, see Bernhard Spies, *Politische Kritik, psychologische Hermeneutik, ästhetischer Blick: Die Entwicklung bürgerlicher Subjektivität im Roman des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Springer, 2016); for a German study concerned with pre-1848 history, see Kyung-Ho Cha's habilitation, 'Der gute Staatsbürger: Literatur und Staatsbürgerschaft von der Klassik bis zum Vormärz' (Universität Bayreuth, 2020, currently unpublished). Kyung-Ho Cha is also currently working on a study of citizenship in German literature, theatre, film and music from 1990 to the present.

CHAPTER ONE

The Citizen's Body: Sexuality and the State in Marieluise Fleißer's *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier* (1931) and Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi, eine von uns* (1931)

1. Introduction: Weimar, Gender, Sexual Violence

1918 marked a rupture in the way both civil society and gender relations were imagined in Germany, a rupture that, throughout the Weimar Republic era, would coexist and conflict with elements of social and political continuity. In addition to the lost war and the political reorganisation of Germany after 1917, the hyperinflation crisis, starting in 1921 and culminating in 1923, effected a fundamental disruption in the economic and cultural hierarchies of the country. As a result, the hegemonial position of now impoverished cultural elites crumbled, while other groups, especially women and white-collar workers, were gaining cultural significance.[1] The concept of citizenship, in its sense as 'Staatsbürgerschaft', assumed a central place in the charged relationship between forces of social disruption and innovation, on the one hand, and conservative or reactionary movements, on the other. Citizenship became an umbrella term capturing the often mutually exclusionary political, legal, and economic desires of the respective interest groups. The concept of citizenship also became a foundational pillar in the state's own pursuit of legitimacy. 'Much of the high drama of the Weimar Republic', Kathleen Canning observes, 'its initial quest for legitimacy and its anguished struggle to survive – played out on the terrain of citizenship'.[2]

For women's movements, too, the demand for full citizenship had been increasingly pivotal since the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Around the same time that revolutionaries in several Western countries had demanded the political liberalisation of governance in the

[1] See Kerstin Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit: Der Roman der Neuen Frau in der Weimarer Republik* (Köln: Böhlau, 2003), p. 1.
[2] Kathleen Canning, 'Claiming Citizenship', in *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*, ed. by Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 116–37 (p. 125).

revolutions of 1848, women's movements also began to organise in associations and conventions (such as the Seneca Falls convention of 1848 in the US),[3] forming part of a transnational field of contentious politics whose ambitions were, to a large extent, expressed in the vocabulary of citizenship. 'Dem Reich der Freiheit werb' ich Bürgerinnen', the German first-generation women's rights activist Louise Otto wrote in 1849 in the newly founded *Frauen-Zeitung*.[4] Women also comprised about half of the participants in the strikes of the last war years of 1917 and 1918, during which, alongside male workers, they demanded suffrage reform and an immediate peace without annexation.[5] When suffrage for women and workers was declared during the 1918 November Revolution, a fundamental change in women's political and legal rights appeared to have been secured. 'Die Frauen besitzen heute das ihnen zustehende Recht der Staatsbürgerinnen', the SPD parliamentarian Marie Juchacz asserted in a 1919 speech; 'die Frauenfrage […] in ihrem alten Sinne [ist] gelöst'.[6] Notwithstanding the important changes in women's legal standing, however, commentators today still debate the extent to which the introduction of the vote effected a true systemic shift in the situation of women and national politics as a whole. While women's political participation erupted immediately after suffrage had been achieved, with high numbers of female voters and women elected to public office, the initial optimism about progress in emancipation soon began to wane. Not only did women's participation in formal politics start to decline as early as 1920,[7] but the onset of the Great Depression and the intensification of economic and political struggles increasingly fuelled societal debates about the presumed responsibility of women for the private household and national reproduction.

In this chapter, I argue that the contestations of women's place in politics, and over the place of the sexualised female body, in particular, formed an essential element in Weimar's process of state building and the formations of citizenship that arose from it. By embedding my analysis in a broader historical context, I will show that the body's role in politics has been simultaneously central and suppressed since the emergence of early concepts of citizenship in antiquity. Until today, following the traditions of liberal and republican thought, conceptions of citizenship continue to be widely associated with abstract reason and rationality, whose force

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[3] See Barry Buzan and George Lawson, 'Ideologies of Progress', in *The Global Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 97–126 (p. 104).
[4] Louise Otto, 'Frauen-Zeitung', in *Dem Reich der Freiheit werb' ich Bürgerinnen: Die Frauen-Zeitung von Louise Otto*, ed. by Ute Gerhard, Elisabeth Hannover-Dürck, and Romina Schmitter (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1979), p. 111.
[5] See Canning, p. 125.
[6] Marie Juchacz, Weimarer Nationalversammlung, 19/02/1919.
[7] See Canning, p. 122.

is seen to transcend the lower spheres of emotions and the body. Nancy Hartsock, for example, explains that 'bodies and their appetites and desires are treated as loathsome, even inhuman, things that must be overcome if a man is to remain powerful and free […] individuals must separate themselves from and conquer the feelings and desires of the body.'[8] As Ruth Lister and other feminist scholars have shown,[9] the capacity to overcome the confines of human physicality has, in the dominant strands of political thought, often been ascribed to men only, while women were seen as caught in the natural realm of sexuality, sentiment, and reproduction. The propagation of the mind/body, and with it the civilisation/nature, dichotomy, laid the foundation for a gendered public/private divide, in which (male) citizenship epitomises the public, while (female) sexuality is relegated to the private sphere. A critical analysis of citizenship from this point of view is not merely concerned with gender inequality as observable in established practices of citizenship, but also with the inequality inherent in the concept itself.

First endeavours to remedy this historical imbalance have aimed at broadening the conceptual scope of citizenship in a way that destabilises the public/private divide which seems to have been central to any understanding of citizenship throughout its history. In one such effort, echoing earlier insights of feminist and postcolonial scholars, David Evans coined the term 'sexual citizenship' in 1993, emphasising that 'citizens have genders, sexualities, and bodies that matter in politics'.[10] On a primary level of analysis, the work of Evans and other scholars of sexual citizenship points towards a phenomenon of their time, namely an increased importance given to sexual practices and identities in the political process, coupled with a heightened awareness of and dissatisfaction with the structural exclusion of these issues from formal political debate and its meta-discourses. As Jeffrey Weeks wrote in 1998: 'The sexual citizen exists – or, perhaps better, wants to come into being – because of the new primacy given to sexual subjectivity in the contemporary world'.[11] Based on his understanding of sexual citizenship as a historically new phenomenon, Weeks regards the sexual citizen as a hybrid and

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[8] Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), pp. 177–78; see also Ruth Lister, 'Citizenship and Gender', in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, ed. by Alan Scott and Kate Nash (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 323–32.

[9] Among them Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Adriana Cavarero, 'Equality and Sexual Difference: Amnesia in Political Thought', in *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 32–47; Moira Gatens, 'Power, Bodies and Difference', in *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, ed. by Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 120–37; Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1984).

[10] David Evans, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[11] Jeffrey Weeks, 'The Sexual Citizen', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 15.3–4 (1998), 35–52 (p. 35).

transgressive character, who breaches the public/private divide by insisting on the intermingling of traditionally separate spheres. At a secondary level of analysis, however, the scholarship on sexual citizenship also helps to show that the presumed exclusion of the body and sexuality from politics was never real in the first place. Instead, a look at early classical thought – and its resonances across the centuries – reveals that the body and sexuality have been constitutive factors in conceptions of citizenship and community at least since antiquity, even though this connection has been hidden to varying degrees throughout the past 2000 years. Focusing on the contract theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Carole Pateman, for example, in her seminal work *The Sexual Contract*, argues that modern political association relies on the retelling of the story of an original social contract, which provides legitimacy for the binding authority of the state and civil law. Repressed in this story, Pateman finds, is the fact that the social contract, in turn, depends on a sexual contract: on the idea of a legitimate exercise of patriarchal or sex-right as 'the power that men exercised over women'.[12] The social order springing from the stories of liberal Enlightenment traditions, therefore, is a necessarily patriarchal one.

Employing two novels of the Weimar Republic, Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi, eine von uns* and Marieluise Fleißer's *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier*, as case studies and springboards to wider theoretical reflection, this chapter seeks to excavate the intimate entanglement of the *body politic*, on the one hand, and the individual body, on the other. In close readings of these novels and their embeddedness in contemporary historical sources as well as in political theories ranging from ancient Greece to the present, I will analyse citizenship as a concept and practice that is both gendered and sexualised. The legal, social, and physical dimensions of coitus – in both its voluntary and enforced variants – will thereby be shown to have comprised a vital component of the conceptualisation of citizenship throughout its history. By zooming in on the corporeal and sexual underpinnings of political association, I will demonstrate that the female body has often been assigned the role of a distinguishing line between citizenship and that which can be seen as its opposite, the state of nature.

The subject of romantic love, which is at the centre of both novels, is not usually theorised in the same analytical categories as the subject of citizenship. Yet both share many structural traits. As is the case with citizenship, love is experientially and conceptually characterised by the simultaneity of a relationship to self and other. Both concepts describe a way of communal connection and of self-identity, of interpersonal inclusion and exclusionary

[12] Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 1.

boundedness. The dynamics unfolding between these two elements may be understood as an insurmountable core tension characterising the relationality of citizenship as well as relationships of romantic love. And in both cases, the explosive potential of this tension exposes itself with particular force during times of structural change, such as the upheavals in the political, economic, and social fabric of the Weimar Republic. The change in the way women related to political and economic matters during the early twentieth century was both a result of, and an igniting force for, a change in gender relations. In turn, these relational changes also resulted in a revaluation not only of the concepts involved – such as citizenship and romantic love – but also of the individual subjecthood of the person engaging with them.

In my analysis, I will pay particular attention to the role that sexual violence has played in the way community has been imagined and narrated throughout the centuries. The history of sexuality has received some attention in the literature of the twentieth century, especially in the context of psychoanalysis and in the wake of Foucault's pioneering study on the subject, published in four volumes between 1976 and 2018.[13] Rape, however, remains an under-researched topic in the German, and particularly the Weimar, context, though it fares better in the scholarship concerned with the period after 1945. While some scholarly attention has been paid, especially since the 1990s, to the refashioning of physical and sexual politics during the Weimar Republic, many of the excellent monographs on Weimar and sexuality which do exist are almost entirely silent on the topic of rape.[14]

When rape is discussed in the Weimar context, it is usually in relation to the then widespread cultural trope and empirical phenomenon of 'Lustmord', mainly read as a violent response to the male trauma experienced during trench warfare.[15] While 'Lustmord' has rightfully received attention as a distinct socio-cultural phenomenon, the generally rigid separation between 'criminal' and 'consensual' sexuality dominant in the scholarship is not unproblematic. In his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault puts forward the thesis that sexuality is a relatively recent social construct in Western society.[16] While this has been contested on many

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[13] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*.
[14] See, e.g., Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and 'New Objectivity'* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001); Cornelie Usborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992).
[15] Elizabeth Boa, 'The New Woman as Satirist or Butt of Satire', *Oxford German Studies*, 46.1 (2017), 25–41 (p. 29); see also Maria Tatar, *Lustmord* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphatasien*, Volumes 1 and 2 (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1980).
[16] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*.

grounds,[17] it certainly holds true that rape, as a juridical and medical category, has always been constituted discursively. Throughout most of Western history, a distinction between sex and violence has not been straightforward, as coitus was long understood as a naturally and necessarily violent act against women.[18] This often implied that the very existence of rape was all but denied. Anatomists and doctors of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries expended considerable amounts of effort on proving that the proposition of a rape of an 'average' woman, if it did not involve exceptional circumstances such as the massive use of force through weapons, defied not only logical probability, but also physical possibility. The Frankfurt physician Johann Valentin Müller, writing in 1796, expressed an assessment typical of the time:

> Ist ein Frauenzimmer von hinlänglicher Größe, und sie soviel Kräfte als eine Mannesperson besitzt, so wird es schwer, sie niederzuwerfen, und wenn man die übrigen Bewegungen, die beim Beyschlaf sich ereignen, betrachtet, so wird es auch unmöglich fallen, so lange das Frauenzimmer sich nur regen kann, die That zu vollbringen: und sind dergleichen angegebene Nothzüchtigungen zwischen Personen von gleicher Größe und Stärke mehrtheils verdächtig, und man kann immer glauben, ob nicht endlich eine Einwilligung erfolgt seye, besonders wenn es in einem Hause geschehen seyn soll, da entweder mehrere Leute vorhanden, oder aus der Nachbarschaft herbygerufen werden konnten […].[19]

Assessments such as Müller's regularly relied on images of the female body that stood in stark contrast to beliefs about women's physicality as constructed outside of the realm of sexual violence. While discourses about women's participation in public life, for example, usually emphasised a discrepancy of physical strength and capability between the sexes, discussions of rape typically assumed an equilibrium of strength between the parties involved. In the rare cases that this equilibrium was believed to have been heavily skewed in favour of the man, the harsh punishment – usually involving death or ostracism – still depended on a preceding judgement of the victim's sexual history and morals. The Bavarian *Codex Bavarici Criminalis* of 1751 is typical of the time, in that it decrees capital punishment for rape, but only if the victim was 'un-defamed': 'Wer eine ehrlich unverleumdete Person mit Gewalt wider ihren Willen, zur Unzucht nöthiget, ist mit dem Schwerdt zu strafen, doch leydet die Straff eine

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[17] See, e.g., Peter Gay, *Education of the Senses: The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud*, Volume 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[18] Maren Lorenz, '"...da der anfängliche Schmerz in Liebeshitze übergehen kann...": Das Delikt der "Notzucht" im gerichtsmedizinischen Diskurs des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Unzucht - Notzucht - Vergewaltigung: Definitionen und Deutungen sexueller Gewalt von der Aufklärung bis heute*, ed. by Christine Künzel (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2003), pp. 63–88 (p. 84).

[19] Johann Valentin Müller, *Entwurf der gerichtlichen Arzneywissenschaft nach juristischen und medizinischen Grundsätzen*, Volume 1 (Frankfurt am Main, 1796), § 86; cited in Lorenz, pp. 70–71.

Milderung, wenn die genöthigte Person eben zur Zeit beschehener That in üblen Ruf gestanden' (VI § 7).[20]

In addition to this problematic distinction between consensual and violent sexual practice, the neglect of rape as a subject of scholarly and political concern has been supported by a problematic distinction of public and private. Rape was long viewed as a largely private matter, generally only tangential to wider public concerns when the violation of a daughter's or married woman's physical integrity was judged a violation of her father's or husband's rights, and therefore seen as an assault on the foundations of the general social order. This aspect is traceable in the etymology of the German term 'Notzucht', a historical precursor of the currently used term 'Vergewaltigung', which was introduced in German law only in 1973.[21] Against the popular misconception, the term 'Notzucht' is not a compound of 'Not' (in the sense of an urgent need) and 'Zucht' (in the sense of 'züchtigen', to punish). Instead, it is based on the concept of 'Frauenraub', the abduction of women: 'Not', here, derives from 'Nötigung' in the sense of 'Zwang'; 'Zucht' denotes a forced change of location in the sense of 'Wegziehen' or 'Wegnehmen'.[22] The focus on a violation of male property, as opposed to a concern over the violation of a woman's physical integrity, is thus inherent in the German conceptual history of rape. A broader shift in public and academic perceptions of rape occurred only in the second half of the twentieth century, beginning, in the 1960s, with the scattered analyses of some political theorists who observed the various political functions of rape. During the Bosnian War of the 1990s, the systematic mass sexual violence perpetrated against women brought the political uses of rape to broader public attention, and led to the first instance of mass rape being formally recognised and prosecuted by an international tribunal.[23] The experience of the Bosnian War led to a heightened awareness and reassessment of the ways in which sexual violence has been used as a directed political tool throughout history, including in contexts such as the Second World War and colonial rule.[24]

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[20] Cited in Ilse Reiter, 'Zur Geschichte des Vergewaltigungsdeliktes unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der österreichischen Rechtsentwicklung', in *Unzucht - Notzucht - Vergewaltigung: Definitionen und Deutungen sexueller Gewalt von der Aufklärung bis heute*, ed. by Christine Künzel (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003), pp. 21–62 (p. 28).
[21] *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* (*BGB*) I 1973/1725; see Reiter, p. 54.
[22] Christine Künzel, 'Einführung', in *Unzucht - Notzucht - Vergewaltigung: Definitionen und Deutungen sexueller Gewalt von der Aufklärung bis heute*, ed. by Chistine Künzel (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2003), p. 9.
[23] See Alexander Mikaberidze, *Behind Barbed Wire: An Encyclopedie of Concentration and Prisoner of War Camps* (Linworth: ABC-CLIO, 2019), p. 223.
[24] See, e.g., *Exterminate Them: Written Accounts of the Murder, Rape, and Slavery of Native Americans during the California Gold Rush, 1848-1868*, ed. by Clifford Trafzer (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999); Nicole A. Dombrowski, *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2004).

An observation of the many empirical cases of surges in sexual violence during eras of foreign occupation, socio-political upheaval, and political transition has since led some theorists to pose conceptual questions about a structural connection between rape and acts of state building. In an early study on the subject, Norman Brown, for instance, asserted in 1966 that '[w]ithout an understanding of the seamy side of sexuality there is no understanding of politics'.[25] Going even further in a more recent study, Victor Vitanza argues that rape is 'a, if not the, *hidden* founding principle for the constitution of Western cultures', and continues to posit that 'the History of cultures, *is* actually and virtually the History of Rape'.[26] Vitanza substantiates his thesis with a disquieting list of classical rape narratives that have served as central founding myths of sovereignty throughout Western history:

> The rape of Korê and the wandering of Demeter, leading to the founding of Athens;
> the rape of Leda, giving us Helen and Clytemnestra;
> the rape of Helen, giving us Aeneas and Livy's histories;
> the rape of the Vestal, issuing the twins, Romulus and Remus, and Rome;
> the rape, or abduction, of the Sabine Women, bringing forth the Roman people;
> the rape of Lucretia, bringing forth the Republic;
> the rapes in the Hebrew Bible;
> the Chaste Rape of Mary, ending the Roman Empire and issuing Christ.[27]

In the face of the highly complex processes involved in the shaping of any historical development, one may want to react to Vitanza's sweeping thesis with some caution. Yet even if the monocausal connection between rape and political culture which Vitanza appears to establish is rejected, the above list still demonstrates that the role of sexual violence in the narrative establishment of new sovereign power in ancient history is substantial.

The reception of ancient Greek and Roman history and mythology forms an important pillar of the West's self-understanding to this day. The stories about gender, violence, and the body emerging from these traditions matter, because they have, for centuries, informed thinking about politics and sexuality. This has pertained to the abstract political as well as the immediately physical level. Historical sources show, for example, that the medicalisation and juridification of sexual violence up to the early twentieth century relied more on stories drawn from ancient myths, biblical sources, and beliefs about practices of indigenous peoples than on the observation of empirical evidence.[28] In the context of Weimar, the simultaneous occurrence

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[25] Norman Brown, *Love's Body* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 11.
[26] Victor J. Vitanza, *Sexual Violence in Western Thought and Writing: Chaste Rape* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. xii, emphases in the original.
[27] Vitanza, pp. xiii–xiv.
[28] Lorenz, pp. 76–77.

of tendencies towards female sexual emancipation, the prevalence of the 'Lustmord' trope, and the advent of a new form of governance raises questions about a continuation of the connection between sovereignty, violence, and sexuality observed by Vitanza and others.

Narration has the potential to transmit and fortify, as well as to expose and disrupt collectively held beliefs about sexual violence and its political significance. Many of the stories we find in myths as well as in later literary fiction document and produce important knowledge about love and sexuality as two symbolically and materially constitutive spheres of social and political life that have, to a large extent, been excluded from other discourses. One of the modern genres through which a particular power dynamic between the genders has been imagined and reproduced during the past 200 years is that of the romance novel. In her study of Caribbean literature, the feminist and postcolonial scholar Donette Francis puts forward the observation that the traditional love plot has historically been used to disavow structural acts of political and sexual violence against women and those not fitting into society's heteronormative logic by cloaking these acts as part of a benign project of civilisation. As Francis succinctly points out:

> At its core, the romance genre masks coercion as consent, since its very structure centers a heterosexual love plot and charts the heroine's liberation from oppressive circumstances and the resolution of difference with a move into domesticity.[29]

While Francis's remarks certainly have unique implications in a colonial and post-colonial setting, they also have analytical relevance in the present context. The two novels analysed in this chapter, *Gilgi, eine von uns* and *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier*, both centre around a love plot, but do not succumb to its traditional rehearsal. Instead, Marieluise Fleißer and Irmgard Keun can be seen to offer attempts at narrative resistance in their particular renderings of the romantic novel. These consist, firstly, of a rewriting of the heterosexual love plot into what can be called an 'antiromantic' plotline, in which the heroine at the end is shown as deciding against the move into marriage and domesticity; secondly, of the foregrounding of sexual complexities and everyday sexual violence which have often been sidelined in canonical historical and literary representations. In order to contextualise these tropes and illuminate their wider political significance, I will open with a brief discussion of the role of gender and the body in the history of political thought.

[29] Francis, p. 4 f.

2.1 Gender, Citizenship, and the Body in Political Theory

Since the 1990s, discussion of the place of the body in politics and in political thought has mainly focused on two seemingly divergent themes: the 'disembodiment' of the political individual, on the one hand, and the 'embodiment' of 'woman', as a socio-political category, on the other.[30] Scholars concerned with the first strand of thought engage critically with the theoretical heritage of late eighteenth-century Europe, when bourgeois men universalised themselves to represent 'man as such' in a process of claiming to be the sole bearers of societal production and political action. Feminist theorists have shown that this heritage generated the concept of an ideal socio-political agent who appears both genderless and disembodied.[31] Scholars analysing the second strand of thought engage critically with a parallel process, in which women were excluded from the public and political realm by being reduced to the physical components of sensuality, sexuality, and nature. Thus relegated to the private realm, the female body was treated not as subject, but merely as object of political action, embedded in an increasingly complex network of societal expectations and political regulation that often revolve around its reproductive function.[32]

These two strands of thought – of disembodiment, on the one hand, and embodiment, on the other – may, at first glance, appear to stand in a relationship of tension or even contradiction. Yet, since antiquity, they have merged to create some of the founding structures of political systems and political theory. From the high to late Middle Ages up to the late nineteenth century, a result of this merging could be observed in a variety of legal and political institutions throughout Europe. One of these was the principle of 'couverture' – the legal fiction of a married couple or a family representing a single political 'body', the head of which was constituted by the husband or the father. The idea of husband and wife, or father and children, forming a single corporation, in which the constitutive parts follow a seemingly 'natural' division of labour in the pursuit of the welfare of the greater organism, provided a central argument for the political silencing of women. Based on this image, the popular case brought forward against women's suffrage during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not so much that women were not in need of political representation, but rather that their representation was already covered by that of their husbands and fathers. Writing in the early nineteenth century, the philosopher James Mill, father of John Stuart Mill, contended, for example: 'One thing is pretty clear, that all those individuals whose interests are indisputably

[30] Brigitte Kerchner, 'Der Körper als politische Metapher', *Femina Politica*, 1999, 61–79 (p. 61).
[31] Brigitte Kerchner, 'Der Körper als politische Metapher', *Femina Politica*, 1999, 61–79 (p. 61).
[32] Kerchner, pp. 61–62.

included in those of other individuals may be struck off without inconvenience.' And he continued: 'In this light, also, women may be regarded, the interest of almost all of whom is involved either in that of their fathers or in that of their husbands.'[33] Mill was satisfied that his analysis 'ascertained that an interest identical with that of the whole community is to be found in the aggregate of males' who are of legal age.[34] Mill's argument drew on widespread nineteenth-century discourses which assumed that, upon marriage, the woman's identity was submerged in that of her husband.[35] As 'universal citizens', the husbands were then tasked with the enactment of the single political will of the corporation they represented.

While formally abolished around the turn of the century, the effects of this doctrine were still visible well after the Second World War, in law and political practice, as well as in some strands of political theory. In an oft-cited legal opinion on the political role of women, Maurice Duverger wrote as late as 1955: 'While women have, legally, ceased to be minors, they still have the mentality of minors in many fields and, particularly in politics [...]. The man – husband, fiancé, lover, or myth – is the mediator between them and the political world'.[36] This denial of women's role as self-standing political 'bodies' also manifested in employment law and the expected division of labour at home. A West German wife's employment was still contingent upon her husband's agreement until 1958, for example, and her employment contract could be unilaterally ended by him.[37] Even the revised Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) of 1958 still stipulated until 1977, in an audible echo of the 'couverture' doctrine: 'Die Frau führt den Haushalt in eigener Verantwortung. Sie ist berechtigt, erwerbstätig zu sein, soweit dies mit ihren Pflichten in Ehe und Familie vereinbar ist'.[38]

The political science models of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often disregarded gender by purporting to work on the assumption of a disembodied, genderless citizen.[39] Yet, even at times when they were ostentatiously ignored, gender and the body have formed essential elements in the constitution of statehood. A review of the history of western political philosophy shows that one of their central functions has been to act as a boundary between the realm of civilisation and the state, on the one hand, and the sphere of necessity and nature, on the other. Contestations over the location of this boundary touch the very core of

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[33] James Mill, *An Essay on Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 43.
[34] Mill, p. 73.
[35] See Diana Owen and Linda Zerilli, 'Gender and Citizenship', *Society*, 28 (1991), 27–34 (p. 28).
[36] Cited in Owen and Zerilli, p. 30.
[37] See, e.g., Sabine Göttel, *'Natürlich sind es Bruchstücke': Zum Verhältnis von Biographie und literarischer Produktion bei Marieluise Fleißer* (Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 1997), p. 46.
[38] § 1356 *BGB*, sub-paragraph 1 and 2.
[39] See Owen and Zerilli, p. 28.

statehood and its theorization, and political philosophers engaged in the relevant debates have long wrestled with a central puzzle. As Annabel Brett has shown in her study of early modern natural law, a seemingly insurmountable tension exists between the realms of nature and the state, as 'the city or state must pull away from nature to form itself at the same time as being grounded in nature to motivate and to legitimate it'.[40] Gender and the body have historically been placed in the highly precarious breach of this conflicted relationship between politics and nature. In the charged constellation that ensues between politics, nature, gender, and the body, the sex act can be regarded as a cumulative focal point, relating independently to all four spheres while also bringing to light the complexity of their internal connections. Coitus is as much part of the realm of natural necessity, and reminder of the creaturely or animalistic core of humankind, as it is the basis of its political structure and sustained cultural production.

In classical and early modern thought, the connection between the physiological and the political realm was usually discussed more openly than in later political science models. As one of the coiners of the concept of the *body politic*, Aristotle, in Book I of his *Politics*, likens the relationship between the political community and the household to that between the body and its organs.[41] This organic metaphor emphasises the unity of the political association, together with its capacity for agency, presenting it as analogous to the human body.[42] Beyond the body's analogous importance, however, its actual physicality was taken to be of great significance. This is illustrated in Book VII of *Politics*, for example, in which Aristotle discusses the very corporeal – and for him highly political – matters of diet, exercise, conception, birth control, and abortion. The *civitas* or *polis* in Aristotelian and also in the Ciceronian tradition, and in thinkers such as Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes, had connotations of a body made of flesh, inhabited by or comprised of citizens whose concrete embodiment was deemed deeply significant. As was, therefore, their gender: most classical political theorists, such as Aristotle, Cicero, Machiavelli, and Rousseau, draw strong connections between citizenship and masculinity, excluding women from citizenship status due to their purported lack of essential civic virtues.[43] And yet, even in these theories, women's position is highly politicised, since the woman as wife, following Aristotle, was usually conceptualised as

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[40] Annabel S. Brett, *Changes of State: Nature and the Limits of the City in Early Modern Natural Law* (Princeton University Press, 2011., 2011), p. 5.
[41] Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by T.A. Sinclair (London: Penguin Books, 1981).
[42] See Brett, p. 122.
[43] Thinkers who deviated were Plato, Bodin, and Hobbes, all of whom in principle accorded the same civic potential to women as to men.

a citizen of what could be called the domestic republic, with the husband as head of the familial state.[44]

The family, however, and the marital relationship at its heart, was more than merely a miniaturised mirror image of the state. It was also the very location where the distinguishing line between culture and nature was negotiated, and where the first essential step towards an escape from nature was taken. Cicero, in his *De Officis* (*On Duties* or *On Obligations*) called marriage the *seminarium* of the *res publica*, the seed bed of the *body politic*, an aspect that theorists such as Bodin pondered very literally.[45] As Anna Becker has pointed out, Jean Bodin, arguably the major theorist of modern sovereignty, wrote extensively on what he regarded as a central element of his political discourse, namely that it was 'coitus that made marriage':

> He insisted on the importance of coitus as the signifier of marriage, because he understood it as the point in which the husband received full *potestas* [governing power] over his wife. And because the *potestas* of the husband was the image as well as the source from which sovereign power flew, coitus also represented the moment that the sovereign had power over the citizen body, the very moment the commonwealth was forged.[46]

Combined with the procreative function of intercourse, which, as the concrete foundation of the *body politic's* survival, was also paid heed to by the other theorists named above, this made for a highly politicised understanding of the citizen's body.

In twentieth-century narratives of political community, the place of the body was alternately – and sometimes simultaneously – exposed and concealed. This applied particularly to discourses around nationhood, a form of collective association which, from the late eighteenth century, was increasingly viewed as the pinnacle of modern political organisation. In the same way that gender is located at the breach between nature and the state, it is also located at the breach between the physical and the symbolic, between the biological and what Benedict Anderson has called the 'imagined' connection underlying the modern nation state. Deriving from the Latin term *natio*, meaning 'birth', nationalism is conceptually rooted in the semantic fields of physicality, sexuality, and gender. Yet this connection has not commonly been made explicit. In particular, the dominant school of nationalist thought, primordialism, has traditionally understood national community as an organic extension of kinship relations, while, at the same time, generally neglecting the role of gender relations.[47] In most theorisations

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[44] See Anna Becker, 'Gendering the Political Body', presented at the Graduate Conference in Political Thought and Intellectual History, *The Body and Politics*, 18th March 2019, Pembroke, Cambridge.
[45] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Obligations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [44 BC]).
[46] Anna Becker, 'Gendering the Political Body', presented at the Graduate Conference in Political Thought and Intellectual History, *The Body and Politics*, 18th March 2019, Pembroke, Cambridge.
[47] See, e.g., Geertz, 1963; Shils, 1957; van den Berghe, 1979.

of nationalism from the 1950s up to the late 1990s, women play a distinct role only as symbolic bearers of the nation,[48] whereas the concretely bodily realm of sexuality, reproduction, and motherhood is not usually mentioned. This echoes a paradox dominant in political science discourses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: even though women were tasked with keeping the household and rearing of the children, they were erased as significant agents in the reproduction of civic culture. Rather than the mothers, it was believed that fathers exerted the dominant influence in their children's political socialisation.[49]

The women's movement of the 1920s and 1930s, growing out of the struggles for suffrage in the first decade of the twentieth century, signaled its awareness of the complex relationship between the private and the political, and between bodies and politics, by introducing a distinction between gender and biological sex. While the early women's movement had aimed at the inclusion of women in the previously male spheres of 'civic rights, social freedoms, higher education, remunerative occupations, and the ballot', some factions of the 1920s and 1930s increasingly demanded 'revolution in all the relations of the sexes'.[50] Some women's rights activists thus claimed not only access to the existing political system, but challenged its very conceptual foundations by refusing the public/private distinction and the assumption of biologically determined identities.[51] The challenges of the public/private distinctions were manifest in women's experiences in a variety of ways. *Der Querschnitt*, a magazine greatly engaged in gender discussions during the Weimar Republic, thematised the gap between the two domains in the context of formally sanctioned, publicly tolerated, and privately lived female sexualities. In an article entitled 'Die heutige Rolle der Virginität im Seelenleben junger Mädchen', Mathilda Vaerting observed:

> Die Befreiung der Frau hat ihrem Geschlecht viele Freiheiten gebracht; aber nur einen kleinen Teil davon hat die Frau zu ergreifen und zu ihrem dauernden Besitz zu machen vermocht. Das Recht auf das eigene Liebesleben wird von der Frau heute am wenigsten öffentlich in der Theorie verfochten, aber vielleicht am stärksten in der Praxis ausgeübt.[52]

As observed by Vaerting, the women's movement of the early- to mid-twentieth century still focused primarily on the areas of political and social rights as well as on maternity, while widely neglecting the issues of self-determined sexuality and lifestyle. According to a

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[48] See, e.g., Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. by Tamar Mayer (London : Routledge, 2000).
[49] See Owen and Zerilli, p. 30.
[50] Owen and Zerilli, p. 29.
[51] See Owen and Zerilli, p. 29.
[52] Mathilde Vaerting, 'Die heutige Rolle der Virginität im Seelenleben des jungen Mädchens', *Der Querschnitt*, 12.4 (1932), 246–49 (p. 246).

representative article by the women's rights activist Gertrud Bäumer, published in 1933 in the magazine *Die Frau*, the official publication of the *Bund deutscher Frauenvereine*, the true place of women's self-actualisation, their central 'Lebens- und Wirkungsraum', was still to be found in the family.[53]

In the course of the twentieth century, feminist thought about gender and the political role of the body developed in dialogue with other strands of political theory, such as critical theory and (post-)structuralism. One of the most prominent thinkers commonly associated with these schools was Michel Foucault, whose thought exerted significant influence on subsequent feminist debates, in part by inspiring dissent. Offering a counter-perspective to the prevailing political theorists of the time, Foucault put the body, and the state's domination of it, at the centre of his scholarly analyses. In his study of 'biopolitical' power, a term originally coined in 1905 by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén,[54] Foucault explored the institutionalised cultural, discursive, and technological processes that allow the state to control citizens' bodies and to 'ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order'.[55] While some historians have criticised Foucault for what they believe is an insufficient historical foundation for his theses, feminist scholars have pointed out his lack of attention to gender. Foucault's concept of physically enacted, disciplinary state power does not systematically consider the role of sex or gender difference in the construction and domination of bodies.[56] Despite this shortcoming, Foucault's work has contributed to an understanding of the subtle ways in which bodies are communally bound in networks of social and political interests, which can be scrutinised and regulated in complex processes of control. Especially since the 1990s, insights into these mechanisms have been further developed by feminist scholars such as, for example, Judith Butler and Seyla Benhabib, who have produced extensive analyses of the cultural-political embeddedness of the gendered body throughout history.[57]

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[53] Gertrud Bäumer, 'Ausstellung Berlin 1933', *Die Frau: Organ des Bundes Deutscher Frauenvereine. Monatsschrift für das gesamte Frauenleben unserer Zeit*, 40 (1933), 379–80 (p. 379).
[54] Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2011), pp. 9–10.
[55] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, p. 138.
[56] Brigitte Kerchner and Gabriele Wilde, 'Die Politisierung des Körpers', *Femina Politica*, 1999, 9–18 (p. 11).
[57] Benhabib; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1990); Barbara Duden, 'Geschlecht, Biologie, Körpergeschichte: Bemerkungen zu neuer Literatur in der Körpergeschichte', *Feministische Studien*, 2.9 (1991); Kerchner and Wilde.

2.2 Body, Politics, and Literature in the Weimar Republic: The New Woman

The intimate entanglement of the collective and the individual body, and of concepts of gender and visions of the state, was of great relevance for many of Germany's political concerns after the First World War. This found particularly strong expression in the field of demographic policy. Here, the concretely physical, socio-political control of the body was closely intertwined with its use in the symbolic language that shaped how concepts such as community and citizenship were popularly imagined. Cornelie Usborne observes, for example, that a major political worry throughout the years of the Weimar Republic was the protection of the 'Volkskörper' from what was designated as a social 'disease': the declining birth-rate. The agenda of ensuring the continuity of a sufficiently populated, powerful state – a 'healthy' *body politic* – in turn required 'interfering with the *Frauenkörper* (the body female)'.[58]

The governmental regulation of sexuality and reproduction, as two of the most intimate spheres of citizenship, became a fiercely contested topic in the short-lived Republic.[59] In this context, anxieties were frequently expressed through recourse to a link between the nation and the maternal in both the latter's symbolic and concretely corporeal dimensions. Ute Frevert cites an illustrative example of this connection, from a contemporary newspaper:

> In 1929 a 'desperate call' could be heard in a Catholic newspaper for a mother for the 'dying fatherland'; 'But she is nowhere to be found. We may see a few women wearing men's hairstyles; we may discover women Olympic champions; and we may hear a young woman cooing for her desires to be fulfilled; yet nowhere do we find a mother'.[60]

In Weimar's cultural imagination, the trauma and humiliation of the First World War became strongly associated with questions of gender, sexuality, and demographic policy. Fears that a drop in birth-rates would produce a further loss of industrial and military power blended with the distress and disorientation triggered by changing gender relations, and it was again the sexualised female body which became a focus of these concerns. The pressure caused by each of these aspects was increased by their interwovenness not only in domestic, but also in international cultural, political, and military matters. The German fears were strongly mirrored and influenced by developments in France, for example, where the term *crise de natalité* became a metaphor for an array of other national deficits, often those relating to military

[58] Usborne, p. xi.
[59] See also Grossmann.
[60] Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford: Berg, 1988), p. 92.

competition.[61] Illustrating the international dimension of gender concerns, the French General Maitrot complained in a 1922 article in the *Echo de Paris*: 'There are too many women typists and civil servants here and not enough *mères de famille*. With respect to natality, the German mothers have beaten the French mothers; this is Germany's first revenge on France'.[62]

As in other European countries, the New Woman ('Neue Frau'), alluded to in Maitrot's article by the descriptors 'typists and civil servants', became a particularly popular target of these concerns in Germany. Usborne notes, for example, that the phenomenon of the New Woman 'seemed to many to reflect, even to contribute to, the social and economic instability of the new Republic. Although more myth than reality, it proved a powerful image to justify moral panic over sex, distilling wider social and political anxieties'.[63] Today, the concept of the New Woman is mostly associated with images of a newly expressed, young femininity during the Weimar Republic. In the popular imaginations of then and now, the New Woman has been portrayed as 'keck und frech […], selbst- und karrierebewusst, kulturell aufgeschlossen, modisch und aufgeklärt'.[64] And yet, the concept of the New Woman is more complex than this simplified ideal. A transnational phenomenon that was coproduced around the turn of the century by the emancipatory women's movement, economic developments, and the profit-driven interests of the media and retail industries, the New Woman always remained a largely phantasmagoric figure. As Birgit Gatermann observes: 'Das Bild, das die Medien der zwanziger Jahre von der "neuen Frau" entwarfen, war – nimmt man es ganz wörtlich – ein Kunstprodukt, die Illusion einer "Hyperfrau", die es verstand, Familie, Beruf, traditionelles Rollenverständnis und Emanzipation in Einklang zu bringen'.[65] The New Woman was a symbol of aspiration and transit towards greater equality in gender relations, as well as of the broader societal challenges and disruptions that accompanied this change. Aiming simultaneously to entertain the desires of both the emancipatory and traditionalist factions of society, the New Woman was at once an unattainable ideal and an ideal that already fell short of the true visions held by each group.

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[61] Karen Offen, 'Body Politics: Women, Work and the Politics of Motherhood in France, 1920-1950', in *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the Europena Welfare States, 1880s-1950s*, ed. by Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 138–59 (p. 138).
[62] Cited and translated in Offen, p. 138.
[63] Usborne, pp. 83–84.
[64] Liane Schüller, *Vom Ernst der Zerstreuung: Schreibende Frauen am Ende der Weimarer Republik: Marieluise Fleißer, Irmgard Keun und Gabriele Tergit* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2005), p. 29.
[65] Birgit Gatermann, '"Malweiber": Bildende Künstlerinnen in den zwanziger Jahren', in *Hart und zart: Frauenleben 1920-1970*, ed. by Maruta Schmidt and Gabriele Dietz (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1990), pp. 101–15 (p. 103).

One realm in which the New Woman visibly challenged traditional gender images was that of fashion, a subject which also receives some attention in Keun's and Fleißer's novels. Fashion's dual function of expressing individuality, on the one hand, and identification with, or belonging to, a social group, on the other, made the changes in female attire a highly political subject. In the post-war years, especially in urban contexts, fashion increasingly became a vehicle for the articulation of new forms of identity. From the mid-twenties onwards, skirts were often shortened to knee length, and corsets were exchanged with the waistless or cylindrical dresses associated with the 'garçonne style'.[66] Encouraged by popular media figures such as Marlene Dietrich or Greta Garbo, the wearing of trousers and suits also became more common among women, who used these fashion items to break entrenched gender conceptions. In her study of 1920s Berlin, Ute Scheub remarks:

> [D]as Tragen von Hosen, jenem jahrhundertealten Symbol männlicher Macht, [wurde] immer noch als provokant empfunden. Schon die Sprichwörter verraten es: Wer 'die Hosen anhat', hat das Sagen, wer 'die Hosen runterlassen muss', wird gedemütigt. Weibliches Hosentragen wurde zum Symbol für die Aneignung männlicher Vorrechte. Eine Frau in Hose beansprucht einen Teil der Männermacht, ein Mann im Rock erlebt eine Degradierung.[67]

The change in clothes was accompanied by a change in popular hairstyles. Many women shortened their long hair to a '*Bubikopf*', a bob cut almost as short as the contemporary male hairstyles. Just as radical a gesture as the shift in apparel, the bob contested age-old practices in which a woman's loss of hair was used to signal social penalisation, disgrace, and humiliation. The broad symbolic implications of women's voluntary loss of hair were immediately grasped by contemporary observers, and often regarded critically even by those men who saw themselves as generally sympathetic to the cause of female emancipation. In a conceptually problematic essay collection of 1929, entitled *Die Frau von morgen wie wir sie wünschen*, in which prominent male writers of the time, among them Stefan Zweig, Max Brod, and Robert Musil, describe their visions of the women of the future, Heinrich Eduard Jacob dedicates his contribution entirely to commenting on the new hairstyle. In his essay 'Haarschnitt ist noch nicht Freiheit', he remarks that the shortening of women's hair, while, in principle, welcome as a symbol of their liberation from sexual oppression, had gone too far:

> Das lange Haar der Frau, beim Raub oder bei der Liebkosung um die Faust des Mannes geschlungen, war zweitausend Jahre hindurch nicht nur das Sinnbild der Sklaverei, sondern sogar ein Wesensbestandteil. Es fiel; und es fiel nicht nur ein Bestandteil, sondern das Sinnbild der Fesselung.

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[66] Schüller, pp. 37–38.
[67] Ute Scheub, *Verrückt nach Leben: Berliner Szenen in den zwanziger Jahren* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2000), p. 144.

> Aber es ist zu stark gefallen. Es ist fast bis zur Wurzel gefallen. Die Frauen tragen heute nicht nur Jünglingsköpfe auf ihren Schultern: sie bekamen sogar den Etonschnitt, die hässliche Militärfrisur. […] Die Haartracht der heutigen Frau beweist, daß sie das Joch des Frauseins nur abgestreift hat, um das Joch des Mannseins zu tragen.[68]

Like Jacob, many observers connected the shortened hair to a change in the sexual relationship between genders. And the conclusions drawn by male commentators were often similar to the underlying tenor of Jacob's essay. While a certain amount of female empowerment was embraced, the change was seen as too radical and judged as disadvantageous to women's erotic attractiveness – an outcome which was tacitly assumed to be undesirable to women.[69] More or less implicitly, these commentators advocated for a continuation of social traditions in which female powerlessness and victimhood were eroticised, a practice often cloaked in the valorisation of purportedly essential female attributes such as 'Anmut' and 'Zartheit'.

Yet the social dynamics around the New Woman's fashion cannot be reduced to a simple male/female antagonism. Male reactions to the style of the New Woman were not all negative, and women's participation in the new fashion trend was not always a sign of genuine empowerment. Especially in urban environments and among younger men, the new fashion gained increasing popularity. The change in fashion also kindled, or strengthened, an erotic interest in the androgynous, as documented in various pieces of contemporary literature. Siegfried Kracauer's semi-autobiographical novel *Georg*, of 1932, provides an exemplary describtion of the romantic and erotic play with the non-binary: '[…] was ihn besonders an der Figur reizte, war aber dies: daß sie ein Gemisch aus Junge und Mädchen darstellte, das von einer unbeschreiblichen Süße war'.[70] Other male writers, most prominently Stefan Zweig and Heinrich Mann, strongly endorsed the New Woman's style for political reasons. Beyond its aesthetic and gender relevance, Mann recognised the style's potential to bridge class divisions: 'Die Erfindung kommt allen gelegen. Es gibt etwas, in dem jede wie die Arbeiterin und jede wie die Dame denkt'.[71] And yet, in spite of its liberating and uniting elements, for many women, the style also came with the same pressures and repercussions associated with previous fashion trends – with the difference that, this time, technological and commercial developments enabled relevant interest groups to broadcast to women the invitation to change even more

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[68] Heinrich Eduard Jacob, 'Haarschnitt ist noch nicht Freiheit', in *Die Frau von morgen wie wir sie wünschen: Eine Essaysammlung aus dem Jahre 1929*, ed. by Friedrich Huebner, (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1990 [1929]), pp. 105–20 (p. 111 f); also cited in Schüller, pp. 40–41.
[69] See, e.g., Schüller, p. 41.
[70] Siegfried Kracauer, *Georg* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977 [1932]), p. 207.
[71] Heinrich Mann, 'Der Bubikopf', in *Essays 2: Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1955), p. 162; also cited in Schüller, p. 42.

loudly and insistently than before. Films, advertisements, and magazines promoted ideal, usually unattainable images of the New Woman, and newly established beauty clinics and cosmetic surgeries found their customers in those pursuing these ideals.[72]

From its early emergence, the development of the New Woman concept was strongly tied to the literary scene. The societal and commercial potential of this connection was first recognised in Great Britain, where the new literary genre of the 'New Woman novel' had already emerged around 1900.[73] Early women's rights activists were very aware of the significance of a change in women's roles in literature. Helene Lange, one of the leading acitivists in late nineteenth-century Germany, emphasised the importance of literary portrayals of 'modern women' as symbolic engines of social and political change: '[B]ei all den Nationen, bei denen die Frauenbewegung ein Faktor des öffentlichen Lebens geworden ist, bei denen man erkannt hat, daß die Frau an der Schwelle einer weltgeschichtlichen Umwandlung steht, [bildet] die moderne Frau eine stehende literarische Figur'. Simultaneously, she bemoans the absence of such literary figures in her home country: 'Das paßt natürlich auf Deutschland nicht'.[74] When the New Woman arrived in Germany, too, she made her appearance first on the literary scene, where she was primarily supposed to serve in the capacity of muse: 'In Deutschland war die "Neue Frau" zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht mehr als ein Versprechen, eine Jahrhundertphantasie, die die literarische Zunft, und hier insbesondere Schriftstellerinnen beflügeln sollte'.[75] The New Woman as lived, socially disruptive experience only seems to have followed as a delayed function.

During the Weimar Republic, the New Woman image, in the spirit of the time, underwent a process of 'democratisation', by branching out from its bourgeois roots to ever wider strata of the population. This went hand in hand with a gradual opening of the literary market to new readers, notably working-class women. Among conservative commentators, this development was regarded with suspicion and unease, as exemplified in a key-note speech delivered by Professor Gerhard Menz at a booksellers' symposium in 1931. Speaking on the topic of 'Die Frau als Leserin', Menz warningly remarks:

> Heute sind die scharfen Grenzen zwischen Männer- und Frauenwelt, die noch bis in die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts wirksam waren, verwischt. Die Verallgemeinerung der Bildungsmöglichkeiten und nicht zuletzt auch die Verbilligung des Lesestoffes haben noch dazu bewirkt, daß als Leserin durchaus nicht

[72] See, e.g., Schüller, p. 43.
[73] Kerstin Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit: Der Roman der Neuen Frau in der Weimarer Republik* (Köln: Böhlau, 2003), p. 9.
[74] Helene Lange, 'Moderne Frauencharaktere in literarischer Konstruktion', *Die Frau*, 3.96 (1895), 14.
[75] Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit: Der Roman der Neuen Frau in der Weimarer Republik*, p. 9.

