

FEMALE EXPERIENCES OF RAPE AND HUNGER IN POSTWAR GERMAN
LITERATURE, 1945-1960

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures.

Chapel Hill
2011

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ABSTRACT

ANJA WIEDEN: Female Experiences of Rape and Hunger in Postwar German Literature, 1945-1960
(Under the direction of Dr. Richard Langston)

Female Experiences of Rape and Hunger in Postwar German Literature, 1945-1960, traces the fundamental rubble experiences of rape and hunger as they course over time and through the genres of autobiography and fiction. This dissertation illuminates how literary forms unite, dissociate or displace female experiences in such a way that either female power is enacted or masculinist political reconstruction is facilitated.

In the immediate postwar years, autobiographies became a popular genre for women to express their experiences of rape and hunger during and directly after the war. Anonyma's *Eine Frau in Berlin*, written from April to June 1945, is of central interest to my analysis. The writer's imagination of a postwar world is filtered through her starving and sexually abused body, resulting in what Anonyma describes as "Schreiben aus dem Bauch heraus." Using humor to narrate her rape experience, the writer displays agency and control of her situation.

Conversely, my dissertation also explores the recoding, appropriation and silencing of female experiences, prominently played out in fictional texts written and published alongside women's autobiographies. These divergent representations resulted, in part, from what I first identify as the literary subordination of bodily experience to the primacy of political ideology around 1945. In the case of Anna Seghers' "Die Saboteure" (1947), I illuminate the way anti-fascist prose preserves a link between female agency

and the experience of hunger, but at the expense of silencing rape as an incisive wartime experience altogether. In the case of Gert Ledig's *Die Vergeltung* (1956), I examine, how literary existentialism not only relativized women's experiences of rape but also excluded the times and spaces of hunger.

The dissertation then uncovers how narratives such as *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* (1955) and *Der Tod in Rom* (1954) appropriate the coupling of hunger and rape common among female autobiographies, but make them part of a man's quest to come to terms with the past. Wartime experiences of women are almost entirely excluded in this literature. To further demonstrate this exclusion, I turn to Wolfgang Koeppen and Heinrich Böll, two writers of West Germany's literary salon, Group 47, and examine how texts by these representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany's leading literary institution claim corporeal economies of food and sex as exclusively (post-) fascist male experiences, transforming the conditions for female agency into post-fascist signs of the fascist man.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation developed out of a 2006 research paper on the representation of food and meals in Günter Grass' *Die Blechtrommel*. Possessing a general interest in food in postwar German literature, I expanded my area of research to include rape, hunger and the role of women in select texts written after Germany's occupation. I would not have been able to conduct this research without my doctoral advisor, Dr. Richard Langston. Due to his valuable suggestions and advice, I framed the project around a fifteen year time period, which not only let me look at evolutions in the literary processing of rape and hunger over time, but also the historical changes in postwar German literature, including the vanishing of female experiences in a multitude of texts—an effacement that has rarely been acknowledged.

In addition to the guidance of Dr. Langston, I have benefitted from the comments of extraordinary readers: I thank my committee members, Dr. Jane Burns, Dr. Eric Downing, Dr. Jonathan Hess, and Dr. Peter McIsaac, for sharpening the direction of my dissertation and encouraging me to rethink its terminology. Parts of the dissertation have been presented at graduate student conferences at Rutgers University, the University of Kentucky, and at the Carolina-Duke Faculty-Graduate Student Works in Progress Series. I would like to thank the audiences at the aforementioned conferences, as well as faculty and graduate students alike, who aided me in my research. A special thanks goes to two of my colleagues at SUNY New Paltz: Dr. Mary Christensen, Department Chair of Foreign Languages, and Dr. Jeff Miller, Director of the Honors Program. Both assisted

me greatly in developing syllabi for two upper level literature and culture classes entitled “Cigarettes and Nylons – Postwar Realities in Occupied Germany,” based on my dissertation. Gaining teaching experience in my own field of research and benefitting from the inspiring comments and feedback of students has convinced me that the perspectives of both a scholar and a teacher of literature are equally important for a successful project.

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Introduction

I. Female Experiences of Rape and Hunger in Postwar German Literature after 1945

The approach of the sixtieth anniversary marking the end of World War II is accompanied by vastly changing perceptions of how Germans experienced the Allied occupation and the early postwar years. The question of German guilt, put forth by Karl Jaspers' 1946 lecture circle *Die Schuldfrage*,¹ has long ago been replaced with the term German suffering:² a term that adheres to the expulsion from the Eastern outskirts of the former Third Reich and the area bombing of major German cities like Hamburg and Dresden. Mass rapes committed against women by members of the occupying troops dominate recent discussions on Germany's past, leading to vast publications of eyewitness accounts, widely advertised and now filling German bookstores.³

German literature has played a crucial role in examining the past; works are embraced and discussed in both popular culture and historical scholarship. Within the past fifteen years, four texts in particular have sparked contemporary debates that

¹ Karl Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1946).

² Mary Nolan, "Germans as Victims During the Second World War: Air Wars, Memory Wars," *Central European History* 38.1 (2005): 7-40, 8. Hereafter cited as "Germans as Victims."

³ I am referring to the Eastern zones of Germany in 1945 where rapes were almost exclusively committed by members of the Red Army. I acknowledge that members of the American, French, and English occupying troops committed rapes as well. The long-lasting Nazi propaganda, which enforced hatred against Communism, led to a different perception and fear towards soldiers of the Red Army, however. In addition, the German military invaded White Russia during the war and killed almost 25 percent of the population. The crimes, among them rape, were a common war tactic committed by Nazis that resulted in anti-German propaganda, which complicated the relationship on both sides at the end of the war. See Babette Quinkert, *Propaganda und Terror in Weißrußland 1941-1944: Die deutsche "geistige" Kriegsführung gegen Zivilbevölkerung und Partisanen* (Paderborn: Schöningh Paderborn, 2008). Hereafter cited as *Propaganda und Terror*.

illuminate silenced discourses on German suffering, challenge simplified understandings of Germans as victims and perpetrators, and lead to gendered perceptions on female experiences on the so-called home front: Günter Grass' novella *Im Krebsgang* (2002) sheds light on the story of approximately 10,000 German refugees who fled from the Red Army on the *Wilhelm Gustloff* ship, which sank on January 30th in 1945. W.G. Sebald's criticism of the way authors depicted and silenced the air war, put forth in *Luftkrieg and Literatur* (1999), foregrounds a gendered outlook on German suffering, since mostly women (and children) suffered from the firebombing. A diversified understanding of the victim-perpetrator dichotomy also informs Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser* (1995). He complicates the notion of German guilt by focusing on the life of an illiterate female concentration camp prison guard. The female protagonist becomes both the savior and (unwilling) annihilator of Jewish inmates during the Third Reich. Due to her illiteracy, Federal Republic's postwar politics use the woman as an easy culprit for atrocities committed against humanity under Nazism.

One of the most influential works within contemporary discussions of German suffering is the 2003 republication of Marta Hillers'⁴ autobiography *Eine Frau in Berlin*. Hillers' work, first released anonymously both in the United States in 1954 and five years later in the Federal Republic, quickly jumped to the top of German bestseller lists in its 2003 edition. Her work is advertised as *the* work of breaking the silence about mass rapes committed against approximately 1.2 million⁵ women living in the Eastern outskirts of

⁴ See chapter 1, section II. I provide detailed research on the autobiography, which includes Jens Binsky's revelation of Marta Hillers' identity in 2003.

⁵ This number is a mere estimation by historians who searched hospital archives for documentation, as not all victims of rape reported the crime. See Helke Sander and Barbara Johr, *BeFreier und Befreite. Krieg,*

the former Third Reich and in the greater area of Berlin at the end of World War II and during the first months of Allied occupation. Feminist historian Elizabeth Heineman remains reserved about the autobiography's success. According to Heineman, Hillers' work merely completes mainstream understandings of Germany's past "now with gender front and center."⁶ The components of Hillers' "dual history"⁷ of both suffering rape and benefitting from the Nazi state as a (in Jens Binsky's words) "smalltime propagandist,"⁸ do not in fact exist side by side, as presented in contemporary debates. According to Heineman, a diversified understanding of German history is still an ongoing process even if Germany has superficially surpassed the need to categorize Hillers' account either as a text featuring German perpetration or victimization. If we look at the autobiography through these categories, Hillers' text remains a story of female suffering and nothing more. Mary Nolan shares Heineman's doubts about Germany's readiness to discuss the past beyond a victim-perpetrator dichotomy. Nolan claims that questions that are posed to reveal more insights into postwar German sufferings actually obscure the diversity of stories literature has to offer; these questions are often one-dimensional and "unfortunately misplaced"⁹ in contemporary debates. In other words, the ways we engage with texts obscure contradicting discourses put forth in private memories (among other forms) and especially overshadow female experiences after 1945.

Vergewaltigungen, Kinder (München: Anje Kunstmann, 1992) 22. Hereafter cited as *BeFreier und Befreite*.

⁶ Elizabeth Heineman, "Gender, Sexuality, and Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past," *Central European History* 38.1 (2005): 41-74, 1. Hereafter cited as "Gender, Sexuality."

⁷ Heineman, "Gender, Sexuality" 60.

⁸ Jens Binsky, "Wenn Jungen Weltgeschichte schreiben, haben Mädchen stumme Rollen," *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* 24 Sept. 2003.

⁹ Nolan, "Germans as Victims" 15.

This dissertation offers a diversified understanding of female suffering in German literature written between 1945 and 1960. The exposure of female characters to rape and hunger breaks with simplified notions of victimhood and perpetration and sheds new light on how women experienced the early weeks of occupation, the destruction of German cities by air raids, and the establishment of the Federal Republic. With the help of five texts – one autobiography, two works of rubble literature and two works by Group 47 members – this dissertation uncovers significant paradigm shifts in the depiction of female characters and their exposure to rape and hunger over the course of fifteen years. The supposed state of exception during the time of early occupation offers, in the case of Hillers' autobiography *Eine Frau in Berlin*, an atypical reading of women as “victims.” Rape is depicted as an inevitable, yet tolerable suffering if the rapist is able to provide the woman with food. Women actively choose their rapists in order to climb the food ladder, which eventually grants women a power position during a time of supposed physical surrender. The (voluntary) participation of women in the exchange economy of trading their bodies offers a chance for women to alter the rules of the male-dominated military society.

The close connection of rape and hunger is interrupted in literature of the rubble. The harsh censorship in the former GDR that did not allow any representation of Russian liberators as rapists, and the silence of rape as a means to re-establish conservative family structures in the Federal Republic, are reflected in the cleaving of hunger and rape. In Anna Seghers' “Die Saboteure,” women become powerful agents as food suppliers, supporters or adversaries of men's political involvement. Gert Ledig's *Die Vergeltung* focuses on many characters' stories during a twenty-minute air raid. Among the stories he

depicts is the rape of a woman by a German soldier; Ledig thus stays away from the politically loaded depiction of the rapist as a former (Russian) wartime enemy in his fiction. The decoupling of rape and hunger leads to a portrayal of women who do not exhibit the power women possess in Anonyma's work. Unlike Seghers' and Ledig's texts, works by members of the Group 47 pick up the connection of rape and hunger again, but this time typical female experiences are transformed into male concerns. Women again become the objects of male desires; any agency they claim is replaced by men's search for a usable past, which ultimately leads to the silencing of female experiences. Men's obsession with food, paralleled with power over women, culminates in the wish to consume women's bodies like food.