> mehr die Frau der gehobenen Gesellschaftsschichten vorzugsweise in Frage kommt. Die Frau als Leserin ist heute zu einem Massenproblem geworden.[76]

Just as the 'New Woman literature' helped to destabilise traditional gender and class relations, it also disrupted familiar doctrines on the relationship between popular culture and high art. To hostile observers, the very popularity of the genre was taken as proof of its artistic worthlessness: it was seen as a fashionable, well-selling commodity rather than a genuine product of culture. At the same time, its increasing success made the genre difficult to ignore, with some of its advocates describing it 'as the new fiction, the wave of the future'.[77] While posing a challenge to critics, this genre ambiguity also served to extend participation in the discourses the novels engaged in. The New Woman novel's integration of stylistic forms traditionally associated with popular fiction – such as, for example, melodramatic elements – attracted a wide range of readers and opened the new negotiations around gender and femininity to a broader audience.[78]

In Weimar's New Woman novel, the visibility women had recently gained in the public sphere – in politics, in recreational culture, and, above all, in employment – was translated into the fictional environment. While up to the early twentieth century the destinies of women protagonists in novels overwhelmingly unfolded in the setting of the private household, a change of setting could now be observed, with more emphasis given to the public sphere. A plethora of novels appeared, authored by both men and women, that portrayed women employees and contributed to the emergence of the 'Angestelltenroman', a sub-genre of the New Woman novel that depicted the lives of white-collar working women, mostly employed in retail or as secretaries.

While popular culture tended to celebrate working women as emancipated and economically independent, much of the fictional literature, especially when read critically, paints a blunter, and historically more accurate, picture. The majority of female employees were young and unmarried, and usually unable to live independently on their low wages. They were generally expected to occupy menial positions and to abandon their occupations upon marriage.[79] This expectation was echoed in much of the 'Angestellten' novels of the time,

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[76] Cited in Schönfelder, 'Die Frau als Leserin', *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel*, 98.34 (1931), 115. Schönfelder summarises the speech in his own words. Also cited in Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit: Der Roman der Neuen Frau in der Weimarer Republik*, p. 56.
[77] Ann Ardis, *New Woman, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 42.
[78] Barndt, p. 7.
[79] Ute Frevert, 'Vom Klavier zur Schreibmaschine', in *Frauen in der Geschichte*, ed. by Annette Kuhn and Gerhard Schneider (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1979), pp. 82–112 (p. 85).

which all too often ended with the young, pretty secretary of humble background landing happily in the arms of her well-to-do boss and saviour. Examples of this plotline, authored by both men and women, were often already hinted at in the titles, such as *Jennys Bummel durch die Männer* (Hans Bachwitz, 1933), *Abteilung Herrenmode: Roman eines Warenhausmädels* (Maria Gleit, 1933), *Das Fräulein vom Spittelmarkt: Lebensroman einer Stenotypistin* (Adolf Sommerfeld, 1932), and *Dagmar springt in die Freiheit* (Fedor von Zobeltitz, 1930).[80] While the external setting of the fictional texts portraying women's lives thus shifted from the domestic to the public sphere, this shift was, to some extent, deceptive. Despite their apparently changed placement, the texts tended to maintain the old internal logic of genres such as the romance novel or the *Bildungsroman*, in which the conflict presented by the plot always finds its resolution in the female protagonist's return to a harmonious home and hearth.

Even though Irmgard Keun and Marieluise Fleißer, too, both focus their novels on the contested figure of the New Woman and her entanglement in relationships of romantic love, their treatment of the subject diverges, in distinct but comparable ways, from that of the abovementioned popular literature of the time. While contributing to the New Woman and romance genres, the two writers engage critically with the political discourses and contestation surrounding the New Woman, and with the way she was often portrayed in popular media. In what follows, I will show how this critique is executed on the levels of both content and form, for example by the authors' disruption of the romance novel design and the conclusion of their texts with unattached heroines, who are unwilling to relieve their loneliness at the price of their (relative) independence.

Both Keun and Fleißer made use of some elements of the aesthetics of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Celebrated as a major literary and cultural style in the early 1920s, *Neue Sachlichkeit* was already starting to go out of fashion around the time Keun and Fleißer were writing, as indicated by contemporary opinions such as Joseph Roth's article 'Schluß mit der "Neuen Sachlichkeit"' of 1930.[81] Yet, while the branding of and direct adherence to the formal etiquette of *Neue Sachlichkeit* may have been in demise from the 1930s onwards, many of its legacies proved to have a lasting effect. In a development similar to that of the New Woman novel, *Neue Sachlichkeit* supported a radical reconsideration of the relationship between high and popular culture, which resonated well with the general socio-economic climate of the time. Concurrent with this development, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, in both its literary and other artistic

[80] See also Schüller, p. 35.
[81] Joseph Roth, 'Schluß mit der "Neuen Sachlichkeit"', *Die literarische Welt*, 6.3 (1930), 3–4; see also Barndt, p. 1.

articulations, took as its foundation a new subjectivity, in which the individual was endowed with new internal and external liberties regarding its political and social position, as well as its capacity to draw distinctions between itself and the positioning of others. Barndt notes on this point: 'Die modernen Verhaltenslehren [der *Neuen Sachlichkeit*] stellten den Versuch dar, die Effekte der sozialen Distinktion der Regie der Person zu übergeben und die Lebenskunst der Trennung zur erlernbaren Technik zu machen'.[82] Stylistically, *Neue Sachlicheit* was characterised by the attempt at an objective reflection of everyday reality and the use of minimalist, prosaic everyday language.

While showing a direct indebtedness to *Neue Sachlichkeit* in part of their writing, Keun and Fleißer disrupt this form by adding elements of the melodramatic – such as romantic suspense and an intense attention to the emotional life of the protagonists. In this combination, the *neu-sachliche* and melodramatic traditions work in a mutually disruptive interplay, in which the limits of both styles are probed together with those of the social scenarios they describe. The disruption of traditional social roles and structures is a central concern in both Keun's and Fleißer's novels, and both deal with the many paradoxes that result from the historical state of transition that their protagonists find themselves in. Both novels show heroines who are caught between a moment of opportunity, on the one hand, and of destiny, on the other – between newfound agency in a politically liberated structure, and victimhood to old socio-cultural forms.

3.1 Irmgard Keun and Gilgi, eine von uns

Irmgard Keun was born in Charlottenburg in 1905 and was 26 years old when her first novel, *Gilgi, eine von uns*, appeared. A confident, ambitious young woman of affluent background, Keun was aware of the publicity potential of her youth, good looks, and candid text. She took an active part in the shaping of her public image as an up-and-coming writer, for example by decreasing her age by five years to enhance the sensation around her youth.[83] This 'correction' also rendered Keun even-aged with her novel's heroine, the 21-year-old Gilgi, thus contributing to the play with autobiographical semblances that was staged around the text. This

[82] Barndt, p. 2.
[83] The age change appears to have taken place on the advice of the theatre producer Johannes Tralow, Keun's later husband. See Barndt, p. 123.

was supported by other aspects of Keun's biography, such as the secretarial experience she shared with Gilgi. Before taking to writing in 1929, Keun had left school after the tenth grade and received private tutoring in stenography and type-writing, with a view to assisting in the *Cölner Benzin-Raffinerie*, of which her father was co-owner. A simultaneously pursued acting career was given up after some time, due to only moderate success.[84]

Gilgi was an instant success among readers, selling 30,000 copies in the first year alone. The novel's wide distribution, increased by its re-publication as a serial in *Vorwärts*, the newspaper of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), contributed to the broadening of controversies over images of femininity and 'women's culture', in which literary critics as well as employees, students and women's activists were engaged.[85] The fame of the novel is a testament to the deep impact of cultural production on the public consciousness of Weimar Germany: 'Gilgi avancier[te] im öffentlichen Bewusstsein der späten Weimarer Republik zu[r] Personifizierung der Weimarer Angestellten […] schlechthin'.[86] Just like her novel's heroine and its primary readership, Keun was directly engaged in the performance of New Woman culture. The meeting of the subject positions of *Gilgi's* author, *sujet*, and audience brings forth what Barndt believes to be the distinct foundation of the New Woman novel: 'Erst im Austausch zwischen Autorin, Text, Leserin und Geschichte konstituiert sich der Roman der Neuen Frau. Schreib- und Leseweisen sind gleichermaßen bedeutsam für das Genre'.[87]

Gilgi is set in Cologne and interweaves two main plot lines: one is Gilgi's affair with a middle-aged bohemian, Martin, the other her gradual discovery of the identity of her biological mother. When the novel opens, Gilgi is working as a secretary and is a model of order and self-discipline; she rises early in the morning to pursue her career, takes language classes at night to acquire additional skills, and rents a small room as a symbol of her independence. This order is abruptly overturned when she meets Martin, a man 20 years her senior, with whom she experiences an intense relationship of love and eroticism which leads her to abandon her job as well as all the habits that had previously constituted her self-identity. When Gilgi unexpectedly becomes pregnant and is unable to procure an abortion, the plot reaches a critical turning point. The narrative mirrors the changes in Gilgi's fortunes in a sub-plot about her friends Hertha and Hans, two impoverished former classmates of hers whose lives, like hers, are put to the test by unwanted pregnancies. Neither of these plotlines ends in a harmonious

[84] See Schüller, p. 67.
[85] Barndt, p. 3.
[86] Barndt, pp. 2–3.
[87] Barndt, p. 3.

family scenario. While Gilgi, determined to move through the crisis, leaves her love relationship to affirm an uncertain life on her own as a single working mother, her friends decide to end their lives and that of their children.

3.2 Embodied Citizenship: Gilgi and Social Synchronicity

While *Gilgi* is often read as a variation on the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman*,[88] an argument could also be made for it being structured as a not merely negative, but even a reversed *Bildungsroman*. Instead of illustrating a hero's journey from a state of idealism and social antagonism to maturity ('Mündigkeit') and social integration, *Gilgi* track's the heroine's development from a high level of realism, social embeddedness, and self-determination into a state of unworldliness, isolation, and precarity. The novel opens with Gilgi's twenty-first birthday, when she reaches what in Weimar was the age of political and legal majority, her formal 'Mündigkeit'. Yet, while this transition into full citizenship may have been expected to open new realms of freedom, Gilgi's lived experience is shown to be diametrically opposed to the change in her formal status. Gilgi's story begins when she is still in a state of liberty, characterised by a radical openness towards a future of which she is the sovereign master: 'ach, sie ist noch jung, und außer Ehe, Filmschauspielerin und Schönheitskönigin zieht sie jede Existenzmöglichkeit in Betracht'.[89] As Gilgi transitions into formal adulthood, however, the liberal dream of the New Woman's unlimited opportunities expressed in this statement quickly falters.

At every stage of the novel, the narration mirrors Gilgi's psychological and social development in its bodily manifestation, documenting her transition from seemingly comprehensive physical self-control to a disintegration in lust and illness, and finally to a vague hope of recuperation and a new embodiment as a mother. The text is written in a third person voice, which alternates between Gilgi's internal perspective and occasional explanatory interpolations by an omniscient narrator. The reader is originally introduced to Gilgi in a role that may be understood as that of an exemplary republican citizen. The high level of self-

[88] See, e.g., Barndt.
[89] Irmgard Keun, *Gilgi, eine von uns* (München: dtv), p. 16. After the first citation, references to *Gilgi* will be given in the text as G.

command that Gilgi has cultivated allows her to live a life of rigid but tranquil order: 'Sie hält es fest in ihrer Hand, ihr kleines Leben' (G 5), the reader learns in the opening sentence.

The sovereign control Gilgi is shown to hold over her life is primarily exercised physically and can be understood as rooted in her ability to maintain a relationship of synchrony between her body and her social environment. With her 'schlanken Beinen und kinderschmalen Hüften', her wearing of 'winzige […] Modekäppchen, die auf dem äußersten Rande des Kopfes geheimnisvoll Halt finden', Gilgi is portrayed as the archetypal New Woman, perfectly in sync with the demands of contemporary fashion (G 5). This point is taken even further in her early-morning exercises, portraying her as having internalised a strictly timed regime of discipline and self-control:

> Halbsieben Uhr morgens. [Gilgi] [t]urnt vor dem weitgeöffneten Fenster. Rumpfbeuge: auf – nieder, auf – nieder. […] So ist es richtig. […] Gilgi […] überlegt, ob sie heute ausnahmsweise erst warm und dann kalt brausen soll. Fort mit der Versuchung. Ausnahmen gelten nicht. Gilgi lässt sich das eiskalte Wasser auf die mageren Schultern, den kleinen, konvexen Bauch, die dünnen, muskelharten Glieder prasseln. Sie preßt die Lippen zu einem festen Strich zusammen und zählt in Gedanken bis dreißig. Eins – zwei – drei – vier. Nicht so schnell zählen. Langsam, ganz langsam: fünfzehn – sechzehn – siebzehn. Sie zittert ein bißchen und ist wie allmorgendlich ein bißchen stolz auf ihre bescheidene Tapferkeit und Selbstüberwindung. Tagesplan einhalten. Nicht abweichen vom System. Nicht schlapp machen. In der kleinsten Kleinigkeit nicht. (G 5-6)

Gilgi's morning routine appears not only to be directed at exercising her own body, but also at connecting her to the temporality of a larger social 'corporation', as indicated by the mention of objective clock time which introduces the paragraph ('[h]albsieben Uhr morgens'). This primary temporality, which serves as the overarching point of orientation for Gilgi's actions, is echoed in the paratactic, elliptical sentence structure as well as the rhythmicality of Gilgi's self-supervising internal monologue: up – down, up – down, one – two – three – four. Having internalised the commands of an implicit authority, Gilgi accompanies her precisely sequenced habits with merciless self-exhortations: No exceptions allowed, keep to the schedule, don't deviate from the system. While counting, Gilgi cautions herself to keep in sync with the implied control time: 'Nicht so schnell zählen'.

The socio-temporal system that Gilgi reminds herself not to deviate from is inflexible, numerical, and binary. In its reverberations of ascetic and military elements, the scene depicts Gilgi as partaking in narrative and physical routines that were central to the establishment of the Western state system. The description of her body is practically devoid of any female attributes, apart from the mention of a 'kleinen, konvexen Bauch'. Overall, Gilgi's routine and physical appearance seem to almost mockingly echo that of a male soldier, albeit a 'lesser' one:

Her limbs are muscularly hard but skinny, her bravery and self-conquest merely humble. Gilgi's self-judgement is rooted in values of individual achievement and self-control. When she concludes her morning routine by examining her face in the mirror, she is content but unemotional: Gilgi 'betrachtet sich mit sachlichem Wohlgefallen. […] Ein gepflegtes Gesicht. Gepflegt ist mehr als hübsch, es ist eigenes Verdienst' (G 6-7).

While Gilgi's morning routine connects her to a larger system of controlled order, it also separates her from her parents, who are portrayed as part of an older structure that has now become outmoded and dysfunctional. When encountering her (adoptive) mother, Frau Kron, on the way to the shower, Gilgi is greeted by the latter in 'morgendlich unordentlicher Stimme', expressing disapproval, in profane Cologne vernacular, of Gilgi's acts of physical self-conquest: '"Aber Jilgi, mit nackten Füßen aufem eisijen Linoljum! Wirst dir noch 'en Tod holen"' (G 5). The 'disorderliness' of Frau Kron's voice is mirrored in that of her body, the unbounded corpulence of which forms a direct contrast to Gilgi's lean, muscular physique and is symbolic of the differences in the two women's relation to the socio-political environment of the time: 'Frau Kron […] ist breit und zerflossen. Das Fleisch ihrer Arme und Brüste ist ehrbar schlaff und müde. Sie ist grau und reizlos und hat nicht den Wunsch, anders zu sein' (G 12). Not desiring it to be different, Frau Kron carries her body as a testament to a bygone era, without endeavouring physically to connect to the present or future.

The gender crisis which Keun portrays in *Gilgi* thus is also a generational crisis, as captured in the trope of disintegration of the traditional family. The standard patriarchal family, which was still held up as the norm in Weimar's dominant political and cultural discourse, appears in the novel to have been reduced to a hollow sham. Many of the primary relationships depicted are extramarital, and the model of the strong male breadwinner is replaced with figures such as Hans and Martin, both of whom are unable (or, in the latter case, potentially unwilling) to support a family. The petty-bourgeois household of Herr und Frau Kron which Gilgi grows up in is outwardly the only 'functioning' one portrayed, with the couple living a respectable life of marital boredom: 'Das Ehepaar Kron hat sich ehrbar bis zur silbernen Hochzeit durchgelangweilt' (G 8). Yet even this apparent bedrock of the old family order is exposed as being less solid than it had seemed, when Gilgi's adoption is revealed to her in the opening part of the novel. The Krons had adopted the baby due to their inability to have children of their own: a circumstance symbolic of the socio-political barrenness of the old order, as well as indicative of the couple's civic failure *vis-à-vis* a political environment in which procreation was, for both men and women, still among the foremost citizenship duties.

The patriarchal norms which continue to reign in the Kron household are outdated and hollow, as expressed through the everyday breakfast routine: 'Herr Kron […] ißt als einziger ein Ei. Dieses Ei ist mehr als Nahrung. Es ist Symbol. Eine Konzession an die männliche Überlegenheit. Ein Monarchenattribut, eine Art Reichsapfel' (G 8). The satirical likening of the head of the family to the head of state harks back to the classical political theory discussed above, in which the family was seen as a miniature *body politic*. Gilgi's mocking criticism of this trope was still highly relevant during the early 1930s, when Weimar's conservative demographers continued to advocate that, in light of the 'dangerous' developments stemming from female emancipation, men 'should hold on to their "decision-making power" both in the public sphere and in the family, which was nothing more than "a small state"'.[90]

This conservative image of the family was challenged by progressive thinkers, who saw the patriarchal family as the seed and mirror image of authoritarian state power. The SPD newspaper, *Vorwärts*, for example, where Keun's novel was later reprinted, also engaged in a critique of marriage. In 1927, Usborne recounts, *Vorwärts* 'attacked the "old-style family" as "the germ cell of the *Obrigkeitsstaat*" and thus as perpetuating bourgeois values, especially women's subordination'. It suggested that '"just as the organisation of the state has changed in order to secure individual political freedom, family life must change in order at last to secure equal rights for women – and not only on paper"'.[91] Gilgi's distinctly ironic comment simultaneously acknowledges and subverts the power of patriarchal symbolism that is still practised in the Kron household. The comparison of Herr Kron's egg with a monarchical emblem at the time of Republicanism illustrates the presumed obsolescence of the patriarchy practised at home, another indicator of the Krons' being out of touch with the socio-political time inhabited by Gilgi.

3.3 Patriarchy and Sexuality: Hans and Hertha

While Gilgi, at least at the opening of the novel, is able to assume a position of blithe superiority towards what are depicted as the relics of domestic patriarchy, Keun's novel also shows, in the characters of Hans and Hertha, that some mechanisms of this old political order are more

[90] See Usborne, p. 96.
[91] Usborne, p. 94.

persistent, veiled, and complex. In *Gilgi*, these mechanisms play out mainly in the most private and intimate of spheres, that of sexuality. Alongside the Krons, whose relationship is one of social conformity but devoid of love or physical passion, Hans and Hertha illustrate another model of domestic gender inequality. Both are shown as bound by true feelings of love for one another, yet their social deprivation and the absence of reproductive autonomy, together with the norms and expectations around male sexual rights and female sexual duties, turn what could otherwise have been a romantic love story into a horrendous tale of suffering. When Gilgi visits her old school friends' home, Hertha, confiding in her, paints a vivid picture of the horror of everyday marital intimacy:

> […] da in dem kleinen schmalen Bett schlafen wir zusammen – und jeden Abend, wenn es dunkel wird, packt mich schon Ekel und Angst. Mein Körper ist so müde geworden ich vertrage es nicht mehr, daß man ihn berührt. Früher war das mal anders aber Krankheit, Müdigkeit und die ewige Angst vor dem Kind das alles hat wohl gemacht, daß mir das eine Qual ist, eine entsetzliche Qual. Und ein Mann ist ja so dumm und fühlt nie, was in einem vorgeht. Manchmal denk ich - wenn er warten würde und mich in Ruhe ließe, bis ich von selbst vielleicht - einmal deutete ich ihm das an – da brach er mir fast zusammen und weinte: Ich bin dir zuwider, du liebst mich nicht mehr. So was versteht ein Mann eben nicht, der setzt mit der naivsten Selbstverständlichkeit die eigenen Gefühle beim anderen voraus. (G 142)

And she continues:

> Und ich würd so gern manchmal nur ganz still und zärtlich neben ihm liegen und hab' dann so gute, weiche Gedanken und streiche sein Haar und leg' mein Gesicht an seins und bin so dankbar und glücklich, wenn er mich nur ganz sanft und lieb auf den Mund küßt – und hab' doch gleich schon wieder Angst und bete richtig: lieber Gott […] – jetzt nicht das andre, nicht das andre – und weiß ja, es ist gar nicht anders möglich – und bin dann doch jedes mal wieder so bitter, bitter enttäuscht und möchte weinen und schreien und ihm drei Mark in die Hand drücken, damit er zur nächsten Hure laufen kann und mich in Ruhe läßt. (G 143)

Gilgi has often been read as a text lacking in political relevance and power. Renate Chédin, for example, characterises the novel as a predominantly melodramatic text that relies on a 'starke[n] Vereinfachung des politischen Kontextes'.[92] While it is true that *Gilgi* only occasionally comments explicitly on the high politics of the time, scenes such as the ones above still show a deep engagement with some of the more veiled aspects of everyday politics. In a manner remarkably lucid for the time of writing, Keun uses this scene to draw aside the curtain of silent privacy behind which customs of marital intimacy generally remain hidden. In so doing, she questions established lines between the private and public realm and shows how an

[92] Cited in Barndt, p. 138.

outwardly inconspicuous conjugal routine can, when narrated from a woman's perspective, turn into a violent experience of daily fear and suffering.

While Hertha's participation in coitus is clearly taking place against her will, she lacks the discursive framework to call her experience one of rape. The act of making her body available without her consent and against her inner resistance is here shown as a duty and sacrifice deeply internalised by Hertha. The sexual act itself is so little her own that she is even unable to name it, just calling it 'das' or 'das andere'.

Hertha's experience accurately reflects the legal and cultural interpretative patterns around the everyday sexual violence of the time. An interpretive pattern, or 'Deutungsmuster', can be understood as a composition of signs, characteristics, and definitions on the basis of which an agent or observer may endow a given situation or person with meaning. Interpretative patterns can take effect at an individual level, but they are formed in complex negotiations between institutions (such as, for example, legal, religious, and medical organisations), broader societal discourses, and personal experiences.[93] Whether a sexual act is experienced as violent or tolerable, for example, is not merely determined by the physiological sensation and immediate emotional reaction of the individual concerned. Instead, a variety of subject positions and collective processes, involving a conglomerate of perpetrator, victim, witnesses, legal, political, and social institutions participate in the process of locating the action on a scale ranging from 'normal' through 'deviant' to 'criminal'.[94]

In Hertha's case, no legal or political framework exists to provide her with an actionable understanding of the wrongfulness of her condition. Instead of anger or blame, Hertha closes her statement with an expression of self-accusation and guilt: 'So gemein bin ich und so wenig gut' (G 143). Hertha's position can be seen as a realistic rendering of contemporary political, legal, and social mores. Marital rape, until it became a criminal offence in 1997, was legally nonexistent in German law. Hertha's experiences of a high degree of physical and emotional suffering, while inflicted by another, identifiable person in a clearly identifiable act, thus leads to the paradoxical situation of producing a victim, but no crime and no perpetrator. Through the lack of legal provision, the state, instead of assuming a protective role towards all citizens,

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[93] See Tanja Hommen, '"Sie hat sich nicht im Geringsten gewehrt": Zur Kontinuität kultureller Deutungsmuster sexueller Gewalt seit dem Kaiserreich', in *Unzucht - Notzucht - Vergewaltigung: Definitionen und Deutungen sexueller Gewalt von der Aufklärung bis heute*, ed. by Christine Künzel (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003), pp. 119–36 (p. 121).

[94] See Tanja Hommen, '"Sie hat sich nicht im Geringsten gewehrt": Zur Kontinuität kultureller Deutungsmuster sexueller Gewalt seit dem Kaiserreich', in *Unzucht - Notzucht - Vergewaltigung: Definitionen und Deutungen sexueller Gewalt von der Aufklärung bis heute*, ed. by Christine Künzel (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003), pp. 119–36 (p. 121).

implicitly signals its tacit sanctioning of any acts taking place in the bedroom, as long as these are pursued by a lawfully wedded, heterosexual couple.[95]

For women, marriage thus implied a relinquishment of part of their basic citizenship right to physical integrity: the very same sexual act that would otherwise have been punishable under criminal law became legitimate at the moment of the wedding. This can be understood as a replacement of part of the married woman's connection with the state in favour of the connection to her husband, who is now tasked with some of the protection that previously resided with the legal-political system. At its most extreme, the same mechanism of the state's withdrawal of rights from the married woman can be seen to operate in the case of international marriages. In a stipulation of the German citizenship law of 1913 (*Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, *StAG*) which remained in force until 1953, German women lost their citizenship upon marriage with a foreigner. Prior to a change of the law in 1949, this even applied when the loss of German citizenship led to the woman's statelessness. This discriminatory law was not unique to Germany but remained widespread across Europe and internationally well into the twentieth century. In the Netherlands, for example, women were only able to retain their citizenship upon marriage to a foreigner following a change of the law in 1985.[96]

Narratively, the legal mechanism of the state's abandonment of the married woman appears to still hark back to the Aristotelian tenet of the 'familial republic'. When understood in its most literal embodiment, the patriarchal family would either render the state's access to the wife superfluous or lead to a situation in which the state and the husband compete for their governing power over the wife. The state's self-extraction from part of the marital constellation thus presents a concession to male sovereignty and eschewal of a potential power conflict. The wife, however, is not only a passive recipient of power in this arrangement. Apart from Aristotle's principle, an echo of Cicero's and Bodin's thought is also perceptible in Hertha's struggle. Her standing as a married woman not only subjects her to her husband's protection, but also puts on her an obligation to protect the transitioning line between culture and nature. It is in this act that marriage can be seen to become what Cicero called the 'seed bed' of the body politic.[97] Variations of this wifely obligation could be heard issuing from the Catholic

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[95] The politics of homosexuality in Germany to some degree intersect with this chapter's discussion but are also distinct from it. In 1871, the German Empire introduced §175 into its penal code (*StGB*), which criminalised homosexual activity. While undergoing several changes during the Weimar Republic, the Nazi regime, and in post-war Germany, the paragraph remained in place until it was finally abolished in 1994. It had been especially aggressively implemented not only during the Nazi era, but also in the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany.
[96] Kochenov, p. 104.
[97] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Obligations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [44 BC]).

Church, which had a strong voice in the Rhineland where the novel is set. The Church was vocal in propagating the containment of 'unbridled sexual urges' and expected marriage to assume a key function in pursuit of this aim. For Catholics of the Weimar period, the wife was expected to be in charge of family planning matters and to 'practice abstinence whenever conception presented real problems'. While a husband's sexual urges were seen as natural and unavoidable, the wife's task was to 'civilise' the male drives within the marriage relationship.[98]

Hertha's situation thus reflects a complex challenge women of her time were confronted with. Not only were they asked to satisfy the physical needs of their husbands, whose sovereignty regulated family relations, but they were also expected to uphold civilisation in the interest of the state sovereign, either by taming male urges or by participating in reproduction. As discourses of the time about the animalistic character of unbridled intercourse indicate,[99] behind this civilising project the old fear of a relapse into nature can be seen lurking. And here again, it is the woman's body that stands as the dividing line between the civilising project of the state, on the one hand, and the state of nature, on the other. Marital sexuality, for women, thus presented a moment in which they were most removed from the protection of state power, while, simultaneously, functioning directly in its service.

Contributing a Marxist variation to this strand of thought, the legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon analyses the sexual use of female bodies as an act of physical expropriation. MacKinnon, in her book *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*, argues that it is exactly an individual's relationship to sex, that is, the ownership of one's own sexuality, which constitutes one's gender. She observes:

> Sexuality is to feminism what work is to marxism: that which is most one's own, yet most taken away. […] As work is to marxism, sexuality to feminism is socially constructed yet constructing, universal as activity yet historically specific, jointly comprised of matter and mind. As the organized expropriation of the work of some for the benefit of others defines a class, workers, the organized expropriation of the sexuality of some for the use of others defines the sex, woman.[100]

In *Gilgi*, the complicated effects of sexuality on the woman's relationship to herself and to the state are not limited to the marital realm. Instead, the loss of physical and sexual ownership described by MacKinnon can also be seen to play out in the consensual erotic relationship between Gilgi and Martin. This is depicted in a series of slowly escalating scenarios, already set in motion during Gilgi's first meeting with Martin when he takes her to his flat, half against

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[98] Usborne, p. 90.
[99] See e.g. Usborne, p. 90.
[100] Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, (Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 3.

her resistance. Gilgi's attempt to hold on to her self-determination is greeted by Martin with condescending amusement: '"Dummes, kleines Ding", sagt Martin leise, […] "kleines Mädchen, gib dir doch keine Mühe, deine Unsicherheit hinter Ruppigkeit zu verstecken, ich hab's so gern, wenn Frauen unsicher sind"' (G 95). On the taxi ride to their destination, Gilgi is shown as undergoing an internal battle: 'Sie braucht niemanden. Sie weiß, was sie will, und kann, was sie will. Und während der ganzen Zeit hält sie Martin Brucks Hand fest, gerade so, als hätte sie Angst, er könnte plötzlich aufstehen und auf Nimmerwiedersehen verschwinden' (G 93). While still resolutely assuring herself of her independence, Gilgi's body already betrays an impending change, involuntarily starting to enact the physical reliance on Martin that she will come to increasingly experience.

The resulting chasm between mind and body, between the forces of her own, conscious will and alien, half-ominous impulses, is first shown as a private conflict, but soon affects Gilgi's broader societal embeddedness. Reflecting on her affliction, Gilgi ponders:

> Es ist wohl nichts Neues, daß einem vor lauter Liebe ganz anders wird. Schlimm ist nur, daß man zur einen Hälfte verändert ist, zur anderen nicht, und jetzt besteht man aus zwei Hälften. […] Man will sein ganzes bisheriges Leben behalten, mit seiner Freude am Weiterkommen, seiner gut geölten Arbeitsmethode, mit seiner harten Zeiteinteilung, seinem prachtvoll funktionierenden System. Und man will noch ein anderes Leben dazu, ein Leben mit Martin, ein weiches, zerflossenes, bedenkenloses Leben. (G 108)

The 'bisherige[…] Leben' mentioned in this passage presents a reference to the opening of the novel analysed above. The strict system of work, temporal, and physical discipline that Gilgi is shown as celebrating at the start has now become precarious, by proving increasingly incompatible with the love relationship she experiences. Gilgi's internal dissociation from the process she observes herself undergoing is signalled in her use of the impersonal pronoun 'man'. By recounting her conflict through the lens of a purportedly universal subject position, Gilgi blurs the narrative lines between her personal situation and broader social dynamics. Yet, while Gilgi's own identity is lost in the impersonal 'man', Martin's subject position is consolidated. In a break with the impersonal narrative perspective, Gilgi explains that '*man* will noch […] ein Leben mit Martin',[101] thus, grammatically, elevating Martin to the position of universally desirable companion.

While Gilgi's earlier routines and physical constitution had ensured her connectedness to the social environment, her relationship to Martin distances her from it. Gilgi's loss of control over her body is immediately connected to a feeling of desynchronisation: 'zu schnell

[101] Emphasis added.

das alles – zu schnell' (G 95) she responds in an internal monologue to Martin's advances. Instead of the synchronised precision and toughness of her previous life, Gilgi's connection to Martin tempts her towards 'ein weiches, zerflossenes […] Leben', placing her in a new proximity to her stepmother, Frau Kron, who, in the opening scenes, is described as 'breit und zerflossen' (G 12). The adjectives 'weich' and 'zerflossen' also point towards Gilgi's loss of boundaries *vis-à-vis* the material world surrounding her. The system of emotional and physical control which, at the beginning of the novel, constituted the foundation for Gilgi's subject position and her connection to the social world has entirely collapsed. In a moment of distance from Martin, Gilgi is able to self-reflexively explain her new state to her friend Pit:

> [I]ch habe keine Grenze mehr und keinen Willen, ich kann von heute auf morgen nicht mehr für mich garantieren […] – ich habe eine quälende körperliche Beziehung zu allen Dingen – wenn ich die Kante des Tisches umschließe, wenn ich eine Blume sehe – wenn ich über diesen Pelz hier streiche … Ich bin mir unsagbar zuwider. (G 114)[102]

Having lost control over her body as a separate, unitary entity, Gilgi experiences an unshielded, painful connection to the material world surrounding her. The loss of her boundaries inhibits any other function of independence, such as willpower and the ability to take responsibility for her behaviour. Gilgi's admission: 'ich kann […] nicht mehr für mich garantieren', signals her descent into a state of ultimate 'Unmündigkeit': her unwillingness or inability to govern her own life sovereignly.

In Martin's conceptual terms, Gilgi's conflict is framed as one between the constrained life of a '[b]raves […] Bürgermädchen' and the fantasy of a liberated life outside of Germany. Complaining about the first physiological signs that Gilgi's heavy workload is beginning to show, Martin reflects:

> Braves, dummes, kleines Bürgermädchen – arbeitest dir Spinnweben ins Gesicht – warum? Wozu? Soviel Willen um so wenig Wert. Soviel verkrampfter Ehrgeiz um so kleines Ziel. […] Ein kaltes, trauriges, unfreundliches Land, dieses Deutschland! […] Müßte den Koffer in die eine Hand, das kleine Mädchen an die andere Hand nehmen – weit fort fahren, irgendwohin, wo's heller, lustiger, sonnensatter sein wird, ihr beibringen, wie dumm und unwichtig das ganze tagesfressende Getriebe hier ist. (G 104)

Martin, while apparently in control in their relationship, is socially entirely deracinated, living an unstructured life diametrically opposed to Gilgi's: 'Planlos streift Martin Bruck durch die Straßen' (G 96), meandering between coffee houses and bars while Gilgi is working at her second job as a private typist. Martin's lack of social integration is repeatedly described in terms of foreignness: Martin 'sieht ein bisschen nach Flüchtling […] aus' (G 111), Gilgi

[102] See also Barndt, pp. 134–35.

observes at one point, and when he gives a generous tip in a coffee house, the waiter 'hält ihn hartnäckig für einen Amerikaner' (G 97). These external ascriptions match Martin's inner relationship to Germany, which he repeatedly refers to as a '[t]rauriges Land' (e.g., G 98). After a long walk during which he reflects on his feelings of discontent and strangeness, it is only in a 'Hafenkneipe' (dockland pub), a universal place of foreignness and transit, that Martin finally feels at home:

> Hat was Heimatliches für ihn. […] Er zieht die Luft ein: es riecht hier, wie es in allen Hafenkneipen der Welt riecht: nach Fusel und billigem Tabak und Morgenweiter. Man kann vergessen, daß man in Köln ist, in Deutschland. Möchte es vergessen. […] Trauriges Land, wo man mit jedem Atemzug Pessimismus schluckt. (G 98)

While Gilgi's dependence on Martin expresses itself in primarily physiological form, Martin relies on Gilgi for mental self-assurance. In his gloomy dissatisfaction and restless disorientation, it is only the memory of Gilgi which changes his mood and secures him in himself. Still at the pub, 'denkt [Martin] an Gilgi und freut sich. […] Er freut sich, daß Gilgi ihn mag, daß er ihr gefällt, legt heute besonders viel Wert drauf, gern gemocht zu werden, fühlt sich sehr angewiesen auf Anerkennung, Bestätigung' (G 98-99).

For Martin, Gilgi fulfils the dual function of homelike anchor and outlet of his desires for the foreign and exotic. Occasionally working on a book about the 'Sitten und Gebräuche von Südseeinsulanern' (G 100), Martin applies his lens of an amateur anthropologist to Gilgi, too. While he is dissatisfied when seeing her as a 'dummes, kleines Bürgermädchen' (G 104), and pathologises her drive to independence as an 'Unabhängigkeitspsychose' (G 107), he delights in discovering in her a 'lebendig gewordenes Gainsborough-Bild' (G 63), a 'niedlich[en] Junge[n]' (G 63) or a 'kleines Maorimädchen' (G 93f).[103] For some time, Gilgi willingly participates in this play with signifiers by making herself available as a canvas for Martin's projections, yet she also becomes increasingly uncomfortable about 'das Unpersönliche in Martins Liebe' (G 86), the looming knowledge that Martin's affection is not directed towards her as a sovereign subject, but towards the function she is fulfilling in his life as an ethnographic object.

The disorientation Gilgi experiences in her relationship to Martin is dramaturgically embedded in the search for her biological mother. That Gilgi learns about her adoption on the day of reaching the age of full legal majority is highly symbolic of the subsequently occurring changes in her life. While, prior to her birthday, she was happy to lead her independent and dynamic life in opposition to the petty-bourgeois mustiness of Herr and Frau Kron's lives, the

[103] See also Barndt, p. 128.

disclosure of her adoption robs Gilgi of a reference point even for her contrary lifestyle. The close temporal proximity between receiving the news of her uncertain parentage and succumbing to a love relationship with a deracinated man twice her age indicates a displacement of her feeling of genealogical homelessness. As a prototypical embodiment of the New Woman, Gilgi's discovery can also be read as a simile for this cultural phenomenon: when tested beyond its germinating state, outside the playful realm of carefree childhood, the popular ideal of the New Woman turns out to be tenuous and lacking in political, legal, and cultural roots. When Gilgi, towards the end of the novel, finally meets her biological mother, the similarities in appearance she observes between the two of them further destabilise the New Woman ideal. Gilgi's mother, described as a 'Magazindame', appears as 'halb kühl fesches Americangirl, halb mager getanzte Gigolo-Mäzenin' (G 115), thus exposing the commercialised, hollow aspects of the New Woman.

Besides the structural inequality of the romantic relationships, *Gilgi* illustrates the discrepancy between the New Woman as a cultural image and the political reality of the time most strongly in its discussion of the contemporary abortion laws. The powerlessness over her body, which Gilgi had experienced in her connection to Martin, escalates to the formal legal and political level when she becomes pregnant. After her doctor refuses to grant her request for an abortion and recommends marriage as the only remedy for her despair, Gilgi turns on him, explaining lucidly:

> Hören Sie, Herr Doktor, es ist doch das Unmoralischste und Absurdeste, eine Frau ein Kind zur Welt bringen zu lassen, das sie nicht ernähren kann. Es ist darüber hinaus überhaupt das Unmoralischste und Absurdeste, eine Frau ein Kind kriegen zu lassen, wenn sie es nicht haben will. (G 117)

While still avoiding the first-person perspective, Gilgi's earlier use of the universal, indistinct pronoun 'man' has now been replaced by the collective but concrete category of 'Frau'. In shifting from the solipsism of 'ich' and the generality of 'man' to the category of 'Frau', Gilgi abstracts her own experience to a politically actionable level, thus transitioning from the private to the public realm. In the political voice she now speaks with, Gilgi's statement cuts straight to the heart of the fiercely contested abortion debate of the time. Introduced in 1871, §218 of the criminal code prohibited both patients and doctors from performing abortions. It stated:

> Eine Schwangere, welche ihre Frucht vorsätzlich abtreibt oder im Mutterleibe tötet, wird mit Zuchthaus bis zu 5 Jahren bestraft. Dieselben Bestimmungen finden auf denjenigen Anwendung, welcher mit Einwilligung der Schwangeren die Mittel zur Abtreibung oder Tötung bei ihr angewendet hat.[104]

[104] §218 *StGB*.

As a result of this sanction, a vast number of women, about 10,000 a year, died from the consequences of illegal abortions during the Weimar Republic.[105] Keun hints at this tragedy in her novel by depicting the intimate entanglement of sexual inequality, reproduction, social deprivation, and finally death in the destiny of Hans and Hertha. In doing so, she unmasks the abortion law as one of several forms of systemic, state-sanctioned violence against women.

Gilgi appears to grasp the political dimensions of her situation half-consciously, half-intuitively. Exacerbating the process commenced by her relationship to Martin, Gilgi's pregnancy leads to a further, drastic intensification of her distance from the state and her social environment. Gilgi's sense of embeddedness in a larger socio-political body now vanishes completely, giving room to a realisation of her existential solitariness. Seeing herself reduced to a state of brutal, bare human life, Gilgi reflects: 'Mensch sein – das heißt was – da gibt's kein Unterkriechen in Gesamtheit mehr – da heißt's allein sein' (G 144). Gilgi's earlier adoption of the unpersonal pronoun 'man', in which her subjecthood had dissolved into an unbounded, collective generality, is here rejected: 'kein Unterkriechen in Gesamtheit mehr'. Instead, her view of society almost evokes that of Hobbes, for whom human beings are not by nature social, but instead isolated from one another in a state of 'warre, as is of every man, against every man'.[106] In a culmination of this sentiment, the isolation Gilgi sees herself forced into through her unwanted pregnancy leads her into an experience of radical, quasi-apocalyptic solipsism: 'Alle Menschen sind tot – ich bin ganz allein auf der Welt – ich werde ein Kind haben – ich freue mich – ich bin ganz traurig vor Freude' (G 153). In this solitary state of despair, the social medium of language starts to fail, with Gilgi's internal monologue disintegrating into the paratactic. The separate elements of the sentence above are both dissociated and connected by means of dashed breaks, which can be seen to capture the silent, unheard, and unutterable elements of her experience.

The radical sense of abandonment Gilgi experiences can be understood as a symptom of the failure of almost all the social systems that she used to be part of. It marks the breakdown of the romantic relationship with Martin and the model of the nuclear family more broadly, but also of the political, social, and legal systems that are unable to provide a space for her or to compensate for the loss in family networks. In the following section, elements of this experience will be shown to be shared with the heroine of Fleißer's novel, Frieda Geier.

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[105] See Schüller, p. 137. See also Barbara Beuys, *Familienleben in Deutschland: Neue Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1980) p. 455.
[106] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme & Power of a Common- Wealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, ed. by A.T. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935 [1651]), p. 83.

4.1 Marieluise Fleißer and Mehlreisende Frieda Geier

Marieluise Fleißer was thirty and already an acclaimed playwright when *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier,* her first and only novel, appeared with Kiepenheuer. Born in 1901 in Ingolstadt, Bavaria, Fleißer received her *Abitur* in a convent boarding school, before studying German Philology in Munich. Beginning in 1923, Fleißer published several short stories and dramas, which received considerable public attention from the mid-twenties onwards. According to Fleißer's own testimony, her private and professional life at the time, as well as her political leanings, were significantly affected by her relationships to two men: Bertolt Brecht, with whom she also collaborated artistically, and Hellmuth Draws-Tychsen, a conservative journalist with whom she was engaged in a conflict-laden romantic relationship in the course of which he exerted a strong influence on her career, for example by effecting a disadvantageous change in publishers.[107] The connection to Brecht fell apart after his encroachment on a performance of one of Fleißer's plays had provoked one of the Weimar era's major theatre scandals. In the 1929 Berlin performance, Brecht, apparently against Fleißer's wishes, had intervened in the production of her play 'Pioniere in Ingolstadt' by increasing its sexual explicitness, amongst other things staging the defloration of a maid. Gabriele Tergit documented the subsequent trial for the *Berliner Tageblatt* of 15/02/1931 in an article entitled 'Der Prozess der Fleißerin', in which she portrayed her fellow novelist as 'eine zarte, weltfremde Dichterin', who tried to persuade the court 'auf rührend weibliche Weise' that her play had in no way been meant to deride the citizenry of her hometown. During the court case, Fleißer had publicly and, eventually, successfully, taken a stand against Ingolstadt's mayor, who had slated the play as a 'Schandstück' and 'gemeines Machwerk'.[108]

A third personal connection of great relevance for Fleißer, especially in the context of *Mehlreisende*, was the author's romantic partnership with Josef Haindl, whom she married in 1935 and divorced in 1938. Parallels between Haindl and the main male protagonist of *Mehlreisende*, Gustl Gillich, are difficult to overlook. Like the fictional Gillich, Haindl was a successful competitive swimmer and owned a tobacco store. Another striking parallel with the plot of the novel mainly unfolded only after its publication, when Haindl demanded that Fleißer abandon her writing career to assist him in the sale of his tobacco products. *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier* was far less successful than Fleißer's previous texts, and a mere 4000 copies of

[107] See Schüller, p. 67 and 71. Draws-Tychsen's influence resulted in a change from Fleißer's secure engagement with Ullstein to a precarious short-term contract with Kiepenheuer.
[108] Gabriele Tergit, 'Der Prozess der Fleißerin: 30 Mark Geldstrafe', in *Wer schießt aus Liebe? Gerichtsreportagen* (Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 1999), pp. 143–45; see also Schüller, p. 69.

the novel were sold. While not receiving broad popular acclaim, the novel still sparked positive reviews among prominent literary voices of the time, such as Hermann Hesse, Herbert Ihering, and Alexander Frey.[109] Fleißer remained in Germany during the war, where both *Mehlreisende* and 'Pioniere' were banned by the Nazi regime. She republished the novel in 1972 with some slight alterations under the title *Eine Zierde für den Verein*.

Both editions of Marieluise Fleißer's novel bear the subtitle: *Roman vom Rauchen, Sporteln, Lieben und Verkaufen*. The tension between 'Lieben' and 'Verkaufen' – between the spheres of emotion and intimacy, on the one hand, and of economics and trade, on the other – already points towards the imbrications, interrelations, and conflicts between these spheres that emerge in the course of the novel. The two editions are almost identical, the only crucial change being that, towards the end of the novel, the male protagonist of the second edition carries out a rape, which in the first edition he had planned but then decided against. According to Fleißer's own account, the second version is representative of her originally intended plotline of the text, which she had changed due to concerns about its reception. With the second edition providing an uncensored account of the author's intentions, I will employ *Eine Zierde für den Verein* as a second reference point during my analysis, alongside the first edition of the text. The second edition will be read as bringing to light some of the suppressed content already present, but still silenced in the first edition. Even though the content of the two editions is identical apart from the rape scene, the change of titles indicates a shift of focus between the first and second editions from the female protagonist of the first title, Frieda Geier, to her male lover, the local athletic hero and 'Zierde für den Verein', Gustl Gillich.[110] Fleißer herself initiated the change of title in a letter to her editor Sigfried Unseld: 'Ich möchte übrigens den Titel ändern […] damit schon im Titel sichtbar wird, daß es sich um eine Schilderung vor-faschistischer Verhaltensweisen handelt'.[111]

The novel is written in the third person and changes perspective between Frieda, Gustl, and Frieda's younger sister Linchen, a schoolgirl in a convent. While Gustl takes up the most space in the novel, Frieda's perspective still appears to be equally significant, and much of Gustl's destiny seems primarily relevant insofar as it explicitly or implicitly relates to Frieda. As in *Gilgi*, we can find in *Frieda Geier* the two modes of narrative resistance pointed out

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[109] See Schüller, p. 69.

[110] In the course of the novel, the term 'Zierde für den Verein' is used only once, in reference to another athlete (the Maurer Paintner). However, its meaning can be understood to denote a certain performance of masculinity for which Gustl is the main representative in the novel. See *Marieluise Fleißer, Eine Zierde für den Verein: Roman vom Rauchen, Sporteln, Lieben und Verkaufen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 203.

[111] Marieluise Fleißer, Letter to Unseld, 23/03/1972, in *Marieluise Fleißer: Briefwechsel 1925-1974*, ed. by Günther Rühle (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 551.

above: an 'antiromantic' plotline, in which the heroine resists the move into marriage and domesticity, and the foregrounding of sexual complexities and structural sexual violence. The novel's heroine, Frieda, is an emotionally and financially independent woman who works as a travelling salesperson dealing in flour. By contrast with Gilgi's occupation as an office clerk, Frieda's occupation is not typical of those of the women of her time (as regards either contemporary popular cultural imagery, or empirical employment data), and this break with the prevalent gender image is conscious, as the novel states: 'Hier ist Frieda, die jahrelang Männerarbeit gemacht hat'.[112] Frieda is portrayed as a local outsider, whose presence and business activity are more tolerated than welcomed in the town. She only takes responsibility for herself and her sister Linchen, who, as Fleißer mentions in one of her letters, can in fact be understood as Frieda's *alter ego*, a younger version of herself.[113] In the course of the novel, Frieda enters into, and then leaves, an erotic relationship with Gustl Gillich. Emotionally hurt by the rejection, Gillich takes revenge by planning to rape Frieda's younger sister (a plan he executes in the second edition) and inciting Frieda's social and economic exclusion from the small-town community where they reside.

4.2 Frieda and Gustl: Sexuality and Power

In stark contrast to Gilgi, Frieda is not shown as undergoing any major internal developments in the relationship with Gustl, and she is clearly positioned from the outset regarding her intention to maintain the relationship mainly to meet her physical needs and for a limited time. Frieda frames the reasoning behind her choices in very political terms. When Gustl proposes marriage sometime after Frieda enters into an affair with him, she refuses by very consciously referring to the structural societal developments in which she sees herself and the institution of marriage embedded in: 'Was nützt der Frau aller Fortschritt, wenn sie dann doch in die patriarchalischen Methoden der Lebensgemeinschaft hineingestoßen wird, die eine rückläufige Bewegung bei ihr erzwingt' (MFG 126). Frieda's use of politically fashionable terms like

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[112] Marieluise Fleißer, *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier: Roman vom Rauchen, Sporteln, Lieben und Verkaufen* (Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 1931), p. 191. After the first citation, references to *Mehlreisende* will be given in the text as MFG.