Within the timeframe of fifteen years, we are able to see how the discourse on rape and hunger changes in literature. Rape and hunger reveal stories of women that go beyond pre-conceived notions of females as silent rape victims, and suffering from starvation. The agency women achieve in autobiographical writing is replaced by the cleaving of hunger and rape. This split leads to diminished roles for women in literature: they are assigned the position either of housewives or passive bearers of sexual abuse. The texts I use in my dissertation deconstruct victim-perpetrator dichotomies, but also (particularly in the case of Group 47 texts) obstruct discourses that we are desperately trying to unveil, such as the individual stories of women. In other words, the silencing of women's experience in literature reflects upon the Federal Republic's support for the establishment of patriarchal societies, the kind of societies that find their most drastic exposure in works of the Group 47. A rereading of literature between 1945 and 1960 demonstrates that the discourse on rape and hunger may both add nuance to and silence

women's voices and individual agency in society. Heinemann's and Nolan's concerns about one-dimensional engagements with certain aspects of literature, such as the newfound interest in representations of rape, are legitimate. We must examine women's roles in these texts in a way that moves beyond or complicates the victim-perpetrator dichotomy. This diversified engagement with literary texts can happen most successfully if we comprehend how discourses of certain texts relate to others in a given time period. In other words, investigating texts published over the course of fifteen years exposes the way a literary engagement with themes like rape and hunger establishes its own history, a literary history, if you will, which in this case ends in the silencing of female experiences.

II. The Investment with the Body – A Reassessment of Adelson's Thesis

In the introduction of her 1993 work on feminism and German identity, *Making Bodies, Making History*, literary scholar Leslie Adelson argues, "History without bodies is unimaginable."¹⁰ Adelson claims that our understanding of German history and identity after 1945 is incomplete since history excludes human subjectivity by disregarding the body as an integral part of a human's individuality. In other words, bodies are reduced to generalized signs of victimization or state metaphors, rendering humans' diverse corporeal agency meaningless, which results in a historical abstraction. According to Adelson, literature after 1945 follows that trend of objectifying the body: "Of an age traumatized by the public knowledge and filmic images of so many dead and tortured

¹⁰ Leslie Adelson, *Making Bodies, Making History: Feminism and German Identity* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993) 1. Hereafter cited as *Making Bodies*.

bodies [...] the first twenty years or so following the war could be expected to see the bodies of history in this light.”¹¹

Adelson supports her argument with two of postwar Germany’s well-known masterpieces, Günter Grass’ *Die Blechtrommel* (1959) and Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* (1943). The odd bodies of protagonists Oskar Matzerath and Adrian Leverkühn, as represented in the novels, exemplify, according to Adelson, embodied allegories for the decay of the German state during the rise of fascism. Adelson draws a sharp line between German literature of the immediate postwar years and literature following the student movement in 1967/68. Her distinction is based upon the divergent investments with the body she perceives in the literature of these different eras; in her view, post-1967 literature can teach us more about history and identity, since authors construct bodies “as sites of contested individual identities.”¹² However, Adelson argues that the body of protagonist Schrella in Heinrich Böll’s *Billard um Halbzehn* (1959) is the closest construct of a body that is not fully obstructed by metaphorical meaning. Schrella feels his individual life story, shaped by historical events of Nazi Germany, through a sensation in his thumb. What does this very visceral way of understanding one’s past suggest? Adelson falls short in her explanation but by comparing Fäbmel to the protagonists Oskar and Adrian, the sensation felt in a particular body part gives an individual’s body a distinct meaning. Thus, that particular body becomes the site of history that is perceived and experienced through the corpus. Or, in Adelson’s words,

¹¹ Adelson, *Making Bodies* 33.

¹² Adelson, *Making Bodies* xv.

“Thus we see that historical processes and relationships are rooted in concrete, sentient experience, while narratives of history comprise *interpretations* of bodily experience.”¹³

This dissertation reassesses Adelson’s thesis by arguing that an interest in the body did in fact exist in literature before the student movement. My project offers a different perspective on the body which focuses primarily on feelings of hunger, the experience of rape by female characters, and the obsession with food and female bodies by male characters. In the case of *Eine Frau in Berlin*, I challenge the notion of the body as a victimized object or in Adelson’s words a mere “allegory” for the German state. The “bodily experience,” especially in terms of hunger and rape, allows women to negotiate which bodily suffering, either rape and hunger, is less harmful to their overall ability to sustain themselves. The specific focus on (female) bodies, particularly emphasized in the autobiography as well as in Böll’s and Koeppen’s texts, contributes to a diversified understanding of rape narratives and encourages a re-evaluation of the literary representation of rape in German texts after 1945.¹⁴

III. The Problematic Issue of Narrating Rape in a Postwar German Context and Beyond

The narration of rape in literature and extra-literary texts is a complicated enterprise. Rape is an ever-changing concept; its definition is strictly tied to the specific cultural framework in which rape occurs. Feminist historian Joanna Bourke illuminates this problem in her 2007 study *Rape* with the following words: “Rape is a form of social

¹³ Adelson, *Making Bodies* 23.

¹⁴ See also Birgit Dahlke in section III of the introduction.

performance. It is highly ritualized. It varies between countries; it changes over time.”¹⁵ Bourke claims that any contemporary research must oppose preconceived notions about rape, for rape is still considered a violent sexual act committed by men against women, thus supporting a stereotypical victim-perpetrator dichotomy. Despite scholars’ attempts to deconstruct that notion¹⁶ by acknowledging women as rapists or men as victims, the male-female power dynamic that rape almost always postulates still remains intact in reference to wartime rape. Susan Brownmiller and socio-criminologist Robert Lilly reveal that rape in wartime serves as a message from the vanquishers to the vanquished, a message from one man to another man.¹⁷ The female victim of rape becomes a personification of the lost war, deprived of her agency and individual experience. The metaphoric meaning of rape becomes especially important in a postwar German context, which ultimately led to the silencing of accounts of mass rapes as both East and West Germany’s images rested upon a story of rebuilding and success. In this section, I survey why and how accounts of rape were silenced, how literary texts were affected by that silencing, and how the engagement with the works I have chosen to examine contributes to a better understanding of an undeveloped discourse on rape narratives in literature after 1945. *Eine Frau in Berlin* in particular breaks with preconceived dichotomies of perpetrator and victim with regards to wartime rape.

¹⁵ Joanna Bourke, *Rape: Sex, Violence, History* (Great Britain: Virago Press, 2007) 6.

¹⁶ Gesa Dane discusses in *Zeter and Mordio* the changing definition of rape as a punishable crime from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. The depictions of rape in literature deconstruct legal debates. Sabine H. Smith is equally invested in the changing perceptions of rape in *Sexual Violence in German Culture*. See Gesa Dane, *Zeter und Mordio: Vergewaltigung in Literatur und Recht* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005) and Sabine H. Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture: Rereading and Rewriting the Tradition* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998).

¹⁷ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will. Men, Women, and Rape* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1976) 119. Hereafter cited as *Against Our Will*.

Stories of rape polluted the image of the Russian “Befreier” in the former GDR and blemished the upstanding domesticated image of Western capitalistic housewives in the Federal Republic. Postwar society was eager to re-establish man as the dominant gender after the lost war. In general, women accepted society’s rules and were eager to hide rape from their husbands. Rape was shameful not only for the victims, but also for husbands, fiancés and fathers. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, who stayed in Berlin during the time of occupation, remembered the suicides of many young women who were forced by their own parents and educators to kill themselves:

‘Ehre verlor, alles verloren’, sagt ein verstörter Vater und drückt seiner zwölfmal geschändeten Tochter einen Strick in die Hand. Gehorsam geht sie und erhängt sich am nächsten Fensterkreuz. ‘Wenn man euch schändet, bleibt nichts als der Tod,’ erklärt zwei Tage vor dem Zusammenbruch die Lehrerin einer Mädchenklasse. Mehr als die Hälfte der Schülerinnen zieht die geforderte Konsequenz und ertränkt ihre Schande im nächstliegenden Wasser.¹⁸

In other words, remaining silent about rapes prevented German men from feeling inadequate or guilty.¹⁹ Rape, even though committed against the victim’s will, threw a shadow on a woman’s sexual purity and value as a wife.²⁰ In the East, the image of Communist Russia needed to be adopted and idolized. Any criticism of the Russian occupiers endangered the good will of the newly founded GDR to bond with the Russian liberators. In Western capitalism, the upright German woman was supposed to present the image of a good housewife and engage in Western consumer culture – a morally questionable past, especially in the event a woman was sexually abused, would destroy

¹⁸ Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Schauplatz Berlin* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2000) 364. Hereafter cited as *Schauplatz Berlin*.

¹⁹ Erich Kuby, *Die Russen in Berlin 1945* (München: Schere, 1965) 27. Hereafter cited as *Die Russen in Berlin*.

²⁰ Sander, *Befreier und Befreite* 17.

her image. After 1945, Germans repressed the notion of sexual crimes committed against women and did not grant victims with children resulting from rapes compensatory payments. According to Lilly, “During the post-World War II Nuremberg trials wartime rape was subsumed but not explicitly identified under ‘crimes against humanity.’”²¹ A brief passage from Helke Sander’s and Barbara Johr’s 1992 documentary, *Befreier und Befreite*, which brought mass rapes committed by members of occupation troops to the public eye in Germany, demonstrates the dilemma for the victim in terms of what was legally defined as rape. If a woman decided to sleep with a man to save her daughter from sexual assault or prevent a deportation to Siberia, she was by definition not a victim of rape.²² The loosened abortion laws after Germany’s defeat reveal how eager both the state and rape victims were to keep the German people racially clean and hide the violence that they had suffered.²³ Unsurprisingly, women who bore children resulting from rapes became outcasts of society.

Even though public discussions of rapes committed by occupation soldiers became taboo, rape proved to be a useful tool to propagate anti-communism in West Germany and the United States, especially during the Cold War. The CDU, for example, utilized the image of the Mongolian on election posters, accompanied with lurid dictums reminding the population of crimes Russian soldiers had committed against German women. In the Cold War context, Burke’s book *The Big Rape*, which became a bestseller in the United States, depicted Russian soldiers as horny animals besieging German

²¹ Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 19. Hereafter cited as *Taken by Force*.

²² Sander, *BeFreier und Befreite* 47.

²³ Sander and Johr investigate a document from March 1945 that exemplifies the racial politics of Nazi Germany by controlling rape victims who refused to abort. See Sander, *BeFreier und Befreite* 49.

women.²⁴ In both East and West Germany, the recollection of rape experiences did not match the zeitgeist of restoration after the end of National Socialism. If the crimes were ever mentioned in historical debates, postwar rapes became a symbol for the suffering of Germany as a whole and thus downplayed the experiences of individual women by including men in the trauma.²⁵ The bottom line remained: rape was a “dirty” secret, a reminder to the German population, both women and men, of their defeat. If a woman was raped, she was less valued because she was viewed as ultimately belonging to the man who had raped her. According to Helge Sander and Barbara Johr’s documentary text *Befreier und Befreite*, women are devalued as rape victims: “Der vorübergehende Besitzwechsel der geschändeten Frauen als Siegesbeute vermindert den Wert der Frau als potentiellles Eigentum des Mannes.”²⁶

The silencing of women who had been raped also impacted literature. Birgit Dahlke is one of the few German scholars who illuminate the discourse on rape in East and West German postwar literature. In 2000, Dahlke published a “Vergewaltigungsdiskurs” under the provocative title “Frau Komm!” which refers to Red Army soldiers’ common order directed at women who were chosen for rape. According to Dahlke, first attempts to portray rape²⁷ in GDR literature and film began only in the late sixties. The film *Ich war neunzehn* by Konrad Wolf (1966), Christoph Hein’s *Die*

²⁴ James Burke, *The Big Rape* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952).

²⁵ Elizabeth Heineman alludes to a speech by Richard von Weizsäcker, in which he shifts from the personal experience of women to a nation’s experience. Elizabeth Heineman, “The Hour of the Women: Memories of Germany’s ‘Crisis Years’ and West German National Identity,” *American Historical Review* 101.2 (1996): 372. Hereafter cited as “The Hour of the Women.”