[113] See Fleißer, Letter to Unseld, 29/01/1972, p. 558. 'Übrigens sind Frieda und Linchen in Wirklichkeit ein und dieselbe Person. […] Daraus erklären sich gewisse Unstimmigkeiten, z.B. daß die von Linchen angeschwärzte Schülerin Meta […] nichts Geschriebenes über die Grenze nehmen darf, das ist nämlich im ersten Weltkrieg, während das Buch doch sonst in den Jahren 26 bis 28 spielt. Diese zwei verschiedenen Zeiten bringe ich aus dem Buch nicht heraus. (Es handelt sich hier um die Zerlegung einer Figur.)'.

'Fortschritt' and 'patriarchalisch[e] Methoden' signals her familiarity with contemporary left-leaning discourses of emancipation, and the recurring reference to this terminology throughout the novel appears as an instrument of support for her. While leading an otherwise isolated life, with no meaningful private connections other than to Linchen and Gustl, Frieda's sober assessment of her own life situation and her ability to abstract her experience to the broader political domain appear to provide her with a source of mental stability and strength to which Gustl has no access.

In what may be seen as a partial inversion of the gender dynamics depicted in Gilgi, *Mehlreisende* shows not the female, but the male character as being severely uprooted by the romantic relationship on both the psychological and physical levels. From the beginning, the power imbalance between the lovers is expressed in erotic terms, with Frieda shown as exhibiting a high level of physical ownership and autonomy. This is noted by Gustl, who, while also drawn to Frieda's independence, inwardly complains:

> Hat sie nicht einen gottverlassenen Stolz an sich, als sage sie, wann ich verführt werde, das bestimme ich allein? Dazu muss sie sich aber dann einen anderen suchen. Die Welt wird nicht länger bestehn, wenn sich solche selbständige Gesinnung unter den Frauen verbreitet. (MFG 24)

The idea of female sexual self-determination stands in such stark conflict to Gustl's world-view that, as expressed here, 'die Welt nicht länger bestehn [würde]', if he had to accept it as a new social reality. And yet, as long as his relationship with Frieda lasts, Gustl appears to be content with what he clearly understands as an untypical sexual power dynamic between himself and Frieda. This is shown, for example, in a scene following their intercourse: '"Ich bin dir grenzenlos dankbar", stammelt Gustl, "du Engel oder Megäre." Seine Zähne schlagen fröstelnd gegeneinander. Jede einzelne Stelle seines Leibes lächelt' (MFG 46). Gustl's offer of the two antithetical terms 'Engel' and 'Megäre' indicates his inability to grasp his physical experience intellectually. By referring to Frieda as a 'Megäre', a furious, raging woman in Greek mythology, Gustl points to the dominant part that she appears to play in their sexuality, while he, against common cultural stereotypes, takes on the role of the receiving party. Gustl thanks Frieda, is lost for breath and words (he 'stammelt'), and, in a foreshadowing of subsequent events, loses partial control over his body (his teeth chatter of their own accord).

The loss of control Gustl experiences in the relationship to Frieda culminates when she breaks up with him. While Gustl's romantic despair is of a similar severity to that experienced by Gilgi, the consequences of both protagonists' states are diametrically opposed. While Gilgi's anguish was directed internally and expressed itself as self-hate and -abjection (e.g. '[i]ch bin mir unsagbar zuwider', G 114), Gustl's sorrow is directed outwards. Rather than

altering his self-relationship, Gustl changes the way he connects to his environment. This is expressed most notably in the way he connects to the binary realms of civilization and nature. Unable to cope with the break-up, Gustl is shown as successively moving away from the sphere of civilisation and into the sphere of nature, culminating in his own transformation into a creature-like state. Being drawn out of his own house and into the woods, Gustl's inner state appears to manifest itself almost immediately in physical action:

> Sein Kragen ist aufgerissen. […] Manchmal schleift er mit beiden Fäusten über das irre Gesicht, hinterlässt eine neue Spur. […] Manchmal schlägt er seine Zähne in die Rinde von jungen Bäumen, kaut daran. […] Er stampft durch dick und dünn wie mit Hufen, rücksichtslos gegen sich selbst. Unter seinem blinden Tritt knickt der Halm, brechen Äste nieder. Er kämmt durch das Gebüsch mit weit aufgerissenen, fühllosen Augen. Seine Stimme ist ausgeschrien. (MFG 146)

In his state of uncontrolled savagery, Gustl is depicted as inhabiting a liminal space between becoming himself a creature of nature ('[e]r stampft […] wie mit Hufen') and fighting the primordial battle of man against nature ('[er] schlägt […] seine Zähne in die Rinde', [u]nter seinem blinden Tritt […] brechen Äste nieder').

Gustl's transition from the city or the *civitas*, as both the physical and the metaphysical realm of community, into wilderness, the sphere of the animalistic and the anti-political, is here again shown as conditioned by the organisation of gender relations. Just as Gustl's loss of Frieda drives him into the no-man's-zone between nature and civilisation, the denial of this loss initiates a further change in his position. After Gustl's violent state reaches its first peak in a vicious curse against Frieda, it is the desperate, forlorn hope that he might still win her back that drives him back into civilisation: 'Er will es nicht wahrhaben, alles wird wieder gut. Der Mann wühlt sich aus dem Dickicht. […] Ihn treibt es in die Stadt' (MFG 147-48). The particularity of Gustl's experience is here observed more distantly and elevated to the political level through use of the impersonal category 'Mann'.

The position of the female body as the doorkeeper between nature and civilisation, between the state of the beast and the state of the *zoōn politikon*, is illustrated even more vividly when Gustl arrives at Frieda's door, where his wish for reunion is rejected. Having earlier been calmed down by his budding hope, Gustl transmutes back into his animalistic state when Frieda refuses to let him in: 'Der Mann setzt sich an ihre Schwelle als Wachhund. […] Er wittert am Schlüsselloch wie ein Tier. […] Ein Knurren erreicht sie, das die ganze Tonleiter hinaufrast. Ein Bärenhieb schmettert gegen die Tür, und sie fürchtet, daß er sie einschlagen wird. Das Tier gebraucht seine Tatzen' (MFG 148-49). As the scenario escalates, so does Gustl's transition into bestiality, which is traced from '[d]er *Mann* setzt sich an ihre Schwelle' to '[d]as *Tier*

gebraucht seine Tatzen' (emphases added). The addition 'als Wachhund' of the first sentence plays with the duality of what is often imagined as the traditional role of the male guardian. As a sentry between the private and the public worlds, the guardian can provide security from external threats while, simultaneously, possibly representing an internal threat to the person guarded, who, by definition, is always placed in a subordinate position of power.

Yet the scene illustrates Frieda's gatekeeping role, too. Gustl's propensity to lapse into a state of bestiality when robbed of access to the woman he desires recalls the earlier theoretical reflection on the civilising role of marriage. As in *Gilgi* previously, overtones of Hobbes may be perceived here, the crucial difference being that Gilgi's role in the Hobbesian scenario was that of a non-aggressive recipient, while Gustl becomes an active participant. Being deprived of his romantic relationship to Frieda appears to throw Gustl back into the brutal, pre-political realm outside the sovereign state, where, famously, 'man is a wolf to man'.[114]

Hobbes's analogy of the non-political to the animalistic can be traced back to Aristotle, whose description in Book I of *Politics* is evocative of Gustl's predicament. In a twist that is often overlooked in the literature, Aristotle directly connects the topics of state formation, (escape from) bestiality, and sexual lust:

> It is clear therefore that the state is also prior by nature to the individual; for if each individual when separate is not self-sufficient, he must be related to the whole state as other parts are to their whole, while a man who is incapable of entering into partnership, or who is so self-sufficing that he has no need to do so, is no part of a state, so that he must be either a lower animal or a god. Therefore the impulse to form a partnership of this kind is present in all men by nature […]. For as man is the best of the animals when perfected, so he is the worst of all when sundered from law and justice. […] [W]hen devoid of virtue man is the most unholy and savage of animals, and the worst in regard to sexual indulgence and gluttony.[115]

Remarkable here is the explicit mention of the term 'sexual indulgence', which is a translation from the Greek *αφροδισία* (*afrodisía*), translatable as sexual desire, sexual urge, or libido.[116] Aristotle, in this passage, presents the sexual drive as both the initiator of community, and as the object of its taming. In parallel to what the church would later describe as the role of marriage, Aristotle sees the state as the central institution for the prevention of undue sexual desire.

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[114] Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, ed. by Howard Warrender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1642]), p. 73.
[115] Annotated online translation of Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0058:book=1 [accessed 01/12/2021].
[116] Annotated online translation of Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0058:book=1 [accessed 01/12/2021]. I am grateful to Ryan Hacker for his advice about the original Greek terminology.

Still driven by what are portrayed as his animalistic instincts, Gustl can be understood as being internally, if not physically or legally, outside of the confines of the state. In what may almost be read as an enactment of Aristotle's analysis, he looks to the sexual realm as an outlet for his grief and desire for revenge. The act of rape, when collectively acknowledged as such, could be seen as the pinnacle of uncontrolled, socially deviant sexual behaviour. After unsuccessfully trying to impregnate Frieda with the aim of binding her to him, Gustl resolves to rape and impregnate her sister for the same purpose, adding to the crime of rape the aggravating factor of child molestation. Rationalising his plans as justified retribution for his own suffering and an opportune 'lesson' to Frieda, Gustl fantasises:

> Er ist Manns genug, um das Kind, auf das Frieda verzichtet hat, ganz ohne ihr Zutun in ihrer Familie unterzubringen. Es soll ihm eine wahre Genugtuung sein, die junge Schwester, mit der Frieda so hoch hinaus will, mit einem Bankert sitzen zu lassen. Da würde Frieda schaun, fast könnt' er lachen. Denn dann brauchen sie ihn. Sie werden ihn immer brauchen. […] Die wird noch an ihn denken. Die Hexe […] soll die natürlichen Machtmittel des Mannes kennenlernen. (MFG 162)

The ability to permanently change a woman's life by impregnating her is here shown as the ultimate instrument of masculine power, through which even Frieda's independent character could be reliably subjugated. While the plot is contemporaneous with that of *Gilgi*, abortion is not even considered as an option, and this omission of a potential moment of female agency supports the elevation of the act of male impregnation to an inescapable act of nature.

Also notable in the passage cited above is the conceptual juxtaposition contained in the last sentence: 'Die *Hexe* […] soll die *natürlichen* Machtmittel des Mannes kennenlernen' (emphases added). Here, embedded in the context of a gender division, nature is not only set against what could, in its most literal sense, be called the supernatural or the 'Übernatürliche', the realm of civilisation, but also against the perverse, the 'Widernatürliche', the realm of witchcraft. Throughout the novel Frieda is accused of 'Hexerei' numerous times, evoking the triangular connection between the body, sexuality, and the state that is at the heart of the history of European witch persecution. What was targeted and suppressed during the witch-hunts consisted, essentially, of fictions about women's excessive, but non-reproductive, sexuality, fears of emasculation, women's autonomy over their own bodies through female medical care, and their right to openly discuss and share knowledge through associations.

All these themes were topical during the Weimar Republic. Through its historical connection to medical practice, witchcraft not only touches on many essential elements of civic rights – physical autonomy, professional activity, right to free speech and association, but also, as Silvia Federici shows, on the very power of life and death. Medically knowledgeable

'witches' were 'the midwives and the people who performed abortions and taught contraception',[117] making them central actors in the state's biopolitical sphere. The violent abatement of witchcraft between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries went hand in hand with the state-coordinated establishment of a centralised, all-male profession of medicine, which was based primarily on a theoretical study of the works of Galen and Hippocrates and often included little practical experience. In France and Germany, the midwives wanting to continue their practice had to shift their allegiance from the women they were serving to the state, for which they were also serving in a function of spies, Federici notes. 'They were expected to report all new births, discover the fathers of children born out of wedlock, and examine the women suspected of having secretly given birth'.[118] The history of witchcraft thus serves as another example of how the female body became the site of violent negotiations about the extent and nature of state power over its citizens. As Fleißer connects to this history in her 'Hexen' references, she can also be seen unknowingly to anticipate the rekindled interest in witch prosecution which would flare up during national socialism.[119]

If the term 'Hexe' could thus be understood as a reference to the realm of female agency and physical autonomy, the 'natürliche Machtmittel des Mannes' which Gustl pits against it stands for its opposite: the male power to force his own body onto the woman against her will, potentially creating new life in the process. As mentioned above, the plan to rape Frieda's sister Linchen is only carried out in the novel's second edition, where it is described in the most sober language. References to the animalistic have now become only implicit, in showing Gustl as acting not rationally but instead instinctually, almost against his own will. The scene is portrayed from Gustl's perspective, disclosing his internal monologue while still maintaining an element of distance through the use of the third person: 'Da soll doch gleich. Gustl will das ja gar nicht. Gustl muß einen dicken Strich darunter machen. Er hatte es gar nicht vor. Dann war es stärker'.[120] In a way comparable to the description of Hertha's sexual experience in *Gilgi*, the act itself remains unnamed and is, instead, referred to as 'das' and 'es'. The 'es' of the last sentence, '[d]ann war es stärker', can be seen to refer to a number of factors in the sphere of 'natural', emotional, or social compulsions that appear to propel Gustl's action:

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[117] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York, NY: Autonomedia, 2004), p. 31.
[118] Federici, p. 89.
[119] Katarzyna Leszczynska, *Hexen und Germanen: Das Interesse des Nationalsozialismus an der Geschichte der Hexenverfolgung* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2009).
[120] Fleißer, *Eine Zierde für den Verein: Roman vom Rauchen, Sporteln, Lieben und Verkaufen*, p. 175. After the first citation, references to *Eine Zierde für den Verein* will be given in the text as ZV.

libidinal drive, the need for revenge, and socially constructed norms and expectations around masculinity. The 'es' here also serves the function of exculpating Gustl's crime: the place of agency is relocated from himself to the indeterminate force of 'es' which he finds himself overpowered by. While Gustl appears partially to detach from his reasoning faculties while committing the crime, he reconnects with them immediately afterwards to trivialise his intensely violent deed: 'Daran ist noch keine gestorben' (ZV 175). Like the 'es' before, this platitudinous assertion presents an attempt at exoneration, but now performed through recourse to society rather than to nature, again underlining the sex act as a transitioning space between the two. 'Daran ist noch keine gestorben' disguises an empirically false statement by shrouding it in a socially accepted truism.

The process of an integration of animalistic impulses into the framework of society shown in this passage foreshadows the development Gustl subsequently undergoes up to the end of the novel. Following the separation from Frieda and the rape of the second edition, Gustl seemingly frees himself from the civilisation/nature conflict, now fully embracing a 'barbaric', animalistic masculinity which is dependent on his continuous enactment of an alpha male performance in a group of subordinate male students: Gustl 'tritt nun mehr in Rudeln auf, wird auf Schritt und Tritt von solchen, die von sportlicher Erfahrung profitieren möchten, begleitet' (MFG 316). He finds in competitive sport a structure in which his violent hypermasculinity is not only socially accepted, but positively rewarded. In the novel's second edition, Gustl's new preference to appear in a 'pack' is connected to the earlier rape. His experience with Frieda and his memory of his perpetration of a sexual crime 'hat [er] abgeschüttelt wie ein Hund' (ZV 187). Gustl resolves the moral and mental dissonance caused by his actions through a process of active amnesia: 'Er hat mehr vergessen, als ihm zukommt. Er will ja auch vergessen. […] Es soll nicht länger wahr sein, was man seinem Nächsten nicht zufügen darf' (ZV 187-88). On a corporeal level, described in both editions, he processes his experience through a harsh regime of exercise:

> Gustl hat was zugelernt in seiner schlimmsten Zeit: das angeborene Nein, das dem Körper gesetzt ist, zu verachten. […] Er kann gar nicht genug Training hinlegen, um die Wunde in seinem Selbstbewusstsein zu heilen. Er schindet sich ab wie nie zuvor, schiebt die Leistungsschwelle nach vorn. (ZV 188 / MFG 316)

Gustl's defiance of his own physical boundaries, his contempt for his own body's 'angeborene Nein', can be seen as an internal mirroring of his preceding, violent infraction of Frieda's and, in the second edition, Linchen's physical boundaries – of the 'Nein' of others' bodies. In line

with this violation, Gustl's forceful denial of the physical is symbolic of his radical renunciation of the female element: 'Alles, was Weib heißt, hat er verschworen' (MFG 316).

4.3 The Single Woman: Citizenship, War, Outlawry

While Gustl's social embeddedness and recognition improve with the breakup from Frieda, the opposite is true for her. The small-town community penalises Frieda's decision to separate from Gustl with social and economic marginalisation. 'Seitdem sie den beliebten Krauler verlassen hat, ist die Geier in Verruf gekommen. Man will sich an ihr die Mäuler zerreißen. Man hält sie für vogelfrei' (MFG 310). The expression 'vogelfrei', only roughly translatable as 'outlawed', is telling in this context as its terminological development resonates with the ambiguities of Frieda's social position and the freedom enjoyed by the women of her time. In its original connotation, 'vogelfrei', within its very literal meaning of 'frei wie ein Vogel', referred to a person free from feudal obligation, who therefore enjoyed freedom of movement. The term was still used in this sense by Luther and Zwingli during the early Reformation. Only in the mid-sixteenth century did its meaning begin to shift, from then on indicating the status of a person punished by legal outlawry, who, like Agamben's *homo sacer*, is banned from the community and, according to Roman Law, may be killed by anybody. The concept of 'Vogelfreiheit' is, therefore, closely connected to what later developed into the status of statelessness. Jacob Grimm, in his compilation of *Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer*, cites Wigand's *Femgericht Westphalens* of 1825, in which the latter states: 'Frei soll er sein, wie die Tiere im Wald, die Vögel und die Fische, den vischen im waßer, so daß niemand gegen ihn einen frevel begehen kann, dessen er büßen dürfe'.[121] The analogy to the animal kingdom signals the radical exclusion from the realm of human community suffered by the outlawed person. Freedom, in this context, has become an empty denominator. Just like the freedom of the stateless person, as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the freedom of the outlawed person is neither an enabling freedom nor one that grants the safety of physical protection.

While Frieda, living in a nominally equal democratic state, is formally still in possession of her full citizenship rights, her lived experience deviates starkly from this status.

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[121] Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer,* Volume 1 (Paderborn: Salzwasser Verlag, 2013 [1828]), p. 56.

As a single woman, Frieda inhabits a liminal space of quasi-lawlessness, in which protective state power appears all but absent. This is illustrated not only in her vulnerability towards the violence occurring in the context of her former romantic relationship, but also in public attacks she experiences. When visiting the grave of Linchen's deceased Jewish classmate Rachel, for example, Frieda witnesses a group of young men desecrating the graves. As Frieda reacts with protest against this act of anti-Semitism, the group of men, now revealed as friends of Gustl's, take the opportunity to revenge their friend, preparing weapons for a violent attack. The setting of the scene is highly symbolic, playing out at the gates of the 'Judenfriedhof' which is located 'so weit von der Stadt und so abgelegen, als ob es ein Ort für Aussätzige wäre' (MFG 307). The symbolism of Frieda's last name, Geier (translated as 'vulture'), puts her in close proximity to the sphere of death, decay, and ostracism captured in the image of the Jewish cemetery. Analogous to the Jewish community, Frieda is depicted as positioned outside of the protective province of the *civis*, the figurative location of the state, when it comes to male violence. Not through state intervention, but only through the decisive action of a passer-by, the young mason Paintner, who happens to stand in athletic competition with the group, can the attack be prevented.

That Frieda takes her continuous exposure to the threat of violence almost for granted and understands it a matter that evades the possibility of state interference is illustrated in the scene following her close escape from the group attack. Frieda's reflections on the event are rendered from a third-person perspective: 'Frieda hat es nicht leicht. Nun muss sie zum Beispiel eine Anzeige wegen Grabschändung erstatten. Diesmal hat der Maurer sie unter die Fittiche genommen. Wie lang wird sie die freiwilligen Ritter finden, wenn die Zeit kommt, wo es ihnen schadet?' (MFG 310). The fact that Frieda feels she '*muss* […] eine Anzeige wegen Grabschändung erstatten' (emphasis added) signals that she views her action against the desecration of the Jewish graves as a civic duty. While this plan acknowledges the presence of a functioning legal system, as well as her own agency within it, Frieda does not appear to assume that the power of the state extends to the protection of her own physical safety. Instead of even considering the possibility of reporting the attack on her, Frieda is aware that she relies entirely on the volatile protective power of civilian male volunteers whom she does not expect to act against their own interest ('wenn die Zeit kommt, wo es ihnen schadet'). Paintner, upon intervening in the attack on Frieda, implicitly acknowledges the same absence of state power when pointing out to the aggressors: 'die Frau hier steht unter *meinem* Schutz' (MFG 308, emphasis added). The term 'Ritter' suggested by Frieda can be understood to not only refer to

the proverbial chivalry of Paintner's action, but also to a pre-state system in which the power monopoly of a central, democratic authority does not yet exist.

While Frieda's and Linchen's situations are particularly precarious, the constant threat of war forms part of the underlying condition of the association of men, as well. In the world depicted in Fleißer's novel, a quasi-Hobbesian, pre-social state immediately shines through once a crack appears in the surface of the provincial order. This can be seen in a scene in which, towards the end the novel, Gustl's sports club celebrates its accomplishment of the day in the local beer garden. When a rumour begins to spread of an impending fight with Paintner and his guild, provoked by the Mason's intervention in the attack on Frieda, the group undergoes a sudden transformation. Gustl, until a second ago the celebratory manager of a group of cheerful athletes, instantly transforms into a military leader, who 'kommandiert seine Abteilung' (MFG 341). In the volatile climate of the novel, the group of sportsmen effortlessly shapeshifts into an army, and harmless, mundane objects miraculously transmute into murderous weapons: the local baker, for example, 'hat aus seinem Spazierstock unvermutet eine Stahlklinge gezaubert und fuchtelt mit der nadelscharfen Mordwaffe herum' (MFG 342).

Yet the fight, when it occurs, reveals that the condition of war has a different quality for the groups of men involved than it had for Frieda or Linchen. The outbreak of the fight is described as an event of violent but ecstatic eruption, liberating and cathartic, joyful in its brutality: 'Gustl nimmt den Paintner mit Macht in die Schere. Er stößt dabei Laute einer entzückten Raserei aus'. Another fighter 'zerteppert am krebsroten Kopf einen Maßkrug, als hasse er die Farbe' (MFG 341). After the fierce fight between the athletes and the guild of masons comes to a conclusion, the beer garden looks like a 'Lazarett' – a field hospital, filled with heavily injured fighters. And yet, their serious wounding notwithstanding, the men are in a joyful mood, even starting to fraternise with Paintner, whom they fought as their archenemy just instants before:

> Sie besinnen sich auf den Veranlasser der plötzlich ausgebrochenen Feindschaft. Eigentlich haben sie gegen ihn gar nichts gehabt. […] Es läuft das Gerücht, demnächst wird beschlossen, den Paintner als Läufer für den eigenen Verein zu keilen. Der Kerl hat bloß noch nichts gemerkt von seinem Glück. Er liegt mit einer Gehirnerschütterung in seiner verlassenen Ecke und kotzt. Nun, das wird sich wieder geben. Bei der Abendrauferei hat er sich am besten gehalten. […] Er hat sich Respekt verschafft, er wäre eine Zierde für den Verein. (MFG 342)

The earlier, rapid metamorphosis of civilian athletes into a group of soldiers is now reversed just as speedily. What had been described in the terminology of war just instants before is now trivialised as a playful 'Rauferei', and those who appeared as locked in a state of enmity are now shown as allied in a deeper bond of masculinity. The conclusion to recruit the Maurer

Painter for the own sports club reveals both the senselessness and aimlessness of the brutality that had played out earlier.

In its celebration of combat for combat's sake, the scene calls to mind aspects of some of the contemporary *Freikorps* literature, which enjoyed increasing popularity in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Two of the works attracting the most scandalous attention at the time were 'O.S.' (1929), written by the expressionist playwright Arnold Bronnen, and Ernst von Salomon's novel *Die Geächteten* (1930). In this autobiographical text, Salomon recounts the memories of his voluntary service in the Baltic states and Upper Silesia after the end of the First World War, where he fought for the *Freikorps* between 1919 and 1921. These areas, disputed since the Versailles treaties, were still considered an active 'eastern front' in the national revolutionary discourses throughout the Weimar era. Salomon, like other authors of the *Freikorps* genre, celebrated war as 'reinste[n] Ausdruck elementarer Lebensdynamik' and portrayed the front-line soldier 'als eine heroische und amoralische Gegengestalt zu den vermeintlichen Pappfiguren der bürgerlichen "Zivilisation"'.[122] In an exemplary passage of the novel, Salomon writes:

> Was wir wollten, wußten wir nicht, und was wir wußten, wollten wir nicht. Krieg und Abenteuer, Aufruhr und Zerstörung und ein unbekannter, quälender, aus allen Winkeln unserer Herzen peitschender Drang! Aufstoßen ein Tor durch die umklammernde Mauer der Welt, […] siegen nach Osten […] – wollten wir das? Ich weiß nicht, ob wir es wollten, wir taten es. Und die Frage nach dem Warum verblaßte unter den Schatten immerwährender Gefechte.[123]

Similar to the scenario described by Fleißer, the men here are shown as united in an essentially undirected, nihilistic drive for combat and destruction, rather than the will to fight for a specific cause or against a specific enemy: 'Die Frage nach dem Warum', which would require a moral positioning, 'verblaßte unter den Schatten immerwährender Gefechte'. Just as in *Die Geächteten*, war, for the men portrayed in Fleißer's novel, is a vitalising force and a state that can be entered into and exited freely. Following the fight, Gustl is seriously injured and has lost four of his front teeth, yet he feels both satisfied and invigorated: 'Gustl rappelt sich aus einem anderen Winkel auf und spuckt vier Vorderzähne in ein sauberes Taschentuch, daß es rasselt. "Schön wars doch", pfeift er aus sämtlichen Lücken. Man spürt, daß man lebt' (MFG 342).

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[122] Hannelore Roth, 'Die Nation als Körper – der Körper als Nation: Zur Dynamik von territorialen und symbolischen Grenzen in Ernst von Salomons "Die Geächteten"', in *Sarmatien - Germania Slavica - Mitteleuropa: Vom Grenzland im Osten über Bobrowskis Utopie zur Ästhetik des Grenzraums*, ed. by Sabine Egger, Stefan Hajduk, and Britta Jung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), pp. 213–32 (p. 214).
[123] Ernst von Salomon, *Die Geächteten*, (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980 [1930]), p. 54 f.

The very same energy of masculine violence, however, shows starkly different effects when directed against the women of the novel. Far from owning the agency of being able to choose their participation in the state of war, unmarried women are depicted as existing in a constant, quasi-lawless state of vulnerability to potential assaults. A curse Gustl mumbles against Frieda while roaming heartbrokenly and sleeplessly through the woods in a scene prior to his rape of Linchen seems paradigmatic of the structural threat posed to any woman of the time who dares to resist the convention of marriage:

> 'Ich stelle dich vor die Wahl', flüstert er, 'Frieda, du wirst mich heiraten oder ich werde dich zurichten, daß niemand mehr etwas mit dir zu tun haben will. Du entrinnst mir nicht, Frieda. Ich werde immer dann kommen, wenn du es am wenigsten denkst. […] Du kannst dich nicht vor mir verstecken'. (MFG 144)

Gustl's vow to eternally rob Frieda of any safe abode makes explicit the price that the heroines of both Fleißer's and Keun's novels pay for renouncing the traditional romantic path of many of their novelistic predecessors. Not only do both protagonists relinquish the possibility of inhabiting a place that is comfortable and safe; their stories also reveal that, as women, the possibility of finding such a dwelling was only an illusion in the first place. Vulnerability to anxieties, male intrusion, and violence remain just as great when masked as the quotidian experience of married life, as is shown, for example, in the marriage of Gilgi's friends, Hans and Hertha. MacKinnon's analysis of this circumstance almost seems to echo Gustl's words:

> Women's situation offers no outside to stand on or gaze at, no inside to escape to, too much urgency to wait, no place else to go, and nothing to use but the twisted tools that have been shoved down our throats.[124]

5. Conclusion: Citizenship and the Anti-Romance Novel

In May 1931, the same year that *Gilgi* and *Mehlreisende* were published, a poem appeared in the journal *Uhu*, entitled 'Kollektiv-Klage junger Mädchen'. Poetically claiming the voice of a whole generation of young New Women of the time, the author, only named as Tillrot, articulates sentiments that resonate strongly with some of the conflicts also explored in the novels, again underlining their topicality:

> Soll ich nur Kinder zeugen, kochen und ein ganzes Leben
> Einen Mann lieben?

[124] MacKinnon, p. 117.

Hat man mir dazu Lindsey, Anquetil gegeben,
Und mich zum Abitur getrieben?
Soll ich andrerseits nur streben, denken und ein ganzes Leben
Experimente, Studien machen?
Hat man mir dazu ein von Freud beglaubigtes Gefühl gegeben?

Alle verdrängten Gefühle unserer Ahnen
Sind in uns und möchten schrein.
Wir möchten kalt sein, brennen, zerstören, bahnen,
Predigen Kollektivismus und sehnen uns sehr,
und nachdem wir's verneinen immer mehr,
Nach Courths-Mahlerschem Glück zu zwein.
Wir passieren Stationen vom Sportgirl bis Gretchen,
Von Studentin Helene bis Lesbosmädchen
[…]

So kommt's, daß wir am Arbeitsorte
An Küsse manchmal denken und an Liebesworte
Und wünschen in des Mannes Arm uns weit
Fort in Arbeit oder Einsamkeit.[125]

Expressed in these passages is the deep-seated disorientation many young women of the 1920s and 1930s felt in trying to define and negotiate between their roles in the public and private realms, both of which were changing just as they were themselves. In the final verses of the poem, the conflict Tillrot outlines culminates in the incompatibility between love and female independence, as well as the inescapable dissatisfaction felt when choosing one of the realms: a desire for romantic love when at work, a desire for work or solitude when in the arms of a man.

In building its argument, the poem relies on the reference of several contemporary literary and theoretical sources popular at the time. Ben B. Lindsey (1869-1943), for example, was an American judge and social reformer whose book *The Companionate Marriage* (1927) advocated for birth control and sexual education, suggesting that young people should live in a childless, year-long 'trial marriage' in which the couple could evaluate their suitability before entering into a life-long commitment.[126] Jules-George Anquetil (1888-1945) was a French author and sexual reformer who argued fervently against the institution of the monogamous

[125] Tillrot, 'Kollektiv-Klage Junger Mädchen', *Uhu*, 1931, 84.
[126] Benjamin Barr Lindsey and Wainwright Evans, *The Companionate Marriage* (New York, NY: Boni & Liveright, 1927).

marriage.[127] The poem contrasts these progressive influences with the 'Courths-Mahlersche[...] Glück zu zwein', referring to the German fiction author Hedwig Courths-Mahler (1867-1950), a contemporary of Keun and Fleißer and prolific writer of romance novels. Among their readers, Courths-Mahler's works were known to follow a single, familiar plot development, loosely based on the Cinderella narrative: a socially disadvantaged, usually female character overcomes deprivation and class differences through romantic love. Writing under a variety of pseudonyms, Courths-Mahler is estimated to have sold over 80 million copies of her novels prior to her death in 1950, all of them in German.[128] When measured in numbers of copies sold, this makes her the most popular German female fiction writer by a large margin, especially when considering that her novels continue to be reprinted in dime novel format to this day.[129]

The extraordinary success of the Courths-Mahler plot line can be seen to not only signal the deep entrenchment of the traditional romantic narrative in the social consciousness of the time, but also gives an indication of the radical subversiveness of Keun's and Fleißer's counter-narratives. Whereas the classic romance novel, and sometimes the *Bildungsroman*, resolves the protagonist's conflict in the attainment of love, Keun and Fleißer take love as the starting point of their unfolding conflicts, which remain unresolved to the end. Sara Lennox has noted in another context that romantic love could be perceived as the only socially permissible means of escaping the human isolation produced in privatised bourgeois society:

> Romantic love between a man and a woman (which ideally exists outside of and unencumbered by the social situation, in contrast to the medieval arranged marriage) represents the union of two autonomous individuals for the purpose of exploring together their possibilities for subjective growth. Romantic love thus permits an overcoming of individual human isolation while at the same time furthering the process of personal development which the removal of medieval constraints made possible (a theme which the *Bildungsroman* explores).[130]

In stark contrast to this narrative model, heterosexual love, in *Gilgi* and *Mehlreisende*, has lost its power as a vehicle for overcoming human estrangement: it is an exacerbating cause of, rather than the solution to the heroines' social estrangement.

While the unsuccessful love relationships depicted in the two novels may be read as failures, and therefore subversions, of the classical romantic plotline, the characters' inability

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[127] Jules-Georges Anquetil, *No satan conduit le bal: Roman pamphlétaire des mœurs du temps* (Paris: Paris-Edition, 1925).
[128] Only one of Courths-Mahler's novels, *Die Perlenschnur* (1927), has seen a translation into English as *The String of Pearls* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1929).
[129] Andreas Graf, *Hedwig Courths-Mahler* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), pp. 7–9.
[130] Sara Lennox, '"We Could Have Had Such a Damned Good Time Together": Individual and Society in "The Sun Also Rises" and "Mutmassungen über Jakob"', *Modern Language Studies*, 7.1 (1977), 82–90 (p. 83).

to translate this failure into political change could be read as a failure, or subversion, of the classic rape narratives modelled on ancient history and myth. Returning briefly to the incomplete list proposed by Vitanza,[131] cited in the introduction, in which he connects sexual violence and the founding of republican sovereignty, the name of Lucretia stands out among the women named through the enormous frequency of use of her story in theory and culture. Lucretia was a Roman noblewoman, who was raped by the Etruscan king's son in 510 BC and committed suicide afterwards. Outrage about her rape is said to have caused a public rebellion, which then led to the fall of the monarchy and establishment of the Roman Republic. Lucretia's case attracted particular attention in the highly politicised cultural environment of the European Enlightenment, with two prominent German adaptations of the story being found in Friedrich Schiller's *Die Verschwörung des Fiescso zu Genua* (1783) and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* (1772).

Lucretia's body – not unlike the bodies of Hertha, Frieda, and Linchen – appears to have performed a kind of labour that was not merely biological, but also deeply cultural and political. In Lucretia's case, the physical assault she experienced seems to have represented a necessary act for the founding of a republican community.[132] Far from simply being side-lined or denied, the female bodies brought to life by Keun and Fleißer, like Lucretia's, are endowed with a high amount of political authority in the process of citizenship formation. In both Keun's and Fleißer's novels, however, the potential of political change arising from the violation of women's physical integrity remains unrealised. This can be read in at least two ways. On the one hand, it may mark the failure of a polity to perceive and rectify injustice through reform or revolution; on the other, it may signal a narrative rejection to continue offering the female body as a platform of negotiation for political change.

The missed opportunity for socio-political transformation is especially candid in *Mehlreisende*, where the line between the private and public realms is continuously renegotiated. When read in the context of historical narratives of rape, the fighting scene in which the novel's plot culminates could be understood as a modern translation of one of the Greek and Roman histories and myths mentioned above, only with a notably different outcome. Like the narrative of the Trojan war or the story of Lucretia, the final fight in *Mehlreisende* is prompted by a male disagreement over the treatment of a woman's body, and, for a moment, appears to be endowed with the same moral-political charge: a group of civic-minded men

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[131] Vitanza, pp. xiii–xiv.
[132] See Melissa M. Matthes, *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of the Republics* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

fighting against the despotism of a second group. It could, therefore, also be read through the theoretical lens of thinkers such as Bodin and Machiavelli, who, drawing on Lucretia and similar examples of historical and mythical narratives of sexual violence, conceptualised the occurrence of a physical assault on women – specifically the rape of the citizen-wife – as an important benchmark of political tyranny and an opportunity for political renewal. Anna Becker has observed with regards to Bodin:

> Because for Bodin the household, and particularly marriage, was the source and the image of sovereign power and the state, it also meant the very limits of the extent of sovereignty. For Bodin the demarcation line between rightful kingship and bestial tyranny was drawn on, or in, the bodies of women.[133]

While Frieda is unmarried, the assault on her is still perceived as a matter of public concern by the witnessing Maurer. When Frieda's attackers criticise his intervention in the scene with the statement: 'Misch dich nicht in etwas ein, was dich nichts angeht, du Rupp', the Maurer Paintner explictly confirms his dedication to the public interest by retorting: 'Wenn vier Rowdys über ein Weib herfallen, geht mich das im selben Augenblick etwas an, wo ich was davon merke' (MFG 306). Rejecting the group's attempt at both cloaking and legitimising the assault on Frieda as a private matter, Paintner translates the incidence into the language of public interest, thus underlining its moral and political content.

In her work *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt defines political power as the potential which emerges between people acting 'in concert'. For collective action to be effective, Arendt argues, congruity is not only required between the individual members of a group, but also between their speech and action. Political power is actualised 'only where word and deed have not parted company', Arendt explains, 'where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities'.[134] In *Mehlreisende*, the incidence of Frieda's attack is elevated to the political level in the Arendtian sense when the moral indignation Paintner had voiced about the assailants' behaviour propels him to mobilise the concerted action of his guild. The ensuing fight between Gustl's group of athletes, who are positioned as sanctioning violence against women, and the guild of masons, who openly oppose it, thus appears to constitute an opportunity for political transformation, analogous to the democratic renewal effected by the public rebellion caused by Lucretia's rape. In the course of the fight, however, it transpires that Arendt's conditions for concerted action

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[133] Anna Becker, 'Gendering the Political Body', presented at the Graduate Conference in Political Thought and Intellectual History, *The Body and Politics*, 18th March 2019, Pembroke, Cambridge.
[134] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 200.

are, in fact, not met. In a reversal of her dictum, words *are* revealed as empty and deeds as brutal as the seemingly opposing male parties are exposed as actual allies – with the earlier violation of a woman's body not presenting an occasion for change, but rather a pretext for the satisfaction of the male drive for violence.

Both Frieda and Gilgi are shown as living in an environment where the threat to their physical integrity is endemic and the social and political will to change this is absent. Being left in the liminal space between formal citizenship and experienced outlawry, both heroines feel driven to take their fortunes into their own hands. At the end of Keun's novel, Gilgi escapes the structure of the patriarchal, heterosexual family by leaving to live with her friend Olga in Berlin, with whom she hopes to raise her child. Depicting a scene towards the end of the romantic relationship in *Mehlreisende*, Fleißer shows Frieda as consciously standing against the law which, throughout the Weimar Republic, still allowed domestic violence, when Gustl threatens to beat her: '"Dazu müsste ich dir denn doch zuvor das Recht geben," spricht deutlich Luzifers Tochter. […] Da steht sie und behauptet sich, als seien die Paragraphen des Gesetzbuches für sie nicht geschrieben'. In the absence of protection by the state, Frieda reverts to what could be read as an act of 'self-legislation', fully asserting her own sovereignty and leaving Gustl to realize that he is 'nicht so souverän, wie er glaubt' (MFG 118).

Beyond the historically specific experience that Keun's and Fleißer's protagonists find themselves embedded in, a meta-theme in the two novels discussed in this chapter is the specific cultural and legal coding of the body and of sexuality at different times in history, which has made certain acts readable as violence, while rendering others invisible. Writing about the legal treatment of sexual violence in the Federal Republic, Susanne Baer, a legal scholar who currently serves as judge at the German Constitutional Court, observes: 'Ein bestimmtes Verhalten wird scheinbar erst in dem Moment Gewalt, da die von ihr Betroffenen als verletzbar anerkannt, ihr integraler Wert geachtet und sie als Mitglieder einer auf Gewaltfreiheit ausgerichteten Gesellschaft gesehen werden'.[135] Keun's and Fleißer's novels do exactly this: more than 60 years before marital rape, for example, became a legal offence in 1997, the brutality of the act is plain from Keun's writing. Both authors narrate acts that were either invisible or understood at their time as benign, quotidian occurrences, and make them readable as the acts of sexual, social, and political violence that they are. By thus showing their protagonists as vulnerable to a political structure which is unjust but, by implication, could be

[135] Susanne Baer, *Würde oder Gleichheit? Zur angemessenen grundrechtlichen Konzeption von Recht gegen Diskriminierung am Beispiel sexueller Belästigung am Arbeitsplatz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und den USA* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), p. 127 f.

different, Keun and Fleißer tentatively endow their protagonists with elements of what could be called narrative citizenship – an inclusive form of association that lays open both the limits and the potential of actual practice.

CHAPTER TWO

The Citizen's Space: Bureaucracy, Statelessness, and Non-Belonging in B. Traven's *Das Totenschiff* (1926) and Anna Seghers' *Transit* (1944)

1. Introduction: Bureaucracy and Statelessness

In Germany as across Europe, the years between 1918 and 1945 – between the end of the First and the end of the Second World War – were characterised by fundamental shifts in identities, borders, and spaces. The contours of international and domestic orders, which determined questions such as the legitimate form of statehood, of individual membership in a state, and the role of international authority, were subject to intense debates and political, cultural, and military struggles.[1] Borders were redrawn between countries and between newly defined political, social, and biological-racial strata. The emerging external and internal lines of demarcation shared a common trait: they were reliant on an increasingly complex system of legal-bureaucratic practices and novel technologies of identification and categorisation to aid the implementation of political agendas. Personal documents such as residence permits, passports, and visas became the most prominent symbols of the new regimes of identity and movement control, as well as the central instruments of their implementation.[2]

While the new material and bureaucratic boundaries erected during the inter-war years aimed to demarcate geographical realms and socio-political groups according to the categories of 'inside' and 'outside', they simultaneously had a confounding effect on this binary distinction. Identity documents, for example, as Dieter Gosewinkel notes in his study on the history of citizenship in Europe, were issued by territorially bounded state units, but were trans-territorial in their function. A document issued by one state defined a person's identity, status,

[1] See Mira L. Siegelberg, *Statelessness: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).
[2] Dieter Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), p. 253.

and belonging for any other state, too.[3] Furthermore, the identity controls that, during times of war, had served to regulate the movement of foreigners, were now applied to a state's own citizens as well. The developing bureaucratic regime of comprehensive identity and movement control became a marker of state sovereignty as such. As Gosewinkel remarks: 'Die umfassende Identitätskontrolle durch staatlich erteilte persönliche Dokumente wurde zum Identitätsmerkmal eines Nationalstaates, der die absolute Macht zur Kontrolle des eigenen Territoriums und zum Schutz der eigenen Staatsbürger besaß'.[4]

With the internationalisation of these practices, citizenship emerged as the main category of belonging, not only in a person's state of origin, but in the international system as a whole. Those who did not meet the bureaucratic requirements of formal association with any country, the stateless, suffered a form of exclusion that differed structurally from pre-existing varieties. Not only were they deprived of the socio-political relations that would meaningfully embed them in a community; they lacked even a physical space that would allow their legitimate presence. Stateless people's exposure, through their very existence, of the hidden exclusionary structures of the international political system led Hannah Arendt, in 1951, to call them 'the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics'.[5] Another aspect contributing to the central conceptual status that Arendt attributed to the stateless was the fact of the long suppression of their reality. In the latest comprehensive study on the subject, the legal historian Mira Siegelberg argues that statelessness first appeared as a subject of fiction before, much later, being acknowledged as a political and legal reality by states. With statelessness standing at odds with many of the canonical assumptions about Western statehood, both official and popular narratives 'tended to reinforce the idea that a person without a nationality belonged to the realm of fiction'.[6]

Ironically perhaps, literary fiction came to play an important part in changing this perception, by bringing the lived experience and plight of stateless people to the consciousness of a wider public. During the 1930s in particular, a series of thrillers and spy novels engaged with the topic of statelessness and the related motifs of porous borders and a broken international system. Eric Ambler's *Epitaph for a Spy*, a bestselling novel published in 1938, for example, relates the story of Joseph Vadassy, a former subject of Austria-Hungary, who is unable to recover his citizenship after the fall of the Habsburg Empire.[7] In what follows I will

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[3] Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, p. 254.
[4] Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, p. 255.
[5] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 277.
[6] Mira L. Siegelberg, *Statelessness: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020) p. 37.
[7] Eric Ambler, *Epitaph for a Spy* (London: Penguin, 2009 [1938]); see also Siegelberg, p. 155.

analyse two German language novels of the time, both of which provide striking accounts of statelessness by interweaving techniques of imaginative fiction with elements of almost documentary historical accuracy. B. Traven's novel *Das Totenschiff* (1926) and Anna Seghers's *Transit* (1944) are both hybrid works featuring ambiguous, quasi-anonymous heroes without a clear past who struggle to find a secure place in society.[8] While concerned with very distinct fictional settings and historical periods – one with the struggles of a lone seafarer during the interwar years, one with the challenges of exile and National Socialist persecution during the Second World War – the two novels intersect in their presentation of scathing critiques of state bureaucracy, and both raise questions about the nature of authority, identity, home, and belonging in communal life. I examine the novels in the light of the history of bureaucracy and statelessness that surrounded and drove their production. Reading the novels alongside relevant texts from political theory, I will show that Traven and Seghers provide compelling literary assessments of modern structures of communal organisation. By disrupting established ways of narrating the dynamics of individualisation and belonging, *Das Totenschiff* and *Transit* reveal some of the complex elements of bureaucratically administered exclusion in objects such as the passport, and can also be seen to provide glimpses of the generative possibilities provided in the spaces of non-belonging occupied by their protagonists.

2.1 B. Traven and Das Totenschiff

Traven's biography presents in and of itself an intriguing illustration of the interrelation of identity, belonging, and textual documentation that forms the subject of this chapter. The author behind the pseudonym B. Traven, who published his work first in German and later in American English between 1926 and 1940, is so mysteriously elusive that speculations about his biography have been almost more numerous than academic discussions of his work. Throughout his adult life, Traven created a series of aliases, misleading traces, and forged documents to conceal his identity from the public. There have been abundant conjectures about his background: for example, that Traven may have been the illegitimate son of Wilhelm II,[9]

[8] After the first citation, references to *Das Totenschiff* will be given in the text as DT, and to the English translation, *The Death Ship*, as DS, followed by page number. My analysis will focus primarily on the German text. Where only the English text is given, no exact equivalent exists in the German edition.
[9] Gert Heidemann, *Postlagernd Tampico: Die abenteurliche Suche nach B. Traven* (Munich: Blanvalet, 1977).

or the illegitimate half-brother of Walther Rathenau,[10] or that he might not have been an individual author at all but rather the pen name of an authorial collective or 'authorial construct'.[11]

While almost all elements of Traven's biography have remained contested, a relatively widely accepted account of his European life has been established through Jan-Christoph Hauschild's detailed study, published in 2012.[12] As reconstructed by Hauschild, and against Traven's repeated assertions of having been born in America, it is today most commonly believed that he was born as Hermann Albert Otto Max Feige in Schwiebus, Germany (today Świebodzin, Poland), in 1882. After his military service and employment in the metal industry, Otto Feige disappeared from his hometown for good in 1904/05, amidst a family dispute over his trade union involvement. For reasons that remain subject to speculation, he reinvented himself in 1907 as the 'American' author and actor Ret Marut, claiming that proof of his citizenship had been lost in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.[13] Marut became the successful editor and writer of *Der Ziegelbrenner*, a radical anarchist magazine, until he was arrested for joining the failed Munich Rebellion in 1919 and managed to escape before his planned execution. He reappeared in England where, in 1923, he was interned for lack of valid identity papers and – again under mysterious circumstances – finally escaped to America, possibly on board several 'death ships'.[14] He settled in Mexico where he established the pseudonym B. Traven and created several other aliases. It is most likely that among these was that of Hal Croves, who, from the 1940s, acted as Traven's 'authorized representative' during screenplay adaptations of Traven's works. Croves's widow, reading from her late husband's will on the day of his death in 1969, revealed that her husband had been the American-born author B. Traven; but later she provided several additional and conflicting accounts which have left the matter unresolved.[15]

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[10] Karl Guthke, 'War B. Traven Walther Rathenaus Halbbruder?', *Schweizer Monatshefte*, 71 (1991), 372-78.
[11] Günter Dammann (ed.), *B. Travens Erzählwerk in der Konstellation von Sprache und Kulturen* (Würzburg: Königshausen Neumann, 2005).
[12] Jan-Christoph Hauschild, *B. Traven: Die unbekannten Jahre* (Vienna: Springer, 2012).
[13] The fire that succeeded the earthquake of April 1906 destroyed the large majority of San Francisco's official birth records, resulting in thousands of false birth claims for several decades to follow. For more details on this and the question of Otto Feige's identity change, see Hauschild, *B. Traven*, p. 179ff.
[14] Death ships, or coffin ships, were dilapidated ships which were deliberately sunk by their owners for the insurance money, at a high risk to crew members' lives. For this reason, as is illustrated in *Das Totenschiff*, coffin ships were usually the only ones that accepted crew without papers.
[15] See, e.g., Larry Rohter, 'His Widow Reveals Much Of Who B. Traven Really Was', *New York Times*, 25 June 1990, p. 13.

Traven's novel *Das Totenschiff* resonates intensely with this life story. Once an international bestseller with millions of copies sold worldwide, the text has fallen into relative obscurity today. A hybrid work that in many ways runs counter to the literary tradition of its time, *Das Totenschiff* could equally be classified as a parodic adventure novel, a seafarer's tale, a satirical *Zeitroman*, a picaresque novel, or an anarchist pamphlet. Several, slightly varying versions exist of the text. An English 'Urfassung',[16] believed to have been written during Traven's incarceration in London between 1923 and 1924,[17] was revised and translated by Traven to appear first in German in 1926, then in several European translations. The English translation of 1934 was later complemented by a second, extended, English version written by Traven himself.

In the novel, the first-person narrator Gales (in some versions called Gale, Gerald Gale or Gerard Gales),[18] an American sailor, misses the departure of his ship in Antwerp and is stranded in inter-war Europe without passport or identification documents. The novel is narrated in an unreliable and often satirical voice, which does not reveal conclusive biographical facts about its owner. As in Traven's entire oeuvre, the narrative voice oscillates between the recounting of subjective experience and detached, seemingly omniscient, political comment.[19] Interspersed throughout the often circular narration of Gales's destiny of effective statelessness are several life stories of other stateless persons, and didactic passages reflecting on the cruelty of the bureaucratic state system and mechanisms of exploitation. The novel falls into three parts (believed to mirror the structure of Dante's *Divine Comedy*),[20] the first of which relates the protagonist's odyssey through Europe as he fails to prove his American nationality and obtain a passport or employment. He is continually stopped and interned by public authorities for lack of identification and then illicitly ejected over various borders.[21] The second part shows Gales as a crew member of the 'death ship' *Yorikke*. On the *Yorikke*, Gales works

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[16] Guthke, *B. Traven: Biographie eines Rätsels*, pp. 568–91. For a detailed analysis of the initial draft, see Frank Nordhausen, 'B. Travens Anfänge: Die "Urfassung" des Totenschiffs', *The German Quarterly*, 65.3 (1992), 378–95.

[17] Guthke, *B. Traven: Biographie eines Rätsels*, p. 651.

[18] For further background and analysis of the name, which reappears in other works and was also among the aliases used by Traven, see Max Schmid, 'B. Traven und sein Ich-Erzähler Gerard Gale', in *Das B. Traven Buch*, ed. by Johannes Beck, Klaus Bergmann and Heiner Boehncke (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1976), pp. 119–45.

[19] *Das Totenschiff* stands out among Traven's twelve novels as one of only three works that make use of a first-person protagonist.

[20] See, e.g., Ernst-Ullrich Pinkert, 'Travens Mär vom "einfachen Erzählen": Zu den intertextuellen Bezügen in dem Roman *Das Totenschiff*', in *B. Travens Erzählwerk*, ed. by Günter Dammann, pp. 23–36.

[21] For an example of the historicity of this practice, see, e.g., Jochen Oltmer, *Migration und Politik in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), p. 439f. Oltmer discusses the case of Germany's illegal deportation of a large number of Polish workers across the Polish border with the aim of increasing employment opportunities for German workers and 'relieving' the pension schemes.

under abhorrent conditions along with other members of a paperless crew, until, in the third part, he and his friend Stanislaw are kidnapped and taken on to a second coffin ship, which is sunk shortly afterwards. While the story is open-ended and readers continue to draw different conclusions about Gales's fate, a telling comment from Traven on the subject supports a theory of survival. Traven noted: 'Was nun aus dem Erzählenden wird, ob er zugrunde geht oder auf irgendeine Weise am Leben bleibt, hat mit dem Totenschiff nichts mehr zu tun'. To which he added laconically in brackets: '(Wer erzählt, lebt wohl auch)'.[22]

2.2. The Passport and the History of Administered Exclusion

The passport, together with the questions of identity and belonging that are attached to it, forms a central motif of *Das Totenschiff* and can be seen as the driving force of its plot development. That Traven placed his protagonist in the situation of requiring a passport speaks of the author's specific historical positioning. In a process which the historian Craig Robertson has called the 'collapsing of identity into identification',[23] the modern state system that Gales finds himself in equates identity, as he repeatedly points out, with 'documented identity'. Accordingly, the lack of his passport not only implies an (external) calling into question and (internal) destabilization of a national identity which he is unable to prove without his papers, but also culminates in the illegalisation and even negation of his entire existence. As a Belgian police officer explains candidly to him (an observation most pointed in Traven's English translation of the text, which I therefore cite here): 'You have no passport. In any civilized country he who has no passport is nobody. He does not exist for us or for anybody else. We can do whatever we want to. […] If we want to, we can even hang you or shoot you or kill you like a louse'.[24]

Traven's story was topical at the time of its publication. Most pressingly, it spoke to millions of people in inter-war Europe who were rendered stateless either by having their nationality revoked (as was the case for many Russians, Armenians, and later German Jews), or by falling through some administrative crack or other (as is the case for Traven's protagonist). But broader public debates were also being held on the sense and nonsense of the

[22] B. Traven, 'Mein Roman *Das Totenschiff*', *Die Büchergilde*, 3 (1926), p. 38.
[23] Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 10.
[24] B. Traven, *The Death Ship* (London: Panther, 1980), p. 23.

post-war passport regime. Taken for granted though the passport might be today, its introduction as a standard requisite for international travel in Europe and globally goes back only to the 1920s and was then, as Bridget Chalk finds in her study on modernism and the passport, 'widely considered socially regressive'[25] because it curtailed civil liberty following several decades of free travel in Western Europe. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the North German Confederation and then the German Empire had still allowed uninhibited border crossings and circulation within its territory to subjects and foreigners alike, based on a liberal 1867 passport law that had abolished all passport requirements. This only changed with World War I, when regulations initially conceived as emergency passport laws became a permanent practice of identity control. While the development of the passport has been traced back as far as biblical times,[26] and passports have been employed as a tool for controlling wartime travel since the late seventeenth century, a look at the 1920s press and its concern with the 'passport nuisance' attests to the fact that the requirement to carry a passport during peacetime 'prompted surprise and indignation' in both Europe and North America.[27]

This sentiment is elaborately echoed in the memoir of the Austrian author Stefan Zweig. A contemporary of Traven, Zweig gives a romanticizing yet historically substantiated account of inter-war movement control practices in a passage of *Die Welt von Gestern*. He describes the significant change which the introduction of bureaucratic control practices initiated not only with regard to personal freedom but also with regard to the spirit of communal life:

> [N]ichts vielleicht macht den ungeheuren Rückfall sinnlicher, in den die Welt seit dem ersten Weltkrieg geraten ist, als die Einschränkung der persönlichen Bewegungsfreiheit des Menschen und die Verminderung seiner Freiheitsrechte. Vor 1914 hatte die Erde allen Menschen gehört. Jeder ging, wohin er wollte und blieb, solange er wollte. Es gab keine Erlaubnisse, keine Verstattungen, und ich ergötze mich immer wieder neu an dem Staunen junger Menschen, sobald ich ihnen erzähle, daß ich vor 1914 nach Indien und Amerika reiste, ohne einen Paß zu besitzen oder überhaupt je einen gesehen zu haben. [...] Es gab keine Permits, keine Visen, keine Belästigungen; dieselben Grenzen, die heute von Zollbeamten, Polizei, Gendarmerieposten dank des pathologischen Mißtrauens aller gegen alle in einen Drahtverhau verwandelt sind, bedeuteten nichts als symbolische Linien, die man ebenso sorglos überschritt wie den Meridian in Greenwich.[28]

The introduction of the contemporary passport, experienced as so disturbing by many, has to be understood in its post-war political context of radical border shifts and mass migration, both

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[25] Bridget Chalk, *Modernism and Mobility: The Passport System and Cosmopolitan Experience* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 22.
[26] Nehemiah 2. 7–9; see Robertson, *The Passport in America*, p. 3.
[27] Chalk, *Modernism and Mobility*, p. 22.
[28] Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2007), p. 463.

of which factors were comprehended as severely threatening the stability of the state. By 'vastly enhanc[ing] the ability of governments to identify their citizens, to distinguish them from non-citizens, and thus to construct themselves as "nation-states"', the passport, John Torpey argues, became a central instrument in the restructuring of governmentality and individual identification which could be witnessed during the inter-war period.[29] But for the passport to become a primary tool in the management of international movement and identity documentation, it first needed, as Robertson emphasises, successfully to establish itself as a reliable communication medium. In this it depended both on the use of previously existing social categories of identification and on the creation of a new, official identity, which, as early contestations about the passport show, in many cases appears to have differed from the way people perceived themselves: 'to document identity', Robertson remarks, 'meant to create a new identity'.[30]

For this new identity to function as an effective transmitter of information, the passport relied on a practice of determining the parameters of a specific, 'socially legible and legally legitimate' life narrative.[31] This can be retraced in the design of the passport, whose basic outlines as we know them today were established during Traven's time. While the form and usage of the passport had previously been subject to the heterogeneous standards of individual states and the passport usually consisted of a single sheet of paper, a League of Nations conference in 1920 legislated a 'uniform type of "ordinary" passport', which for the first time in history standardised passport requirements internationally and introduced the book-like passport format still in use today. This is also the type of passport which Traven or Gales would have been required to carry. The first four of a passport's 32 pages provided identification, while the remaining pages were for visa stamps. The document required information on the place and date of birth (the most essential categories according to the *ius soli* principle), current residence, profession (pointing to class), a photograph (making racialised physical markers visible), and marriage status (indicating sexuality); wives did not usually hold their own documents, but were only appendices on their husband's passports.[32]

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[29] John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 121.
[30] Robertson, *The Passport in America*, p. 11. The estrangement many people felt from their officially represented identity is perhaps most tangible in the passport photograph. Robertson writes: 'Photography as an identification technology had to develop a unique standardized pose distinct from the repertoire of poses photographers had borrowed from portrait painting. […] The oft-cited comparison between a passport photograph and a criminal "mug shot" made visible the cultural association of official identification with suspect populations', ibid.
[31] Chalk, *Modernism and Mobility*, p. 30.
[32] See ibid., p. 19.

A notable feature of the modern passport is its aim unambiguously to identify the individual. While 'the premodern "passport" seemed to carry with it the *assumption* that the person presenting it was the person named in the document (if indeed they were named)',[33] the development of the design of the passport from a single sheet of paper to a closed book can be argued to parallel the development of a mistrust of the immediately visible person which Gales experiences in his encounters with the authorities. The increased complexity of the relationship between identified subject and object of identification to which the inter-war period bore witness is also implicit in the requirement that the passport be opened by officials: this mirrors the perception of a hidden element behind the physical appearance that requires active 'discovery' and deciphering.

Each of the deciphering categories named above, even though they may have been historically contested as viable indicators of identity,[34] constitutes a part of the institutionalised form in which individuals have been expected to present themselves in order to prove their right to social inclusion and national belonging. Because he does not have a passport, Gales fails to satisfy these categories and the various cultural micro-narratives attached to them, which provide the only way his existence and belonging could be made comprehensible to the bureaucratic system of the nation-state. Traven presents this conflict not only as drama, but also as satire, highlighting the absurdity of the bureaucratic process. The comedy culminates at the American consulate in Paris, where the consul suggests that the fact of Gales's birth is perfectly deniable as long as it is not documented by a birth certificate:

> *Gales*: 'Vielleicht bestreiten Sie gar, daß ich überhaupt geboren bin?'
>
> *Consul*: 'Richtig. Das bestreite ich. Die Tatsache, daß sie hier vor mir stehen, ist kein Beweis für mich, daß Sie geboren sind. Ich habe es zu glauben. Wie ich zu glauben habe, daß Sie Amerikaner, daß Sie Bürger sind [...]. Ihre Staatsbürgerschaft und Ihre Geburt kann ich nicht beweisen'.[35]

Modern bureaucratic societies, Michel Foucault maintains, operate on the assumption that 'biological existence' is 'reflected in political existence'.[36] In a discursive realm in which social inclusion and belonging are only accessible via the bureaucratically legible form of official documentation, Gales's presence brings to light the uncomfortable foundation of every political institution: what Agamben has called 'bare' or 'the very natural life'.[37] By acting as a memento

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[33] Robertson, *The Passport in America*, pp. 3–4.
[34] Ibid., p. 10.
[35] B. Traven, *Das Totenschiff* (Frankfurt am Main: Diogenes, 1983), p. 66.
[36] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, p. 36.
[37] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 127.

of this suppressed content and the fictiveness and precarity of the biological–political link, Gales triggers fundamental resistance in the bureaucrats he encounters. It is the principle of 'what must not be, cannot be'[38] that drives Gales's environment to try to negate his existence. Despite the protagonist's (at least partial) insight into the absurdity of his exclusion and its manufactured foundation, he cannot entirely protect himself against identifying with it. In an internalised mirroring of the police officer's earlier statement, Gales reflects upon his profound precarity:

> Im Grunde und ganz ohne Scherz gesprochen war ich ja schon lange tot. Ich war nicht geboren, […] konnte nie im Leben einen Paß bekommen, und jeder konnte mit mir machen, was er wollte, denn ich war niemand, war offiziell überhaupt gar nicht auf der Welt, konnte infolge dessen auch nicht vermisst werden. Wenn mich jemand erschlug, so war kein Mord verübt worden. Denn ich fehlte nirgends. (DT 83)

Gales cannot present himself, or his belonging, to the bureaucratic system in a way that is legible to it, and is therefore homeless. In stark contrast to the requirement of individual recognizability that confronts Gales, the bureaucratic personnel in the novel remain anonymously amorphous, and consequently universally 'at home'. Gales is shown to undergo the same ritualised bureaucratic treatment in every country he sets foot in, so that he finally concludes that he would be able to understand the request for his passport 'even in Hindustani' (DS 45). Traven comments on the uniformity of the bureaucrats in *Das Totenschiff*:

> Der Konsul in Holland ist derselbe Bürokrat wie der Konsul in Frankreich, wie der Konsul in Italien, wie fast jeder Beamte. Und der deutsche Konsul in England redet dieselbe Sprache wie der polnische Konsul in Hamburg.[39]

In a historical context where individual citizens were increasingly subject to the attempt to make them transparent to the bureaucratic state system, the uniform, opaque, fluid and elusive qualities of the bureaucratic personnel in *Das Totenschiff* can be understood as a marked criticism of official privilege. Those qualities also set the bureaucrats apart as dehumanised figures, who mainly function as puppets of state interests. Gales speaks of 'Figuren aus Papiermaché' (DT 25) or 'Automaten […], die ihre Arme, Beine, Augen, Lippen, Herzen und Gehirnzellen genauso bewegen, wie es der allmächtige Götze Staat haben will' (DT 177). Commenting on the chasm between any personal opinion, on the one hand, and official

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[38] Monika Krause, 'Stateless People and Undocumented Migrants: An Arendtian Perspective', in *Statelessness and the European Union: Displaced, Undocumented, Unwanted*, ed. by Brad Blitz and Caroline Sawyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 22–40 (p. 25).
[39] Traven, 'Mein Roman *Das Totenschiff*', p. 733.

obligations, on the other, one state official renounces all responsibility for his behaviour by explaining: 'I am not to blame. It is the system of which I am a slave' (DS 53).

The explicit critique of bureaucratic practices found in *Das Totenschiff* can be seen as mirrored at the level of the text's structural design. Jesper Gulddal has argued that the inter-war system of international movement control that the novel engages with is not only a plot motif, but also a formal narrative instrument. According to Gulddal, Traven's *Das Totenschiff*, representing what he calls a 'failed' travel account, reveals the structural impact of the introduction of the passport on practices of narration:

> Barred from using, like novels since antiquity, the free mobility of the protagonists as an instigator of narrative events and 'adventures', this novel is forced instead to draw its momentum from the recurring conflict between the individual and the passport system. The result is a narrative that is stuttering and circular rather than progressively linear.[40]

Furthermore, the novel's non-teleological Sisyphus structure, with its oscillation between partial progress and reversal, appears as a mimetic response to the meaninglessness and absurdity of endless bureaucratic processes. At the same time, the novel's structure can be regarded as disrupting and subverting hegemonic narratives of community that rely on the feature of linearity. As Benedict Anderson famously argued in his 1983 work *Imagined Communities*, the modern nation-state relies on shared narratives to generate a sense of 'deep, horizontal comradeship' among its otherwise diverse, extensive and dispersed populations.[41] These narratives are inscribed not only in the passport, but also in newspapers, political writings and imaginative fiction.

Literary fiction, as Timothy Brennan[42] and Bridget Chalk have argued, also needs to adhere to a particular structure if it is to function as a mirror and support of conceptions of community. The logic of citizenship and national identity, Chalk explains, 'depends in large part on traditional narrative forms of the life story like the *Bildungsroman* and (auto)biography, as well as literary elements like plot, linear progression, grounded narration, and basic characterological stability'.[43] In his rejection of these narrative features – expressed through the absence of Gales's passport as well as in the novel's structure – Traven calls into question the dominant ways of understanding modern bureaucratic community and civic belonging.

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[40] Gulddal, p. 295.
[41] Anderson, p. 7.
[42] Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form', in *Nation and Nationalism*, ed. by Homi Bhabha (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), pp. 44–70 (p. 44 f).
[43] Chalk, *Modernism and Mobility*, p. 14.

2.2 Citizenship, Statelessness, Homelessness

By virtue of being a (partially failed) traveler's account, Traven's text problematises the spatial dimensions of citizenship and its underlying assumption of a convergence between nation-state, homogeneous culture, political freedom and stationary populations. Stating that he has 'keine andere Adresse als [seinen] Arbeitsplatz' (DT 35), Gales is introduced as a migrant worker, a status which in itself destabilises idealised conceptions of home by dissociating the realm of economic activity from that of recreation, privacy and family. Yet Gales's lack of legal status introduces a new dimension to his previously unsettled position. He now experiences a homelessness that, while it can also be read as ontological, encompasses all areas of his material, social and political existence, revealing the close interrelation of these spheres. The modern nation-state, Kathleen Arnold writes, 'treats home and homeland as extensions of national identity'.[44] Just as the undocumented person brings to light the chasm between biological and political existence, the homeless and non-stationary person reveals the tension between territory and nation.[45] As a 'vagabond' and eternal stranger, Gales illustrates structural similarities between homelessness and statelessness as well as the disruption of the logic of national citizenship implied in both phenomena. 'The home', Arnold suggests, 'both represents and transcends the concept of citizenship and signifies autonomy, the ability to pursue long-term goals, maintain a social network, and have some privacy.'[46] Politically, home 'symbolizes a unitary subject'[47] as well as the locus of the rational individual capable of political decision-making. Through his homelessness and lack of legal status, Gales can be seen as having been robbed of all these features.

While Gales's position of radical exclusion deeply disturbs his sense of identity and belonging, it is also shown to endow him with a sudden and growing understanding of the violent restraints of bureaucracy, the socially sanctioned life narrative, and the state system altogether. Scholarship has acknowledged that two levels of consciousness may be distinguished in the novel, one of which is empirical and one of which may be called

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[44] Kathleen Arnold, *Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity: The Uncanniness of Late Modernity* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 14.

[45] Besides undocumented and migrant populations, this theme is also of relevance to Roma communities, whose specific situation, however, lies outside of the bounds of this study. For more on this topic, also in the German context, see, e.g., *Roma – A Minority in Europe: Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, ed. by Raphael Vago and Roni Stauber (New York: Central European University Press, 2007).

[46] Arnold, *Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity*, p. 4.

[47] Ibid.

'enlightened'.[48] Yet no connection has hitherto been drawn between the protagonist's heightened understanding and what I argue is its immediate trigger, namely the object of the passport, or rather the lack thereof. Expressed in a voice of detached comment that differs markedly from the experiential descriptiveness of most of the novel, the protagonist's political revelations not only arise for the first time after his initial experience of being denied a passport at the American consulate in Rotterdam,[49] but can also be seen to increase in inverse proportion to Gales's sense of certainty about the identity which the passport is meant to prove. When his nationality is called into question and disbelieved by state officials, Gales – initially portrayed as a proud citizen repeatedly proclaiming his 'free' or 'red-blooded' American identity[50] – quickly becomes uncertain about his national belonging ('"Sie sind Amerikaner?" "Ja, ich denke"', DT 42) until he finally admits: '"Nationalität?" Eine heikle Frage jetzt. Ich habe so ein Ding nicht mehr, seitdem ich nicht beweisen kann, daß ich geboren bin' (DT 74).

This establishes a theme of tension between communal or institutional belonging and the principle of freedom, which, throughout the West, has been a constitutive core value of modern citizenship. Gales is excluded by the unavailability of a passport from the only two communities of which he considered himself to be a member: the American nation and (being barred from regular employment through lack of papers) the community of seafarers. Yet, while having a deeply upsetting effect on both the protagonist's self-understanding and his material situation, the disintegration of his former ties to the nation also have a liberating element, expressed in a new-found intensity of life. When Gales, towards the end of the novel's first part, finally arrives in Spain, a country which is depicted as having a pre-bourgeois social order with less bureaucracy than others, he is convinced that authentic being is only possible as undocumented being, outside the realm of state interference. After his previous experience of deportation and internment, Gales settles in Spain in conditions of deprivation, but also of relative satisfaction due to the freedom from physical labour and identity-policing that he finds there:

> Um Arbeit sollte ich mich sorgen? Ich war auf der Welt, ich lebte, ich war lebendig, ich atmete die Luft. Das Leben war so wundervoll schön, die Sonne war so golden und so warm, das Land so märchenhaft lieblich, alle Menschen so freundlich, auch wenn sie in Lumpen gingen, alle Leute so höflich, und über alles das war so viel echte Freiheit. (DT 99)

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[48] See, e.g., Jorge Sacido Romero, 'B. Traven and Joseph Conrad: Ideological Contrasts', in *B. Travens Erzählwerk*, ed. by Günter Dammann, pp. 37–50 (p. 47).

[49] In these first 'enlightened' reflections, Gales comments on the state as a supra-natural, impersonal 'Biest' and on the divide between a state official's inhumane professional identity and his human private side. Traven, *Das Totenschiff*, pp. 35–36.

[50] See, e.g., T 28, and DS 8. The editions differ in both cases, hence no translation is cited.

This description of Gales's elated state of freedom stands in stark contrast to his earlier state of despair over the loss of his passport, illustrating the liberating potential of the absence of this object. Gales here appears to experience liberation from the social ties into which the passport, as an object, had previously woven him, and this finds stylistic expression in the enthusiasm of tautology ('ich lebte, ich war lebendig', etc.), the breathlessness of parataxis, and the euphoria of the repeated intensifier 'so'. The work of a pioneering theorist of material culture, the sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss, may be helpful to illuminate this scene. In his work *The Gift* (*Essai sur le Don*), of 1950, Mauss argued that both a society's internal relationships and its individual ascriptions of personhood were intricately related to practices in the realm of material culture. Perceiving this as a net of obligations in which objects and bodies are not 'owned' by their bearers, but rather continuously 'owed' to others, thus enabling the creation of social relationships based on continuous material exchange, Mauss's theory of the gift throws light on both the enabling and the inhibiting implications of the passport. The passport, in this context, could be argued to stand out among other objects through what may be called its extraordinarily 'sticky' quality, implying that it cannot be returned or passed on as other objects would be. When applying Mauss's theory to the passport, i.e. an object which is legally owned by the state but required to be carried by the individual, this document can be seen as establishing and upholding a relationship of permanent subordination and debt on the part of the citizen to the state. Cutting its bearer off from the possibility of equal reciprocation, which would usually enable a termination of the relationship between giver and recipient, the specific bureaucratic framework of the passport offers as the sole avenue of escape the complete renunciation of the object.

Yet such a renunciation, as Gales's destiny illustrates, comes at the high cost of expulsion from the community that established the passport as a signifier of membership. Traven presents in *Das Totenschiff* a trenchant critique of the institution of citizenship and all forms of state power.[51] Yet he also illustrates, *ex negativo*, the rights and privileges of protection and communal integration which citizenship, ideally, entails. While Gales may have found in Spain an element of what Isaiah Berlin, in his *Two Concepts of Liberty*, would call negative liberty,[52] it soon transpires that the loss implied by his expulsion from citizenship far exceeds questions of physical comfort. Instead, it touches on the very foundations of a

[51] On the theme of anarchism in *Das Totenschiff*, see, e.g., Wendula Dahle, 'B. Traven, *Das Totenschiff*: Die Dekonstruktion anarchistischer Elemente in der Rezeption', in *Travens Erzählwerk*, ed. by Günter Dammann, pp. 63–82.
[52] Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

meaningful existence – a topic that Hannah Arendt made the centrepiece of her analysis of statelessness in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Drawing on her own experience of statelessness, Arendt powerfully argues that even when a stateless person manages to secure a condition of relative physical safety, as Gales did in Spain, the passport-less status remains definitive. For stateless persons, more is at stake than their physical freedom or security. The extremity of their fate, Arendt holds, 'is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective'.[53] Gales is not able to find this place of Berlinian positive liberty, enabled through formal membership of a community, in Spain or any other country, and this finally drives him to accept a position on the death ship *Yorikke* in the full awareness of the likelihood of horrible physical exploitation and the sealing of his fate as a dehumanised outcast.[54]

The *Yorikke*, despite the tyranny and abuse suffered on it, provides a non-terrestrial, non-national space for a community of paperless outcasts, which includes the apparently stateless ship itself. Gales notes: 'Ihre Nationalität hielt sie streng geheim, offenbar war ihr Paß nicht ganz in Ordnung' (DT 111). In a world whose territory has become inhospitable due to its complete bureaucratization, Gales finally finds at sea an unregulated niche into which to fit, among a passport-less crew of 'verlumpte, abgerissene, verkommene, verdreckte, verlauste, verluderte, verhurte, versoffene, gottvergessene und völlig verkrachte Seeleute' (DT 121). The repeated use of the prefix 'ver' (which has only approximate equivalents in English prefixes such as 'mis', 'de', 'dis' or 'un'), marks the sailors' state as negatively deviating from a preconceived norm, but also as challenging and transcending existing boundaries. This latter aspect is underscored by the remark that the crew are 'unzivilisiert' to the degree of being 'mit nichts vergleich[bar], was sich sonst auf Erden findet' (DT 133). Constituting the only 'home' available to the protagonist and the rest of the crew, the *Yorikke* not only presents a system of brutishness in itself, but can also be read as the mirror image of an international state system whose cruelty, as Arendt notes, lies in its bureaucratization of the entire world, without any '"uncivilized" spot'[55] left to accommodate those who do not meet the administrative criteria of national belonging. She continues: 'Only with a completely organized humanity could the loss of home and political status become identical with expulsion from humanity altogether'.[56]

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[53] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1951), p. 296.
[54] Still from the safety of the shores, Gales registers the crew as looking 'schlimmer […] als alles, was ich je in dieser Hinsicht erblickt habe' (DT 120), their destitute appearance foreshadowing the abhorrent treatment he himself will experience on the ship.
[55] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 297.
[56] Ibid.

Both the image of the ship and its name, *Yorikke*, are rife with symbolic and intertextual meaning, thematically surrounding (mainly) the areas of governance, on the one hand, and the realm between life and death (or between the earthly/mortal and the divine), on the other. Gales's remarks upon spotting the ship and searching, in vain, for its name and nationality, may be read as a humorous nod to the rich, universal heritage of the ship metaphor, which reaches back to Greek antiquity and even to ancient Egypt. In this passage of the English edition, he hyperbolically describes the *Yorikke* as an archaeological object of indeterminable origin:

> Of course, there was something painted on the stern. But, I am sure, only a well-trained archaeologist could have deciphered what those spots meant. There was a flag, of course, flying above the stern. The flag, however, was so pale, so flimsy, so shredded, that it might have represented any flag of any country in the world. It looked as if it had been flown from the battle-ships of all the fleets that had partaken in sea-battles for the last five thousand years. (DS 88)

Traven's contemporary, D. H. Lawrence, in his poem 'The Ship of Death',[57] followed a long narrative tradition in the poem's evocation of life as a journey, and the ship as the arbiter of a person's passage from life to death, from an old to a new state. Like Traven, Lawrence makes intertextual reference to Shakespeare's Hamlet, who famously described death as 'The undiscovered country, from whose bourn | No traveler returns'.[58] The name Traven chose for his death ship, Yorikke, marks a clear reference to the deceased jester Yorick in *Hamlet*, whose skull is exhumed in Act 5, Scene 1, of the play, eliciting the hero's well-known lament 'Alas, poor Yorick!'. Yorick is also the name of Lawrence Sterne's fictional narrator in *Tristram Shandy* (1759) and *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), which, as subversive biographical and travel accounts, also resonate with *Das Totenschiff*.[59] In Shakespeare, Sterne and Traven, the figure of Yorick (or *Yorikke*) is used as a narrative nodal point, conjoining the areas of life and death, but also of (outward) foolery and (hidden) truth spoken to power.

There are further resonances between Traven's death ship and Plato's image of the *ship of fools*, which the philosopher uses in Book VI of his *Republic* to illustrate the dangers of incompetent governance. In a critique of democratic rule with strong reverberations of his allegory of the cave, Plato here describes how a dysfunctional crew, oblivious of their own

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[57] Posthumously published in 1932.
[58] Act 3, Scene 1.
[59] On the Traven/Sterne connection, see: Ute Gerhard, 'Literarische Reisen zwischen Selbstfindung und Selbstentäußerung: Exemplarische Blicke auf Texte von Sterne, Eichendorff und Traven', *Der Deutschunterricht*, 4.2 (2002), 27–36. On the connection to Shakespeare, Sterne, and others, see Pinkert, 'Travens Mär vom "einfachen Erzählen"'.

ignorance, believe themselves to be better equipped to steer a ship than a knowledgeable captain.[60] *Das Totenschiff* further evokes associations with the Homeric *Odyssey*, the legend of the *Flying Dutchman*, and Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), all of which have strong themes of home, exile, and death. On another level of symbolism, the ship, together with the sea on which it sails, signals a realm of exception, politically, spatially, and temporally. As Foucault has noted: 'the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea'.[61]

In the Western cultural imagination, the sea has often been conceived as a 'quintessential wilderness, a void without community'.[62] It presents an emblematic counterpart to the terrestrial sphere of complete bureaucratization. Gales's profession as a sailor not only characterises him as a non-stationary, narratively unreliable figure (according to the cliché of the 'sailor's yarn'), but also firmly locates him at sea, a sphere which the novel depicts as an extra-juridical world and negative foil to a fully organised system of nation-states. In resisting an inscription through land-based traces such as footprints, monuments and ruins, the sea's surface remains a historiographically empty space out of reach of established practices of objective documentary accounting[63] which form the *sine qua non* of the modern state and its passport regime. In the context of *Das Totenschiff*, it is therefore not surprising that the setting of the sea, by propelling even further Gales's liberation from the ties which the loss of his identity papers had begun to loosen, functions as an intensified trigger of political critique. It is also here that Gales starts to understand his position as one which enables privileged insight.[64] Reflecting on the possibility of critical understanding and his fellow 'dead' crew members on board the *Yorikke*, he notes:

> Dummköpfe kamen nie zu den Toten und nur selten Durchschnittsmenschen. Denn die haben immer alles schön in Ordnung. Die können nie über die Mauer fallen, weil sie nie hoch genug klettern, um zu sehen, wie es auf der anderen Seite wohl aussehen mag. Die glauben, was man ihnen darüber erzählt. [...] Und wer das nicht glaubt und einmal nachsehen will, ob es wahr ist, auf die Mauer klettert und dabei runterfällt, dem geschieht es ganz recht, daß er draußen bleibt. (DT 218)

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[60] The allegory of the ship as a governing body also resurfaced in 1494 Germany in Sebastian Brant's satire *Das Narrenschiff*.
[61] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), 22–27 (p. 27).
[62] John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), p. 16.
[63] See also Mack, *The Sea*, p. 18.
[64] This moment of deepened insight experienced on board the ship is also underscored by the aural reverberation of 'Yorikke' with the exclamatory 'Eureka!', marking a point of revelation.

The possibility of uninhibited insight into the 'true' structure of the state is here elevated from the individual to a collective level, whereby national exclusion serves as a necessary precondition of intellectual understanding. The remark that 'Dummköpfe' and ordinary people would never be part of the crew also represents an inversion of Plato's *ship of fools* metaphor. While, in Plato, the boat is filled with ignorant people without insight into the mechanisms of governance, in Traven it is the crew of outcasts – and not the political elite – who (in the language of the analogy of the cave) dare to expose themselves to the light of truth and understand the deeper nature of the state.

Yet the mental freedom and sense of 'home' which Gales can be seen to experience on board the *Yorikke* again comes at the price of confinement and loss of identity. While Gales's condition on land was mostly characterised by his exclusion from the civic community, his situation on board the ship is marked by an excessive integration into the communal body which the crew members, in the course of their collective work, appear to form with each other and with the ship. For Gales, this leads to a renewed eradication of his self, this time induced not by bureaucratic processes but by physical labour. He notes: 'Ich war ausgelöscht. An Stelle des Ichs stand nichts anderes mehr als elf bis sechs [his working hours]' (DT 197). He concludes: 'Ich war jetzt ein Teil der Yorrike geworden' (DT 196). The lack of privacy and physical safety that Gales experiences on board the ship stands in a relationship of tension with his former need for communal integration. Through his precarious status, Gales simultaneously reveals the implications of the lack of home and challenges idealised notions of a contained, unified home – both in its concrete manifestation and in the form of citizenship as a symbolic home. For Gales, the tension between belonging and freedom remains unresolved and inescapable, despite the high price he has to pay in the process of sounding out its nature and severity. In what may be seen as a moment of epiphanic culmination, Gales finally understands both the land and the sea as complementary realms of confinement, separated by a seemingly insurmountable barrier:

> Das feste Land ist mit einer unübersteigbaren Mauer umgeben, ein Zuchthaus für die, die drinnen sind, ein Totenschiff oder eine Fremdenlegion für die, die draußen sind. Es ist die einzige Freiheit, die ein Staat, der sich zum Extrem seines Sinnes entwickeln will und muß, dem einzelnen Menschen, der nicht nummeriert werden kann, zu bieten vermag, wenn er ihn nicht mit kühler Geste ermorden will. Zu dieser kühlen Geste wird der Staat noch kommen müssen. (DT 238)

This passage, full of eerie historical foresight, today evokes a harrowing string of associations far too extensive to do justice to in the context of this study. Connections range from ships

carrying passengers hoping to escape national socialist persecution during the 1930s and 1940s (the topic which I will turn to in the second part of this chapter),[65] to contemporary migrant and refugee populations endeavouring to cross the Mediterranean sea or the English Channel, and from concentration camps to 'immigration removal centres'.[66] Varied as these cases are, they share a nexus between the operation of biopolitical power, practices of documentation and detention, and the sea as a last point of recourse for those not meeting specific administrative criteria. To this day, this nexus too often turns into literal reality the longstanding allegory of the *Ship of Death*, as employed, for instance, in D.H. Lawrence's eponymous poem: 'There is no port, there is nowhere to go'.[67]

3.1 Anna Seghers and Transit

First published in 1944, 18 years after *Das Totenschiff*, Anna Seghers's *Transit* shares the motifs of migration, homelessness, arbitrary and dangerous bureaucratic practices, opportunities for narrative resistance, and the sea as a last resort and realm of death with Traven's novel. Similar to *Das Totenschiff*, *Transit* is partially informed by its author's biographical experience: 'Ich habe niemals etwas so unmittelbar im Erlebnis Steckendes geschrieben', Seghers would later reflect on her novel in a letter to Lew Kopelew.[68] In *Transit*, the author processed part of her experience of flight and emigration, which, in 1933, took her from Germany to Paris, and finally to Mexico, where she arrived in 1941 and stayed until 1947. Seghers had already been a successful author prior to her escape from Nazi Germany. She was born in 1900 as Netty Reiling into a bourgeois Jewish family in the German city of Mainz. Having studied art history at the University of Heidelberg, she adopted the androgynous pen name 'Seghers', after a seventeenth-century Dutch artist, for her first publications between 1924 and 1928. Critics praised the author's 'hard', 'masculine' prose, before, in 1928, Seghers

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[65] See, e.g., the now famous case of the *MS St Louis*, which, in 1939, tried to save its 900 passengers from anti-Semitic persecution in Europe but was denied landing in America.

[66] For a comprehensive study on this topic, see, e.g., *Migration by Boat: Discourses of Trauma, Exclusion and Survival*, ed. by Lynda Mannik (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2016).

[67] 'The Ship of Death', in: D. H. Lawrence, *Last Poems*, ed. by Richard Aldington (London: Martin Secker, 1933), pp. 60–64.

[68] Letter to Lew Kopelew of 7 March 1960. See Kai Sicks, 'Anna Seghers: *Transit* (1944/1947)', in *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Exilliteratur: Von Heinrich Heine bis Herta Müller*, ed. by Bettina Bannasch and Gerhild Rochus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), pp. 527–34 (p. 529).

revealed her gender when she was awarded the prestigious *Kleist Preis* for her short story 'Grubetsch' and her novella *Aufstand der Fischer von St. Barbara*. The critical acclaim for her artistic talent, combined with the surprise of her gender and youth, turned the writer into an immediate media sensation.[69] After the war, Seghers returned to Germany in 1947 to live in Berlin. She first resided in the American sector, where, as a vocal female writer, a Jew, and a communist (Seghers had been a member of the communist party since 1928), she became the target of increasing public hostility.[70] In 1950, Seghers eventually settled in East Berlin where she died in 1983.

The close ties with left-wing ideology, apparent in both her biography and her writing, are often seen as a contributing factor in the reception of her work. While Seghers enjoyed broad acclaim during the late years of the Weimar Republic, her explicitly antifascist books were banned in Nazi Germany in 1933. After the war, and with the onset of the Cold War, she encountered aggressive reviews and boycotts in West Germany, and only began to gain acceptance from the late 1970s, when some of her works were also incorporated into the FRG's school curricula.[71] Despite enjoying the status of a star author in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and in the international circles of the Communist Party, Seghers's relationship to the socialist state, as to most other states she encountered in the course of her eventful life, was a charged one. Summarising the author's complicated connection to the various public authorities that crossed and intervened in her life path, Helen Fehervary notes that Seghers was 'under police surveillance for most of her career, whether by the Gestapo, the FBI, the French Sûreté, or the Stasi'.[72]

In a recent edited volume largely dedicated to Seghers's work, Kristy Boney and Jennifer Marston William contend that, even today, Seghers is still 'unduly neglected' as a central figure of modernist German storytelling, her reputation too often confined to her authorship of the antifascist novel *Das Siebte Kreuz* (1942).[73] That Seghers cannot be reduced to either a 'one-hit-wonder' or a socialist author is evident not only in her conflicted, and at times even perilous, relationship with the socialist state but also in the broad stylistic variations

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[69] See Helen Fehervary, 'Anna Seghers, a Writer Who Defended the Wretched of the Earth', *Jacobin Magazine*, https://jacobinmag.com/2020/11/anna-seghers-jewish-writer-germany-holocaust [accessed 15/09/2021]. Netty Reiling's married name was Radványi, and, from 1928, Anna Seghers became her preferred pen name (earlier pseudonyms being Anna Brand and Peter Conrad).
[70] See Fehervary, 'Anna Seghers, a Writer Who Defended the Wretched of the Earth'.
[71] See Fehervary, 'Anna Seghers, a Writer Who Defended the Wretched of the Earth'.
[72] Fehervary, 'Anna Seghers, a Writer Who Defended the Wretched of the Earth'.
[73] Kristy R. Boney and Jennifer Marston William, 'Introduction', in *Dimensions of Storytelling in German Literature and Beyond: 'For Once, Telling It All From the Beginning'*, ed. by Kristy R. Boney and Jennifer Marston William (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2018), p. 3.

in her literary works.[74] Far from toeing the cultural-political party line by following the script of the socialist realist novel favoured by the GDR leadership,[75] Seghers frequently engaged in experimental forms in her stories. Seghers's particular views on literary aesthetics were at odds with the socialist party line and likely constituted a contributing factor in the complicated publication history of *Transit*.[76] She explicitly reflected upon her reservations towards the socialist realist style in her 1938/39 correspondence with Georg Lukacs (György Lukács), the leading theorist of socialist aesthetics.[77] While Lukacs believed that modernist writers fell short of portraying 'true' reality and thus failed to produce the revolutionary power necessary to effect change, Seghers was convinced that a connection with the 'immediacy of basic experience' sometimes required aesthetic means that diverge from the ideal of realist rendition.[78] She drew a conscious distinction between lived experience and its artistic processing, emphasising that the one cannot be collapsed into the other: 'Diese Realität der Krisenzeit, der Kriege usw., muß […] erstens ertragen werden, es muß ihr ins Auge gesehen und zweitens muß sie gestaltet werden'.[79] Times of historical crisis, Seghers insisted, have always been characterised by harsh artistic ruptures, 'durch jähe Stilbrüche, durch Experimente, durch sonderbare Mischformen'.[80] While traditional artistic forms, under these conditions, may to Lukacs appear to be subject to a process of decay ('Zerfall'), these ruptures, Seghers argued, also created room for novelty to emerge: 'Es war aber doch der Anfang zu etwas Neuem'.[81]

Some of Seghers's aesthetic considerations found their practical implementation in *Transit*, whose particular style may, to some extent, be seen as a response to the challenging circumstances of its creation. Seghers had emigrated to Paris in 1933, the year the National Socialists took power in Germany, and wrote most of the novel while fleeing Nazi prosecution, between 1940 and 1943.[82] The author had found herself and her family in an increasingly

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[74] For more details of her problematic standing in the GDR, see, e.g., Ilse Nagelschmidt, 'Ein Leben zwischen den Zeiten und den Orten', in *Anna Seghers-Handbuch: Leben - Werk - Wirkung*, ed. by Carola Hilmes and Ilse Nagelschmidt (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2020), pp. 3–36.
[75] The political significance of the socialist realist genre will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.
[76] See, e.g., Jörg Schuster, 'Transit', in *Anna Seghers-Handbuch: Leben - Werk - Wirkung*, ed. by Carola Hilmes and Ilse Nagelschmidt (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2020), pp. 83–88 (p. 83).
[77] The name Georg Lukacs is presented in different spellings in the works cited. For consistency, the spelling 'Georg Lukacs' will be used in the main text, while the spelling of the relevant source will be adopted in the references.
[78] Georg Lukacs and Anna Seghers, 'Ein Briefwechsel zwischen Anna Seghers und Georg Lukacs', in *Essays über Realismus* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1948), pp. 171–215 (p. 177).
[79] Lukacs and Seghers, p. 177.
[80] Lukacs and Seghers, p. 177.
[81] Lukacs and Seghers, p. 177. See also Schuster, p. 83.
[82] See Sicks, p. 529.

precarious state from 1940 onwards, when her husband was interned after the German invasion of the north of France. During the same year in which she started writing *Transit*, Seghers and her children fled from occupied Paris via Pamiers and Marseille to Vichy France in the south. Following a lengthy and perilous process of trying to secure the necessary paperwork through consulates and government offices, Seghers and her family (her husband having been released from camp) were able to secure passage on a ship leaving for America in March 1941. Among their fellow passengers were other cultural luminaries of the time, such as André Breton and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (who memorialised the journey in his *Tristes Tropiques* (1955)). Four months later, after internments in Martinique, Santo Domingo, and Ellis Island, Seghers and her family reached Mexico. In the preface to *Transit's* Czech edition, Seghers reflects:

> Der Roman 'Transit' ist im ersten Kriegsjahr in Frankreich begonnen worden. Er wurde mitten in der Situation geschrieben, die darin beschrieben ist. Ein paar Seiten entstanden in Hotelzimmern und Cafés von Marseille, ein paar in den Pyrenäen, als unsere Männer dort im Lager eingesperrt waren, ein paar auf dem Schiff, das aus Marseille an der spanischen Küste entlang, um das künstlich vernebelte Fort von Gibraltar herum, in endloser, erschöpfender Fahrt auf die lnsel Martinique zufuhr. (T 286)

Seghers stayed in Mexico until 1947, at a time when, coincidentally, Traven is believed to have resided in the same country. As was the case with Traven's *Totenschiff*, *Transit's* publication history is entangled in aspects of multilingualism. A publication of the German manuscript was rejected by the Mexican German language exile press, *El Libro Libre*, which had previously published *Das Siebte Kreuz*. As Jörg Schuster argues, the rejection was likely a result of 'literatur-politischer Vorbehalte innerhalb des kommunistisch-antifaschistischen Kuratoriums'.[83] First editions of the novel, therefore, appeared in English (USA) and Spanish (Mexico) translations in 1944, before a preprint of a German edition was published in the *Berliner Zeitung* (*BZ*) between August and November 1947. A first German edition, lacking in editorial care, appeared in 1948 with *Curt Weller*, and in 1951 in the East German *Aufbau Verlag*. With all German typescripts lost and the original *BZ* text full of blatant errors, the novel's historical-critical edition of 2001, produced by Silvia Schlenstedt, relied on the translated texts to reconstruct the novel's intended meaning (T 334-346).

Similarly to *Das Totenschiff*, *Transit* does not adhere to any one genre. It could be classed partially as (potentially failed versions of) a *Bildungsroman*, an adventure novel or a travel narrative, but also combines these genres with aspects of biographical and historical

[83] Schuster, p. 84.

accounting, on the one hand, and elements drawn from myth and fairy tale, on the other.[84] With this blend of aesthetic influences, the novel has been said to formally replicate the collective and personal experience of displacement, statelessness, and exile which the author witnessed from 1933 onwards.[85] That *Transit* speaks not only to the specificity of its time, but also to universal aspects around forced migration can be seen as underscored by a double-anonymity established at the beginning of the narration. *Transit* is narrated in the first-person voice of a nameless narrator, who recounts his story to an unknown, apparently random listener in a pizzeria in Marseille. In the course of the report, the addressee, who is a refugee him- or herself,[86] learns of the narrator's flight from a German concentration camp and French prisoner of war camp, via Paris, to the south of France, where he joins a large population of refugees trying to obtain documents to leave France.

While in Paris, the narrator is asked by a friend to deliver two letters to the Jewish writer Weidel. Arriving in Weidel's hotel room, the narrator finds that he had committed suicide and agrees to the hotelier's request to remove his possessions, among which he finds the unfinished manuscript of a novel. Upon opening the letters previously entrusted to him, a quasi-Shakespearean motif around the writer's death is revealed, in which what are likely the two main reasons behind Weidel's suicide – persecution and heartbreak – are remedied tragically late. The narrator learns from one of the letters that Weidel's wife, Marie, had previously left her husband, but now wishes to reunite with him as he was granted a Mexican visa, enclosed in the second letter, which would have enabled them both to leave Europe. The narrator's attempt to return the travel documents to the Mexican embassy leads to a scenario of mistaken identity in which he eventually assumes the role of the writer, claiming Weidel as his pen name. The confusion of identity continues when the narrator meets Marie in Marseille and falls in love with her, without informing her of her husband's death. The narrator's impersonation of Weidel at the consulates fuels Marie's futile search for her deceased husband, as the bureaucratic apparatus confirms his residence in Marseille. With the narrator's help, Marie finally boards a ship, the 'Montreal', convinced that her husband will join her on the journey. Realising that Marie will always continue loving and searching for her husband, the narrator

[84] For a discussion of the mythic dimension, see Helen Fehervary, *Anna Seghers: The Mythic Dimension* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); for aspects of the fairy tale, see Rebekah Slodounik, '"Once Upon a Time in Marseille": Displacement and the Fairy Tale in Anna Seghers' *Transit*', *Humanities*, 8.4 (2019), 173–84.
[85] See, e.g., Slodounik, p. 174.
[86] That the addressee is a refugee is implied in the narrator's interjection: 'Sie kennen ja selbst die Rue Stanislas Lorein [where residence permits are issued]. Sie haben ja selbst bei Regen und Schnee in der seltsamen Menschenschlange gewartet […]' (T 113).

decides to stay behind in France, where he finds a new community of friends in the French resistance and occupation as a farm worker. The end of the novel repeats a reflection already stated at its opening, about a rumour that the 'Montreal' had sunk after encountering a mine.