²⁶ Sander, *Befreier und Befreite* 21.

²⁷ These attempts are very reserved. They merely allude to rape as a wartime experience (due to the harsh GDR censorship).

Vergewaltigung (1989)²⁸ and Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* (1977) are but three examples. Before that, representation of rape in literary texts, in reference to the Russian occupation, was prohibited by the harsh censorship GDR authors had to face. According to Dahlke, Boris Djacenko's unfinished and unpublished 1958 manuscript, in which he portrays a Russian soldier as a rapist upon Germany's defeat, exemplifies best how strictly the GDR persecuted rape narratives in a wartime German context. Boris was not able to finish his work and was actively pushed out of GDR's literary landscape: "Mit dem Verbot des Romans von Boris Djacenko wurde 1958 ein Exempel für alle kommenden Versuche statuiert, das Verhältnis zwischen Russen und Deutschen zur Diskussion zu stellen."²⁹ In the West, Dahlke declares Annemarie Weber's *Westend* (1966) as an early depiction of rape in postwar German literature, which is based upon the author's experiences as a translator for the occupying forces. Helga Sander-Brahms' film *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* (1980) is yet another example that brings rape to the fore. The rape by the female character is of particular interest, since it features two American soldiers as rapists, which distracted from the common image that rape only happened in the Russian occupation zone. After Germany's unification, Helge Sander's and Barbara Johr's 1992 documentary film and accompanying book *Befreier und Befreite* broke the silence about wartime rape in Germany on a large scale. These two works sparked scholarly and mainstream interest in the topic on a large scale, an interest that continues to this day.

²⁸ The narration was already written in 1988. Hein waited until after Germany's reunification to move forward with publication, as his text would have failed the GDR censorship.

²⁹ Birgit Dahlke, "‘Frau Komm!’ Vergewaltigungen 1945: Zur Geschichte eines Diskurses," *LiteraturGesellschaft DDR*, eds. Birgit Dahlke, Martina Langmann, Thomas Taterka (Stuttgart: Metzler 2000) 281. Hereafter cited as "Frau Komm."

Dahlke makes a clear distinction in her study between autobiographies and fictional or film narratives. The GDR systematically prohibited the publication of any works that featured rape. Only those with a Communist agenda, like Ruth Andreas Friedrich's *Schauplatz Berlin*, Elfriede Brüning's *Es war einmal mein Leben*, and Lina Haag's *Eine Handvoll Staub*, made it into the literary landscape. The West published autobiographies that dealt with rape like Ursula Pless Damm's *Der Weg ins Ungewisse*, Ursula Kardoff's *Berliner Aufzeichnungen*, and Ilse Deutschkron's *Ich trug den gelben Stern*, and *Eine Frau in Berlin*. None of these autobiographies, save the latter, focused explicitly on rape. Rape was seen as just a small fraction of women's suffering after 1945. Although in East and West Germany autobiographies became a popular genre to shed light on female experiences, especially during the seventies and eighties, Dahlke declares these works to be overall insufficient in their depiction of rape: "In der Mehrzahl dieser autobiographischen Texte war die Vergewaltigungserfahrung präsent: relative unspektakulär, als alltägliche Erfahrung, die im gesamten Kampf ums Überleben nur ein Leid unter anderen darstellt."³⁰

Dahlke points to another problem caused by the silence on rape in both East and West German literature (even beyond the immediate postwar years): authors lack aesthetic reference points³¹ in the depiction of rape. Rape is either metaphorically overloaded³² and signifies the suffering of the occupation period and its (political) consequences for the postwar generation, as exemplified in Christoph Hein's *Die*

³⁰ Dahlke, "Frau Komm" 294.

³¹ Dahlke, "Frau Komm" 297.

³² Dahlke, "Frau Komm" 280.

Vergewaltigung, or, in the case of Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*, the narration of rape as female experience fails in its overtly distanced depiction. While Dahlke attends to a missing framework on rape narratives in a German context, Sorcha Gunne and Zoë Brigley Thompson, editors and authors of *Feminism, Literature and Rape* (2010), point to the responsibilities of engaging with and interpreting rape narratives: "Now what is at stake is not whether we speak about rape or not, but *how* we speak about rape and to what end."³³ For Gunne and Brigley, breaking with the victim-perpetrator dichotomy, as Joan Bourke advocates, means not only the author, but also readers of narratives of rape, need to "confront the uncomfortable and shocking nature of sexual violence [...]."³⁴ *Female Experiences of Rape and Hunger* extends Birgit Dahlke's attempt to establish a "Vergewaltigungsdiskurs" in German literature and identifies four of the works I examine in this dissertation as rape narratives that illuminate engagements with rape that move beyond a victim-perpetrator dichotomy. Gunne's and Thompson's proposed reading strategy especially allows for a radically different interpretation of wartime rape in Hillers' *Eine Frau in Berlin*. In the case of Hillers' autobiography, rape breaks with preconceived notions as it occurs in connection with female agency. This sense of agency is radically deconstructed in Gert Ledig's *Die Vergeltung*, where rape becomes a meaningless occurrence in a world faced with destruction. The most radical shift in postwar literature happens in Group 47 writings. Rape appears detached from female experience and represents women only as victims.

³³ Sorcha Gunne and Zoë Brigley Thompson eds., *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives: Violence and Violation* (New York: Routledge, 2010) 3. Hereafter cited as *Feminism, Literature*.

³⁴ Gunne, *Feminism, Literature* 3.

IV. Hunger, Food, and Female Characters

The depiction of female and male characters in connection to hunger and food in German literature between 1945 and 1960 exposes gendered power dynamics: while suffering hunger becomes primarily a female concern in the descriptions of German culture during the occupation, the access to food as a metaphor for patriarchal power is given to male characters in texts featuring a “steady” postwar (German) society. German literature builds upon cultural perceptions of female experiences that are predominantly associated with overcoming hunger and providing for others during the hardships of the early postwar years. Food, on the other hand, becomes a means to establish the power of the occupational forces over the German population. In the fifties, the Federal Republic also used food to help display their power as a strong and ever-improving state during the time of the economic miracle. An overabundance of food items is attributed to (West) Germany’s economic success in a society that is based upon patriarchal power structures. The power to provide food, then, becomes associated with men as the heads of the households. The following elucidations illuminate the interconnection of culture and literature in terms of hunger and food.