3.2 Transitory Identity and Identification

Questions around identity form a central motif in *Transit*. Mistaken identity, Rebekah Slodounik has pointed out, functions as an important plot driver in the novel, and 'relates to displacement as a means of substitution'.[87] Seghers's emphasis on the role of mistaken identity, Slodounik observes, 'destabilizes the concept of immutable identities in a period of upheaval and transition'.[88] The theme of mistaken as well as of shifting and fragmented identity may be regarded as not only a metaphor for the wider political developments at the heart of *Transit*, but also as a documentation of historical experiences. Just like the social and political relations depicted in the novel, the identities of many of its protagonists, too, may be described as transitory. This is most explicitly developed in the narrator, whom the literature usually understands to move between three main levels of identity.[89] Upon closer inspection, however, this fragmentation of identity goes even further. Each level of the narrator's identity, akin to the structure of a Russian nesting doll, can be seen to contain in itself several additional layers of transitoriness, thus deconstructing the concept of identity to its very core. At the end, no 'true' identity remains. The narrator's primary identity, his birth name, had become unusable with the loss of his papers during his internment in the German concentration camp, an event which rendered the proof of his identity both administratively impossible and politically dangerous. This results in his *de facto* statelessness and in a degree of dissociation from the primary identity, as is revealed, for example, in a short scene placed almost exactly at the middle of the novel. Here, two fellow former concentration camp inmates call out the narrator's name when accidentally crossing his path in Marseille, causing the narrator to start in shock. The encounter also leads him to reflect on the exemplariness of his bearing multiple identities under the conditions of exile:

[87] Slodounik, p. 172.
[88] Slodounik, p. 174.
[89] See, e.g., Slodounik, p. 173.

> Auf meinem Heimweg über den Cours Belsunce rief jemand aus der Glasveranda des Cafés Rotonde meinen alten Namen. Ich schrak zusammen wie jedesmal, wenn man mich bei dem echten Namen rief. Und jetzt und immer beruhigte ich mich, daß fast alle Leute hier unter allerlei Namen herumliefen, und sei es auch nur, weil sie ihren Namen in fremde Sprachen übersetzten.[90]

At a secondary level of identity, the narrator adopts the name Seidler by obtaining a refugee certificate of a former Saar resident in order to facilitate his flight through France. He maintains this identity throughout the novel and, at its conclusion, his settlement in France is dependent on the adopted status of a Saar refugee as well. At a tertiary level, the narrator, as Seidler, adopts the identity of Weidel in his dealings with the Mexican consulate. It can be inferred from the implied background stories that, at all three levels of identity, the narrator remains, at least *de facto*, stateless.

Edward Said, in his essay *Reflection on Exile*, observes that exile is 'fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past'.[91] Deprived of familiar social connections, the stability of home and community which used to function as an anchor of self, the refugee faces the challenge 'to reassemble an identity'[92] in their new environment.[93] Under the conditions of the regime of modern movement control, however, the essential components of this process of reassembly are not merely social and psychological, but also formal and political. An illustrative example of this is given in a scene in *Transit* during which the narrator, after having spent a month in Marseille, begins to feel content with his situation, before this sentiment is abruptly upended when the local registration officer informs him of the impossibility of prolonging his stay. The narrator recounts:

> Inzwischen war der Monat zu Ende gegangen, für den man mir Aufenthalt gewährt hatte. Ich fühlte mich schon ganz eingemeindet. Ich hatte ein Zimmer, einen Freund, eine Geliebte. Doch der Beamte war anderer Meinung. Er sagte: 'Sie müssen morgen abfahren. Wir dulden hier nur Fremde, die uns den Beweis erbringen, daß sie die Abfahrt beabsichtigen. Sie haben nicht einmal ein Visum, ja nicht einmal die Aussicht auf ein Visum. Es liegt kein Grund vor, Ihren Aufenthalt zu verlängern.' Da fing ich an zu zittern. Ich zitterte vielleicht im tiefsten Inneren, weil der Beamte recht hatte. Ich war gar nicht eingemeindet. Mein Dach war fragwürdig in der Rue de la Providence. Meine Freundschaft mit Georg Binnet war unerprobt […] und was Nadine anging, fing ich nicht schon an, ihrer müde zu werden? Das war dann die Strafe für die unverbindliche Flüchtigkeit meines Durchzugs – ich mußte fort. (T 66-67)

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[90] Anna Seghers, *Transit* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1974), p. 155. After the first citation, references to *Transit* will be given in the text as T.
[91] Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), pp. 181–93 (p. 184).
[92] Said, p. 184.
[93] See also Margarete J. Landwehr, 'Empathy and Community in the Age of Refugees: Petzold's Radical Translation of Seghers' Transit', *Arts*, 9.4 (2020), 118–30 (p. 118).

The passage speaks of the psychological, emotional, and social impact of the refugee's administrative status, and the way in which the regime of official documentation can systematically disrupt a person's various levels of identity, from the physical to the intersubjective. When it was left to his own judgement, the narrator had felt socially integrated, with his basic needs met by his access to a place of shelter, community, and a love relationship. The officer's interjection, confronting the narrator with a conflicting formal reality, however, leads him instantly to question his own perception. This new reality first hits him at the most immediate level, his physicality, causing him to shiver. In a manner calling to mind the mechanism of internalised coercion described in Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, the state's direct, but concealed, access to the narrator's body is illustrated in its anticipation of and pre-emptive compliance with the administrative order to 'move', as expressed in the act of trembling.

Just as the narrator's body is destabilised, his previously secure sense of self and of community erodes, too, partially in response to the need to derive cognitive meaning from his physical reaction. 'Perhaps I shivered at my deepest core because the official was right', he concludes. Having been made aware of the precarity of his official status, the internal bonds that he had felt with his environment dwindle as well. This destabilisation of identity proves so structural that even the two additional identities that the narrator adopts throughout the story cannot present an escape. While they offer certain short-term protections and privileges, the new identities each come with their inherent precarities, too, in the end accentuating rather than remedying the narrator's own insecure identity and sense of belonging.

3.3 Seidler: Saarland and the Transitoriness of Borders

Seidler's papers are procured through a family in France, the Binnets, whose daughter Yvonne the narrator briefly dated before the war. Now married to a local official, Yvonne tasks her husband with finding documents for her ex-boyfriend, with the main motive, as the narrator suspects, '[ihn] rasch loszuwerden' (T 40). After a night of drinking with other officials, the husband returns, successfully,

> mit einem gelben Papierchen, einem überzähligen Flüchtlingsschein, den ein Mann aus dieser Gemeinde wohl zurückgegeben hatte, als er andere bessere Papiere bekam. Seidler hatte der Mann geheißen, dessen schlechterer Schein für mich der bessere war, er war nach der Abstimmung aus der Saar nach dem Elsaß

> eingewandert. Yvonnes Mann drückte mir noch einen Stempel auf, wir suchten das Dorf im Schulatlas, nach seiner Lage mußte es glücklicherweise verbrannt sein mit dem Einwohnerregister. (T 39-40)

Both the description of the highly informal path to acquisition of the document and the diminutive 'Papierchen' express the narrator's almost ironising detachment from the official processes of bureaucratic identification. The document, created by the state to unambiguously distinguish the individual bearer, becomes disconnected from its intended purpose. Instead, it is here treated as an article of trade, indicating the development of a trend which would escalate to the present day: the commodification of citizenship.[94] The real Seidler left behind his identity for another, 'better' one as soon as he was able to, whereas, for the narrator, the new official identity he acquires is better than none.

The passage above also acknowledges an aspect of the cultural acquisition of identity, by mentioning that the narrator is inducted into his newly adopted region of origin through the school atlas. The opportunistic remark that Seidler's home village 'mußte […] glücklicherweise verbrannt sein mit dem Einwohnerregister' (T 40), establishes a theme which recurs in the narrator's adoption of Weidel's identity. Within the administrative system of movement control that frames the novel, the freedom of movement of some (in this case, the narrator) is enabled by the extinction of others (such as Weidel, and the inhabitants or, at least, the administrative apparatus of the Saar village).

Of the two alien identities the narrator assumes throughout the novel, only Weidel's is customarily analysed in the secondary literature. The novel gives little information about the 'real' Seidler, of whom no more is revealed than what is cited in the passage above. Yet, while little is known about the personal story of Seidler, it appears significant that the narrator assumes the identity of an immigrant from the Saar region (*Saarland*): a territory whose history exemplifies the transitoriness of borders and nationhood in the twentieth century. The resource-rich Saar region had been an important centre of industrialisation in Germany and the focal point of cultural struggles since the failed Revolutions of 1848/49.

Having formed part of the German Empire before World War I, the territory of the Saar Basin (then called the *Saargebiet*) was occupied by the United Kingdom and France between 1920 and 1935 under a League of Nations mandate, as determined by the Treaty of Versailles. During this time, France expended considerable efforts on both the economic and cultural integration of the region, such as through the establishment of French schools. Following Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the special political status of the Saar region, which formed the

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[94] For a recent case study on the subject, see, e.g., Marilyn Grell-Brisk, 'Eluding National Boundaries: A Case Study of Commodified Citizenship and the Transnational Capitalist Class', *Societies*, 8.2 (2018), 35.

last remaining territory under foreign occupation, attracted a considerable number of regime critics to move there. Opponents to Hitler throughout Germany subsequently canvassed for the Saar Basin to remain under international control. Following a heated campaign in which propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels joined forces with the Catholic church and anti-Bolshevik campaigners, a local plebiscite was held in 1935, the 'Abstimmung' mentioned in the passage above, in which 98% of the voting Saar population participated and which resulted in the return of the territory to Germany. (In the referendum, an overwhelming majority, 90.8%, elected to re-join the German Reich, with a mere 8.8% voting to maintain the occupied status and 0.4% wishing to join France.) After the conclusion of the war, the Saar region became a French protectorate, subject to attempts at full integration into France and even the temporary existence of an autonomous Saarland citizenship, which, however, was never recognised by Germany.[95] It was, again, a referendum, which, in 1955, led to the region rejoining Germany in 1957.

That the 'real' Seidler emigrated as a result of the election implies that he was a regime critic belonging to one of the minority groups of voters. Of the approximately 6000 Saar refugees who fled to France following the election, only around 4000 were officially admitted. As the owner of a 'Flüchtlingsschein', Seidler would have been among the latter group, whose residence in France was contingent on having proven political engagement in Germany.[96] Seidler's origin is also indicative in social terms. Ruth Fabian and Corinna Coulmas found in their study of German immigration to France that the overwhelming majority of German immigrants between 1933 and 1944 were of middle-class background, around 80% of them Jewish, with a very high proportion of intellectuals, artists, and academics. In Seghers's historically accurate depiction, this milieu is also dominant in the migrating characters appearing in *Transit*, of whom the writer Weidel is a typical representative. '[D]er Exodus der deutschen geistigen Elite', Fabian and Coulmas observe, 'ist eines der bekanntesten und meistbehandelten Themen der Nazizeit'.[97] Given the attention that the intellectual elite has received both in literary and academic discussions of German migration, it is notable that the narrator himself is decidedly an outsider to this group, with almost anti-intellectual tendencies shining through in his professed aversion to writers, for example, as well as his confession of having never in his life read an entire book (T 25). 'Meine Welt ist das nicht', the narrator

[95] See Ingo von Münch, *Die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit: Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), p. 81.
[96] See, e.g., Ruth Fabian and Corinna Coulmas, *Die deutsche Emigration in Frankreich nach 1933* (München: K.G. Saur, 1978), p. 45.
[97] Fabian and Coulmas, p. 78.

comments on the milieu of writers early in the novel (T 25). It can be assumed that his social background more closely resembles that of his *alter ego*, Seidler, as most of the refugees from the Saar region were of working-class background.[98] Seghers can thus be seen to provide an additional layer to the outsider perspective that the narrator already assumes as a stateless migrant.

Like Gales in *Das Totenschiff*, *Transit's* protagonist identifies as a storyteller, not as a writer. The narrator's recollection of a scene during which he first encountered Marie underscores his emphatic disidentification from the writer's profession: 'Eine Frau kam herein. Was soll ich Ihnen darüber sagen? Ich kann nur sagen, sie kam herein. Der Mann, der sich das Leben nahm in der Rue de Vaugirard [namely, Weidel], hat es anders ausdrücken können. Ich kann nur sagen: sie kam herein' (T 89-90). The narrator's adamant insistence on direct, prosaic language and on his inability to produce a more poetic or detailed rendering of his experience (which is contradicted by his highly elaborate style in other parts of the novel) underscores his (self-)positioning as an outsider *vis-à-vis* the predominantly artistic, middle-class milieu which his and Seidler's social backgrounds bring along with it. The narrator's and Seidler's precarious milieu, distancing them from the realm of the professional authors, establishes a particular narrative situation which echoes *Transit's* eponymous motif: the ephemeral quality of the oral as opposed to the more enduring written word resonates with the themes of transitoriness of identity and relationships established throughout the novel.

3.4 Weidel: Identity, Death, and NS Citizenship

The identity of Weidel, just like Seidler's, contains multiple layers of complexity. On an extradiegetic level, Seghers produced in Weidel a reference to the literary tradition of East European Jewry, who constituted the principal target of the Nazi genocide, by basing the character on her former friend Ernst Weiss. Sharing some of his fictional counterpart's destiny, Weiss was a Jewish physician and author of Moravian origin who took his own life in Paris in 1940 when German troops invaded the capital.[99] While little detail of the German persecution

[98] On the social background of Saar refugees, see Fabian and Coulmas, p. 112.
[99] See Fehervary, 'Anna Seghers, a Writer Who Defended the Wretched of the Earth'.

of European Jews is explicitly discussed in *Transit*, an analysis of this historical context will be shown to be illuminating for parts of the plotline.

On an intradiegetic level, one of Weidel's most remarkable feats, together with his Jewish background and profession as an author, is his 'absent presence'. Even though the narrator never meets him alive, the deceased writer constitutes one of the most dominant characters of the novel, perpetually haunting its pages, as it were. Weidel lives on in the official registers of the consulates and in the expectations of Marie, and he even continues to form part of his friends' daily experience, who, unaware of his passing, occasionally believe they have spotted him around Marseille. At a gathering in a café, a fellow writer, Hermann Achselroth, relates:

> Ich traf ihn kürzlich im Mont Vertoux […] er grolle. Er krümmte sich hinter seiner Zeitung zusammen, damit es ja nicht zu einem Wiedersehen käme. Ihr wißt doch, Weidel im Café steckt immer den Kopf hinter eine Zeitung, damit ihn ja keiner anredet und in die Zeitung hat er mit einer Stecknadel kleine Löchlein gestochen, damit er versteckt dem Treiben der Menschen zusehen kann. (T 156-7)[100]

Achselroth's opening subclause, 'Ihr wißt doch', addresses the gathering group to achieve social affirmation of his mental image of Weidel – an image which, quite literally, keeps the writer alive in the perception of his former friends. The passage speaks of the production of identity as an intersubjective process whose force can transcend even the passing of the person being identified.

A parallel process takes place at the administrative level, where the circulation of Weidel's identity documents between different officials appears sufficient proof of his continued existence. When considering Weidel's implied fictional background story, questions of identity, absence, and documentation are complicated even further by being intertwined with issues of racialisation. Not much is made explicit about Weidel's experience in exile, and the National Socialists' race policies, which form the relevant background for the flight of most of the refugees appearing in *Transit*, are barely discussed directly. Based on Weidel's former place of residence and mother tongue, it can, however, be reasonably assumed that he was a German citizen, and some aspects of his destiny may, therefore, be inferred by reference to the development of citizenship legislation in Germany. Marie reports Weidel's flight from Germany in the year of Hitler's coming to power, 1933. '"Er könnte das Land nicht mehr ertragen"', she recalls him explaining, he planned to go '"'Weit weg und für lange'"' (T 166).

[100] Towards the end of the novel, a variation of this scene is repeated when another friend (only identified as 'der dicke Musiker', notes in passing: 'Ich habe ihn [Weidel] übrigens eben gesehen. […] Gesehen ist freilich übertrieben. Ich sah das Zeitungsblatt, hinter dem er sich verschanzt hielt' (T 276).

As a Jew, Weidel's character would have been severely affected by the changes in legislation which progressively deprived German Jews, among other groups, of citizenship privileges from 1933 onwards. At the time the novel plays, 1940/41, Weidel would have been likely to have either already lost his German citizenship, or, at the very least, to have been degraded to a subcategory of national belonging, that of a 'Staatsangehöriger'.

1935 marked the introduction of the *Reichsbürgergesetz*, which established the new category of 'Reichsbürger', limited to 'Staatsangehörige deutschen oder artverwandten Blutes' (§ 2 paragraph 1). Dividing 'Reichsbürger' and 'Staatsangehörige', the former were declared 'alleinige Träger der vollen politischen Rechte' (§ 2 paragraph 2), legally cementing the treatment (already initiated earlier) of Jews and 'Zigeuner' as second-class citizens with no political rights.[101] The *Reichsbürgergesetz* had been preceded, in July 1933, by the *Gesetz über den Widerruf von Einbürgerungen und die Aberkennung der deutschen Staatsangehörigkeit*, which allowed the state to reverse 'undesirable' naturalisations made during the Weimar Republic (§ 1) and to effect the denaturalisation of those 'Staatsangehörige' residing abroad, 'sofern sie durch ein Verhalten, das gegen die Pflicht zur Treue gegen Reich und Volk verstößt, die deutschen Belange geschädigt haben' (§ 2 paragraph 1). This legislation was applied extensively by the Reich Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, who in August 1933 alone denaturalised a large number of prominent German intellectuals and artists, such as, among many others, Lion Feuchtwanger, Philipp Scheidemann, Kurt Tucholsky, Heinrich Mann, and Alfred Kerr.[102] Given Weidel's intradiegetic fame as an author, which even extends internationally, and the mention of his regime critical work, it may well be possible that, in *Transit's* fictional reality, his name would have been on the list of denaturalised writers.

Nazi Germany's race legislation would also have severely affected Weidel's romantic and family relationships. It appears that Weidel's wife, Marie, would have been classified as a 'Reichsbürger'. Her family, at least initially, does not seem directly impacted by Hitler's rise to power,[103] and, according to her own report, her plan to leave the country stems from a casual,

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[101] See, e.g., Münch, p. 63.

[102] See Münch, p. 69. What still required individual action under the 'Gesetz über den Widerruf von Einbürgerungen und die Aberkennung der deutschen Staatsangehörigkeit' became collective law in November 1941, with the eleventh provision of the 'Reichsbürgergesetz'. § 1 decreed: 'Ein Jude, der seinen gewöhnlichen Aufenthalt im Ausland hat, kann nicht deutscher Staatsangehöriger sein. Der gewöhnliche Aufenthalt im Ausland ist dann gegeben, wenn sich ein Jude im Ausland unter Umständen aufhält, die erkennen lassen, daß er dort nicht nur vorübergehend verweilt'. This legislation collectively denaturalised all Jews residing abroad, whether they had gone into exile or been transported to one of the concentration camps outside the borders of the German Reich.

[103] This is indicated by Marie's statement: '"Mein Vater konnte zwar auch den Hitler nicht leiden, doch war es sehr weit bis zum Nichtmehrertragen"' (T 166).

adventurous impulse rather than urgent distress: 'Ich hätte auch einmal gerne fremde Länder gesehen', she replies upon hearing of Weidel's intended flight, and spontaneously decides to join him (T 166-67). The marriage between Marie and Weidel, at least if entered into after 1935, would have been subject to the *Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*, which prohibited romantic relations (§ 2) and marriages (§ 1 paragraph 1) 'zwischen Juden und Staatsangehörigen deutschen oder artverwandten Blutes' and voided all marriages which had been entered into in contradiction of this law, even if (as would have been the case for Marie and Weidel) this happened abroad (§ 1 paragraph 1). The law led to 2211 convictions between 1935 and 1943, with preliminary proceedings initiated much more often.[104]

While the legal framework in which Weidel's and Marie's connection is embedded is never spelled out in *Transit*, it mirrors the romantic complications that bind them, and which, as Weidel's *alter ego*, the narrator is also drawn into. On the level of genre, Weidel's and Marie's love story forms part of the tradition of tragic romances, whose history stretches back to Greek antiquity. The circumstances of Weidel's suicide, which would likely have been averted had he received the letters informing him too late of his lover's return and of his opportunity for a safe escape from Nazi persecution, appear to indicate an intertextual reference to the tragic death of Shakespeare's Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*. Romeo and Juliet, too, are forbidden to live out their love, in their case due to the rules imposed by their patriarchal families, whose sanctioning function, in Weidel's and Marie's historical context, has shifted to the authority of the state. In a similar manner to Weidel, Romeo takes his life based on the false assumption of his lover's death, while Juliet's letter, meant to inform him of the contrary, is on its way to him. Against the legal and genre background of *Transit's* love story, Marie's romantic oscillation, her separation from her husband, her lingering indecision, and her ultimately unbreakable bond with and will to return to Weidel appears to echo a conflict-laden situation in which her marriage would have been legally void and politically dangerous, but still socially and emotionally significant.

Weidel's background story is paradigmatic for the destiny of tens of thousands of German Jews whose exile led them into statelessness. Like other totalitarian countries after World War I, particularly the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany purposefully employed

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[104] Alexandra Przyrembel, *'Rassenschande': Reinheitsmythos und Vernichtungslegitimation im Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), p. 499. Przyrembel recounts that of the 5152 preliminary proceedings initiated during this period in Berlin alone, 694 led to convictions, which would imply that proceeding rates were around seven times higher.

denaturalisation as a tool for the psycho-social disintegration of the individual as well as the pursuit of wider domestic and foreign policy goals. Arendt remarks that early persecution of German Jews, resulting in their forced exile across Europe, should be understood less as an attempt to get rid of the Jews, than as an effort to spread antisemitic sentiment among Western democracies which had historically shown a 'friendly disposure' towards them. Denationalisation and forced migration thus functioned as an instrument for propagating the National Socialist value system internationally. Arendt cites a letter from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, circulated to all national authorities in the wake of the 1938 November pogroms:

> The emigration movement of only about 100,000 Jews has already sufficed to awaken the interest of many countries in the Jewish danger. […] Germany is very interested in maintaining the dispersal of Jewry […] the influx of Jews in all parts of the world invokes the opposition of the native population and therefore forms the best propaganda for the German Jewish policy. […] The poorer and therefore more burdensome the immigrant Jew is to the country absorbing him, the stronger the country will react.[105]

Reiterating the conscious use of denationalisation in the pursuit of the production of undesirable migrants across Europe, Arendt goes on to quote the official SS newspaper, the *Schwarze Korps*, which 'stated explicitly in 1938 that if the world was not yet convinced that the Jews were the scum of the earth, it soon would be when unidentifiable beggars, without nationality, without money, and without passports crossed their frontiers'.[106] *Transit* illustrates the cruel efficacy of these political calculations. The narrator's description of the masses of ragged and starved refugees queuing for bread, resident permits, and visas, which Weidel, had he still been alive, would have formed part of, appears almost as the direct realisation of the Nazis' policy aims cited above.

The effectiveness of the National Socialists' strategy was also proven on the stages of international diplomacy that set the framework for the regime of Jewish migration during the 1930s and 1940s. Preceding the 1938 November pogroms by just four months, the international Évian Conference, held in Évian-les-Bains, France, between 6-15 July, had already delivered some evidence that would serve the Nazis' later conclusions.[107] The gathering was convened to address the plight of German and Austrian Jews fleeing racialised persecution and came at

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[105] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 268; for the original translation, see also *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington, 1946), p. 87 ff.
[106] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 269.
[107] Hitler sardonically responded to the conference: 'I can only hope and expect that the other world, which has such deep sympathy for these criminals [Jews], will at least be generous enough to convert this sympathy into practical aid. We, on our part, are ready to put all these criminals at the disposal of these countries, for all I care, even on luxury ships'. Cited in: Ronnie Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 137.

the initiative of US president Franklin D. Roosevelt, presumably in an attempt to deflect attention from the United States' own low refugee quota by committing other nations to a higher intake.[108] Roosevelt's plan did not succeed and the conference was deemed a failure. Of the 32 participating nations, only the Dominican Republic offered to accept a large number of Jewish refugees, up to 100,000 people. And even the Dominican Republic's proposal, which was never fully realised, was not a humanitarian response to a situation of racialised atrocity, but formed part of Rafael Trujillo's own racial agenda by which the country's dictator sought to 'lighten the population of DR as he had previously sought through genocide'.[109] Overall, the impression prevailed even in the contemporary international media that Chaim Weizmann's statement, published two years earlier in the *Manchester Guardian*, had still held true during the conference: 'the world seemed to be divided into two parts – those places where the Jews could not live and those where they could not enter'.[110]

Spreading more than antisemitic hostility in the popular and political imaginations around the world, the international migration caused by National Socialist policies must also be regarded as having provided an occasion to precipitate the development of new technologies of identity and movement control in the countries of (potential) destination. France assumed a leading role in this respect. In absolute numbers, Germany's western neighbour was the largest European immigration country for German and German-speaking refugees in the 1930s and 1940s. Arieh Tartakower and Kurt Grossman calculate that, between 1933 and 1943, about 285,000 German speaking emigrants were on French soil at some point during their flight, though most of them left shortly after their arrival.[111] Coinciding with a time when France sought to develop and protect its domestic welfare programmes with the support of increasingly elaborate methods of centralised data collection and statistical analysis, the growing number of migrants entering the country prompted an expansion of these technologies into the realm of border control, too. France introduced a centralised registration system for immigration during the mid-1930s, earlier than Great Britain and the USA, where central registers of citizens and

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[108] Allen Wells, *Tropical Zion: General Trujillo, FDR, and the Jews of Sosua* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 6–8.
[109] Eve Stern, 'The Power of Whiteness: The Jews of Sousa and the Unspoken Parsley Massacre', *The Times of Israel* <https://web.archive.org/web/20201101074031/https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-power-of-whiteness-the-jews-of-sousa-and-the-unspoken-parsley-massacre/> [accessed 20 July 2021]; see also Robert D. Crassweller, *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1966).
[110] *Manchester Guardian*, May 23, 1936; cited in A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and the Third Reich, 1933-1939* (London: Elek Books, 1973), p. 112.
[111] Arieh Tartakower and Kurt R. Grossmann, 'The Jewish Refugee', *American Journal of International Law*, 39.3 (1945), 640–41; see also Fabian and Coulmas, p. 157. The authors estimate that France accommodated about 150,000 German exiles between 1933 and 1940 alone.

foreigners were introduced only after the outbreak of the war. Foreigners in France's Third Republic were recorded by the various markers of identity given in the passport, but also by the biometrical data of fingerprints.[112] In the aftermath of the 1929 world economic crisis and policies of austerity, the advancement of new models of social citizenship and the technologies they were based on became intimately entwined with the further development of instruments facilitating the exclusion of those who were deemed not to belong.[113]

Weidel's situation of being bureaucratically 'alive' while physically dead presents, in many ways, a (reverse) analogy of the impossible situation faced by stateless people of the time. Despite international attempts during the 1930s and 1940s to manage the status of stateless people by means such as the Nansen passport,[114] the stateless person's very existence, as discussed above, still constituted a bureaucratic anomaly that defied the logic of national belonging and was, therefore, denied wherever possible. As in *Das Totenschiff*, a strong symbolic connection is established in *Transit* between statelessness, identity papers, and the theme of death. Weidel, one of the very few characters in *Transit* who has been granted all necessary travel and identity documents for free international passage, receives these only after his death. The motif of the deceased Weidel living on through his identity documents presents a mirror image to the conundrum of *Das Totenschiff*, where the narrator, physically alive and breathing, is led to conclude that the absence of his papers implied his death.[115] The theme of a person being kept alive, or imitating a state of aliveness, by means of the bureaucratic system is repeated at several points throughout the novel. Remembering the masses of fellow refugees waiting with him in line to be registered at the local authority, the narrator reflects, for example:

> Alle diese Heerscharen, die zufällig noch ein wenig am Leben geblieben waren, oder sich nur so stellten, sollten unbedingt registriert werden. Da fand ich meinen kleinen Kapellmeister wieder, klappernd vor Kälte, als sei er aus einem Grab gekrochen, um noch einmal mit den Lebenden registriert zu werden […]. (T 113)

Again, echoing the theme of the novel's title, the exiles are here depicted as occupying an intermediate, transitioning space between life and death. As in *Das Totenschiff*, the administrative apparatus occupies the position of a gatekeeper between the realm of life and death: it presents the seat of ultimate biopolitical power. Yet while, in *Das Totenschiff*, the state has the power to 'kill' (both figuratively and literally) those who do not fit into its system of

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[112] See Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, p. 257.
[113] See, e.g., Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, p. 260.
[114] See, e.g., Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, pp. 161, 261.
[115] As Gales reflects: 'Im Grunde und ganz ohne Scherz gesprochen war ich ja schon lange tot' (DT 83).

identification, in *Transit*, this power is escalated to a supernatural, quasi-biblical level: bureaucracy, here, is capable even of bringing the 'dead' back to life.

Just as *Transit's* dead-alive 'Heerscharen' of refugees occupy a liminal space between life and death, so do they also with regard to political domination and sovereignty. On the one hand, the refugees' ragged, vulnerable physicality presents them as being entirely at the mercy of the state, evoking associations with the Agambian (and, by extension, Benjaminian) 'bare life' which forms the suppressed yet essential basis of every political regime, constituting 'the first content of sovereign power'.[116] Calling to mind Rilke's depiction of 'die Fortgeworfenenen', the Parisian 'outcasts' his eponymous narrator observes in *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), *Transit's* exiles, too, appear as 'Abfälle, Schalen von Menschen, die das Schicksal ausgespien hat'.[117]

The similarity in the depiction of Seghers's and Rilke's respective 'outcasts' also illustrates the developments which reshaped the concept of citizenship in central Europe during the interwar years. In *Malte*, the Parisian outcasts can be assumed to be domestic, and the narrator's own, Danish, nationality does not prevent him from experiencing a direct kinship with them. In Seghers, by contrast, the expansion of the welfare state and the strengthening of national borders during the 1920s and 1930s has already led to the (real or constructed) foreigner as opposed to the internal 'other' being a focus of the exclusion during the 1940s. And while Rilke (based on his tendentially conservative socio-political stance), may still have been able to speak of a woeful 'destiny' as the cause of the Parisian 'outcasts'' deprivation, there is no doubt that *Transit's* 'abgeschiedene Seelen' (T 122) are the product of a consciously engineered political process.

Yet, at the same time as being wholly subjected to the power of this process, the refugees also seem constantly on the cusp of eluding or even surmounting it. Similar to Rilke's 'outcasts', *Transit's* refugees are endowed with an elusive, uncanny power of their own. The exiled masses, increasingly outnumbering 'die Lebenden, die hier ihre festen Siedlungen hatten' (T 122), at times take on the form of a force of nature, a 'flood' too strong to be contained by human action: 'Ich staunte nur', the narrator comments, 'daß der Präfekt und die Herren und Beamten der Stadt sich noch immer weiter so stellten, als sei der Strom Abgeschiedener etwas, was man mit Menschenmacht eindämmen könnte' (T 122-23). And just as Rilke's Malte finds himself continuoually at risk of joining 'die Fortgeworfenenen', whom

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[116] Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, p. 83. Agamben's analysis draws partially on Walter Benjamin's essay 'Zur Kritik der Gewalt' (1921) and his concept of 'bloßes Leben', developed therein.
[117] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Köln: Anaconda, 2003), p. 32.

he believes see him as part of their group ('Die wissen, daß ich eigentlich zu ihnen gehöre'),[118] *Transit's* narrator, perhaps partially induced through his identity entanglement with Weidel, faces the constant challenge of maintaining his outsider position towards the 'flood' of refugees that he fears to be swept into: 'Ich fürchtete mich beim Zusehen, ich könnte in diesen Strom hineingeraten […] als könnte ich in den Strom gerissen werden durch einen Gewaltstreich oder durch eine Verlockung' (T 113).

3.4 Overcoming the Home/Death Dichotomy: The Failed Bildungsroman *and the Search for a 'Third Space'*

The connection of death and exile has been a recurring subject in European literature for more than 2000 years. Then and now, both fictional and theoretical accounts speak of the existential dangers a loss of organised community brings for the individual. In the classical political thought of Aristotle, for example, societal integration functions as the marker of humanness as such. As he explains in his *Politics*: 'anyone who lacks the capacity to share in community, or has not the need to because of his [own] self-sufficiency, is no part of the city and as a result is either a beast or a god'.[119] According to this stance, a person can truly actualise themselves only as the citizen of a *polis*, while the voluntary or involuntary exclusion from community would mean either death, or a shift into the sub- or superhuman categories of 'beast' or 'god'.[120]

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, in another parallel with *Transit*, also thematises the connection of death and exile. In Act 3, Scene 3, of the play, Romeo faces the news of his banishment from his hometown, Verona, due to his unintentional involvement in a duel during which he killed Juliet's cousin, Tybalt. During the scene, Friar Lawrence delivers the message that the Prince had shown mercy by rendering a 'gentler judgement' than the customary death sentence: 'Not body's death, but body's banishment'. Romeo reacts to the announcement not with relief, but with desperation, and the following dialogue unfolds:

> *Romeo:*
> Ha, banishment! Be merciful, say 'death',
> For exile hath more terror in his look,

[118] Rilke, p. 31.
[119] Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. by T.A. Sinclair (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 1253a29.
[120] For Aristotle, like for most philosophers of ancient Greece, this political theory applied to free men only, not women or slaves.

> Much more than death. Do not say 'banishment'.
>
> *Friar Lawrence:*
> Hence from Verona art thou banished.
> Be patient, for the world is broad and wide.
>
> *Romeo:*
> There is no world without Verona walls
> But purgatory, torture, hell itself.
> Hence 'banished' is banished from the world,
> And world's exile is death; then 'banished'
> Is death misterm'd. […]

Following the binary logic of classical political thought, Romeo, in this scene, shows himself convinced that survival outside of his home community is impossible, and that exile presents merely a cloaked synonym for an even crueller form of capital punishment: 'then "banished" | Is death misterm'd'. In his despair, Romeo is unreceptive to the Friar's assurance that 'the world is broad and wide', by which he suggests the existence of other opportunities beyond the dichotomy of home and death.

In *Transit*, Romeo's reasoning can be seen as being acted out by Weidel, whose suicide signals a surrender to the binary logic of home and death. The narrator's path, by contrast, could be understood as a testing of the Friar's claim and an attempt to avail himself of the opportunity of an alternative space beyond the dualistic paradigm of belonging. The novel concludes with the narrator's deciding against the journey to the Americas and instead on staying in France, where he seems newly socially integrated and takes up labour as a farm worker. This may be read as proof of his fully overcoming any 'temptation' ('Verlockung', T 113) to join the stream of refugees, an act which, both intradiegetically and historically, would have implied a high risk of death. Critics generally understand this ending as a successful resolution of the narrator's personal predicament in the structure of a coming-of-age story or *Bildungsroman*. Margarete Landwehr summarises:

> Seidler's [i.e., the narrator's] journey reflects the trajectory of the classical *Bildungsroman* hero as he matures from an irresolute wanderer without close ties, strong convictions, or clear goals to a mature individual with stable friendships, love, home, and work, and commitment to a cause, the French resistance, when he rediscovers his sense of honor and integrity.[121]

[121] Landwehr, pp. 124–25; for a similar reading, see also Sicks, p. 531.

While the narrator's integration into a new, consciously chosen community certainly presents a break with the more traditional assumption of an individual's permanent binding to their community of origin, a certain trace of the home/death dichotomy may still be detected even in this reading. Survival, according to most critics of this novel, is granted not so much *despite* the loss of home, but rather because it is *replaced* by a new one.

Yet it seems to me that the capaciousness of the novel, with its multi-layered and occasionally self-contradictory ductus, also leaves room for a divergent interpretation. I believe that a case may be made for the narrator not finding the stability, self-identity, and home that would be implied in his successful conclusion of the *Bildungsroman* path, but rather that the novel's ending suggests the discovery of an even more radical 'third space' between death and community: the hero's 'settling' in his continued situation of non-belonging and transit.

Landwehr notes that the narrator 'eventually creates a new persona for himself both in the personal sphere – he finds a home and work – and a national one – he discovers solidarity with French resistance fighters'.[122] In support of the interpretation that the narrator puts down new roots in France, Landwehr and others cite mainly two passages occurring at the end of *Transit*. In one scene, the narrator is told by his French friend, Georg Binnet, that he had become 'one of them', most likely referring to the French resistance: '"Du gehörst zu uns. Was uns geschieht, geschieht dir"' (T 278). In a second scene, the narrator speaks of his new employment as a farm-hand and his will to fight with the resistance (T 278-79). Kai Sicks, broadly in line with Landwehr's reading, comments on these scenes:

> Georg Binnet attestiert [dem Ich-Erzähler] die Zugehörigkeit zum freien Frankreich […]. So öffnet sich dem Erzähler am Ende eine Existenz als südfranzösischer Landarbeiter und Widerstandskämpfer. Anders als für alle anderen Figuren des Romans vollzieht sich an ihm eine utopisch anmutende Akkulturation, gewinnt er eine neue Heimat […].[123]

There is strong textual evidence for Sicks's and Landwehr's analysis, yet a more pessimistic reading of the same two passages, especially when bearing in mind the bureaucratic context of citizenship, also lends room for other interpretations that are less straightforward. While the narrator responds to Binnet's inviting statement with some enthusiasm, the reflections that follow the passage convey that he understands himself to maintain a perilous status. Instead of embracing his new identity within a country idyll and secure, long-term employment on the farm, the narrator describes his situation with guarded caution: 'Ich bin nicht auf Landarbeit versessen, ich bin durch und durch Städter. […] Die Arbeit ist erträglich. Ich bin jetzt *ein paar*

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[122] Landwehr, p. 123.
[123] Sicks, p. 531.

Wochen dort' (T 278-79, emphasis added). And while the narrator does confirm a close internal connection to France and the resistance: 'Ich will jetzt Gutes und Böses mit *meinen* Leuten teilen' (T 279, emphasis added), he also remarks on the same page, with more distance and reservation: 'So gibt mir denn *diese* Familie [the Binnets], gibt mir *dieses* Volk *bis auf weiteres* Obdach' (T 279, emphases added).

Another look at the contemporary laws and regulations concerning citizenship and migration suggests that the narrator's restraint is well-founded. His state of social transitoriness would most likely also have presented itself bureaucratically, namely in a continued status of statelessness. Having finally left Weidel's papers behind, the narrator, at the end, returns to the identity of a refugee from the Saar region. He reports on his move to the French countryside:

> das Gesetz ist immer noch gültig, daß man Genehmigungen braucht, um seinen Aufenthalt zu wechseln. Ich ging zum Dorf-Bürgermeister mit allen neuen einwandfreien Papieren [again provided informally by Yvonne's husband]. Ich stellte mich als eine Art Saarflüchtling vor, der den Winter in einem anderen Department verbracht hat und nun zur Arbeit ans Meer fährt. (T 279)

Rather than having found a stable home and full integration into the French nation, which, ultimately, would only have been possible through his naturalisation as a citizen, the narrator maintains his insecure legal status as a refugee to the very end. By adopting, for a second time, the transitory identity of a Saar refugee, he associates himself with a group of migrants whose typical journey during the war shared many characteristics with his own. As opposed to the large majority of the German-speaking emigrants who crossed France between 1933 and 1945, Saar refugees did not usually transition to a third country and, during the early years, were frequently able to reckon on support in France. Fabian and Coulmas point out that the fate of Saar refugees often differed strikingly from that of German and Austrian emigrants in that they were usually treated preferentially at least during the pre-war and early war years.[124]

The privileges of the early years of arrival dwindled, however, as the war continued, resulting in the detention of many Saar refugees in French internment camps and, in some cases, their deportation to Germany, where they were usually prosecuted as political defectors. The small number of Jewish Saar refugees on French territory faced deportation to German concentration camps. For non-Jewish Saar refugees, one possible route through which to avoid detention or deportation was to 'volunteer' themselves as farm workers, as manual labour was in high demand during the war.[125] When reading *Transit's* conclusion in this context, the narrator's employment in the countryside appears robbed of the utopian element observed by

[124] Fabian and Coulmas, p. 126.
[125] Fabian and Coulmas, p. 204.

so many critics,[126] and instead presents itself as a temporary and historically representative solution to an ongoing state of precarity.

3.5 Beyond 'Civilised' Space: The Right to be Stateless

Reflecting in 1979 on the disappointment of the Évian conference of 1938, Walter Mondale, then Vice-President of the United States, framed the gathering as an (implicitly failed) 'test of civilization':

> At stake at Evian were both human lives – and the decency and self-respect of the civilized world. If each nation at Evian had agreed on that day to take in 17,000 Jews at once, every Jew in the *Reich* could have been saved. As one American observer wrote, 'It is heartbreaking to think of the [...] desperate human beings [...] waiting in suspense for what happens at Evian. But the question they underline is not simply humanitarian [...] it is a test of civilization'.[127]

Even now the failure of the Western world to prevent the atrocities of the Second World War, and of the Holocaust in particular, is widely thought of as a civilisational failure. But since the 1980s, newly emerging academic discourses and fields of study, such as post-colonialism and critical race studies, have helped to raise awareness of the deeply problematic thought and history underlying the concept of Western 'civilisation'.[128] An analysis of the nexus between modern citizenship, bureaucratic technologies, and exclusion further illustrates that a simple dichotomy in which 'civilised' is equated with 'morally advanced' and 'uncivilised' with 'morally backwards' fails to withstand historical testing even within the framework of the West's own moral system. Like Traven's *Totenschiff*, Seghers's *Transit* provides an account of some of the cruelty inherent in many socio-political practices of modern civilisation.

The concept of 'civilisation' shares its etymological root with 'citizenship': both terms originate from the Latin 'civitas', or 'city', standing for a bounded, organised community whose major trait is its distinction from 'barbarism'. In the world portrayed by Traven and Seghers, this divide is no longer exogenous, but has been fully incorporated. As Hannah Arendt, later commenting on the topic of statelessness in her *Origins*, observes: 'The trouble is that this calamity [of the plight of stateless people] arose not from any lack of civilization,

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[126] See, e.g., Sicks, p. 531.
[127] Walter Mondale, 'Evian and Geneva', *The New York Times*, 28 July 1979, p. 17.
[128] See, e.g., Amar Acheraiou, *Rethinking Postcolonialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

backwardness, or mere tyranny, but, on the contrary, that it could not be repaired, because there was no longer any "uncivilized" spot on earth'.[129] A wholly 'civilised' world of nation states necessarily internalises the barbarism formally pushed to its borders, due to the impossibility of externalising those who do not meet the requirements of civic belonging. Seghers's narrator shows an acute awareness of the absence of alternative spaces to the bureaucratic system he encounters in his French exile. Reflecting on what might have happened to the passengers of the Montreal had they actually been able to reach American shores, the narrator asks, in resignation:

> Was machen alle die Menschen da drüben, falls sie doch noch ankamen? Ein neues Leben beginnen? Berufe ergreifen? Komitees einrennen? Den Urwald roden? Ja, wenn es sie wirklich gäbe, *die vollkommene Wildnis*, die alle und alles verjüngt, dann könnte ich fast bereuen, nicht mitgefahren zu sein. (T6, emphasis added)

Instead of succumbing to the illusion of some of his fellow exiles, who hope to find on their journey a *terra nullius*, 'the perfect wilderness' which offers the space to begin a radically new life, the narrator understands that the international system of states offers no way out. Even in South America, no '"uncivilized" spot'[130] will be found – only more of the bureaucratic organisation already familiar to him.

Like Gales, *Transit's* narrator is, ultimately, unable to find a space of secure freedom and integration in the physical world. However, a certain degree of symbolic space appears to open up in his conscious acceptance, or, at least, full awareness, of his state of non-belonging. While the narrator's identity fluctuates throughout the novel and his integration in France remains socially and legally precarious, a *negative* identity trait is stable throughout: the rejection of his national association with Nazi Germany. Summarising his relationship to the French and German nations, respectively, on the novel's penultimate page, the narrator affirms: 'Wenn die Nazis uns auch noch hier überfallen, dann werden sie mich *vielleicht* mit den Söhnen der Familie [Binnet] Zwangsarbeit machen lassen oder *irgendwohin* deportieren. […] Die Nazis werden mich *keinesfalls* mehr als ihren Landsmann erkennen' (T 279, emphases added). The uncertainty about his belonging in France and his future destiny (he may 'perhaps' be treated as one of the Binnet's sons and might end up 'anywhere') is here contrasted with the certainty of his non-belonging ('by no means/under no circumstances' will he be identified as a German compatriot).[131]

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[129] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 297.
[130] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 297.
[131] Own translations.

Seghers's portrayal of the narrator's spirit of conscious renunciation of his German identity and citizenship, which comes at the price of continued '*Heimatlosigkeit'*, presciently augurs a theme which would have occupied both her and *Transit's* fictional characters four years after the narrator concludes his account in the novel's fictional present of 1941. Following the end of the war, this theme surfaced as the citizenship struggle of many Jewish emigrants. Today, and with good reason, the large majority of research on the loss of German citizenship by Jews focuses on its insufficient restitution in the context of the 'Wiedergutmachung' of National Socialist crimes.[132] In the years after the war, however, legal fights were also waged for the opposite objective. The racialised citizenship legislation of the National Socialists had rendered tens of thousands of surviving Jewish emigrants stateless; and many of them rejected the Allied Forces' initial attempts to collectively reintegrate them into German citizenship after 1945. Instead, a substantial number of Jewish exiles, and foremost among them the 20,000-30,000 formerly German Jews released from concentration camps, insisted on the right to renounce the restitution of their lost German citizenship, even if this implied their continued statelessness.

While the Allied Forces originally assumed that Jewish survivors of Nazi persecution would simply wish to return and resume their pre-war lives in Germany, only about 4-5% of previously German Jews elected to do so in the immediate after-war years.[133] The Allied resistance against this preference was ideologically grounded in the paradigm of liberal statism, and simultaneously driven by material concerns about the execution of sovereign power. Before the war, as demonstrated in Traven's *Totenschiff*, the difficulties involved in forcibly removing stateless people from a territory where they were not wanted had already been experienced internationally. From 1944 onwards, the countries of exile, especially France, Great Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands, voiced great interest in restoring the nationality of former German Jews in order to facilitate their return 'home'. An official at the British Home Office, Sir F. Newsam, for example, commented on this question in May 1945 by advising that 'the aim should be to see that the refugees in this country and elsewhere are provided with some nationality and with some country to which they can return if they wish, to which they can be sent if necessary'.[134]

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[132] See, e.g., Nicholas Courtman, 'Öffentliche Anhörung des Innenausschusses am 21.10.: Wiedergutmachung im Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht' (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019).

[133] See David Fraser and Frank Caestecker, 'Jews or Germans? Nationality Legislation and the Restoration of Liberal Democracy in Western Europe after the Holocaust', *Law and History Review*, 31.2 (2013), 391–422 (p. 414).

[134] 'Sir F. Newsam to the Control Commission' (Kew: National Archives), HO 213/951; see also Fraser and Caestecker, pp. 413–14. The reinstatement of German citizenship for Jewish exiles was of particularly high

The binary nature of the statist paradigm does not easily accommodate grey areas of belonging. In the Allied countries, the effects of the Holocaust on the experience of national association were not immediately comprehended or recognised, which initially led to the indiscriminate inclusion of Jewish survivors among all those displaced by the war.[135] Jewish refugees were treated as German 'enemy aliens', a status that entailed the sequestration of their property, the threat of forced relocation to Germany, and their internment side-by-side with members of the *Wehrmacht* and Nazi officials. Opposition to this policy was vocal among Jewish communities internationally, but is best recorded in the case of Belgium, where the *Comité des Réfugiés Victimes des Lois Raciales* (COREF) fought several years of legal battles against what they experienced as a coercive restoration of German nationality imposed on Jewish refugees.[136] In a 1945 letter to the authorities, the organisation explained the existential injustice they felt was involved in their denomination as German citizens:

> The atrocities of the Nazis have given to the word 'German' an uncanny sinister sound. The DPs [displaced persons] of German origin have to live with identity cards giving their nationality as 'German'. To be mixed up in this way with their greatest enemies is a gross injustice. Their hate against everything connected with Germany and the Germans is so deeply rooted that they will never forget nor forgive. Therefore […] everything should be done to help these persons to get rid of the ominous and incriminating designation as 'German'.[137]

For Jewish communities in exile, resistance to a formal association with Germany went far beyond material concerns about adverse treatment. Instead, citizenship was understood in its full symbolic spectrum, and German nationality was declined on the basis of this understanding. Those formerly German Jews who opposed the restoration of their nationality, David Fraser and Frank Caestecker note in their study on the subject, were 'informed by an experiential and political understanding of citizenship as belonging (or not) to a society, with a common sense of culture, history and identity, feelings that they no longer shared with their former countrymen and women'.[138] To those rejecting German nationality, these symbolic concerns were of such high importance that they superseded any misgivings about the formal level of a restrictive bureaucratic normativity in which statelessness was severely penalised.

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interest for Great Britain as the government feared that a large population of stateless Jews would lead to an escalation of the contentious 'Palestine problem'.

[135] Fraser and Caestecker, p. 399.

[136] For more details on this case, see Fraser and Caestecker, p. 414 f.

[137] COREF, *Memorandum Submitted to Sir Herbert Emerson*; cited in Fraser and Caestecker, p. 416.

[138] Fraser and Caestecker, p. 417.

The status of 'non-national' became a source of identity and of (at least temporary and symbolic) political power.[139]

Hannah Arendt, in addition to her above-cited writings on the plight of stateless people in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, also published her thoughts on the opportunities that statelessness offered as a tool for the positive disruption of the state-centred international paradigm.[140] Commenting on the Jewish nationality struggles after the war, Arendt noted that these former citizens of Germany embraced an empowered status as 'voluntary *Heimatlose*', thereby rejecting the traditional normativity of the citizen/death duality that dominates, to this day, both socio-cultural thought and the international legal system.[141] For Arendt, the Jewish *apatrides* 'embodied a move toward conceptualizing a new international paradigm wherein rights could be sought beyond the traditional bounds of a state-based legal order, precisely because those bounds had been irrevocably shattered by the state itself'.[142] Arendt envisioned a solution to the problem of statelessness through the establishment of an international regime which, centring on the needs of its most vulnerable members, would 'somehow or other' restore to those affected 'the inalienable rights of man'.[143]

4. Conclusion: Non-Belonging and Narrative Space

In his memoir, originally published in Austria in 1946 and translated into English as *Man's Search for Meaning* in 1959, the Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl recounts his experience after his release from a concentration camp:

> [A] few days after the liberation, I walked through the country past flowering meadows, for miles and miles, toward the market town near the camp. Larks rose to the sky and I could hear their joyous song. There was no one to be seen for miles around; there was nothing but the wide earth and sky and the larks' jubilation and the freedom of space. I stopped, looked around, and up to the sky – and then I went down on my knees. At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or of the world – I had but one sentence in mind – always the same: 'I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space.' How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence memory can no longer recall.

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[139] See Fraser and Caestecker, p. 418.
[140] See, e.g., Hannah Arendt, 'The Stateless People', *Contemporary Jewish Record*, 1945, 137–53; Hannah Arendt, 'The Disenfranchised and Disgraced', in *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2007), pp. 232–35.
[141] Fraser and Caestecker, p. 392.
[142] Fraser and Caestecker, p. 392.
[143] Arendt, 'The Stateless People', p. 153.

> But I know that on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being.[144]

After having spent three years under the unspeakably atrocious conditions of four different concentration camps, where he also lost his wife, mother, father, and brother, Frankl begins his return to the realm of the living in the moment of apprehending 'the freedom of space' disclosed in nature. While communicated to him through the medium of physical liberty and scenic expanse, the space Frankl perceives transcends the bounds of the external, ultimately becoming the space enabling an internal process of 're-humanisation'.

In his psychiatric practice, Gordon Allport relates, Frankl was known to ask his patients: 'Why do you not commit suicide?'.[145] The answer would offer him a gateway through which to connect his patients with the same space he himself had previously experienced so intensely: their own internal space of freedom, derived from the capacity to perceive and create meaning in their lives. The question: 'Why not choose death?', which the existentialist Albert Camus, writing at around the same time as Seghers, considered the most fundamental question of philosophy,[146] also forms a central concern in both *Das Totenschiff* and *Transit*. In both novels, the answer may be seen as being provided in the space the narrators create for themselves through their acceptance of a state of non-belonging and the processing of their experience in the form of narrative.

In the final part of *Das Totenschiff*, Gales and his friend Stanislaw are kidnapped onto a second coffin ship, which is deliberately sunk by its captain shortly afterwards, to enable its owner to profit from the insurance. Floating at sea, Gales and Stanislaw find themselves confronted with a glorious vision of the *Yorikke*, the death ship which they had come to call home. While Stanislaw drowns as a result of succumbing to this dangerous illusion of home and belonging, Gales takes the immediate confrontation with death as an opportunity finally to free himself completely from the passport which had dictated his destiny until then. 'Bisher haben wir uns nur um Papiere herumgeschlagen […]. Jetzt geht es endlich um den letzten Atemzug' (DT 301). The space created in this final liberating process can be seen as the precondition of Gales's formulation of his own life story: a story which does not reveal his origins, is non-teleological, unreliable, and fragmented, and thus does not adhere to the narrative logic of the nation and the passport system.

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[144] Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (London: Rider, 2004), pp. 96–97. The cited passage is a variation of Psalm 118:5.
[145] Frankl, p. 7.
[146] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, (London: Penguin, 1942). Camus opens his essay with the now famous statement: 'There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide', p. 1.

Rereading Traven's statement cited at the beginning ('Wer erzählt, lebt wohl auch'), it may be argued that Gales's narration is not only a *proof*, but also an *instrument* of survival. In this novel, Gales manages to build a narrative space for himself outside of imposed bureaucratic parameters and the dichotomous – and eventually lethal – land/sea distinction. While this space is a precarious one, it is still a space filled with meaning, and in this it is not unlike Arendt's 'place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective'.[147]

Such considerations are of more than purely aesthetic relevance, as is evidenced not only by Seghers's precarious life story and the elusive biography of Traven – who continually reinvented his (national) identity and quite literally 'storied' himself into a new persona – but also by the conceptual history of statelessness. That statelessness was originally treated by politicians and lawyers as belonging to the province of fiction was not a historical accident, but instead, as Siegelberg points out, had 'served an important ideological function in transatlantic international thought since the late eighteenth century'.[148] Literary fiction played a key role in subverting official narratives of an undamaged system of states in which statelessness could not exist. At the same time as questioning the structural conditions that allowed for statelessness to occur, it was also primarily literary fiction, not legal or political action, that 'most accurately portrayed the reality of statelessness', introducing 'the real plight of people without the protection of national status into wider popular consciousness'.[149]

Since the 1990s, literary scholars and philosophers, such as Martha Nussbaum, have increasingly commented on the crucial role of literature in developing key 'citizenship skills', such as the ability to understand and empathise with the experience of strangers.[150] The educational benefit of novels such as *Das Totenschiff* and *Transit* for a wider and deeper understanding of statelessness remains relevant to this day, especially since statelessness has continued to be both an under-reported and ambiguous category. In the texts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), stateless persons are habitually described as 'invisible', 'anonymous' or living 'shadowy lives',[151] and their very denomination remains contested. NGOs working in support of refugee and stateless populations have long insisted that the two groups – those without legal citizenship (the *de jure* stateless), and those lacking effective citizenship (i.e. the protection or

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[147] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 296.
[148] Siegelberg, p. 157.
[149] Ibid., pp. 59–60.
[150] Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995); Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[151] See, e.g., UNHCR, *Being Invisible: Children Living in Statelessness* (Geneva, 2019).

benefits of their state, the *de facto* stateless) – both have the same protection needs and should therefore be treated as one group.[152] This radical approach to classification continues to be opposed by many policy makers and scholars, but is shared by Arendt, who emphatically maintains that 'all refugees are for practical purposes stateless'.[153] Literary fiction can contribute to this discussion by furthering understanding of the fact that statelessness is not only a formal legal status, but above all a lived and interpersonal experience that is contingent upon, and continuously reshaped by, a culture's imagination of citizenship and belonging.

Benedict Anderson has shown that all communities are fictive, but not fictitious: 'Communities', he argues, 'are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.'[154] Besides promoting empathy and understanding of the injustice suffered in the *status quo*, literary fiction, therefore, may also serve to expand current imaginaries of belonging. Acts of resistance to and destabilisation of established narrative forces can, in this sense, be read as highly political, as they open up the space in which to imagine communal forms such as citizenship anew. By rejecting features of narrative coherence, characterological stability, linear progression, and teleology – all of which form fundamental pillars in the construction of national citizenship – Traven's *Das Totenschiff* and Seghers's *Transit* both present compelling commentaries on the operational dynamics of modern community. To work on citizenship, Jacques Rancière has argued, requires working 'in its margins', in 'the spaces of practical confrontation with the different forms of exclusion, a confrontation that always constitutes the founding moment of citizenship'.[155] The stories told by Traven and Seghers, with their outsider perspectives, disrupted plots, and playful contingencies, constitute valuable counter-narratives to dominant normative ways of imagining community and home.

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[152] See, e.g., Hugh Massey, *UNHRC and De Facto Statelessness* (Geneva, 2010). For an NGO perspective, see, e.g., Equal Rights Trust, *Unravelling Anomaly: Detention, Discrimination and the Protection Needs of Stateless Persons* (London, 2010), pp. 52–84.
[153] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 281.
[154] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.
[155] Cited in Neveu, 'Citizenship', p. 299.

CHAPTER THREE

The Citizen's Temporality: The Politics of Progress and Exclusion in Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob* (1959)

1. Introduction: Citizenship and Progress

In this chapter, I will explore the nexus of citizenship, ideologies of progress, and phenomena of psycho-social division in Uwe Johnson's novel *Mutmassungen über Jakob*. I will argue that *Mutmassungen* employs both its specific temporality and its espionage features as tools for destabilising a unified model of reality whose protection, historically, has been among the primary tasks of the nation state. One aspect of this state-guaranteed reality has been the promise of social, economic, and political progress for its citizens. I will discuss how literary production participates in and reacts to the political endeavour to create a shared national temporality organised around the expectation of progress. To this end, I will investigate how ideologies of progress were employed by various political actors in East Germany in processes of citizenship formation, and how Johnson engages with and critically comments on these processes.

Modern citizenship, as I have argued in this dissertation's introduction, is intrinsically aspirational. Rarely has this been more pronounced than in the period after World War Two and the fall of the National Socialist regime, when Germany faced the challenging task of devising a new formal framework for the civil society it aimed to create. Foundational slogans of other modern democracies, such as the French 'liberté, égalité, fraternité', or the American 'all men are created equal', were not descriptive utterances at their point of creation during the respective national revolutions. Instead, they were (and have, to some extent, remained) normative expressions of hopes, desires, and ambitions directed toward the future. In the present, these slogans serve not only the function of a common point of orientation, but may also mask actual differences in socio-economic, legal, and political terms as well as in the abilities, hopes, and aspirations of the individuals concerned. The text that, from 1949 onwards,

was to constitute the central foundation for all political relations in West Germany, the *Grundgesetz*, opens with a similarly aspirational assertion in Article 1:

> (1) Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar. Sie zu achten und zu schützen ist Verpflichtung aller staatlichen Gewalt.
>
> (2) Das Deutsche Volk bekennt sich darum zu unverletzlichen und unveräußerlichen Menschenrechten als Grundlage jeder menschlichen Gemeinschaft, des Friedens und der Gerechtigkeit in der Welt.

Even though grammatically expressed as the description of a present state, in 1949 the text may more accurately be understood to have represented a negotiation of, and commentary on, a particular conception of the past and the future. Like the French and American slogans, the West German constitution neither delivered an accurate account of historical experience nor described the moment of its inception, but rather constituted, in the form of a performative speech act, the setting of a radical mark between the dark realities of the past and the vision of a more positive future.

The belief in legal, social, and political progress which is implied in Article 1 of the West German constitution was made explicit in East Germany's constitution of the same year. Its preamble states:

> Von dem Willen erfüllt, die Freiheit und die Rechte des Menschen zu verbürgen, das Gemeinschafts- und Wirtschaftsleben in sozialer Gerechtigkeit zu gestalten, dem gesellschaftlichen Fortschritt zu dienen, die Freundschaft mit allen Völkern zu fördern und den Frieden zu sichern, hat sich das deutsche Volk diese Verfassung gegeben.[1]

The East German constitution shows remarkable overlap with its West German counterpart in its dedication to the rule of law, human rights, and peaceful international relations. Yet a stark contrast can be seen at the level of form, with the aspirational character of the constitution ('imbued with the intention/will') as well as its dedication to progress ('to serve societal progress') made explicit only in the GDR document.[2]

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[1] *Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, 7 October 1949. The GDR's successor constitution of 6 April 1968 replaced the preamble with a new text, in which the idea of progress was still clearly present in the form of movement metaphors, but not explicitly enunciated: 'Getragen von der Verantwortung, der ganzen deutschen Nation den Weg in eine Zukunft des Friedens und des Sozialismus zu weisen, in Ansehung der geschichtlichen Tatsache, daß der Imperialismus unter Führung der USA im Einvernehmen mit Kreisen des westdeutschen Monopolkapitals Deutschland gespalten hat, um Westdeutschland zu einer Basis des Imperialismus und des Kampfes gegen den Sozialismus aufzubauen, was den Lebensinteressen der Nation widerspricht, hat sich das Volk der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, fest gegründet auf den Errungenschaften der antifaschistisch - demokratischen und der sozialistischen Umwälzung der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung, einig in seinen werktätigen Klassen und Schichten das Werk der Verfassung vom 7. Oktober 1949 in ihrem Geiste weiterführend, und von dem Willen erfüllt, den Weg des Friedens, der sozialen Gerechtigkeit, der Demokratie, des Sozialismus und der Völkerfreundschaft in freier Entscheidung unbeirrt weiterzugehen, diese sozialistische Verfassung gegeben.'

[2] Own translation.

As will be explored in more detail below, the linguistic difference found in the two constitutions is characteristic of the way in which the two Germanies related to ideas of progress and its role in the process of citizenship formation. Each of the two ideologies that divided Germany – socialism and liberalism – came with its own distinct understanding and practice of progress. In the GDR, especially during its earlier years, passionate commitments to visions of progress were constantly reaffirmed in all public realms, ranging from agricultural to cultural production. The FRG's commitment to progress has been less overt and more complex. On the one hand, a strong endorsement of the concept of infinite progress could be found, for example, in West Germany's pronounced dedication to economic wealth as measured in the growth of its gross domestic product (GDP). On the other hand, explicit political and cultural engagement with the concept by the ruling parties was often accompanied by (and sometimes cloaked in) scepticism or an endorsement of conservatism.

In his seminal work on the conceptual history of progress in the Western world, the historian Reinhard Koselleck lays out the complexity and internal contradictions that the term has accumulated as layers of meaning throughout its development. He contends that the concept is 'utopisch und erfahrungsgesättigt zugleich', and at once an indicator of and a factor in the rapid changes that have marked modernity.[3] What Koselleck notes as characteristic of progress may also, to some extent, be seen to apply to the concept of citizenship. In the same way as progress, modern citizenship was historically conceived of, and has since remained, a utopian idea, always maintaining its future-oriented, aspirational character whose improvability has never ceased to be the subject of political and scholarly discussion. At the same time, the concept and its attendant values of equality, rule of law, and economic equity are rooted in the lived experience of tangible changes in the political consciousness and power relations set in motion by processes of industrialisation and urbanisation that Europe witnessed from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.

One expression of the future-orientation of citizenship has been the concept's ongoing expansion into more and more areas of life. During the Enlightenment reflections on citizenship were still largely confined to formal matters of restriction and fairer distribution of state power, but citizenship has since evolved to cover a much more extensive variety of contexts and demands, with the lines between the public and private spheres becoming increasingly permeable. The post-war context constituted both a continuation of, and partial retraction from,

[3] Reinhart Koselleck, 'Fortschritt', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975), pp. 351–423 (p. 353).

this process, with at least West Germany's transition to liberal democracy allowing a certain relief from the all-pervasive state mechanisms of the previous totalitarian regime. Yet the relationship between the state's official demands on its citizens, and the citizens' demands on the state, continued to be highly complex in both parts of Germany.

This chapter will examine how ideas of progress played into this complexity, and what internal conflicts it can be seen to have incited in individual citizens. Germany's political post-war division will be shown as reflected in a psychological division of its citizenry, induced by a political climate which hindered a full integration of the public and private personas. Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob* will serve as an illustrative example of German 'Nachkriegsliteratur': the literature produced in the years after the Second World War, the 'Krieg des deutschen Kulturbruchs'.[4] Written in the East of Germany, Johnson's novel engages with the particular historical moment of its inception. As might be said of all politically conscious literature of the time, the novel's positioning in the post-war context implies that its author (like the authors of the German constitutions) faced the challenge of having to calibrate a taut bidirectional perspective. The inescapable look backward at the horror and suffering inflicted by the Nazi regime and the war ('What happened?', 'Why did it happen?') had necessarily to be accompanied, implicitly or explicitly, by the forward-looking question 'Where do we go from here?'. Johnson's work provides pessimistic, though not entirely hopeless, answers to this question. Embedding a reading of the novel in an analysis of societal visions of history and the future as provided by contemporary political documents and intellectual texts, I will argue that *Mutmassungen* was written as a critical engagement with the post-war climate of progress-orientation, which acted as a strong ideological instrument of social cohesion and citizenship formation in both East and, more subtly, West Germany.

In both parts of Germany, but particularly in the GDR, politics, economy, and temporality were intimately entwined, joining together in a system of 'temporal politics' which pervaded formal as well as informal social institutions. I will argue in this chapter that a citizen's friction with East Germany's temporal politics usually indicated, or led to, exclusion from the *civis* as a whole. All forms of political authority come with their own temporal politics whereby a given community organises its history, present, and future. The GDR, however, stands out in this regard due to the extent that its temporal politics were both modelled by and predicated on the particularity of its economic paradigm: the centrally planned economy. The

[4] Erhard Schütz, 'Nach dem Entkommen, vor dem Ankommen', in *Handbuch Nachkriegskultur*, ed. by Elena Agazzi and Erhard Schütz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 1–140 (p. 1). The term 'Nachkriegsliteratur' usually refers to literature published between 1945 and 1962.

GDR's economic order provided a vision of a fully integrated society, in which, according to the country's standard textbooks on economic law, all social and political institutions were 'Glieder eines Organismus, der in bewußter Durchsetzung der ökonomischen Gesetze des Sozialismus nach einem einheitlichen, auf die Entwicklung der Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft gerichteten staatlichen Gesamtplan wirksam ist'.[5]

Michael Ostheimer suggests that the GDR's 'Zeitpolitik' was primarily a result of the 'Dialektik von Arbeitswelt und Zukunftsgewissheit'.[6] The former, i.e. the processes of labour and production, was strongly determined by factors such as tempo and rationalisation, and continuously oriented towards an economics of time, usually framed in metaphors of a race against capitalist methods of production.[7] The perceived predictability of the processes of labour and production, on the other hand, corresponded to a utopian 'Fortschrittsdenken, woraus die Vorstellung von einer historischen Zeit resultierte, die Machbarkeit, linearen Fortschritt und kollektive Zukunftsprognostik samt heilsgewisser Erwartung miteinander in Einklang brachte'.[8] When first implemented in the Soviet Union, the idea of the command economy, directed by the rational state, appeared to demonstrate some success. In stark contrast to the West's experience of depression during the interwar years, the Soviet Union quickly advanced its industrialisation process, providing 19% of the world's industrial production on the eve of the Second World War (as compared to only 4% in 1913). At the same time, the USSR's population (at least statistically) enjoyed better access to medical care than many Western countries, with more doctors per capita than either Britain or Germany.[9]

Yet these dynamics of progress changed after the war, and never manifested for East Germany. Historians continue to disagree about the detailed causes of the development of the GDR's economic decline,[10] yet it is widely acknowledged today that the theoretical model

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[5] Gerold Ambrosius, '"Sozialistische Planwirtschaft" als Alternative und Variante in der Industriegesellschaft: Die Wirtschaftsordnung', in *Überholen ohne einzuholen: Die DDR-Wirtschaft als Fußnote der deutschen Geschichte*, ed. by André Steiner (Berlin: Links Christoph, 2006), pp. 11–31 (p. 13).

[6] Michael Ostheimer, 'Wendezeit - Wende der Zeit: Zum Zusammenhang von Geschichtsphilosophie und Zeitdenken in der Post-DDR-Literatur', in *Romanhaftes Erzählen von Geschichte: Vergegenwärtigte Vergangenheiten im beginnenden 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Daniel Fulda and Stephan Jaeger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 251–78 (p. 254).

[7] In its own terms, the regime's aim was to optimise efficiency of human labour in both industry and agriculture, in keeping with the Leninist-Marxist doctrine according to which the economic value of goods is determined by the amount of physically necessary and socially accepted labour that goes into their production. See Ostheimer, p. 254.

[8] Ostheimer, p. 254.

[9] Buzan and Lawson, pp. 110–11.

[10] See, e.g., Hajo Riese, 'Grenzen und Schwächen der Erkenntnis: Die Wirtschaftstheorie', in *Überholen ohne einzuholen: Die DDR-Wirtschaft als Fußnote der deutschen Geschichte* (Berlin: Links Christoph, 2006), pp. 33–44; André Steiner, 'From the Soviet Occupation Zone to the "New Eastern States": A Survey', in *The East German Economy, 1945-2010: Falling Behind or Catching Up?*, ed. by Hartmut Berghoff and Uta Andrea Balbier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 17–49.

underlying the country's economic activity diverged considerably from the reality on the ground. Even while the regime lasted, the disparity between the propagated vision of plannable, linear progress and the increasingly unfavourable economic position *vis-à-vis* its West German neighbour began to discredit East Germany's temporal politics in the lived experience of many of its citizens.

2.1 Divided Germany and its Citizenship Laws

To this day, and with good reason, discussions of Germany's political and cultural post-war development show a strong focus on questions related to coming to terms with the past. In a deviation from this trend, I will, instead, focus on questions surrounding post-war visions of futurity, which have received less attention. Yet to better understand the thrust of the drive for progress which I will discuss in greater detail below, it is helpful first to call to mind what the orientation towards the future was meant to move *away* from: namely the extent of the destruction that post-war Europe found itself confronted with. While any numerical data of the war come with inherent limitations and will also be familiar to some readers, a brief revisit still appears appropriate for the purpose of delineating the socio-historical context of the novel analysed here. An overview of the situation in Germany and parts of Europe is provided by Erhard Schütz, whose summary becomes even more harrowing when one remembers that the global level of devastation caused by the World War is barely even touched upon here:

> Mindestens 45 Millionen Menschen hatten in Europa ihr Leben verloren, allein fast 21 Millionen, davon ein Drittel Zivilisten, in der Sowjetunion. Drei Millionen Sowjetsoldaten starben in deutscher Gefangenschaft. In Polen starben ca. 300.000 Soldaten und 4,2 Millionen Zivilisten. Etwa sechs Millionen europäische Juden waren bestialisch umgebracht worden. In der deutschen Bevölkerung – die deutschen Juden gar nicht mit eingerechnet – kamen über fünf Millionen um, darunter etwa 600.000 Zivilisten durch Bombenangriffe. An die zwei Millionen Tonnen Bomben hatten die Alliierten auf Deutschland und die besetzten Gebiete geworfen; drei Millionen Menschen waren aus den bombardierten Städten evakuiert worden. Weit über drei Millionen Wohnungen wurden zerstört, über sieben Millionen Menschen obdachlos. Zwölf Millionen Deutsche flohen vor der Roten Armee oder wurden anschließend aus Polen, der Tschechoslowakei, Rumänien, Ungarn und Jugoslawien vertrieben. Zwei Millionen sind dabei ums Leben gekommen. Man geht heute davon aus, dass insgesamt fast zwei Millionen Frauen und Mädchen von Sowjetsoldaten vergewaltigt wurden, allein in Berlin mindestens 110.000. Von den insgesamt 80 Millionen mobilisierten Soldaten kamen 35 Millionen in Kriegsgefangenschaft, allein elf

> Millionen Deutsche, von denen zunächst über drei Millionen in der Sowjetunion zurückgehalten wurden und die letzten erst 1956 wieder zurückkehrten.[11]

In Germany in 1945, the ruins of war and totalitarianism had to be faced in the public and private realms, in industry and living quarters, in social relationships and individual psyches. The fall of the Nazi regime and the end of the war on 8 May were described as a 'Stunde Null', a term indicating a radical break with the past and the prospect of a new beginning. Today the concept is usually regarded more as the metaphor for a public mood than as an accurate historical description:[12] too numerous were the continuities with the past that contradict any assumption of a socio-political *tabula rasa*.

This certainly holds true for the formal framework of citizenship as far as it relates to nationality. While the fields of legal history and jurisprudence have seen some discussion of the question of Germany's post-war legal status and the implications of the Berlin Declaration of 5 June 1945, whereby the four Allied Forces jointly assumed 'supreme authority' over German territory,[13] it is generally accepted today that Germany never lost its identity as a state, nor did the bulk of its inhabitants ever lose their German citizenship status.[14] The Allies repealed NS legislation related to the Nuremberg race laws, through which millions had been rendered stateless, as well as the laws that had forcibly transferred German citizenship to French and Luxembourgian nationals. While the 1935 citizenship law was cancelled,[15] the *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* (*RuStAG*) of 1913 was left in force. Citizenship laws and their application in East and West also remained practically untouched by West Germany's declaration of its constitution, the *Grundgesetz*, on 23 May 1949, and by the *Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, which was declared on 7 October 1949 and introduced only slight changes to the *RuStAG*, most notably in regard to gender equality. The ties between citizenship and ethnicity also remained strong in both parts of Germany, although Western Germany, *de facto*, soon began to acquire a sizeable settled population of people not fitting the legal framework.[16]

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[11] Schütz, 'Nach dem Entkommen, vor dem Ankommen', p. 13.
[12] Heinrich Vormweg, 'Literatur war ein Asyl', *Literaturmagazin*, 1977, 203–8 (p. 203); see also Schütz, 'Nach dem Entkommen, vor dem Ankommen', p. 30.
[13] See, e.g., Hans Kelsen, 'The Legal Status of Germany According to the Declaration of Berlin', *American Journal of International Law*, 39.3 (1945), 518–526.
[14] See Ingo von Münch, *Die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit: Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), p. 77 f.
[15] The Federal Republic later reversed part of the cancellation by considering valid the 1935 laws on naturalisation through service in the German 'Reichsarmee' or the SS.
[16] See Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, p. 167.

Even though the separate constitutions indicated the creation of two distinct state entities, West Germany continued to insist on a single German citizenship throughout the period of division. The East German constitution of 1949 originally concurred, stating: 'es gibt nur eine deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit' (Art. 1 Abs. 4). This only changed in 1967, when the GDR introduced its own citizenship law, the *Gesetz über die Staatsbürgerschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetz)*, which, in its preamble, retroactively declared that an independent East German citizenship had already been created in 1949:

> Mit der Gründung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik entstand in Übereinstimmung mit dem Völkerrecht die Staatsbürgerschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. Sie ist Ausdruck der Souveränität der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und trägt zur weiteren allseitigen Stärkung des sozialistischen Staates bei.

This move towards an independent state identity was also mirrored in the use of national symbols. While both East and West originally adopted the black-red-golden flag, the GDR introduced its own symbolism in 1959, when it added the national emblem of hammer, compass, and rye. Yet despite such endeavours to foster identification with a distinct GDR statehood, the formal legal situation of two German citizenships did not entirely match public sentiment. This was even admitted by state-sanctioned authors Gerhard Riege und Hans-Jürgen Kulke, who, in a 1980 book tellingly titled *Nationalität: deutsch. Staatsbürgerschaft: DDR*, reasoned:

> Menschen unseres Landes waren sich zur Zeit der Staatsgründung durchaus nicht darüber im klaren, daß der erste deutsche Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern auch eine neue Staatsbürgerschaft bedeutete. Vorherrschend war vielmehr ein anderes Gefühl, nämlich Freude und Genugtuung über einen deutschen Staat, der vom Volke getragen wird und ihm dient, in dem es lohnt zu leben und zu arbeiten, der Frieden und sozialen Fortschritt zu seinem Lebensgesetz gemacht hat.[17]

Beyond questions of East and West German citizenship, post-war Germany faced a variety of other citizenship-related challenges. Some of these challenges were shared with the European countries that had participated in the war and were now dealing with citizenship applications that had been put on hold, for example, and needed to determine rules on the treatment of denaturalised refugees and those who had been forced to work in enemy armies and labour camps.[18] Yet the rewriting of citizenship in Germany involved a particular urgency and grave

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[17] Gerhard Riege and Hans-Jürgen Kulke, *Nationalität: Deutsch. Staatsbürgerschaft: DDR* (Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1980), p. 16; see also Münch, p. 90 f. In line with the sentiment expressed in the title of Riege and Kulke's book, the GDR's second constitution, of 9 April 1968, eradicated the declaration of a unified German citizenship found in the 1949 constitution, but still asserted an allegiance to the German nation in its preamble: 'Getragen von der Verantwortung, der ganzen deutschen Nation den Weg in eine Zukunft des Friedens und des Sozialismus zu weisen'.

[18] See Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, p. 197.

difficulties. Among these were the complex details of implementing the above-mentioned reversal of the citizenship-related injustice inflicted in the Nazi period (a task which remains partly unfulfilled to this day),[19] and negotiation of the citizenship status of internally and internationally displaced persons, including the 12 million 'deutschen Volkszugehörigen' who were expelled from Eastern Europe after 1945. The commotion of the immediate post-war period and the accompanying need to constantly renegotiate paradigms of belonging were perpetuated in the early years of the GDR and Bonn Republic, when over 2.5 million people left what became East Germany for the West between 1945 and 1961, and about one million people left West Germany for the East.[20]

The high level of external mobility during the post-war years, mirrored in the reorganisation of building structures as well as political and social relationships, was, however, not universally perceived as a sign of substantive change. Especially in West Germany, the term 'Restauration' soon became a popular key word in any criticism of the Adenauer era. Within a milieu of critical young historians, writers, and intellectuals, many of whom were loosely organised around the *Gruppe 47*, the term 'Restauration' was used to describe what might be called the underbelly of West Germany's phase of expedient economy recovery, or the 'Wirtschaftswunder' time. Already used by Walter Dirks in his 1950 article 'Der restaurative Character der Epoche',[21] the idea of restoration is also prominently employed in Wolfgang Koeppen's novel *Treibhaus* and Wolfgang Paul's poem 'Restauration', which critiques the lack of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' as well as society's retreat into 'biedermeierliche Gemütlichkeit' and capitalist practices of consumerism.[22] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, a vehement proponent of the restoration charge during the Adenauer years, later recalled the many patriarchal structures that persisted at the time:

> Polizisten trugen Tschako und führten sich wie zu Kaiser Wilhelms Zeiten auf. Die Frauen wurden nicht nur in der Kirche zum Schweigen angehalten. In der Schule gab es Tatzen mit der Rute. In der Arztpraxis und der Klinik hatte der Patient nichts zu melden. Und so weiter und so fort.[23]

West Germany's politically conscious literature of the time saw its task in the demasking of open and latent continuities with the Nazi past, as well as in the demand for a confrontation of German guilt. Literary figures such as Koeppen, Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Günter Grass,

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[19] See, e.g., Nicholas Courtman, 'Öffentliche Anhörung des Innenausschusses am 21.10.: Wiedergutmachung im Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht' (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019).
[20] Schütz, 'Nach dem Entkommen, vor dem Ankommen', p. 14.
[21] Walter Dirks, 'Der restaurative Charakter der Epoche', *Frankfurter Hefte*, 5.9 (1950), 942–54.
[22] See also Schütz, 'Nach dem Entkommen, vor dem Ankommen', p. 91 f.
[23] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Die falschen Fünfziger: Eine westdeutsche Reminiszenz', *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 16 June 2007.

whose *Blechtrommel* (1959) engaged with the implication of ordinary citizens in the crimes of the Nazis, insisted on continuously drawing into the light what they saw as the suppressed contents of the past.[24]

The parallel path on which the GDR embarked in its political development could also be observed in the cultural sphere. While the German occupation zones (which later became states) faced the same conditions at the start, the stark differences in the political ideologies that steered their respective destinies soon led to the emergence of distinct, but not disconnected, cultures on either side of the divide.[25] The leading figures in the critical literary scene of East Germany, including, among others, Johnson, Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller, Reiner Kunze, and Günter Kunert, were, like their West German colleagues, also engaged in 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' and the exposure of the contradictions of contemporary governance. Yet both a rigid censorship regime and a general belief in the socialist project as such made the writers' relationship to power in many cases a highly complex one.[26]

West German intellectuals' concerns about the restorative character of the Adenauer years have been relativised by historians, making space for a more differentiated image. As Eva Banchelli notes:

> Aus heutiger Perspektive erscheint das Jahrzehnt als ein heterogenes Spannungsfeld bewahrender Tendenzen und starker Modernisierungsimpulse, das hauptsächlich in der BRD der Adenauerzeit – aber auch in einem gewissen Grad in der DDR der Tauwetterperiode zwischen 1953 und 1962 – ein komplexes Bild von Kontinuität und Wandel, von Anpassung und Widerstand bietet.[27]

The criticism of Uwe Johnson and his fellow campaigners was audible and, at least to some extent, effective, precisely because he was part of a generation that benefitted from immense political, social, and economic progress. The Western youth culture of the late 1950s and 1960s, which Johnson was able to partake in following his emigration to the Federal Republic, was based on a level of individual freedom unknown before, as well as on 'unprecedented wealth, mobility and independence'.[28] While Johnson would certainly have agreed that social change was necessary and desirable to achieve better outcomes for the societies on both sides

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[24] The Gruppe 47 had very few female members, among them Barbara König. The most widely read female members were the Austrian authors Ingeborg Bachmann and Ilse Aichinger.
[25] See also Schütz, 'Nach dem Entkommen, vor dem Ankommen', p. 35.
[26] On the complicity of East German intellectuals in the SED crimes, see, for example, the debate around Christa Wolf. 'Zum Tod von Christa Wolf: Sie wurde harsch kritisiert', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 5 December 2011, p. 2.
[27] Banchelli, p. 553; for a stronger focus on the progressive development of post-war Germany, see, e.g., Edgar Wolfrum, *Die geglückte Demokratie: Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (München: Pantheon, 2007); and Edgar Wolfrum, *Der Aufsteiger: Eine Geschichte Deutschlands von 1990 bis heute* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2020).
[28] Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, p. 181.

of the German border, his writings indicate that he was also sensitive to the ways in which progress, when functioning as an ideology, comes with its shadow side, too. In order to explore this side, I will first provide an analysis of the way in which concepts of progress and citizenship were linked, firstly, in Western history, and, secondly, in the GDR. The subsequent literary analysis will then primarily focus on what I will call the 'anti-progressive' form of Johnson's novel, as well as investigating the text's rich progress-related symbolism, expressed in technological language and objects such as the train.

2.2 Delay, Progress, Citizenship

The conviction at the core of the restoration charge – that Germany's development was temporally out of sync with, or lagging behind where it 'naturally' should be – was not unique to the critical intellectual milieu of post-war Germany. Helmuth Plessner's *Die verspätete Nation*, for example, originally published in 1935 and republished to greater acclaim in 1959, already expresses the idea of retarded national development in its programmatic title. In the course of a complex analysis whose findings can certainly not be reduced to the title alone, Plessner argues that the rise of the National Socialist regime shows a certain continuity with the country's socio-political developments since the sixteenth century and can be explained with reference to Germany's conflicted relationship to modernity. As the last major nation to assume formal statehood in Europe, the foundation of the German Empire falls within a period when the spirit of the Enlightenment had already lost its power. Unable to appeal to Enlightenment values during the process of state building, as the French had done with their slogan 'liberté, égalité, fraternité', Germany instead fell back on earlier, archaic ideas of blood and ethnicity as the basis of political community.

In a separate strand of analysis, Plessner links this development to a Protestant tradition that he understands as specific to Germany. The strong entanglement of Lutheran church and state, and the compulsive organisation of citizens in regional churches ('Landeskirchen'), led to a dislocation of individual religious energy from the church onto the state itself. According to Plessner, this situation effected an inner chasm in individual citizens, rendering them unable to reconcile their own psycho-spiritual realisation with their relationship to the state. Instead of enabling citizens to engage creatively with their community, the state's usurpation of the

religious sphere resulted in an apathetic or opportunistic relationship with political leadership and the public realm in general. The lack of robust religious and humanist values found in Germany as a consequence of its developmental delay left Germany, more than other nations, susceptible to political appeals on the bodily level, such as racist doctrines.[29] Plessner's thesis formed a central text of what became known as the German 'Sonderweg' narrative, a historical stance emphasising the uniqueness of Germany's national development, which historians usually see as outdated today.[30] Yet while the thrust and political context of Plessner's argument need to be treated with great caution, *Die verspätete Nation* is still a document of some analytical value as the resonance it found in the critical intellectual milieu when it was republished in 1959 is historically informative.

Paradoxically, the critical assessment of both the pre- and post-war years, to the effect that Germany needed to move forward from its current state of affairs through accelerated cultural, political, and economic progress, constituted a continuity with certain aspects of National Socialist doctrine. To some extent, the belief in progress can be seen to present an ideology in itself. Barry Buzan and George Lawson, for example, define ideology as 'assemblages of beliefs, concepts and values that address how polities, economies and cultural orders relate to each other, how individuals and groups fit into these assemblages, and how human collectivities should be governed'.[31] Yet even though the concept of progress meets the characteristics of a self-standing ideology, it also is so amenable to a variety of temporal, spatial, and ideational contexts that it formed a central determinant of each of the main ideological strands of twentieth-century Europe. While the progressive elements of liberalism and socialism are well established, the connection of not only nationalism, but also twentieth-century racism to ideas of progress is not always recognised. Nationalism's 'progressiveness' lay in its reimagination of the structures of political belonging and administration. And even '"scientific" racism', Buzan and Lawson observe, 'had a "progressive" element in its assertion that "superior stock" should command historical development'. As they continue to point out:

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[29] Helmuth Plessner, *Die verspätete Nation: Über die Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1962); see also Carola Dietze, 'Selbstvergewisserung im Exil. Autobiographische Dimensionen einer Meistererzählung: *Die verspätete Nation* von Helmuth Plessner', in *Weltoffener Humanismus: Philosophie, Philologie und Geschichte in der deutsch-jüdischen Emigration*, ed. by Gerald Hartung and Kay Schiller (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2006), pp. 111–32; Joachim Whaley, 'Helmuth Plessner and *The Delayed Nation*', *Journal of European Studies*, 50.1 (2020), 128–40.

[30] See, e.g., Gabriele Metzler, *Der Staat der Historiker: Staatsvorstellungen deutscher Historiker seit 1945* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018); Richard Evans, *Rereading German History: From Unification to Reunification, 1800–1996* (London: Routledge, 1997); Whaley.

[31] Buzan and Lawson, p. 99; for further reading on the nature of ideology, see, e.g., Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

'There was a close, if often unacknowledged, relationship between liberal and socialist ideas of "improvement", and racist proposals to use eugenics to "upgrade" the biological quality of the human stock'.[32] All four political strands – nationalism, 'scientific' racism, socialism, and liberalism – used the idea of progress as a central basis on which to challenge existing societal orders, justify comprehensive programmes of social engineering, and legitimise the expansion of state power both internally and internationally.[33] In the international context, the notion of progress has been deeply implicated in the West's colonising mission, where it served as a comparative yardstick to distinguish countries based on their different levels of 'civilisational' development and legitimised the imperial project.[34]

There is wide agreement among scholars of progress, such as Arendt and Koselleck, that the concept in its contemporary meaning is a distinctly modern one, arising around the time of the Industrial Revolution, when Western imperialism could be said to have crystallised into a distinct ideology, and when the concept of national citizenship emerged. Koselleck traces the etymology of 'Fortschritt' back to Immanuel Kant, whom he believes to have coined the German term in his 1754 essay 'Die Frage, ob die Erde veralte, physikalisch erwogen'.[35] Precursor notions of progress, such as the Latin 'perfectibilis', the French 'perfectibilité', or the German 'Progreß' and 'Fortgang', whose history reaches back more than 2000 years, were distinct to the modern concept by still being rooted in organic metaphors of growth and circular biological processes.

The concept of progress/'Fortschritt' which emerged across Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, was entirely denaturalised. Instead of an organic metaphor, the concept now offered an instrument for capturing the modern experience of a purely socio-political historical time.[36] There is reason to consider that the simultaneous emergence of the concept of progress and the concept of modern citizenship was not coincidental. Both notions complement and mutually legitimise each other and have often been drawn on as responses to the challenges of industrial societies by leaders and popular movements alike. The sense of forward momentum inherent in both notions can be said to have served to stabilise communities amidst the enormous transformations they had witnessed since the beginning of the industrialisation process. With the Industrial Revolution effecting a radical upheaval of previous social orders and inspiring stronger demands for political transparency

[32] Buzan and Lawson, p. 100.
[33] See Buzan and Lawson, p. 101.
[34] See Buzan and Lawson, p. 99.
[35] Koselleck, 'Fortschritt'.
[36] Koselleck, 'Fortschritt'.

and participation, the idea of progress became not only a vehicle for expressing the desires of excluded groups, but also an instrument in the hands of the ruling elites for pacifying these desires and justifying existing inequalities. As Buzan and Lawson remark:

> [T]he nineteenth century established the addiction of industrial societies to permanent growth as a means of mediating the politics of inequality. Progress in the form of economic growth, allied to a degree of redistribution, was as important as nationalism in containing the class conflicts predicted by Marx, Engels and their successors.'[37]

Yet not only the empirical experience of measurable material progress, but also the mere political commitment to ideas of growth and transformation, served as important instruments with which to appease sentiments of injustice in the face of inequality. Just as the idea of economic progress justifies poverty by promising a future escape from it, the idea of equal citizenship perpetually delays part of the fulfilment of its promise to a time yet to come. When holding on to the idea of progress, disparities in the distribution of wealth and power metamorphose from a systemic injustice into a merely temporal problem.

The concept and ideology of progress thus contributes an additional layer of complexity to any analysis of social change and continuity in mid-twentieth-century Germany. Ideas of progress have been both powerful drivers of change accompanied by sentiments of social uprootedness, on the one hand, and symptoms of a certain stability of thought across time and ideological boundaries, on the other. In addition to the factors discussed above, the inherent promise of perpetual and fundamental societal development offered by progress strikes a deep chord in individual modern subjectivity itself. As Anthony Cascardi has put it: 'the modern subject's self-image is built on the premise of its incommensurability with any pre-existing paradigm',[38] thus rendering the idea of radical change and perpetual unpreparedness for the future ahead a central principle of modernity.

This complex relationship between modernity and progress has been summarised by Koselleck. He argues that, since the industrial revolution, the notion of progress has contained the socio-political message that historically acquired human skills and experience are never sufficient to meet the new and unforeseeable challenges of the future. For this reason, the notion of progress compels political systems to invest in comprehensive planning efforts, but these efforts are, necessarily, constantly subject to change due to the perpetually evolving present and projected environments they are embedded in. Koselleck summarises:

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[37] Buzan and Lawson, p. 101.
[38] Anthony J. Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 6.

> Der Fortschrittsbegriff erfaßt genau jene Erfahrung unserer eigenen, unserer Neuzeit, die immer wieder unvorhersehbare Neuheiten gezeitigt hat, die gemessen an aller Vergangenheit schwer oder gar nicht vergleichbar sind. Dies einzukalkulieren ist geradezu ein Element des Fortschrittsbegriffs geworden, so daß er bereits einen stabilisierenden, innerhalb der Moderne konservativen Bedeutungsstreifen gewonnen hat. Das Vertrauen in den Fortschritt, der immer weiter führt, ist sozusagen altmodisch geworden, ohne deshalb völlig unberechtigt zu sein. Zunächst freilich zeichnete ihn aus, daß er die Einmaligkeit der Veränderung selbst thematisierte.[39]

After the war, the persistent, fundamental belief in the idea of progress held by both leaders and the wider population served as an effective lever when it came to imagining and implementing new frameworks of social belonging and their formalisation in the institution of citizenship. The political utility of ideas of progressive transformation was also known to the Allied forces. In her study *Soziologie der Stunde Null,* Uta Gerhardt investigates how the idea of radical change at the heart of the 'zero hour' thesis was a consciously and carefully engineered instrument, already constructed by the US government while the war was still ongoing, to effect a complete reorganisation of all aspects of German social and political life.[40] And in the GDR, Soviet visions of socialist futurity and of a 'leadership' in the developmental 'race' with capitalist nations became a central semantic strategy of state building.[41]

2.3 Citizenship in the GDR: Progress as Civic Duty

It could be argued that the GDR treated citizenship as one of the central institutional vehicles for the enactment of the state's mission of progress. The language of progress, at the same time, served as an important device in a process that Ralph Jessen, borrowing from Koselleck, has called the 'temporalization' of belonging.[42] By means of this semantic device, the GDR's population was constructed as a unified entity by narratively placing it in a particular relationship to the historical past and visions of the future. The nature of this relationship was

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[39] Reinhart Koselleck, '"Fortschritt und Niedergang": Nachtrag zur Geschichte zweier Begriffe', in *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*, ed. by Reinhart Koselleck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), pp. 159–82.

[40] Uta Gerhardt, *Soziologie der Stunde Null: Zur Gesellschaftskonzeption des amerikanischen Besatzungsregimes in Deutschland 1944–1945/1946* (Stuttgart: Suhrkamp, 2005).

[41] See, e.g., Ralph Jessen, 'Semantic Strategies of Inclusion and Exclusion in the German Democratic Republic (1949-1989)', in *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes*, ed. by Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 275–91.

[42] See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: Columbia University Press, 1985).

usually expressed in contrast to that of the FRG, whose development was seen as reactionary rather than progressive. As Jessen points out:

> The offer of 'temporal' identification was based mainly on two arguments: one distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' strands in the German past; the other directing attention towards a future Communist utopia. With regard to the German past, SED propaganda and historiography put forward the concept of two competing paths in German history, one of which – the path of reaction – had resulted in imperialism and fascism as the ultimate stages of the capitalist order, while the other – the path of progress – had led to the founding of the GDR.[43]

The GDR's self-fashioning as 'anti-fascist', progressive, and oriented towards a number of eschatological expectations, aimed at endowing the state with a particular legitimacy for its citizens. This message was aimed at all citizens, but particularly at the younger population who were understood as both the symbolic and actual bearers of a utopian socialist future for the GDR, a future united Germany, and ultimately the whole of mankind.[44] Formally, the extended political position which the GDR youth enjoyed *vis-à-vis* their West German contemporaries was expressed in the differences of voting age. The East German government granted the full, active citizenship status brought about by the right to vote to people over the age of 18 in 1949, whereas the Federal Republic had a minimum voting age of 21 until 1970, when it was lowered to 18. West Germany's age requirement for the ultimate signifier of political agency, namely membership in parliament, was even higher than this, with a minimum age of 25 until 1969.[45]

The centrality of the progress theme for the GDR's founding myth is legible not only in the first line of its national anthem: 'Auferstanden aus Ruinen und der Zukunft zugewandt',[46] but also in the state's several constitutions. A brief linguistic analysis I conducted of the GDR's constitutions of 1949 and 1968, along with the FRG's *Grundgesetz* (*GG*), revealed the enormous importance that was given to ideas of progress and development. The GDR's 1949 constitution uses the term 'Fortschritt' twice in its programmatic opening, and the term 'Entwicklung', which can be seen as sharing a sematic field with 'progress', occurs 22 times.[47]

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[43] Jessen, p. 278.
[44] See Jessen, p. 279.
[45] This was lowered to 21 in 1969 and to 18 in 1972. The GDR's young voting age was representative of communist countries of the time, while West Germany's high voting age was typical of Western democracies. France only lowered the voting age to 18 in 1974, Britain in 1969, and the United States in 1971. The age of conscription, however, was 18 across the different systems. See Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, pp. 178–79.
[46] Opening of the GDR's national anthem from 1949, text by the poet Johannes R. Becher, who later became the GDR's Minister of Culture. Due to the anthem's reference to 'Deutschland einig Vaterland' it was no longer sung after Erich Honecker abandoned the policy of treating the whole of Germany as 'one nation' in the mid-1970s.
[47] The constitution was changed in 1955, 1958, and 1960, and was finally replaced by a new constitution on 9 April 1968.