While accounts of rape were often silenced, hunger became a widely-documented female experience in reference to the immediate postwar years, indicated by a multitude of autobiographical texts published in East and West German culture in the context of second-wave feminism. Two consecutive studies by the titles *Wie wir das alles geschafft haben* (1984) and *Von Liebe sprach damals keiner* (1985) in particular illuminate a popular interest in women’s struggles to provide for their families during the time of early occupation. As the two works demonstrate by interviewing a random pool

of women (and their families), females engaged in “Hamsterfahrten,” black market trades and creative strategies of stretching food. Even though shedding more light on female experiences is the aim of the authors Sibylle Meyer and Eva Schulze, both texts limit women to their roles as mothers and caretakers, suggesting that their primary goal consisted of the re-establishment of the nuclear family, with the man as the head of the household. Despite these pitfalls, contemporary scholarship frequently refers to Sibylle Meyer’s and Eva Schulze’s studies as a crucial starting point in the documentation of female suffering on the home front. Literary scholar Caroline Schaumann, for instance, uses both studies to segue into yet another story of female suffering: women as rape victims.

While hunger is associated with female suffering, feminist historian Elizabeth Heinemann demonstrates that the role of women as providers of food offers a different story, one not acknowledged in cultural memory. Heinemann works against the reluctance of mainstream historical perceptions to accept women as the driving forces in the immediate postwar years. Even though women’s efforts as caretakers for their families were recognized, the economic success story that culminated in West Germany’s embrace of capitalism has become the story of Germany as a whole, including men and women.³⁵ By the late fifties, Germans were able to show their newly won economic stability with their healthy and strong bodies, “bred” in the consumer culture in West Germany. Germans were eager to become independent in the time of reconstruction and show off their success by adopting American consumer culture.

³⁵ Erich Kuby already predicts such a historical adulteration. See Kuby, *Die Russen in Berlin* 255.

Food as a means to display power is characteristic of the relationship between the occupying soldiers and the German population at the end of World War II. Atina Grossmann reflects on the rationing politics as a “transitional justice.”³⁶ That terminology refers to food as a value system during the times of the denazification processes. Grossmann declares that the “access to food supplies or goods that could be exchanged for food became a key gauge of the occupiers’ favor and group or individual classifications as victim, perpetrator, or bystander during the Nazi regime.”³⁷ Germans were dependent on “the good parent” and competed against each other to climb the food ladder. The power of the occupying troops due to their access to food was mirrored in postwar German society by the public display of food consumption during the time of reconstruction. An overabundance of food proved Germany’s ability to provide for itself and reclaim its position of power. Food became both a way to establish normalcy and a means to openly expose an alliance with Westernized consumer cultures, especially with the United States. However, as mentioned, (West) Germany’s success was predominantly associated with a male-dominated heteronormative state. Men re-established their roles as providers for the family and took sole credit for Germany’s booming market economy.

Hunger as a sign of female suffering and food as a sign of male power are similarly schematized in literature. The image of caring women is thoroughly documented in literature of the rubble. Wolfgang Borchert’s *Das Brot*, Wolfdietrich Schnurre’s *Auf der Flucht*, Walter Kolbenhoff *Von unserem Fleisch und Blut*, Heinrich Böll’s *Der Zug war pünktlich*, are but some examples of texts in which women are

³⁶ Atina Grossmann, “Grams, Calories, and Food: Languages of Victimization, Entitlement, and Human Rights in Occupied Germany, 1945-1960,” *Central European History* 44 (2011): 118-148, 123. Hereafter cited as “Grams, Calories.”

³⁷ Grossmann, “Grams, Calories” 120.

portrayed as caretakers of the family, tied to the kitchen; these women even display more discipline than men in tolerating hunger. Yet in Marta Hillers' *Eine Frau in Berlin*, hunger, due to its ability to overshadow other afflictions, sheds a different light on the story of stereotypical female suffering. Anonyma's overall concern with the feeling of hunger renders all of her hardships during the time of early occupation secondary. As I show in my reading of the autobiography, hunger turns rape into a tolerable event, for the latter is not an immediate danger to the woman's survival. Moreover, *Eine Frau in Berlin* radically rejects the notion of women as caretakers and depicts the fight against hunger as a personal and competitive event. While Anna Seghers' "Die Saboteure" is ostensibly less radical in its depiction of women within the domestic sphere, Seghers grants women agency as manipulators or supporters of men's political actions. When we look at a steady postwar society during the time of reconstruction, the access to food as a display of men's power in texts is exemplified best by Heinrich Böll's *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* and Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom*. Women are dominated by men's access to food, an access the men obtain either through acting as cooks or through profitable careers.

V. Structure of the Dissertation

Female Experiences of Rape and Hunger is divided into three parts. The tripartite structure allows for a distinct representation of paradigm shifts in the depiction of rape and hunger in German literature between 1945 and 1960. Part I features the autobiography *Eine Frau in Berlin* by Marta Hillers. Hillers' account serves as the starting point of my analyses of literary texts, since it depicts a unique interconnection of rape and hunger as female experiences. Women develop agency in a time of supposed physical surrender and expose the male-dominated military culture as controllable by women, which allows female characters to gain access to food by choosing their potential rapists. Part I further illuminates why Hillers' account is different than other autobiographies' depiction of rape and hunger and why the careful aesthetic construction of *Eine Frau in Berlin* justifies a reading of her text as a work of literature. The interpretation of the narration of personal rape experiences intersects with Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* and Annemarie Tröger's "Between Rape and Prostitution," for both texts engage with the distancing of body from mind as a means to tolerate (sexual) abuse, a distancing similarly depicted by the narrator of *Eine Frau in Berlin*. Part I concludes by examining humor as a significant measure to share rape anecdotes among *Eine Frau in Berlin*'s female characters, which deconstructs male dominance over women.

Part II serves as a transition between Anonyma's (the narrator's) power position to works of the Group 47, which merely depict women as victims of rape and hunger. In part II, works of rubble literature, like Anna Seghers' "Die Saboteure," exemplify the way that hunger and food become common metaphors to depict both female suffering and political alliance of the Nazi state. Gert Ledig's *Die Vergeltung* is the only text

written between 1945 and 1960 that features an explicit narration of rape with a focus on the female body. Ledig does not depict wartime rape as a power dynamic between victor/defeated or occupation soldier/German woman. Rather, *Die Vergeltung* depicts rape as a meaningless occurrence in a world of physical destruction. The publication of Ledig's work resembles suggests that the narration of the rape scene detached from an occupation discourse did not endanger Germany's deliberate silence on the topic of rape.

Part III displays the endpoint of female experiences in literature of Group 47 authors. Women are not powerful agents anymore and have to abide by the rules of a steady postwar (West) German society with patriarchal power structures. In contradiction to other scholars' attempts to categorize Böll's work as a love story, I expose that the male protagonist Walter Fendrich does not have genuine feelings for the woman, but abuses her inability to provide (food) for herself in order to gain access to her body. Rape in *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* is disguised in heteronormative male-female relationships. In *Der Tod in Rom*, female suffering is treated as only a secondary concern. I argue against critics' attempts to denote Koeppen's work as one of the most thorough and multi-faceted postwar texts written in the fifties. In my reading, I expose the ways women are merely reduced to their bodies. Rape becomes a means to live out fascist behavior in a postwar world, in which women "involuntarily" support men's search for a steady postwar position. Representations of food are used to display men's power position over women, especially in the way they display and show off their cooking skills. The kitchen, depicted in rubble literature as a place owned by women, in these texts becomes a grounds for manly self-expression.

Part I: *Eine Frau in Berlin*

Chapter One

The Deconstruction of Female Victimization

I. Other Autobiographies and *Eine Frau in Berlin*

In an attempt to reassess immediate postwar German literature after 1945, literary scholar Monika Melchert characterizes the dominance of female writers as an “ausgesprochenes Nachkriegsphänomen.”³⁸ Autobiographies and diaries became prominent genres in which women narrated their wartime and early postwar experiences. One of these autobiographies is *Eine Frau in Berlin*. The author Marta Hillers, whom I refer to as Anonyma, offers a unique aesthetic construction of rape and hunger as an embodied experience. Anonyma’s account differs radically from other autobiographies published alongside her work. Due to its writing style, which is highly invested in the body, *Eine Frau in Berlin* is the only work that closely narrates rape in a postwar German context. Moreover, Anonyma deconstructs patriarchal power structures by ridiculing her rapists and climbing the food ladder as “war booty,” leaving (German) men behind.

By examining seven other autobiographies that also feature rape and hunger, I expose why these texts, unlike Anonyma’s, offer only one-dimensional engagements. Rape and hunger are politically charged in these other accounts. The ability to endure hunger serves as a means to distinguish, in the case of autobiographies of resistance fighters, the authors from the selfish masses. In these accounts, wartime rape is reduced

³⁸ Monika Melchert, “Mutter Berlin und ihre Töchter: Weibliche Perspektiven in der Nachkriegsliteratur,” *Unterm Notdach: Nachkriegsliteratur in Berlin 1945 – 1949*, ed. Ursula Heukenkamp (Berlin: Schmidt, 1996) 368.

to a mere unfortunate occurrence, which is viewed as a lesser trauma in a society freed from the Nazi regime. In accounts that portray their authors as apolitical, women are depicted as victims only. Hunger triggers jealousy towards the occupying troops who have better access to food. The (rare) depictions of rape in these accounts do not offer a close textual engagement with the act itself, but focus on the racial features of the rapists, supporting propaganda politics propagated during the Third Reich.³⁹ The seven autobiographies that stand at the center of my analyses include Ursula von Kardorff's *Berliner Aufzeichnungen*, Ruth Andreas-Friedrich's *Schauplatz Berlin* and her sequel *Der Schattenmann*, Lina Haag's *Eine Handvoll Staub*, Käthe von Normann's *Tagebuch aus Pommern 1945-1946*, Ursula Pless-Damm's *Weg ins Ungewisse*, and Inge Deutschkron's *Ich trug den gelben Stern*.⁴⁰

Lina Haag and Ruth-Andreas Friedrich, both resistance fighters during the rise of fascism, depict the ability to come to terms with hunger as an inherent strength of people who are opposed to the Nazi regime. While Lina Haag spends several months in the concentration camp Dachau, she comments on the way other female inmates change when they are exposed to hunger: "Höchstens, dass man sich, sobald man sich unbeaufsichtigt fühlt, um eine verschimmelte Brotrinde balgt oder um eine faule Kartoffel blutig schlägt. Dann hat auch bei den Bibelforscherinnen Jehovas Gebot 'Du sollst Deinen Nächsten lieben wie Dich selbst' kein Gewicht mehr. So ist der Mensch?"

³⁹ Atina Grossmann, "A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers," *October*, Spring (1995): 42-63, 49. Hereafter cited as "A Question of Silence."

⁴⁰ The seven autobiographies include: Ursula von Kardorff, *Berliner Aufzeichnungen*; Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Schauplatz Berlin*; Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Der Schattenmann* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000); Lina Haag, *Eine Handvoll Staub* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg, 1980); Käthe von Normann, *Tagebuch aus Pommern 1945-1946* (München: dtv, 1986); Ursula Pless-Damm, *Weg ins Ungewisse*; Inge Deutschkron, *Ich trug den gelben Stern* (München: dtv, 1985). Hereafter all texts are cited parenthetically in the text.