The 1968 constitution, which replaced the earlier document, uses the terms 'Fortschritt' and its derivatives five times, and the term 'Entwicklung', in contexts such as 'die Entwicklung der sozialistischen Gesellschaft', is employed an astonishing 38 times.[48] By comparison, the *GG*, while prominently including the implicitly forward-looking preamble cited in this chapter's introduction, is entirely free of any explicit mention of ideas such as 'Fortschritt' or 'Entwicklung', and on the 10 occasions that the prefix 'fort' is used, it is consistently in different forms of past- and conservation-oriented terms such as 'Fortdauer', 'Fortgeltung', etc.[49]

The GDR's narratives of progress which defined the state's *raison d'être* and communal boundaries also served as the basis for the formulation of a distinct model of citizenship *vis-à-vis* the FRG. Already operative in the state's earlier years, but only formulated as a fully-fledged theory in the 1970s and 1980s, this articulation of citizenship centred on ideas of societal and individual development and its connection to the lived political activity of the citizen, in which the legal formality of the institution is meant to withdraw into the background. As Riege and Kulke asserted in 1980: 'Als ein reales gesellschaftliches Verhältnis wird auch die Staatsbürgerschaft nicht durch ein Gesetz geschaffen, sondern durch die gesellschaftliche Aktion, die zur Staatsgründung führte'.[50] The conceptual link that the GDR established between the political aim of the state's progress and the resulting expectation of active engagement of its citizens had already been expressed in the constitution, as illustrated, for example, in Article 3: 'Jeder Bürger hat das Recht und die Pflicht zur Mitgestaltung […] Die Staatsgewalt muß dem Wohl des Volkes, der Freiheit, dem Frieden und dem demokratischen Fortschritt dienen.'[51] The two aspects of the citizens' engagement, on the one hand, and the state's progress, on the other, are here connected not only through their close textual proximity in one legal article, but also through the parallelism which is established between the respective duties of the citizen and the state ('Bürger' → 'Mitgestaltung', 'Staatsmacht' → 'Fortschritt').

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[48] GDR constitution of 1968, Art. 3 (2). The terms were counted in the 1968 constitution's amended form of 1974 – the GDR's final constitution before reunification.
[49] See, e.g., Art. 123 (1): 'Recht aus der Zeit vor dem Zusammentritt des Bundestages gilt fort, soweit es dem Grundgesetze nicht widerspricht'. The term 'Entwicklung' is used once, but only in a strictly developmental context, when referring to the 'leibliche und seelische Entwicklung' of extramarital children (*GG*, Art. 5 (6)).
[50] Riege and Kulke, p. 17.
[51] Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik of 1949. Article 2 (2) provides another example of the exalted position that progress played in the ideational formation of the socialist society: 'Die Planung und Leitung der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung nach den fortschrittlichsten Erkenntnissen der Wissenschaft bilden unantastbare Grundlagen der sozialistischen Gesellschaftsordnung.'

Just as competition between the two German states as a whole was often expressed in the spatiotemporal terms of progress, with one state declared as being 'ahead' of the other, and the latter as being historically 'backward', 'ageing', or 'in decline', scholarly comparisons between the two forms of German citizenship in East and West also availed themselves of the metaphors of a journey, a race, or rivalry between the young and the old. Riege and Kulke use this terminology when explaining the incommensurability of the two German citizenships:

> Die sozialistische Staatsbürgerschaft der DDR, 1949 mit dem Arbeiter-Bauern-Staat entstanden, teilt mit dem Alter dieses Staates sein Aufblühen. Was sie für den einzelnen und die Gesellschaft wirklich bedeutet, wird inhaltsreicher und vielfältiger, je weiter unsere Gesellschaft auf dem sozialistischen Kurs zum Kommunismus vorankommt. Zugleich hebt sie sich zunehmend stärker von der imperialistischen deutschen Bundesbürgerschaft ab, die den einzelnen mit einer Ordnung verbindet, deren glänzende äußere Aufmachung nicht überdecken kann, daß sie abgelebt und geschichtlich verbraucht ist. So betrachtet wird die Kluft zwischen den gesellschaftlichen und staatlichen Ordnungen ständig größer. Die von vornherein bestehende Unvereinbarkeit der mit ihnen verknüpften Bürgerschaften tritt immer plastischer hervor.[52]

In a separate publication entitled 'Der Bürger in der sozialistischen Gesellschafts- und Staatsordnung der DDR: Seine Grundrechte und Grundpflichten', Gerhard Riege expands on this description by portraying GDR citizenship as an inherently dynamic institution. He here contrasts the durability of the formal framework of citizenship with its lived content – at which level it is engaged in a continuous process of development, in sync with the broader societal progress:

> Der sozialistischen Staatsbürgerschaft ist eine innere Dynamik eigen. Seiner Form nach bleibt das Rechtsinstitut über längere Zeit weitgehend unverändert; in seinem Inhalt hingegen entwickelt es sich mit der sozialistischen Gesellschafts- und Staatsordnung, d.h. in dem Maße, in dem die Selbstbestimmung des Volkes, die Beherrschung der Gesellschaft und der Natur durch den Menschen an Tiefe und Breite zunehmen.[53]

Notable in this context is the denomination of 'Staatsbürgerschaft', which, beginning in the 1970s, was increasingly used to demarcate the GDR's citizenship from the FRG's 'Staatsangehörigkeit'. While the latter was portrayed as a mainly passive status, the GDR's 'Staatsbürgerschaft' was fashioned as a concept which expressed the active engagement of the citizenry as well as their privileged relationship to the law and the state. The status of the socialist 'Staatsbürger', Riege and Kulke insist in accordance with the official doctrine of the

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[52] Riege and Kulke, pp. 146–47.

[53] Gerhard Riege, 'Der Bürger in der sozialisten Gesellschafts- und Staatsordnung der DDR: Seine Grundrechte und Grundpflichten', in *Grundrechte des Bürgers in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft*, ed. by Eberhard Poppe (Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1980), pp. 9–60 (p. 53).

time, 'reflektiert in ganz anderer Weise als der des Staatsangehörigen die Gewißheit, in der Gesellschaft wirken zu können und von ihr gebraucht zu werden'.[54] Yet this invitation to engage politically came with certain conditions attached, one of which was adherence to a linear and progressive sense of temporality.

3.1 Uwe Johnson, Mutmassungen über Jakob*, and 'Anti-Progressive' Citizenship*

Uwe Johnson's novel *Mutmassungen über Jakob* takes the death of the title's hero, the railway foreman Jakob Abs, and his friends' speculations about the background of the event, as the fulcrum for a study of the complexities of German civil society under the conditions of division and the Cold War. Written while the author was still in the GDR, where the book's publication was never allowed, *Mutmassungen* appeared to immediate critical acclaim in West Germany in 1959. The FRG's cultural scene celebrated the novel as a 'gesamtdeutscher Roman' (Enzensberger)[55] and 'Abbreviatur aller modernen Erzählmöglichkeiten' (Blöcker).[56] The novel's remarkable style, making use of modernist techniques such as free syntax, multi-perspectivity, and a highly elaborate architecture, has been seen as offering one of the first apposite aesthetic responses to the challenges of the post-war period and German division.[57] In the East, the negative reception of the novel and the emigration of its author upon publication were seen by some as symptomatic of a then increasing inability among literary writers to voice discomfort and dissent with the GDR while still remaining part of its society. Concern about official responses to the East German uprising of 1953, as well as to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, whose brutal suppression by Soviet forces plays a central role in *Mutmassungen*, led to a sharp rise in authors leaving the GDR for the West.[58]

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[54] Riege and Kulke, p. 23; see also Münch, p. 94 ff.
[55] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Die große Ausnahme', in *Über Uwe Johnson*, ed. by Raimund Fellinger (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 55–60 (p. 55).
[56] Günter Blöcker, 'Roman der beiden Deutschland', in *Über Uwe Johnson*, ed. by Raimund Fellinger (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 47–50 (p. 47).
[57] See, e.g., Viviana Chilese, 'Uwe Johnson: *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*', in *Handbuch Nachkriegskultur*, ed. by Elena Agazzi and Erhard Schütz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 593–96.
[58] Most prominently among them Horst Bienek, Alfred Kantorowicz, Walter Kempowski, Heinar Kipphardt, and Uwe Johnson.

Johnson's novel begins with a programmatic conjunction: '*Aber* Jakob ist immer quer über die Gleise gegangen.'[59] 'Aber', according to the *Duden*, can signal reservation, objection, opposition, or a correction, and its prominent location at the beginning of an opening sentence which also forms a paragraph in its own right appears clearly to position the subsequent text as an expression of protest and a counter-narrative to an implied alternative account.[60] In its immediate context, the sentence forms part of a conversation among Jakob's friends, who try to reconstruct the events leading to Jakob's death on the railway tracks, being unwilling or unable to accept the official explanation that it was an accident.[61] In the course of the *Mutmassungen*, a polyphony of voices are given space, and, in keeping with the egalitarian form and epistemology of the novel, no final conclusion is drawn with regard to the speculations about Jakob's sudden death, leaving open the question of whether it was caused by an accident, political execution, murder, or suicide.

The text is designed as a negotiation among a variety of characters, with only sparse interjections provided by the narrator. Since Johnson believed that the perspective of the omniscient narrator of the Socialist Realist novel would mirror and symbolically endorse the position of the State Security Service (the 'Staatssicherheit' or 'Stasi'),[62] he attempted to abandon the privileged epistemological position of authorial omniscience.[63] Four perspectives shape the bulk of the text: those of Jonas Blach, Jakob's friend, professor of English and regime critic; Gesine Cresspahl, who lives in West Germany working as a translator for NATO, and who is Jakob's foster-sister and later love interest of first Jonas and then Jakob; Jöche, Jakob's colleague at the East German *Reichsbahn*; and Rohlfs, an agent with the East German State

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[59] Uwe Johnson, *Mutmassungen über Jakob* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), p. 7, emphasis added. After the first citation, references to *Mutmassungen* will be given in the text as MJ.

[60] While usually interpreted through a political lens, Robert Gillett rightly points out that the 'aber' may also be read in a non-ideological fashion as the expression of a metaphysical protest in the face of the loss of a friend. Robert Gillett, 'The Making of a Modernist Novel: An Editor's View of Mutmassungen über Jakob', *German Life and Letters*, 70.3 (2017), 367–75 (p. 367).

[61] In earlier scholarship, possibly fuelled by an unconscious effort to increase the political symbolism of the fatal incident, the railway tracks were mistakenly believed to lead from East to West (instead of from North to South, as Mark Boulby found out). See Mark Boulby, *Uwe Johnson* (New York, NY: Ungar, 1974), p. 13.

[62] He expressed this view during an interview. See Michael Roloff, 'Gespräche mit Uwe Johnson', in *'Ich überlege mir Geschichte...': Uwe Johnson im Gespräch*, ed. by Eberhard Fahlke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 178.

[63] The question of whether or not Johnson succeeded in eliminating the omniscient narrator has inspired considerable debate in the scholarship. Colin Riordan, among others, argues that Johnson failed in his attempt, as he appears to be able to access characters' thoughts. See Colin Riordan, *The Ethics of Narration* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association and the Institute of Germanic Studies at the University of London, 1989); D. G. Bond, in contrast, asserts that the omniscience of the author should not be confused with that of the narrator, who is not given this perspective. See D. G. Bond, 'The Dialogic Form of Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob*', *Modern Language Review*, 84.4 (1989), 874–84. See also David Kenosian, 'The Death of the Collective Subject in Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob*', *Orbis Litterarum*, 58.6 (2003), 452–65.

Security Service who is hoping to recruit Gesine. Other significant figures include Gesine's father, the carpenter Heinrich Cresspahl; and Jakob's mother, Marie Abs, who leaves the GDR for West Germany after being approached by Rohlfs while he is in pursuit of Gesine.

The novel comments on time and temporality in a multitude of ways, both explicitly and on the levels of symbolism and structure. I understand the term 'temporality', as mentioned above, to refer to the social and political management of time, together with the individual and collective experience of time that ensues. A character's specific experience of time is thus always also an indication of how he or she relates to the experience of the greater collective that constitutes the citizenry. The adjective 'quer', for example, which is found in the opening sentence of *Mutmassungen*, and has received considerable attention in the secondary literature for its spatial and political resonances,[64] also presents an expedient cue in an analysis of the temporality of Johnson's novel. After the oft-cited first sentence: 'Aber Jakob ist immer quer über die Gleise gegangen' (MJ 7), the term 'quer' returns twice more on the very first page alone.[65] Especially when read in conjunction with regularly occurring related terms such as 'schräg', 'übereck' (MJ 44), or 'schief' (MJ 239, 257), it can be seen to form an important motif in the novel.[66] In the immediate context of the first sentence, the term 'quer', as Brigitte Martin-Mendonca has pointed out, may be read as meaning that Jakob crossed the tracks either diagonally or at a right angle, and the term has usually been understood to figuratively refer to a contrarian political opinion in its associations with 'Querkopf', 'Querulant', 'Quertreiber', etc.[67] In addition to these layers of meaning, the term 'quer' is suitable for describing the temporality of the novel which is not linear and teleological, but instead runs, as it were, 'kreuz und quer', crisscrossing its way through various layers of experience.

Another pointer towards the novel's anti-progressive and thus politically subversive structure is provided in the first sentence, when one considers the way it establishes the intradiegetic puzzle and 'arrival point' of the novel. In a narrative direction running backwards, i.e., counter to the direction of progress, the central event of *Mutmassungen* which the first sentence addresses, namely the death of Jakob Abs, is one which occurs not in the narrative

[64] See, e.g., Brigitte Martin-Mendonca, 'Technology and Symbolism in Uwe Johnson's *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, XXV.2 (1989), 139–46.
[65] Other occurrences of the term are, for example, on pp. 26, 27, 43, and 193 MJ.
[66] See Martin-Mendonca.
[67] See Martin-Mendonca, pp. 141–42.

future, but in the past, and which can only be analytically reconstructed, not changed. 'Das Erzählen fängt an, wenn die Geschichte zu Ende ist', Johnson pointed out in an interview.[68]

Reverse analytical narration already has a tradition in genres such as the detective novel. The enigmatic aspect of *Mutmassungen's* design resonates well with this genre, as does the novel's principal subject matter: the event of a human death and the subsequent endeavour to find out the truth about the situation that caused it. The aspects of *Mutmassungen* that appear to present themselves as an analytical puzzle have, consequently, received much attention among critics.[69] Yet despite certain references to the detective novel, Johnson decisively distorts this form, disturbing even a reverse linear flow: the frequent recurrence of incidents, narrated from different points of view, adds an element of circularity, and the omission of information about the temporal location of events, together with the overall perspectival fragmentation, resists any impression of facile progression in the reader's attempt to collect more information. The shifting perspectives and absence of a dominant explanatory thread has earned the text a reputation for being 'difficult' to understand and navigate.[70] Instead of having facts conveniently laid out and interpreted for them, readers are required to actively engage with a model of narration and, in certain respects, a historiography which is conspicuously anti-linear, incomplete, and continuously questions its own validity, thus never arriving at the point of resolution that classic detective fiction offers.

Johnson's rejection of narrative linearity and stringent chronology was an acutely political act, and immediately understood as such by the GDR leadership. According to the socialist cultural doctrine, one of the vital tasks of literary fiction was to mirror and support the politically central idea of progress, by rendering the 'protagonists' process of development […] a metonymy of the historical development of socialist society'.[71] The underlying model of socialist realism was strongly informed by the literary theory of Georg Lukacs, who explains the function of literary characters in the following terms:

> Daß ihre Individualität letzten Endes gesellschaftlich-geschichtlich bedingt ist, kommt gerade in der Beziehung: Vergangenheit-Gegenwart-Perspektive der Zukunft am deutlichsten zum Ausdruck. Gerade das literarische Herauswachsenlassen der heutigen Menschen aus ihrer durchlebten Vergangenheit bringt

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[68] Arnelm Neusüß, 'Über die Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit: Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson', in *Uwe Johnson*, ed. by Rainer Gerlach and Matthias Richter (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 39–48 (p. 40).

[69] See, e.g., Hansjürgen Popp, *Einführung in Uwe Johnsons 'Mutmassungen über Jakob'* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1967). The larger part of Popp's study is dedicated to 'detective work' in an effort to reconstruct the line of events in *Mutmassungen*. See also Gillett, p. 69.

[70] See, e.g., Gillett, p. 369.

[71] Kenosian, p. 456.

> das Verhältnis von Menschen und Gesellschaft innerhalb einer Persönlichkeit am konkretesten an die Oberfläche.[72]

The form Johnson chose for his novel amounted to an expression of dissent with the socialist master narrative of historical progress, and this was instantly noticed in the GDR. The head of the Socialist Unity Party's Cultural Committee (the SED's 'Kulturkommission'), Alfred Kurella, criticised the work on the basis of its 'misleading' temporality, in which 'die *Wirklichkeit* sich in eine Summe von qualligen Beziehungen auflöst und die Handlung zum *zeitlosen* Nebeneinander verschiedener Ereignisebenen wird'.[73] In the GDR's climate of literary censorship, aesthetic choices and portrayals of temporality that deviated from the official norm were perceived as not only artistically unworthy, but also as morally objectionable and politically dangerous.

Besides its general aesthetic hostility towards Johnson's text, Kurella's comment is notable for the connection it establishes between temporality and reality, and the acknowledgement that fictional production has the capacity to disrupt this connection. The organisation and unification of reality for a particular population has been among the primary tasks of the modern nation state since its inception in the late nineteenth century.[74] To consolidate the reality of its own existence, the nation state had to construct for its population a shared reality which consisted, among other aspects, of a homogeneous experience of time and space. The process of citizenship formation relies heavily on the state's ability to create a sense of synchronicity among a dispersed group of diverse individuals. When Kurella criticises *Mutmassungen* on grounds that its temporality 'dissolves reality into a sum of jellyfish-like connections',[75] he puts his finger on the politically destabilising potential of temporal epistemologies that deviate from those the state is trying to promote.

For the social theorist Luc Boltanski, the relationship between reality and the state forms the crux of the classical crime or spy novel. Boltanski argues that the emergence and rapidly growing popularity of the crime novel (of which the spy novel is a later offshoot),[76] as well as the development of the social sciences and psychiatry's formulation of the condition of

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[72] Georg Lukacs, 'Sozialistischer Realismus heute', *Neue Rundschau*, 1964, 404–5.
[73] Cited in Chilese, p. 593. Emphasis added.
[74] Luc Boltanski, *Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. xiv–xv.
[75] Own translation.
[76] See Boltanski, p. 124: 'The constitution of espionage fiction as an original genre followed that of detective fiction by about thrity years. Although stories about spies and spying appeared in French novels in the early twentieth century, it can be argued that the genre took root in its canonical forms in Great Britain around the outbreak of the First World War.' Boltanski identifies John Buchan's novel *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) as the genre's foundational text.

paranoia around the turn of the twentieth century all coincided with, and were partly driven by, newly emerging ways of questioning reality and grappling with the burgeoning contradictions it presented.[77] The mysteries at the centre of detective and espionage novels, Boltanski maintains, 'can be constituted as specific objects only by being detached from the background of a stabilised and predictable reality whose fragility is revealed by crimes'.[78]

The uncertainty surrounding the death of Jakob Abs undoubtedly constitutes such an epistemologically destabilising incident for his surroundings, and the effort of reconstructing the events that led to Jakob's death shows certain features of a detective's investigative work in the process of which they are trying to restore the sense of a unified reality that had become threatened by the mystery's occurrence. If, however, the focus is extended to include not only Jakob's death, but also the context of the Cold War, the Ministry of State Security, and the central role that Rohlfs and, crucially, Gesine play in *Mutmassungen*, the novel more easily fits Boltanski's framework of a spy, rather than a detective, novel. According to Boltanski, both genres share a variety of features, such as the centrality of enigmas, different kinds of perils, and the creation of anxiety about 'the solidity and stability of *reality*'.[79] An important difference between the genres, however, is established by the political context in which these features are played out. Boltanski argues that the crime novel is typically located in a setting in which the state is at peace, while the context of the spy novel is one of war. As a result, the spy novel exposes a state's vulnerability much more acutely than does the crime novel. Boltanski elucidates:

> A state in a state of war is a state whose fragility comes to the foreground since as an entity, that is, as a moral person, it is subjected to a trial from which the reader is given to understand that it may not emerge triumphant (otherwise, there would be neither suspense nor fiction). A state at war does not merely have criminal individuals to confront. It has to struggle against a more or less sizeable, more or less organized coalition that threatens its personal integrity. As a quasi-individual, the state has to defend its own existence at all costs.[80]

While classic spy novels are political in their very design, and always show moments during which the omnipotence of the state is called into question, they are not necessarily politically subversive. When concluding with a satisfying resolution of the mystery or the definitive defeat of the state's enemy, espionage fiction can have an 'anodyne and diverting' effect on its readers, in the end restoring a false but comforting sense of stable causal relationships and

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[77] Boltanski, pp. xiv–xv.
[78] Boltanski, p. xiv.
[79] Boltanski, p. 124. Emphasis in original.
[80] Boltanski, pp. 124–25.

predictability.[81] *Mutmassungen* inverts this mechanism. Instead of recreating a misleading perception of a unified reality, Johnson leaves open the mystery around Jakob's death and several other puzzles occurring in the novel, such as that around Gesine's identity (which will be addressed in further detail below). With this, the 'crack' in reality caused by the enigmatic event at the centre of the novel remains open. The destabilising effect of this continued uncertainty in the plot is supported by the novel's multi-perspectivity, narrative fragmentation, and temporal diversions.

For Johnson, according to his own recollection, the adoption of these stylistic features was not a primarily political or academic one, but one driven by narrative necessities and ethics. In the same interview cited above, Johnson speaks about how the form of his novel emerged almost organically from practical considerations, rather than a systemic agenda:

> Ich habe bei der Geschichte, die darin steht, nur eine Form, eine Lösung gesucht, diese Geschichte zu erzählen. Es ist aber dabei keinerlei germanistische oder konstruktivistische Überlegung vorausgegangen, sondern die Verhältnisse der Geschichte haben einfach die Darstellung bestimmt. Der Mann, um den es geht, ist tot am Ende der Geschichte, das ist überhaupt die Geschichte! Sie ist geschehen, bevor die Beteiligten anfangen, sich ihrer zu entsinnen. Das Erzählen fängt an, wenn die Geschichte zu Ende ist. Die Frage ist nun: was bleibt von einem Menschen übrig im Gedächtnis seiner Umgebung. Das sind sehr verschiedene Dinge. Ich habe auch den ersten Versuch zu diesem Buch auf eine sehr treuherzige Weise gemacht. Ich habe so ungefähr ein Viertel chronologisch geschrieben, ohne da irgendwelche Gespräche oder Monologe dazwischenzuschieben, aber dann ergaben sich stilistische Schwierigkeiten, etwa von der Art, daß ein unbeteiligter Erzähler nicht die entschiedene Haltung und Meinung von Herrn Rohlfs wiedergeben kann, ohne sich in seiner allzu kritischen oder allzu ironischen oder allzu feindseligen Art zu verhalten. Das schadet natürlich der Gestalt Rohlfs, und darum wurde aus Herrn Rohlfs ein innerer Monolog. Außerdem: die Gewohnheiten, mit Hilfe derer man sich eines Verstorbenen erinnert, sind eben Gespräche und erinnernde Monologe. Das ist dann ziemlich alles von selbst gekommen.[82]

In the following sections, I will explore more fully the different ways in which the characters depicted in *Mutmassungen* relate to the environment of the GDR's distinct temporality and ideology of progress, and, thereby, to its concept of citizenship. These relationships will be found to often be expressed through certain symbolic objects, such as the train or typewriter.

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[81] Boltanski, p. xvi.
[82] Neusüß, p. 40.

3.2 Jakob and Trains: Citizenship, Progress, and its Disturbance

Johnson's choice of trains as the principal motif of his novel was motivated by his understanding of the 'Reichsbahn' as a microcosm of the socialist system.[83] Very suitably for the political context Johnson addresses, he, thereby, also chose to centre his text around a particularly potent symbol of progress and national integration.[84] Since their inception around 1800, locomotive engines, trains, and railroads have not only been tangible manifestations of technological achievements, but also drivers of broader economic and societal change. Like the invention of the printing press, which, according to Anderson, made abstract communities of strangers imaginable to the individual,[85] the railroad system can be seen to have played a substantial role in the building of the modern state and its citizenry. By opening up an experience of distance to increasingly broad segments of the population, the railroad made national space and belonging 'erfahrbar' beyond the citizens' immediate neighbourhoods that they were earlier confined to.

Beyond its significance for the nation, the train system is also a particularly suitable metaphor of progress by connecting space, time, and accelerated movement. The ideological dimension of the train metaphor draws on the fact that this acceleration is based on human-made, technological innovation and that trains are meant to run in accordance with a planned schedule. With time itself being an abstract concept, human understanding and communication of the passage of history has always relied on spatial metaphors. As Koselleck explains: '[A]lle geschichtlichen Ausdrücke [leben], weil Zeit selber nicht anschaulich gemacht werden kann, von natürlichen und räumlichen Hintergrundsbedeutungen, die metaphorisch auf die Geschichte und ihre 'Bewegungen' ausgeweitet werden'.[86] This also holds for the concept of 'Fortschritt', which, derived from the term 'Schreiten' (stride), has a physical and spatial dimension, to which a temporal component is added in the activity of striding. 'Fortschritt', Koselleck argues, is therefore to be understood as a relational concept, 'eine Relationsbestimmung, die räumlich hier und dort, zeitlich jetzt und dann und früher aufeinander bezieht'. The spatial elements always correspond to a chronological sequence.[87] Beyond the social, economic, and political connections that trains facilitate in *Mutmassungen*

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[83] Uwe Johnson, *Begleitumstände* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), p. 118.

[84] Here and in what follows, I understand symbolism in the sense of Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov's classical definition of 'a more or less stable association between two units of the same level (that is, two signifiers or two signified)'. Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 102.

[85] Anderson.

[86] Koselleck, '"Fortschritt und Niedergang": Nachtrag zur Geschichte zweier Begriffe', p. 351.

[87] Koselleck, '"Fortschritt und Niedergang": Nachtrag zur Geschichte zweier Begriffe', p. 351.

and that should be interpreted against this broader historical background, Johnson can also be seen to use the symbol of the train in a subversive way by turning its conventional association with linearity and progress on its head.

Mutmassungen's first sentence establishes a priviliged connection between Jakob and the semantic field of trains (containing objects such as 'Bahnhof', 'Eisenbahn', 'Gleise', etc.), and this connection is maintained throughout the text. The relationship between Jakob and trains also extends to the political implications that public transport carried in the GDR. At a time when individual transportation flourished in the West, making cars and motorways an important theme in the FRG's popular imagination,[88] collective forms of mobility and transportation were prioritised in the East.[89] This was for both economic and political reasons. Economically, the unprecedentedly high reparations the Soviet Union extracted from the GDR resulted in a scarcity of industrial resources that hindered growth in the automotive industry. Politically, public transport was favoured in opposition to the primacy of the individual as celebrated in liberal ideologies. Jakob's depiction as a 'public' person who feels uncomfortable in private conveyances such as cars, instead preferring the 'Bedingungen der öffentlichen Personenbeförderung' (MJ 69), is, therefore, also a way of signalling his alignment with the spirit of good socialist citizenship.[90]

Jakob's close symbolic association with trains, his personal transportation preferences, and the dedication to the public good that he practises in his occupation as a dispatcher, at first appear to put him in harmony with the official doctrine. Yet Jakob is shown to comprehend the mechanisms of the railroad system to an extent which both supersedes and subverts the central party line. In contrast to the political leadership, Jakob's relation to the railroad is not tainted by ideology but is based on meticulous empirical analysis and pragmatism, offering him a deep insight into the temporal structures on which the system depends. A passage describing how Jakob develops his own timetables, which deviate from the inaccurate official ones, may be read as summarising several layers of his complex relationship to the GDR leadership and their understanding of temporality:

> In diesem Herbst war Jakob achtundzwanzig Jahre alt, und er hatte noch in keinem den Oktober so als eine Zeit erlebt. Die Minuten seiner Arbeit musste er sparsam ausnutzen und umsichtig bedenken, er

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[88] See, for example, the popular West German comedy film *Natürlich die Autofahrer* of 1959, directed by Erich Engels and starring Heinz Erhardt.
[89] See, e.g., Schütz, 'Nach dem Entkommen, vor dem Ankommen', p. 19.
[90] See also Brigitte Martin-Mendonca, 'Technology and Symbolism in Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, XXV.2 (1989), 139–46 (p. 140). Jakob is unable to drive a car, and in the novel only rides on cars when with Rohlfs (44, 57) or Gesine (163, 293); see also Martin-Mendonca, p. 140.

> kannte jede einzelne. Das Papier auf der schrägen Tischplatte vor ihm war eingeteilt nach senkrechten und waagerechten Linien für das zeitliche und räumliche Nacheinander der planmässigen und der unregelmässigen Vorkommnisse, er verzeichnete darin mit seinen verschiedenen Stiften die Bewegung der Eisenbahnzüge auf seiner Strecke von Blockstelle zu Blockstelle und von Minute zu Minute, aber eigentlich nahm er von dem berühmten Wechsel der Jahreszeiten nur die unterschiedliche Helligkeit wahr, am Ende machten die Minuten keine Tage aus sondern einen Fahrplan. (MJ 376)

The timetable Jakob generates from his analysis of historical and normative data creates an image which overlaps in many ways with concepts of progress such as those held by the SED and described by Koselleck above. The passing of time as analysed by Jakob is all but divorced from natural processes like the change of seasons and the time of day: 'eigentlich nahm er von dem berühmten Wechsel der Jahreszeiten nur die unterschiedliche Helligkeit wahr, am Ende machten die Minuten keine Tage aus sondern einen Fahrplan' (MJ 376). Jakob is interested in mechanical time alone, the denaturalised time which underlies the modern understanding of progress.[91] Yet simultaneously, the image Jakob draws also deviates from and resists the official ideology of linear progress by exposing the cracks in the system of mechanical time. The lines on his paper run not only horizontally, but are also crossed vertically ('quer'), and events are not only 'planmässig', but also 'unregelmässig': a term which in this context can be understood in its full breadth, ranging from 'erratic' and 'inconstant' to 'against the rules'.[92]

At other points in the text, this rupture between the abstract party doctrine of progress and Jakob's conscientious treatment of temporal matters is further illustrated in the contrast between him and Rohlfs, who in the scholarship is often seen to represent a personification of the East German state. While Jakob wears a precision watch to ensure that he can constantly practise the punctuality which he understands as a fundamental pillar of social responsibility, Rohlfs is shown to be lax in temporal matters, and to repeatedly rely on others whom he asks for the time.[93] Time, for Rohlfs, is not connected to an 'objective' reality or mechanical device, but to human agency and interaction. He holds an ideological image of time and progress, which renders him out of sync with clock time, and historical time more broadly. Jakob, in contrast to the party doctrine, does not believe that time is subject to human control, but instead regards it as a force that he must submit to and work with. This renders him humble,

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[91] See Koselleck, 'Fortschritt'.

[92] It has been noted in the scholarship that the description of Jakob's construction of time-tables can also be understood as an analogy of the poetological model of the novel as a whole. See, e.g., Alexander Honold, 'Zehrfahrene Lebenslinien: Über die Fragmentierng des Biographischen in Uwe Johnsons *Mutmassungen über Jakob*', in *Literatur als Lebensgeschichte*, ed. by Peter Braun and Bernd Stiegler (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014), pp. 187–203.

[93] MJ 65, 165.

clearheaded, and imaginative when confronted with logistical challenges in the train schedule, such as those which arise during the Hungarian uprising.

The Hungarian uprising of October 1956 is also the context in which Jakob's seemingly unpolitical work at the 'Reichsbahn' becomes abruptly and undeniably political, changing his relationship to both the GDR leadership and to technology in the process. The novel shows Jakob as starting out with a strong belief in technology: '[er] brachte sich die Technik ins Gedächtnis und die Ursachen und die Voraussetzungen und achtete sie für notwendig allesamt' (MJ 70). The events of autumn 1956, however, lead him increasingly to understand technology as an ambivalent tool that can be used in the interests of both the public good and suppressive power. This tension is eloquently captured by Jonas, who summarises: '"Die Eisenbahn zum freundlichen Reisen. Sie ist ausserdem die Möglichkeit der Mobilmachung für die bewaffnete Verteidigung des Sozialismus. Die Technik im allgemeinen, lenkbares Hilfsmittel oder übermächtige Zauberei"' (MJ 218). The ambivalence of railroad technology and its questionable relationship to social progress is further underscored by occasional references to its role during the Nazi regime. In the context of the Hungarian uprising, for example, the novel can be seen to establish a certain continuity between the use of trains by the fascist troops of the past and the socialist troops of the fictional present through an aesthetic resonance of the destructive power and animalistic potency they have in common: 'Trupp für Trupp stürmte aus den Lastwagen über die engen Treppen auf die Waggons zu, Megafone knatterten, Motoren heulten, Holz splitterte zierlich unter den Raupenketten, die Rangierlokomotive zog fauchend ab' (MJ 250).

Mutmassungen here differs markedly from the unambiguous celebration of politically driven technological progress which was a frequent motif in the Socialist Realist novel. Particularly up to the 1970s, the genres of *Aufbau*- and *Baustellenroman*, which were typically placed in a setting of heavy industry, embraced a highly techno-optimistic spirit of 'totaler Machbarkeit'.[94] Machines were often depicted as a means for subjecting both social developments and nature to full human control. A character in Karl-Heinz Jakob's novel *Beschreibung eines Sommers* of 1961 (turned into a successful DEFA film in 1962), for example, fantasises that even the complete destruction of planet earth would hardly present a challenge in the future: '[Dann werden wir] den lächerlichen Erdball aus seiner Bahn sprengen und uns ein anderes Sonnensystem suchen. […] In den nächsten zwanzig Jahren werden wir

[94] Erhard Schütz, 'Technische Zeit: Einleitung', in *Handbuch Nachkriegskultur*, ed. by Elena Agazzi and Erhard Schütz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 381–94 (p. 384).

lernen, Kernfusionen zu bauen'.[95] Social and political belonging, in the *Aufbau-* and *Baustellen*-genre, was strongly linked to an ability and willingness to keep up with these fast-paced developments. A political 'lagging behind' of characters was sanctioned with social exclusion or other forms of punishment, while a novel's happy ending was achieved through a synchronising of characters with the new political era and the rest of the citizenry.[96]

In *Mutmassungen*, this politically engineered progressive plotline is echoed by Rohlfs, who summarises his stance on the topic when recalling a conversation with Jakob: '*vielleicht war es eine Antwort* […] *dass ich sagte mir scheine nachgerade jedes Mittel recht gegen den Stillstand und gegen das Zurückgehen, gegen die Veränderung zum Alten hin: gegen alle die die Veränderung zum Neuen zur Zukunft nicht lernen wollen*' (MJ 52, italics in original). Rohlfs shares the view of the socialist leadership that 'jedes Mittel' is justifiable in the struggle against backwardness and the pursuit of an improved future.

An historical example of the enactment of this stance is the official response to the Hungarian uprising, which was similarly formulated in the language of progress. On 30 October, four days before the military intervention, the Soviet Presidium released a *Declaration by the Soviet Government on the Principles of Development and further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist States* in which it laid out its view of the uprising:

> The course of events has shown that the working people of Hungary, who have attained *great progress* on the basis of the people's democratic system, are rightfully raising the question of the need to eliminate serious defects in the sphere of economic construction, the question of *further improving* the living standards of the population, the question of combating bureaucratic distortions in the state machinery. However, this *legitimate and progressive* movement of the working people was soon joined by the forces of *black reaction and counterrevolution*, which are trying to take advantage of the dissatisfaction of a part of the working people in order to undermine the foundations of the people's democratic system in Hungary and to *restore the old landowner-capitalist ways* in that country.[97]

The Soviet declaration decisively pits a 'legitimate and progressive' section of the uprising against a faction of 'reaction and counterrevolution' which it accuses of having taken over the movement. It is as a fight against these purportedly regressive forces and their plans to undo the advancements of socialism that the Soviets justified their intervention, in the course of

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[95] Karl-Heinz Jakobs, *Beschreibung eines Sommers* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1961), p. 79.
[96] See, e.g., Schütz, 'Technische Zeit: Einleitung', p. 384.
[97] 'Declaration by the Soviet Government on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist States' <https://www.cvce.eu/obj/declaration_by_the_soviet_government_moscow_30_october_1956-en-0876cc2c-5d0c-414f-8a18-966b8350d514.html>; italics added.

which over 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Soviet troops were killed, and around 200,000 Hungarians were exiled.

Jakob does not accept the simple dichotomy between the progressive and the regressive, or the associated logic of social inclusion and exclusion, that Rohlfs and dominant socialist narratives offer. When Rohlfs propagandises against '*alle die die Veränderung zum Neuen zur Zukunft nicht lernen wollen*', Jakob is unafraid to side with those attacked. Rohlfs recalls Jakob's response: '*"Wenn ich solche kennen soll, muss ich ihnen wohl ähnlich sein" sagte er*' (MJ 52, italics in original). The political language of the GDR made sweeping use of images of acceleration and 'overtaking' the capitalist system in their efforts of community building,[98] and Jakob's reply indicates his unwillingness to partake in this competitive discourse and the type of polity forged by it.

The 'Nicht-Überholen-Methode' Jakob develops for the train system is aptly named as an illustration of the subversive concept of history and community he holds. Yet just as Jakob does not embrace speed for speed's sake, neither does he embrace a facile form of resistance. Originally, Jakob is willing to take part in acts that signal to foreign countries the GDR's reliability, accuracy of planning, and velocity. Rohlfs recounts a conversation with Jakob: '*Über seine Strecke kommt: erklärt er mir: die Überzahl der internationalen Güterzüge in Richtung der skandinavischen Fährschiffe und des Hamburger Hafens, deren Pünktlichkeit sei wichtig für das Ansehen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*' (MJ 49, italics in original). Later, some of the troops and tanks sent by the Soviet leadership to crush the Hungarian uprising are also led through GDR territory via the 'Reichsbahn', where orders are handed out to give them priority over freight and passenger transportation. When Jakob's co-workers attempt to block the movement of Russian tanks on their way to Hungary, he understands that the brief interruption they might be able to achieve would be merely symbolic and without actual political impact: '"Als ob zehn Minuten was nützen"' (MJ 247). The passenger trains transporting the general population, however, would be affected adversely and unjustly by the disruption: '"Die Leute wollen nach Hause, die haben auch eine Meinung über die Russen, deswegen tun sie doch keinem Menschen was"' (MJ 247). For Jakob, the high politics conducted in the distance does not take precedence over the immediacy of the private lives of the passengers under his care.

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[98] This language persists in the historiography until today. See, e.g., *The East German Economy, 1945-2010: Falling Behind or Catching Up?*, ed. by Hartmut Berghoff and Uta Andrea Balbier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); *Überholen ohne einzuholen: Die DDR-Wirtschaft als Fußnote der deutschen Geschichte*, ed. by André Steiner (Berlin: Links Christoph, 2006).

Instead of intervening in the planned schedule and trying to interrupt ongoing events, Jakob devises a new method, the 'Nicht-Überholen-Methode', to help passenger trains fulfil the requirements of their schedule (MJ 130).[99] When contriving his 'Nicht-Überholen-Methode' he arrives at the conclusion that the most efficient outcome will be reached by slowing down certain trains, namely those carrying goods, to let others, the passenger trains, move unimpeded. As before, the immediate interests of citizens are prioritised over economic or political values. Jakob communicates his method by breaking out of the hierarchies and engaging directly with the engine drivers: '"Wenn du den 4073 fährst, kommst du zweimal ins Gedränge. Dann musst du zweimal warten auf dem zweiten Gleis, acht Minuten nach Plan. Personenzüge."' Explaining that the trains do not usually meet the schedule, he adds: '"Meistens länger. Dann muss ich dich rausnehmen und irgendwo hinten wieder ansetzen"' (MJ 130-31).

The work of Jakob and other dispatchers shows that, even on the small, seemingly confined scale that the train system presents, history eludes the linear, sequential planning of community, which is envisioned politically, and which underlies ideologies of progress. Instead of a smoothly running system, the 'Reichsbahn' presents an aggregation of unforeseen disruptions, tied up in a disorderly network of mutual dependencies:

> Jedes Ereignis zog einen borstigen Schwanz wechselseitig bedingter Abhängigkeiten hinter sich, die Voraussicht war im eigenen Gebiet unsicher geworden, einmal erreichte Pünktlichkeit wurde vielleicht verdorben von den Unregelmässigkeiten, die der angrenzende Dispatchbezirk mit Aufatmen und Bedauern übergab. (MJ 23)

Jakob responds to this challenge through adjustments which constantly necessitate deviations from the official schedule. Based on his meticulous historical records, responsive projections, and continuous alertness to the requirements of the present moment, he successfully achieves in his realm of action what the socialist leadership is incapable of achieving in its: to maintain the stability of the system.

The wide chasm shown here between the state's official realm of power and its actual capacity for enforcement echoes a typical motif of the classic spy novel. In this genre, Boltanski argues, '[t]he state, in its honest (but blind) components, is a largely illusory machine. Its leaders believe they hold a power they do not possess. Real power eludes them'.[100] Yet, as is the case with most other references to the espionage novel, the feature of the theme of the weak state is played with but not applied consistently throughout *Mutmassungen*. While Jakob

[99] See also Martin-Mendonca, p. 142.
[100] Boltanski, pp. 133–34.

appears to be more thoroughly in control of the trains under his supervision than the state is able to be, it is eventually a train that leads to his death. Even though the causal chain of events preceding the fatal event remains unclear, the mere possibility that it might have been a clandestine but officially planned execution shows the political desirability of the death for the GDR: ultimately, the railroad system is operating in the interest of the state.

Another scene in which the clear supremacy of the state's temporality over that of its citizens is demonstrated is the frantic chase during which Jakob and Gesine unsuccessfully try to escape Rohlfs, who is pursuing them in his car (MJ 158 ff). In the course of the extensive, arduous journey, Jakob and Gesine travel by all the various means of transportation that are publicly accessible, such as the train, coach, taxi, and by foot, defying the adverse natural conditions of rain, darkness, and exhaustion. Yet, despite their intense effort, upon finally almost reaching their destination, the outskirts of their home town, Jerichow, they find themselves greeted by the hostile headlights of the same car they had been trying to outrun. The reigning temporality, symbolised by Rohlfs and his privileged means of transportation, the car, dominates: no matter how hard they try, Jakob and Gesine are incapable of winning the 'race' against the state, whose power cannot be eluded in direct confrontation.

Johnson's references to temporality in *Mutmassungen*, as in the train schedule passages examined above, immediately suggest themselves as comments on the particular experience of East German citizens. They can also, however, be read more broadly as an engagement with modern temporality and its connection to political authority. In particular the ways in which Jakob's management of time is described in *Mutmassungen* bear an interesting resemblance to a concept well-established in philosophy and the social sciences to describe the experience of time in late modernity: 'the temporalisation of time'. The German sociologist Hartmut Rosa, in his seminal study on *Social Acceleration*, summarises that the temporalisation of time 'means that the duration, sequence, rhythm, and tempo of actions, events, and relationships are first decided in the course of their execution, that is, within time itself. They no longer follow a predefined time schedule'.[101] This concept is distinguished from, and diametrically opposed to, the 'temporalisation of life', which, Rosa explains, 'provided the classical modern form of identity with an authoritative life course regime and normal biography.' He expands:

> The first surge of dynamization in modernity led to a view of life as directed motion along presequenced alternative paths of development that were defined by the formal stability of expectations and planning regarding the future and that therefore issued in the devising of 'lifeplans.' The second surge supersedes

[101] Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 233.

> (*aufhebt*) precisely this presequencing and calculability. *The temporalization of time therefore means the revocation of the temporalization of life in the sense of a temporally extended project*.[102]

Sociologists such as Rosa, Martin Kohli, and Zygmunt Bauman have observed the temporalisation of time in phenomena such as the erosion of the institutionalised life course, predefined career sequences, and the general fragmentation of what used to be the 'normal' life story.[103] It could be argued that the most extreme manifestation of the temporalisation of time in politics manifests in what Giorgio Agamben (based on Carl Schmitt) has called the 'state of exception' ('Ausnahmezustand'): a situation in which all or part of the foundational rights and freedoms of a given political system are temporally suspended to allow the sovereign to confront a national emergency.[104] Agamben and others have warned of a dangerous tendency in contemporary politics to normalise the state of exception, legitimising an erosion of the democratic process in favour of extended executive power.[105]

All autocratic states throughout modern history, including Nazi Germany and the GDR, have incorporated aspects of exceptionality to justify extreme measures in what they promise will be a transitional phase on the way to a more positive future. Yet the GDR's particular economic model of central planning, shared with the majority of socialist/communist states, also anchored the regime firmly in the classical modern concept of time, characterised by the 'strict planning and rigid, thorough organization' of traditional bureaucracy.[106] Determined by the standards of linear time, understood as being fully extraneous to events, 'the length and sequence of activities within a segment of time are here fixed and planned ahead of time in order to guarantee a social synchronization and coordination of actions'.[107] Jakob's experience with the railway system, during which he struggles to adapt the rigid, dysfunctional schedule of the central administration to a reality which continually demands flexible adjustments, can

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[102] Rosa, pp. 233–34; italics in original.
[103] Martin Kohli, 'Institutionalisierung und Individualisierung der Erwerbsbiographie', in *Riskante Freiheiten*, ed. by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), pp. 219–44; Martin Kohli, 'Lebenslauf und Lebensalter als gesellschaftliche Konstruktionen: Elemente zu einem interkulturellen Vergleich', in *Im Lauf der Zeit: Ethnographische Studien zur gesellschaftlichen Konstruktion von Lebensaltern*, ed. by Georg Elwert, Martin Kohli, and Harald Müller (Saarbrücken: Breitenbach, 1990), pp. 11–32; Martin Kohli, 'Gesellschaft und Lebenszeit: Der Lebenslauf im Strukturwandel der Moderne', in *Die Moderne: Kontinuitäten und Zäsuren*, ed. by Johannes Berger (Göttingen: Schwartz, 1986), pp. 183–207; Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2000), p. 116 f.
[104] Carl Schmitt, *Die Diktatur: Von den Anfängen des modernen Souveränitätsgedankens bis zum proletarischen Klassenkampf* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot); Giorgio Agamben, *The State of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[105] For a recent example, see, e.g., Leila Choukroune, 'When the State of Exception Becomes the Norm, Democracy Is on a Tightrope', *The Conversation*, 2021 <https://theconversation.com/when-the-state-of-exception-becomes-the-norm-democracy-is-on-a-tightrope-135369> [accessed 10 January 2021].
[106] Rosa, p. 334.
[107] Rosa, p. 235.

thus also be understood as a conflict arising between a citizen's lived temporality which is already in sync with late modernity, on the one hand, and the state's antiquated model of classical modern temporality, on the other.

Johnson was acutely aware of the close ties that perceptions of time have with wider social processes as well as to questions of historiography and epistemology. This is articulated in one of his interviews, in which he explicitly connects these aspects:

> Was ist denn die Wahrheit? Es gibt eine subjektive, die Erlebniswahrheit, die unter anderem an sich hat, daß ein Vorgang von fünf Minuten in der Erinnerung auf eine Sekunde zusammenschrumpfen kann, oder eine Sekunde weitet sich aus zur Unendlichkeit: da ist nichts genau zu fixieren. Es gibt bei dieser subjektiven Wahrheit der Erlebniszeit auch Teilwahrheiten, einzelne Aspekte der Wahrheit, die gar nicht formulierbar sind. Wie wollen Sie zum Beispiel eine Gesichtsbewegung beschreiben? Sie können es mit einer Beschreibung des Ablaufs der Muskelbewegung versuchen, aber wo finden Sie im Muskelreflex die Verbindung zu dem, was er eigentlich bedeutet? Dann gibt es auch objektive Wahrheiten, etwa die Geschichtsschreibung oder die Statistik, und dann gibt es auch noch die parteiische Wahrheit. Die Wahrheit des Sachwalters oder die Wahrheit des Kanzlers: all diese Teilwahrheiten: sie mögen sich manchmal überdecken, mitunter bestätigen sie sich, aber sie alle greifen von ganz verschiedenen Aspekten her den Gegenstand oder den Vorfall oder das Gefühl an, und sehr oft widersprechen sie sich. Was ist denn da die Wahrheit?[108]

Johnson's thoughts on the subjectivity of historical experience were deeply subversive in the context of GDR historiography. The standard political language of the GDR sought to epistemologically weaken the subjective standpoint and did so by discursive means that seemingly erased the responsible actors, instead attributing social and political developments to the 'laws of history'. The frequent use of the passive voice and of standardised phrases like 'die objektive Gesetzmäßigkeit der Entwicklung' in political and historical writing were stylistic features serving this end.[109] In *Mutmassungen*, Jakob resists the model of citizenship arising from this epistemology by rooting a robust, independent agency in a temporality that contradicts the one politically imposed.

[108] Neusüß, p. 47.
[109] See, e.g., Jessen, p. 287.

3.3 Herr Cresspahl and Frau Abs: Citizenship, Temporality, and Marginality

Johnson does not merely establish a facile conflict between the 'old' and the 'new/young', the 'slow' and the 'fast'. The ways in which *Mutmassungen's* protagonists fall out of sync with the state's – and thus the citizenry's – temporality are multi-layered and complex. While a generational conflict might be detected between the youthful Jakob and the state's outdated bureaucratic temporality, another conflict exists, for example, between the state's tempo of technological progress and the generation of Jakob's mother, Frau Abs, and Gesine's father, Herr Cresspahl. Both are shown as becoming socially and politically marginalised due to their inability to keep up with the fast-paced technical world surrounding them. While all other major characters are symbolically linked to technical objects throughout the novel (e.g. Jakob to the train, Rohlfs to the car), Frau Abs and Herr Cresspahl instead relate to pre-industrial objects, such as Cresspahl's manual carpentry tools or the horse and cart that brought Jakob and his mother to Jerichow after the war. As Martin-Mendonca observes, both struggle when using modern conveniences such as the train or telephone system, and the speed of communication and transportation makes the technical world appear hostile to them.[110] The constant battle both characters experience in their contact with technology presents a major impediment to their participation as equal citizens in the life of the polity. An example of this can be found in the scene describing Frau Abs's flight to West Germany (initiated after being questioned by Rohlfs), the swiftness of which does not allow her to bid goodbye to her son:

> und während sie [Frau Abs] noch da sitzt auf dem von Cresspahl besorgten Platz und hin überlegt und her und vor Eile nicht zur Besinnung kommt, fahren die vorne an mit so einem plötzlichen ungeschickten Ruck, und ehe sie anfängt nach Jakobs Turm zu suchen […], kriecht der Zug längst in die Ausfahrt und klirrt immer schneller raus aus dem Bahnhof weg von Jakob. (MJ 55)

The train, described as occupying a liminal space between animated being and machine, 'kriecht' and 'klirrt', its 'plötzlich[…]' and 'ungeschickt[…]' advance interrupting Frau Abs's own internal movement. With the train perpetually accelerating, the spatiotemporal position Frau Abs finds herself in does not allow her to think clearly or come to her senses – the prerequisite for operating as a free agent. This underscores the scene's theme of politically coerced migration, while simultaneously lending symbolism to the fact that a train, as the image of progress and societal acceleration, 'drives' her out of the country.

A similar clustering of these themes is experienced by Cresspahl at several points throughout the novel. When Cresspahl, for example, attempts a telephone conversation with Gesine to let her know of Frau Abs's 'visit' to the FRG, his maladaptedness to the new

[110] Martin-Mendonca, p. 144.

technology is shown when he treats the conversation like an exchange of letters or telegrams: opening his address with '"Lieben Tochter […] schreim tusse nich – "', and closing it formally with '"Ende des Gesprächs"' (MJ 37-38). His slow-paced speech diverges from the official speed of communication that is expected, and he is hurried on by the operator: '"Sprechen Sie noch. Sprechen Sie noch. Sprechen Halloh sprechen Sie noch"' (MJ 37).[111] Cresspahl's rootedness in a temporality which is seen as outdated, and therefore dangerous, by GDR society is further underscored by the fact that the initial reason for Rohlfs's attention to the Cresspahl/Abs household (which consequently instigates the entirety of *Mutmassungen's* story line) was a complaint the secret service received about an old song Herr Cresspahl had sung publicly in the local inn (MJ 9). Upon receiving the complaint, Rohlfs acknowledges its pettiness, but still ponders Cressphal's 'backwardness': 'wie konnte Cresspahl denn noch solche Lieder singen' (MJ 11).

While the official teleological narratives of imperative historical developments would, logically, imply an automatous element, political membership in the GDR was by no means passive, but constantly commanded citizens' active participation in the state's temporal frameworks. As Ralph Jessen observes:

> The gloomy doctrines of the past were regarded as 'heritage' and 'legacy', and the alluring Communist future as a 'mission' to be carried out by all members of the socialist society. For the GDR citizens, membership in the socialist community of destiny and expectation was not available free of charge. The price was loyalty and collaboration.[112]

While some divergence from the technocratic, progress-oriented temporality was possible for a while, as shown in the years during which Cresspahl and Frau Abs were able to live peacefully before Rohlfs's arrival, such a divergent existence was, ultimately, precarious and dangerous, as shown in the investigation into Crespahl's singing and in Frau Abs's eventual flight to West Germany.

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[111] See also Martin-Mendonca, p. 144.

[112] Jessen, pp. 279–80.

3.4 Jonas and the Typewriter: Citizenship and Desynchronised Resistance

The theme of resistance through desynchronisation with the political system found in Jakob recurs in the character of Jonas, albeit in a different form. Jonas visits Cresspahl's house in Jerichow with the intention of writing a political text conveying his criticism of the GDR regime. In a way paralleling the expression of Jakob's resistance through the symbol of the train, Jonas's instrument of resistance, and his vehicle for taking part in the world ('an der Welt teilnehmen'), is the typewriter (MJ 171). While also a technical object like the train, the typewriter, in relation to Jonas, is associated with slowness rather than speed, and with a backward rather than forward movement. The symbolic correspondence and mirror-connection between Jonas's typewriter and Jakob's train is underlined in a passage describing Jonas's return to a text he had written the previous evening:

> Schon beim Nachsehen der ersten Seiten merkte Jonas dass er nur die Oberfläche eines Zeichengewebes wahrnahm, das waagerecht und senkrecht gegliedert war und von dieser Regelmässigkeit her eben nicht zu verstehen. Er achtete auf Schreibfehler und den Bau der Sätze; er fühlte sich nicht mehr imstande den Inhalt noch einmal zu denken. Das Niedergeschriebene kam ihm vor wie ein mitgebrachter Vorrat, der am Ende der Reise nicht mehr zu gebrauchen war. Das Zimmer half ihm nicht. Die schweren alten Möbel schienen ihn mit sich zu vergleichen, sie erinnerten ihn an seinen Vorsatz. Er wusste ihn noch, Kapitel zwei endete mit den Bedingungen der Begriffe, er hatte aber keine Lust. (MJ 174)

Jonas's experience of his text as a web of characters/signs, structured horizontally and vertically, presents a clear echo of the earlier description of the train schedule produced by Jakob, which is said to be 'eingeteilt nach senkrechten und waagerechten Linien für das zeitliche und räumliche Nacheinander der planmässigen und der unregelmässigen Vorkommnisse' (MJ 20). Yet Jonas, in contrast to Jakob, is unable systematically to order his thoughts and orient himself in his own written product, and the regularity suggested by the web-like pattern on the paper is deceptive rather than helpful in the understanding of his text. Instead of enabling the smooth running of future events, as Jakob's schedule does, Jonas's text is stuck in the past, akin to provisions that have gone stale, or the old furniture in Cresspahl's room.

The inertia of the phlegmatic-melancholic mood suggested by Jonas's disinclination to work ('er hatte aber keine Lust', MJ 174) is confirmed in several other locations in the text. For example, Jonas realises at various points throughout the novel the divergence between his own and Gesine's experience of time, as well as his inability to connect to her tempo. An initial illustration of this is given when Jonas first meets Gesine with two U.S. officers, whose invitation to join them in their fast car he declines for no apparent reason. He later reflects on Gesine: 'sie musste ungeheuer eilig abfahren in diesem riesigen eidechsenartigen Auto, obwohl

in meiner Erinnerung jetzt nicht Eile ist sondern ihr weltvergessliches Dastehen und Warten neben mir und nicht neben mir' (MJ 110). The discrepancy between the temporality of the two characters, as well as the separation it causes between them, is underlined in Jonas's conscious neglect of what he knows to have been Gesine's true speed (her enormously hasty departure *away* from him) in favour of his preferred memory of her standing around and waiting *next* to him. Jonas appears to be at least half aware of the temporal conflict between him and Gesine, as well as of the fact that an encounter between them requires her to slow down, while he is unable to match her speed. This is shown in the corrective addition 'und nicht neben mir', which appears as an acknowledgement of the deep internal chasm dividing the two characters even at a moment of their physical proximity. In another melancholy reflection, Jonas ponders at some point after he and Gesine had become lovers that he regrets not having just left her alone after their first encounter, '[s]ondern sie hineingezogen hatte in die Unzuverlässigkeit und *Langeweile* seines Tagesablaufes' (MJ 112, emphasis added).

The theme of lethargic slowness which Jonas is associated with in his work and connection to Gesine can be read as a criticism of, or at least engagement with, the degree of political effectiveness of intellectual criticism in the GDR. Jonas has a desire to participate in public discourse, to engage his own voice as a citizen. His text, he professes, '"ist für mich nur eine Gelegenheit dass ich meins auch mal sage"' (MJ 171). Yet his attempt at effective political expression is thwarted by several factors, all of which bear a relation to temporality. While Jonas, for example, is clearly not in sync with the state, he is also unable to adapt to the pace of other people of his age group who work more effectively and with an orientation towards the future, such as Gesine and Jakob. What appears to put the brake on Jonas's experiential speed is his rootedness in the intellectual heritage and doctrines he bases his work on, which render him unable to think and work as a truly independent political agent. That his political pamphlet, as mentioned above, contains a section on 'the conditions of the concepts' ('die Bedingungen der Begriffe') points to the overly academic nature of his work, which seems an unsuitable framework for a true call to broad political action in the polity he seeks to address.

The anchoring of Jonas's thought in deep intellectual history and the complications arising from this in his communication with the non-academic citizenry is also illustrated in his conversation with Cresspahl, in the course of which the elderly man becomes confused by Jonas's remark: '"Wir sind ja der Sache des Fortschritts unbelehrbar ergeben"' (MJ 171). The language used by Jonas arouses Cresspahl's suspicion:

> über dem UNBELEHRBAR ERGEBEN' war er [Cresspahl] bedenklich geworden. Denn UNBELEHRBAR war das Wort, das die sozialistische Staatsmacht für ihre Feinde gebrauchte und hiess

> soviel wie streitsüchtig besserwisserisch töricht unnütz, aber ERGEBEN verwandte sie für den anderen Teil der Bevölkerung und der internationalen Arbeiterklasse, der von dem einmal eingeschlagenen Weg zum Sozialismus UNBEIRBAR überzeugt war und unermüdlich arbeitwillig die Anweisungen der Parteileitung ausführte, und was hiess UNBELEHRBAR ERGEBEN (dachte Cresspahl:) wenn es in Jonas' Munde war? (MJ 171-72)

The sentence uttered by Jonas and its subsequent exegesis by Cresspahl have received some attention in the secondary literature and are often read as an example of a misunderstanding arising between the academic and non-academic realms. It has been observed, for example, that part of Cresspahl's confusion stems from his ignorance of the fact that Jonas's remark contains an intertextual reference to Brecht's poem *An die Kämpfer in den Konzentrationslagern* which addresses the fighters in the concentration camps with the line "Unbelehrbar, heißt es, seid ihr der proletarischen Sache ergeben".[113] Beyond this intertextual connection to previous forms of political resistance and the complex and contradictory reverberations with the language of the socialist regime, Jonas's remark, however, also carries a more immediate message about his relationship to the political system. As correctly suspected by Cresspahl, words and concepts do not simply stagnate in their meaning across different contexts. Instead, familiar words change meaning when 'in Jonas' Munde' (MJ 172). Jonas's context and character lend a connotation to the words which appears to diverge significantly from that of Brecht's poem. The use of the term 'unbelehrbar', for example, which in Brecht's poem may most suitably be translated as 'obstinately', in Jonas's context may also be understood to mean 'unteachably', and form a reference to his doubt about the political efficiency of his academic work, as seen in his earlier encounter with the text he produced. The term 'ergeben' may mean both 'devoted' or 'to surrender/capitulate', and, again in the context of Jonas's lethargy, takes on resonances of the latter, more passive translation (rather than of the former, active translation in Brecht).

Jonas's character shows strong reverberations with the progress-scepticism arising in left-leaning intellectual circles between the two world wars, when the phenomenon was already analysed by Plessner. While Jonas appears, at least partially, to want to continue holding on to the idea of progress as a theoretical reference, his ability to grasp the idea as a veritable political action point seems to be disturbed by the network of overlaid historical meanings he is trapped in. Jonas's heavy conceptual networks, in which the lines between past and present are blurred and historical meanings take on the same significance as contemporary ones, form a reinforcing loop with his internal state of resignation. Especially when read in conjunction with his critical

[113] See, e.g., Martin-Mendonca, pp. 143–44.

statement, appearing later in the novel, about the political ambivalence of the railroad system as cited above,[114] the sentence '"Wir sind ja der Sache des Fortschritts unbelehrbar ergeben"', in Jonas's mouth, can certainly not be read as a simple embrace of progress. Instead, the sentence acquires an almost cynical quality.

The mood conveyed in Jonas's character here and throughout the text is reminiscent of what Plessner had analysed about twenty years earlier in his *Verspätete Nation*. Taking Germany's situation after 1918 as an analytical starting point, Plessner argued that the experience of the First World War had fundamentally altered Europe's position as a previously politically, economically, and technologically dominant global actor.[115] During this time, the embodied trauma of the war and a divisive process of domestic and international political power struggles went hand in hand, for many intellectuals, with a loss of faith in the promises of technologically driven progress and the Enlightenment narratives of a successive moral advancement of human nature and solidarity. As Whaley summarises it:

> This new scepticism in turn reflected the collapse of religious faith in modern society and Europe's loss of any understanding of the historical origins of its own ideals. If this was a European problem, it was at its most acute in Germany which, exhausted by the Herculean effort made in the war, was in defeat the centre of scepticism about European values.[116]

The paralysing scepticism exhibited by Jonas can be read as a result of his inability to structure his experience of time, and his own position in history, productively. In the temporality that Johnson illustrates in Jonas, events and ways of experiencing the world are not 'left behind' with the passing of clock time. Instead, the past lingers in objects as well as in the actions and consciousness of the people who lived through it, laying the same claim to contemporaneity as events of the narrative present. Similarly to Cresspahl and Frau Abs, Jonas's sense of temporality is out of sync with the politically imposed one. This does not merely prevent him from participating in public life as an equal citizen, but also from voicing his opposition in a politically effective manner. The heavy apathy which his unstructured temporality produces in Jonas can be placed in direct connection with his eventual demise. When Jonas is arrested at the end of the novel, the description is dominated by images of passivity and delay: 'Jonas stieg freiwillig aus in dem Bahnhof, vor dem Herr Rohlfs mit seinem Wagen sass' (MJ 304), 'Jonas wartete' (MJ 305), 'Jonas [hielt] die Hände [hin] für die Fesseln' (MJ 308).

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[114] '"Die Eisenbahn zum freundlichen Reisen. Sie ist ausserdem die Möglichkeit der Mobilmachung für die bewaffnete Verteidigung des Sozialismus. Die Technik im allgemeinen, lenkbares Hilfsmittel oder übermächtige Zauberei"' (MJ 218).
[115] Plessner, p. 34; see also Whaley.
[116] Whaley, p. 134; see also Plessner, p. 40.

3.5 Gesine: (Temporal) Shapeshifting as Citizenship Strategy

Apart from the two straightforward, polar modes of relating to the state, conformism and resistance (or synchronicity and asynchronicity), *Mutmassungen* also presents a third, more complex option, which could be seen to represent the most successful incarnation of citizenship in the novel, and, potentially, of postmodern citizenship more broadly. I read this third option as being based on a personality strategy which the psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton termed 'shapeshifting'.[117] As an evolving form of the postmodern personality, shapeshifting arises in response to increasingly dynamic and de-structured life circumstances, in which the reliable, organised planning of classical modern temporality has ceased to be practicable. Gesine is the only protagonist in *Mutmassungen* willing or able to embody this strategy, and her prowess at it is illustrated in her ability to work efficiently across different temporalities, political systems, and languages. She continuously adapts her own positionality in relation to the past, present, and future based on the particular circumstances she finds herself in. Gesine is able to connect with the symbolic objects of all different 'time zones' appearing throughout the novel, ranging from the horse cart to the newest spying technology,[118] and she is as comfortable when engaging in quick-witted English language conversation with young American officers as when speaking to GDR officials or people from her hometown.[119] During her phone call with Cresspahl, for example, Gesine adapts to the slow communication pace of her father, as well as echoing his dialect and epistolary style. '"Lieben Vater es is allens so nass"', she declares in dialect, before closing the conversation with a formulaic greeting which mirrors, and almost mocks, her father's letter-like diction: '"Ja. Ende. Lieber Vater. Deine dich liebende Tochter. Ende"' (MJ 37-38).

Gesine's shapeshifting strategy renders her identity unstable and makes her the most elusive and ambiguous character in the novel. Her ability, as a translator, to speak in a multitude of tongues underlines this volatile identity. According to Rosa, the situational logic adopted by the shapeshifting individual 'directly shapes identity because it forces one to maintain, both

[117] Robert Jay Lifton, *The Life of the Self: Toward a New Psychology* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1976).
[118] MJ 290.
[119] MJ 109–10.

synchronically and diachronically, flexible and variable time horizons and perspectives'.[120] He continues:

> Where past, present, and future are continually reconnected and reinterpreted situationally, the conception of who one was, is, and will be likewise continually changes. The character and weighting of the parameters of identity alter from situation to situation: who one is depends on which social sphere one is currently engaged in and with whom one is currently dealing.[121]

In keeping with this uncertainty of identity, Gesine's political stance remains nebulous throughout the novel. It is unclear, for example, whether, in addition to, or under the guise of her task as translator at the NATO, she might be a West German secret agent (the camera and the pistol that she carries when arriving in Jerichow are strong indicators that she is),[122] or whether she might eventually let herself be recruited by the Stasi (potentially as a double agent), as her meeting with Rohlfs at the very end of the novel suggests.[123] On the one hand, Gesine inhabits a role of ideological opposition to the Stasi and the political system it stands for while in the company of Jakob and Jonas. Yet, on the other, her potential espionage activity also establishes a dangerously intimate similarity between her and Rohlfs. This is noted by Jakob towards the end of the novel, when he sees the photos which Gesine secretly took while driving in Rohlfs's car: '"Ich glaub es ist nicht richtig … so zu fotografieren …" sagte er [Jakob]. "Es sieht so aus als wär alles eins, verstehst du: als könnt Rohlfs auch bei eurem Geheimdienst sein"' (MJ 291).[124] Jakob's critical response to Gesine's clandestine activity encapsulates the ultimate danger of the shapeshifting personality: complete moral and political relativism.

A potential clue to the psycho-social origin of Gesine's shapeshifting personality might be found in her grasp of simultaneity. Gesine, akin to Jonas, is able to experience the non-linear logic of a simultaneity of disparate historical concepts and events across time, and for her, too, this experience induces a profound existential conflict. Yet unlike Jonas, Gesine is also able to structure her experience in a form which allows her to not merely succumb to lethargy, but to articulate political critique effectively. Gesine's memory of the post-war time, in which she recalls walking past a 'Typhusfriedhof', provides a lucid example of this:

> *Jedennoch die offenen Gruben mit den Hühnern, die immer wieder herankamen aus dem Küchengarten und der dicke schwammstreifige grobe kalte Schlosswürfel und die Toten auf den Leiterwagen wie Korngaben und wie ich einen nackten Mädchenfuss steif herausrutschen sah aus der fleckigen Zeltplan und mit geschlossenen Augen den schweren hölzernen Aufschlag hörte unter mir dröhnend auf meinen*

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[120] Rosa, p. 238.
[121] Rosa, p. 238.
[122] See MJ 204; on this point see also Martin-Mendonca, p. 143.
[123] See MJ 308.
[124] See also Martin-Mendonca, p. 143.

> *Lidern: und wie ich betäubt von der Hitze in dem braunen Waldgras lag halb im Kiefernschatten und Jakob zog mit den Pferden ebenmässig wie die Ewigkeit über die frischen Stoppeln und wir sassen nebeneinander an den weich überkrusteten Pflugscharen und assen Nachmittagsbrot und es fragte plötzlich aus mir Ist das wahr Jakob mit den Konzentrationslagern: sind Zeitabläufe, von denen ich nie habe denken können: das war gestern und morgen wird es schon vorgestern gewesen sein, oder das war vor zehn Jahren und inzwischen weiss ich über den Monopolkapitalismus als Imperialismus viel besser Bescheid und kann das Vergangene betrachten von heute aus. Sie vergehen nicht, ich bin dreizehn Jahre alt jeden Augenblick vor Jakobs grossflächigem reglosem Gesicht und seinen halbgeschlossenen Augen und höre ihn sagen Ja das ist wahr. Damit kann man nicht leben, das ist unbrauchbar, wie soll es verantwortet werden. Wie soll das eingerichtet werden mit dem nassen Buchenblätterrascheln unter unseren Schritten und mit den schwankenden kreisenden Kieferkronen über uns vor dem grauen nächtlichen Himmel* […]. (MJ 192-93; emphases added, italics in original)

The engagement with the German past depicted in this passage stands in contrast to the GDR's official historiography, which largely distanced itself from any social and political responsibility for the National Socialists' actions by instead narratively constructing itself as an heir to the antifascist resistance.[125] In stark divergence from the state's narrative of having 'overcome' Germany's fascist history in the act of its own creation, Gesine understands the presence of the past as ongoing. Yet in her experience of simultaneity, past and present do not just blur as they tend to do for Jonas. Instead, Gesine both explicitly acknowledges and contradicts the regime's narrative according to which the GDR had left behind Germany's Nazi heritage through its resolution in the socialist state. She does not satisfy herself with the official story line, in which the past is viewed from the vantage point of the present and understood as a logical manifestation of the development of monopoly capitalism as imperialism. Instead, Gesine's memory presents at least two instances of simultaneity: one taking place at the time of her original experience, one during her recollection of it.

The moment of witnessing the transport of bodies that had succumbed to typhus fever after the war represents the first instance of simultaneity. Even though the dead are victims of different circumstances, the manner in which their corpses are presented, as innocent non-combatants (a girl's naked foot) and professionally piled up like objects (like ears of grain), invokes for Gesine (as well as for the reader) the horrors of the industrial-style murders of the concentration camps. This experience of simultaneity, secondly, initiates a profound and lasting sense of the enduring ubiquity of historical events. Gesine insists that the passages of time during which she realised the proximity and historical truth of the Holocaust do not pass,

[125] See Emma Dresler-Hawke, 'Reconstructing the Past and Attributing the Responsibility for the Holocaust', *Social Behavior and Personality*, 33.2 (2005), 133–48.

'ich bin dreizehn Jahre alt jeden Augenblick'. The intensity of Jakob's 'Ja das ist wahr' does not cease. It cannot be moved away from in the linear fashion the GDR regime conjures in its own historiography. Instead of a simple resolution of past events in a straightforward history of progress, the eternal presence of the past leads to both a personal existential crisis ('damit kann man nicht leben'), and a conceptual conflict between what Koselleck categorised as 'historical time', on the one hand, and 'natural time', on the other. The organic movement of the surrounding landscape, symbolising the passing of natural time, through the rustling of beech leaves ('Buchenblätterrascheln'), and the swaying circulating crown of the pine tree ('den schwankenden kreisenden Kieferkronen'), stand in an unresolvable contradiction with the atrocious, lasting truth of historical experience.

This conflict between history and the present, historical and natural time, is not merely foundational for Gesine's personal understanding of national history, but simultaneously describes the collective founding moment of the new political identities and models of citizenship formed by the GDR and FRG after the war. Part of the great fluidity Gesine exhibits throughout the novel may be seen to have its psycho-genetic origin in an attempt to live with a conflict that, fundamentally, 'one *cannot* live with'.[126] Gesine demonstrates great analytical skill in her grasp of a state of (national) being that is not fully inhabitable. Paradoxically, she could be seen to show a sense of responsible citizenship exactly in her act of illustrating the impossibility of an integrated German citizenry. Her shapeshifting personality appears to provide her with a strategy for escaping the unresolvable conflict of having to live with the impossible, by allowing her to continuously move between different social and temporal zones without ever having to identify with any of them.

Yet Gesine's strategy of continuous flexibility comes at the high price of an ambiguous identity, which remains opaque even to the people closest to her. This is expressed, for example, in a passage in which Cresspahl reflects on his absent daughter:

> Da sass er [Cresspahl] nun und dachte an seiner Tochter Leben und wusste nicht wie ihr Leben war. Sie kam morgens aus der Haustür und stieg in die Strassenbahn und nickte dem Pförtner zu auf Englisch und schrieb mit der Maschine eine Sprache um die andere und vermittelte zwischen den einen und den anderen Rednern als sei sie wirklich am Mitreden […]. (MJ 172-73)

Gesine's habitual use of modern technology, such as the cable car and the typewriter, clearly renders her unfamiliar to her father. The strange speed of her life, markedly different from his own temporality, is underlined by the hurriedness of the paratactical sentence design which

[126] See MJ 139. Own translation, emphasis added.

Cresspahl uses in an attempt to capture his daughters life. The various subclauses are held together by the repeated equalising conjunction 'und', signalling Cresspahl's inability to hierarchically structure and evaluate Gesine's activities.

In several parts of the novel, Gesine's shifting identity brings to mind what French existentialist philosophy has called 'mauvaise foi', or 'bad faith'. This psychological phenomenon captures an individual's internal state of inauthenticity as a result of surrendering to external societal pressures. In the process, an actor's true values and inherent freedom as an independent subject are replaced through assimilation to the false tenets held by the environment.[127] Jean-Paul Sartre, in his *magnum opus*, *Being and Nothingness*, has captured the resulting personality strategy in the image of a café waiter, who is not merely assuming his role, but rather acting it out as a spectacle. As Sartre describes it:

> His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually re-establishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. All his behaviour seems to us a game. He applies himself to changing his movements as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other; his gestures and even his voice seems to be mechanisms; he gives himself the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things.[128]

Sartre is illustrating a person's playful balancing act between mechanical automation and satirical imitation, with the former implying the unconscious surrendering of individual autonomy and even humaneness, and the latter signalling the actor's meta-cognition of the deceptive process. The act's deceitful element may be read as being directed against society as well as the self, depending on the level of self-conscious reflection involved. If played at a high level of awareness, the game of the waiter enables an actor to both externally assimilate and ostensibly relinquish their freedom to the requirements of society, while simultaneously maintaining an element of internal freedom through the act of play.

Gesine's performance of the 'citizenship spectacle' is perhaps most strongly captured in the three professional activities she is (likely) carrying out in the course of the novel: translator, radio presenter, and spy. Her task of mediating as a translator carries some symbolism as to her political role and power as citizen. While she is able to witness the political

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[127] See, e.g., *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 103.
[128] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomological Ontology* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 59.

decision-making process first-hand and seemingly has a 'voice' in it, the limits of her role, as remarked by Cresspahl, only allow her a marginal position in which she acts *as if* she were actually participating in the conversation ('als sei sie wirklich am Mitreden', MJ 173), instead of enabling her to truly engage. This position of formal participation, but *de facto* marginalisation, of the citizen in the political process was of wider significance not only in the Eastern Block, but also throughout Western democracies at the time. Although political citizenship had been expanded further than ever before, with many of the earlier limits based on gender, economic status and race at least eased, the effect of these developments on active political power was lagging behind. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Fahrmeir notes, 'doubts about the functionality of political systems increased in western Europe and North America'. He elaborates:

> Changes in the boundaries of the political citizenry had limited effects on the social structure of parliamentary assemblies. Deputies remained significantly wealthier and better educated than voters, with workers, farmers and businessmen typically under-represented. Critics argued that this indicated a shift from voters to party networks and could herald a transfer of political power to an oligarchy of wealthy individuals, corporations, vested interests and professional politicians, backed by a declining variety of mass media. The impression was increased by the limits the police, the military and secret services placed on dissent.[129]

Towards the very end of the novel, Gesine exchanges her translation job with an even more symbolically charged occupation. As a presenter on the radio programme 'SPRECHEN SIE DEUTSCH' (MJ 308), aimed at teaching German to the occupying troops, she can be seen to elevate the performativity of her citizenship to a new level. Alongside a young U.S. American soldier, Gesine appears on radio as 'eine Frauenstimme mit einem schmalen ganz *biegsamen* Ton', the term 'pliable', again, pointing towards her (politically) fluid identity (MJ 306, emphasis added). The conversation between the two presenters, Gesine and the American, is intended to convey an impression of authenticity to the audience, with amusing, flirtatious misunderstandings occurring between them, sparked by the language difference. Rohlfs, however, when listening in on his car radio while on his way to arrest Jonas, immediately recognises that the apparent linguistic confusions are, in truth, part of a scripted performance: 'Herr Rohlfs war im übrigen sicher dass all diese Zwischenfälle im Textbuch der Sendung standen und die Aufmerksamkeit des Hörers anziehen sollten' (MJ 307). Gesine performs the process of teaching German as a play and a game, by which she is, on one level, distancing herself from the act and her identity as a German, while, on another level, turning the very act

[129] Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept*, p. 181.

of playing into a part of her pedagogical message. As a radio presenter, she is put in the position of a model of what it means to speak, and, ultimately, to *be* 'deutsch'; her performance conveys the message that being German does not mean to inhabit the nationality authentically, but rather to perform it.

Gesine's likely activity as a spy renders her relationship to her citizenship, and thereby to the German state, even more complex. To be carried out effectively, the occupation of a secret agent relies entirely on a convincing performance of the normalised life of the inconspicuous citizen. For this reason, the spy may be deemed a certain kind of 'model' citizen in the full sense of the term. The spy impersonates a fully private existence, while, in truth, being constantly connected in all actions to the state. Secret agents' performance of privacy under conditions of politicisation of their entire existence, their shapeshifting, their split and uncertain identity, their reliance on being unremarkable, and their constant state of precarity makes their lives in many ways allegorical of the postmodern citizen's.

Boltanski has noted that the environment described in classical spy fiction bears a certain resemblance to Agamben's account of the state of exception in so far as the boundaries between public and private, inside and outside, have become wholly porous and indistinct. In a process of defending its role as guarantor of reality, the state, under these conditions, treats both citizens and non-citizens as current or potential suspects. At the same time, 'there is no situation, however banal in appearance, which does not contain the seeds of danger'.[130] The reigning theme is duplicity: radical uncertainty about the true nature of any given condition, and about the actions, intentions, and identities of all actors.[131] Of all the characters in *Mutmassungen*, this theme is most pointedly illustrated in Gesine, and perhaps most potently expressed in her relation to the mystery at the heart of the novel: Jakob's death. In a manner typical of the entanglements of private and personal spheres in the spy novel, Gesine is both Jakob's lover and, through her proximity to Rohlfs and potential work for the Stasi, at the same time dangerously closely connected to the web of circumstances that are involved in his death. The exact reason for Jakob's death – political execution, suicide, murder, or accident – is highly nebulous. '[I]n the narrative context of a spy novel', Boltanski explains, 'it is not easy to distinguish clearly between cases of death inflicted to satisfy the demands of service and murders committed for personal reasons, so intermingled are friends and enemies – and the actors are often involved in friendly or even amorous relations'.[132] This intermingling is

[130] Boltanski, p. 128.
[131] Boltanski, p. 122.
[132] Boltanski, pp. 127–28.

highlighted in the novel's very last sentences, when Gesine meets Rohlfs, potentially for the purpose of her recruitment to the East German secret service. Upon seeing her, Rohlfs internally remarks: 'Ich wäre froh eine Schwester zu haben' (MJ 308), with the image of an elective family connection underlining the fluidity and contingency of the (political) relationships and identities formed throughout the novel. Having started out as Jakob's foster-sister and then lover, the text insinuates that Gesine may become his opponent's 'sister' at the end, thus bringing her ambiguous identity to a culmination.

4. Conclusion: Temporality and Internal Division

Notwithstanding the moral and political dangers that accompany the shapeshifting strategy, it may be argued that it is exactly Gesine's capacity to remain enigmatic, constantly to adapt and change, which lends her an advantage over other characters of the novel. Cresspahl and Frau Abs form part of an earlier generation that has evidently lost political power in the GDR, where discourses of progress looked towards the youth as the generation that was to fulfil the socialist task of an improved future. Yet Gesine is the only one among the younger protagonists who neither represents part of the established system (like Rohlfs), nor dies or is incarcerated for her open opposition to it (like Jakob and Jonas, respectively). While Jakob's and Jonas's strategies of resisting state power through undogmatic thought and action might be ethically superior to Gesine's more complex strategy, they are still doomed to fail in the end. Ultimately, Gesine's shapeshifting tactic, while rendering her ambivalent and internally divided, secures her survival not merely in *Mutmassungen*, but even beyond the text, in Uwe Johnson's *Jahrestage* tetralogy of novels published between 1970 and 1983, of which she forms the central character.[133]

As a bounded group identity, citizenship has always been predicated on the exclusion of non-members.[134] In the three chapters of this dissertation, I have discussed three of the many possible sociocultural levels on which exclusion can be executed and observed: the physical, the bureaucratic, and the temporal spheres. The practice of shapeshifting, as illustrated by Gesine, shows that acts of exclusion, apart from dividing an identifiable 'insider' group (the 'good' citizens) from a contingent group of 'outsiders' (e.g. the 'aliens', the divergent 'others'), can also play out in the psychological life of a single individual. The process of exclusion is

[133] Uwe Johnson, *Jahrestage: Aus dem Leben der Gesine Cresspahl*, 2. edition, Volume 1-4 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2017).
[134] See, e.g., Veit Bader, *Citizenship and Exclusion*, ed. by Veit Bader (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), p. 2.

thereby internalised, dividing the person of the citizen themself. This inner division correlates with an insecure and ambiguous citizenship status, in which the citizen, similarly to Sartre's waiter, both identifies with and alienates themself from the role performed. Some features of the citizenship model illustrated in Gesine resemble, to an astonishing extent, Plessner's analysis of German citizenship, in which he describes an internally divided individual who is only able to relate opportunistically to the state. As in *Mutmassungen*, this division also has a temporal element in Plessner, who argues that Germany's retarded development into an integrated nation state, or, put differently, the state's being out of sync with the broader historical developments of the Western world, was a major root cause of the psychological chasms of German citizens.[135]

Plessner's study, as well as parts of Gesine's character, are specific to the German context and might help to explain the lasting ambiguity of the concept of citizenship in the country. Other aspects of Gesine's role speak to the postmodern condition more broadly. Postmodern theory, as well as contemporary sociology, psychology, and neuroscience have, during the past decades, increasingly questioned the notion of an integrated, autonomous self as the carrier of a context-transcending, temporally stable identity.[136] The personality type postulated by classical modern thought, with an identity resistant to its social, political, and historical environment, has been progressively replaced with ideas of a fluent, fragmented, and pluralised self. In the spirit of Lifton's shapeshifting character, Kenneth Gergen, for example, speaks of the postmodern 'pastiche personality', whom he describes as 'a social chameleon, constantly borrowing bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available and constructing them as useful or desirable in a given situation'.[137] Rosa finds the reason for this internal fragmentation in the above-mentioned phenomenon of the 'temporalisation of time', which, in turn, is an effect of an increased acceleration of social change, whereby the pursuit of long-term goals is surrendered in favour of urgent situational demands.[138]

Johnson mirrors these social dynamics of fragmentation not only in the character of Gesine, but also in the form of the entire novel. By elevating techniques of multi-voicedness

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[135] Helmuth Plessner, *Die verspätete Nation: Über die Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1962); see also Carola Dietze, 'Selbstvergewisserung im Exil. Autobiographische Dimensionen einer Meistererzählung: *Die verspätete Nation* von Helmuth Plessner', in *Weltoffener Humanismus: Philosophie, Philologie und Geschichte in der deutsch-jüdischen Emigration*, ed. by Gerald Hartung and Kay Schiller (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2006), pp. 111–32; Joachim Whaley, 'Helmuth Plessner and *The Delayed Nation*', *Journal of European Studies*, 50.1 (2020), 128–40.
[136] See, e.g., Rosa, p. 238; see also Lifton.
[137] Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), p. 150.
[138] Rosa, p. 238.

and ambiguity to the level of narrative principle, Johnson mimetically reconstructs post-war phenomena of both socio-political and psychological relevance. The internal dividedness of the characters he portrays mirrors the disunity and vulnerability of the states they are embedded in, and both levels of division are echoed in the design and epistemology of the text. While, on one level, the novel's non-linear and incomplete narrative presents itself as a puzzle not unlike that found in spy fiction, it simultaneously eludes the fact-finding principle of the traditional spy novel. The when, where, what, how, and who of *Mutmassungen* can be reconstructed only with great difficulty, and any analysis will have to concede to some uncertainty in the end. This is not only owing to the text's elliptic and non-linear elements, but also to the absence of an authoritative omniscient narrator: the information disseminated by any one of the intradiegetic voices in the text is given the same informational value as the extradiegetic voice that is occasionally present.[139] If one assumes that Johnson's main aim was not simply to trick or riddle his readers, it may follow that the difficulty in recovering the facts of the novel has another purpose, such as to shift attention away from the details of information as neatly ordered, objective reference points to the chaotic social dynamics that govern their transmission. In doing away with the authoritative epistemology of an omniscient narrator and instead presenting an equalised field of conflicting voices and temporalities, *Mutmassungen* foregrounds the messy, discordant processes of knowledge formation that constitutes the basis democratic citizenship.

Some critics have understood the character of Jakob as illustrating the potential of an unalienated and eudaemonistic form of citizenship. Bernd Neumann, as well as Swantje Rehfeld, see in Jakob a certain embodiment of utopian socialist visions advocated by Ernst Bloch and early Marx.[140] Johnson's exposure to Ernst Bloch and Hans Mayer, whose lectures he visited while studying at the University of Leipzig from 1954 to 1956, was formative in the development of his critical thought.[141] David Kenosian notes that Bloch's critique of Lukacs's literary theory may have influenced some of Johnson's ideas as expressed in *Mutmassungen*, for example with regard to the relation between the individual and the collective in the political sphere.[142] Traces of Bloch's philosophy have also been found in *Mutmassungen* by Norbert

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[139] See Bond, p. 874.
[140] Bernd Neumann, *Utopie und Mimesis* (Kronberg: Athenäum, 1978), p. 36; Swantje Rehfeld, 'Leben unter fortwährender Prüfung: Das Bild des Sozialismus in Uwe Johnsons Roman Mutmassungen über Jakob', *Internationales Uwe-Johnson-Forum*, 7 (1998); see also Kenosian.
[141] See, e.g., Bernd Neumann, *Uwe Johnson* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlangsanstalt, 1994), p. 151; Kenosian, p. 453.
[142] Kenosian, p. 454.

Mecklenburg.[143] Yet while Bloch, Meyer, and the majority of critical intellectuals in the GDR, despite substantial points of contention with the regime, still shared with it the strong belief in the desirability and necessity of the socialist project and its ideology of progress, Johnson produces a complex, multifaceted critique in his novel, which appears to distance him from facile identification with any form of utopian socialism.

This is also reflected in the character design of Jakob, the one person in *Mutmassungen* who, in principle, appears capable of envisioning and enacting an idea of social development that is both humane and sustainable. Yet Jakob is not only dead, but is also the novel's sole major protagonist who is not able to speak directly: never does he materialise as an immediate actor, instead remaining an elusive construction of his environment. If Jakob, thus, is to be understood as a utopian character, it is only in the original sense of the Greek οὐ τόπος ('no-place'), meaning that he is not able, allowed, or willing to find a place in the world he inhabits. Jakob's ontological place- and homelessness can be put into direct connection with his rejection of the forms of political identity offered to him, as also expressed in his inability to fit into the state's temporal system. Rohlfs's arrival, standing for the direct interference of the state in Jakob's life, together with the political events he witnesses has disturbed the possibility of a peaceful and politically integrated life in the GDR. While Gesine finds (at least a temporary) refuge in the citizenship play she performs on the radio programme 'SPRECHEN SIE DEUTSCH', Jakob refuses to join her in this, not giving in to her pleas: 'ach bleib doch hier Jakob. Von dieser Sendung können wir beide leben' (MJ 307). Gesine's suggestion that they 'can both live off'[144] the radio programme in part appears as a distant answer, perhaps even solution, to her earlier existential dilemma, induced by the Holocaust memory, when she declared: '*Damit kann man nicht leben*' (MJ 193, italics in original). In contrast to Gesine, Jakob rejects the escape into a pastiche citizenship, and pays for this decision with his life.

[143] Norbert Mecklenburg, *Die Erzählkunst des Uwe Johnson* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).
[144] Own translation.

CONCLUSION

The Social Life of Concepts and Stories

In one of his studies on the conceptual history of the German term 'Fortschritt', Reinhart Koselleck relates an eyewitness account from the small village of Frenke, situated in Lower Saxony. In the account, the youngest son of a craftsman's household recalls a moment of abrupt change which occurred in his family during the 1880s. Just before the dinner following his older brother's confirmation, the brother, in line with the custom of the region, received a final, resounding slap in the face and was, from then on, permitted to join his parents in sitting down during the meal, instead of eating in a standing position as was expected from younger children. Being fully in accordance with the established traditions of the time, this event may not have been particularly memorable to the young observer. What committed the day to memory was a second, entirely surprising event that ensued. To the great astonishment of those gathered, the father also invited the youngest son to take a seat at the table, without issuing another slap. To his wife's incredulous inquiry about the reason for this break with common practice, the father, as remembered by the youngest son, answered tersely: 'Das kommt vom Fortschritt'.[145] While concluding the family discussion of the event, the unknown term 'Fortschritt' lacked any explanatory value for the boy, as it likely did for the rest of the household. Koselleck recounts:

> Vergeblich horchte der Junge im Dorf herum, was das sei, der Fortschritt? […] Aber niemand wußte hier eine Antwort. Und doch kursierte dieses Wort, es mag ein angelesenes oder in der Stadt gehörtes Schlagwort gewesen sein, und es traf den neuen Sachverhalt. Ein alter Brauch riß ab.[146]

The newly introduced concept of 'Fortschritt', even without being fully understood, was shown to have had a potent effect, disrupting age-old routines that before had remained unquestioned for a considerable length of time. The abrupt and radical change itself – occurring in the fleeting moment between the older and the younger sibling taking a seat – was just as astonishing as the justification that followed it. In the scene that had unfolded before the young boy's eyes,

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[145] Reinhart Koselleck, '"Fortschritt und Niedergang": Nachtrag zur Geschichte zweier Begriffe', in *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*, ed. by Reinhart Koselleck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), pp. 159–82 (p. 159).

[146] Koselleck, '"Fortschritt und Niedergang": Nachtrag zur Geschichte zweier Begriffe', p. 159.

change appears to have been initiated not so much by the power of the father alone, but rather by the enigmatic concept of 'Fortschritt' itself. The father's statement, 'Das kommt vom Fortschritt', seemingly released the head of the family from the responsibilities of full agency, instead rendering him a mere attendant to what 'the times' had demanded of him. Both the motive and meaning behind the father's actions were thus externalised, with 'Fortschritt' having become the true executive force driving the events.[147]

Koselleck's report offers an illustration of how a concept, together with the stories attaching themselves to it, can assume a social life of its own. 'Fortschritt', in Koselleck's account, was granted the role of an historical agent, generating social outcomes even while its meaning remained obscure. This phenomenon, which may be called 'conceptual agency', is ideologically neutral. While the above anecdote happens to be of a socially progressive transformation, history is ripe with instances of the same underlying dynamic producing undesirable outcomes such as exclusionary structures or political inertia, many of which continue to operate to this day.

To collectively participate – willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously – in the imagination and narrativisation of statehood could be seen as the most elementary act of citizenship. Whether the resulting forms of statehood are egalitarian and democratic depends, in large parts, on the degree of transparency involved in their narrative creation and perpetuation. The analysis performed in this dissertation rests on the hypothesis that there is value in an informed engagement with the concepts and narratives that underly our social structures. By casting light on the hidden foundations of socially powerful concepts and stories, scholars of literature can assist with the task of transferring agency from the supra-personal sphere of unconscious conceptual and narrative forces into the hands of conscious and concrete social actors. To contribute to tracing and unearthing some of the narrative heritage that has shaped the concept of German citizenship was one of the aims of this study.

In her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt warns of the appeal of finding simple answers to complex societal challenges. Totalitarianism, she argues, derived its effectiveness in large part through the comfort it was able to offer to millions of people who, in the upheavals of the Great War, the Depression and various revolutions, had lost their sense of place and orientation in the social order. Under these circumstances, the inherent logic of a single idea that could reveal 'the mysteries of the whole historical process – the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, [and] the uncertainties of the future' was powerfully attractive to

[147] See Koselleck, '"Fortschritt und Niedergang": Nachtrag zur Geschichte zweier Begriffe', p. 160.

large parts of the public.[148] When this bottom-up dynamic combines with the state's top-down interest in a population's legibility that was discussed in the Introduction, the pull towards simplification can be expected to be even more pervasive: explanations, frames of reasoning, and visions rehearsed on the institutional and informal levels of society become unitary and unidimensional. Truly democratic approaches to social and political questions, however, need to embrace multi- rather than mono-causality, and to allow for contradiction as well as dissent. It is on this point that the narrative ethics of the novels investigated in this study may be seen to converge with those of some social science approaches which increasingly emphasise the imperfect and unfinished quality of civic community and the need to engage with marginality. Iris Marion Young, for example, proposes that only genuinely heterogeneous approaches to citizenship and the embedding of difference within normativity can generate fruitful responses to the challenges posed by increasing inequality and social exclusion.[149] Dahrendorf concurs, affirmingly, that: 'the true test of the strength of citizenship rights is heterogeneity'.[150] Based on the argument that the cacophony of voices expressed in novels can contribute to broadening and diversifying imaginaries of political community, it was a second aim of this dissertation to contribute to a productive re-complexification of current discourses about citizenship.

In his work *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen*, Herfried Winkler argues that Germany, in comparison to its European neighbours and the USA, is a 'weitgehend mythenfreie Zone' as regards political founding narratives:

> kein Sturm auf die Bastille mit anschließender glorreicher Revolution, die zum politischen Orientierungszeichen einer ganzen Epoche wurde, wie in Frankreich; kein Unabhängigkeitskrieg, in dem politische Werte durchgesetzt wurden, […] wie in den USA; keine ungebrochene Erinnerung an eine glanzvolle imperiale Epoche, in der man der Welt Ordnung und Zivilisation gegeben habe, aus der die Eliten Selbstbewusstsein ziehen, wie in England […]. In Deutschland findet sich nichts Vergleichbares, lediglich die Erinnerung an das zweimalige politisch-militärische Scheitern in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts und die furchtbaren Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus.[151]

As noted in the Introduction, the absence of a grand democratic narrative in Germany has likely impeded the development of a strong and cohesive concept of citizenship. Yet, as I have tried to show in the course of my analysis, the processes of community building in Germany, too, have been embroiled in the realms of myth – some specifically German, some shared across

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[148] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 469.
[149] Iris Marion Young, 'Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference', in *Justice, Governance, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Difference* (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität, 2007), pp. 79–116.
[150] Ralf Dahrendorf, 'The Changing Quality of Citizenship', in *The Condition of Citizenship*, ed. by Bart van Steenbergen (Newcastle: Sage, 1994), p. 17.
[151] Herfried Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009), pp. 9–10.

borders. While elements of particular social myths have proven resilient across centuries, the contexts, political agendas, and broader meanings they are embedded in are subject to constant transformation. Myths, therefore, are highly fluid, continuously reorganising their internal structures in a process that Claude Lévi-Strauss has called *bricolage*.[152] The nature and direction of this process is not stable but improvised, governed by ever-changing rational and irrational forces. I hope to have shown in my analysis that the concept of citizenship, and the narratives connecting to it, are part of and subject to the same social processes. To draw attention to the fluidity and contingency of citizenship discourses and to thereby demonstrate that these are open to direct public intervention was a third aim of this study.

Finally, a fourth aim of the present analysis was to contribute to the growing body of interdisciplinary citizenship studies, and to the still nascent study of citizenship in German literature, in particular. Citizenship, as argued above, is a concept and practice in constant flux. At its core, the concept presents one way of narratively framing community, and it appears pertinent that literary scholars contribute their expertise to the analysis and shaping of this narrative act. The process of imagining community through shared texts, which Benedict Anderson holds responsible for the emergence of the eighteenth-century nation-state, has not been concluded. The nation-state remains a fluctuating geopolitical *topos* whose boundaries and internal communal structures continue to be mapped and negotiated through novelistic and other textual interventions. Several contemporary German language novels, among them Olivia Wenzel's *1000 Serpentinen Angst*, or Abbas Khider's *Der falsche Inder*, engage intensely with matters of German citizenship.[153] Dardan Asal's *Betrachtungen einer Barbarin* is an example of an essayistic negotiation with the topic.[154] German history offers a particularly illustrative proof of the volatility and adaptability of all forms of social organisation, and German Studies, accordingly, is well-positioned to participate productively in international citizenship discourses.

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[152] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 68.270 (1955), 428–44.
[153] Olivia Wenzel, *1000 Serpentinen Angst* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2020); Abbas Khidder, *Der falsche Inder* (Munich: Random House, 2013).
[154] Asal Dardan, *Betrachtungen einer Barbarin* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2021).

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