(123). Haag distances herself from the other women who, despite their propagated religious altruism, are unable to control their greed. Haag endures hunger during the time she spends in the concentration camp, suggesting hunger is a mere discomfort in her fight against the Nazi regime. In her autobiography *Schauplatz Berlin*, resistance fighter Ruth Andreas-Friedrich also distinguishes herself from her surroundings when it comes to enduring hunger. While she walks through the streets of occupied Berlin, she witnesses a group of people carving up an ox: "...Sie schreien und gestikulieren, reißen sich die Fleischfetzen aus der Hand. 'Mir die Leber!' keift einer. – 'Mir die Zunge!...die Zunge...die Zunge!' Fünf blutbeschmierte Fäuste zerren wütend die Ochsenzunge aus dem Schlund....Ich schleiche mich beiseite. Noch nie ist mir so elend gewesen" (15). The act of dismembering the animal appears brutal, selfish and disrespectful. People compete in a bloody manner over the animal's body parts. The author emphasizes that she despises their behavior and removes herself from the scene. Clearly, Lina Haag and Ruth Andreas-Friedrich deeply value their discipline over their bodies. Enduring hunger in their accounts is a means to separate themselves from the masses as resistance fighters. Even though Friedrich's *Schauplatz Berlin* captures the immediate occupation period in Berlin, she barely mentions the occurrence of rape.⁴¹ When she reflects upon rape in her environment, however, she embeds rape into a political discourse and sides with the notion that the suffering that Nazi Germany brought upon the rest of the world, has necessary repercussions for the defeated Germans: "Es ist nicht schön, aber es ist verständlich" (24).

⁴¹ Even though she merely glosses over the occurrence of rape, her work did not pass GDR censorship and was only published in the Federal Republic.

Inge Deutschkron's *Ich trug den gelben Stern* features the life of a young Jewish woman who survived World War II in the Berlin underground. Hunger is also a means to distance this woman from the German population. After she and her mother claim that they have been bombed out and assume false identities, her gratefulness over food stamps serves to distance Jews from the Germans' complaints about the food scarcity: "Vor allem schienen uns die Lebensmittelrationen ein unermesslicher Schatz, und wir fragten uns manchmal, wie über zu geringe Mengen geklagt werden konnte. Für uns war es viel im Vergleich zu dem, was uns in den Jahren zuvor zur Verfügung gestanden hatte" (191). As in the previously mentioned autobiographies, emphasis is placed on the comparative inability of others to endure hunger. The enlarged portions fill the Jewish women with happiness, as they had to suffer from hunger more severely in the underground. The greed of the other Germans distinguishes Inge from the wide masses as a victim of the National Socialist State. When Inge escapes multiple rape attempts after the liberation of Berlin, rape is understood as another means to victimize Jewish women. No member of the occupying troops is able to comprehend the meaning of Inge's Jewish identity card, which reduces her, as other women, to wartime booty. The descriptions of the soldier who tries to rape her are informed by his racial difference, which becomes a typical measure to describe Soviet soldiers in many autobiographies: "Er war klein und hatte krumme Beine, ein typisch mongolisches Gesicht mit mandelförmigen Augen und hohen Backenknochen. Er lächelte verschmitzt" (194).

The typical Mongolian features are also predominant in Ursula Pless-Damm's *Weg ins Ungewisse*. When the author falls victim to rape in a Russian camp, the rapist's

face is described as a “grinsendes Mongolengesicht.”⁴² Pless-Damm does not narrate her personal experience of rape. The text indicates that the rapist forces her on the bed, but the actual act is excluded from the narration. However, Pless-Damm touches on another occurrence connected to her experience of rape: receiving food after rape. Pless-Damm’s feels as if she prostituted herself. Her conservative morals as a married woman do not go hand-in-hand with receiving enjoyable food after she has been raped. Food, then, turns rape for Pless-Damm into prostitution, which emphasizes yet again how entrenched the author is in conservative understandings of either rape or prostitution: “Nachträglich fühle ich mich wie ein Straßenmädchen, weil ich mich durch das karge Essen, das mir noch geschmeckt hatte, habe, bezahlen’ lassen!” (40).

Käthe von Normann displays the same conservative value system when it comes to rape. She has been spared the experience, which she emphasizes multiple times. Her primary concern, besides obtaining food, is the well-being of her husband. She remains in her Pomeranian village during the occupation period and continuously mentions hunger and the greed of the occupying forces: “Dann erschienen neun Russen, um hier zu essen. Wir hatten nichts weiter als Kartoffeln und etwas Milch, aber sie fanden noch unser Brot und leider auch unsere gerade fertige Ablieferungsbutter, die wir im nicht benutzbaren elektrischen Kochherd der Bauersfrau versteckt hatten” (71). She sees herself as a victim who longs for normalcy and awaits reunion with her husband. The occurrence of relationships between hungry women and occupying soldiers, which is solely motivated by women’s lack of food, is harshly judged by the author. The occupying forces are depicted as greedy and selfish when it comes to food. Her autobiography mentions

⁴² Ursula Pless-Damm, *Weg ins Ungewisse. Tagebuchblätter aus Pommern und Polen* (Essen: Richart Bacht, 1964) 39-40. Hereafter cited as *Weg ins Ungewisse*.

multiple times that the forces steal food from the Germans and rape women brutally on a daily basis: “Gestern abend kamen wieder Russen ins Dorf, die ganz schlimm gehaust haben. Sie haben die Frauen vergewaltigt und blutig geschlagen, das hört doch nicht auf” (108).

While Käthe von Normann’s account harshly criticizes the Soviet occupiers, journalist Ursula von Kardorff tries to offer an objective view of wartime and postwar Berlin. Kardorff worked for a wartime propaganda magazine and distances herself from the articles she had to write. She merely narrates in small entries what is happening in wartime and occupied Berlin in an attempt to portray a balanced and objective account. Kardorff, despite her work at a Nazi newspaper, attempts to portray herself as apolitical. As a member of the upper class, she was able to leave Berlin upon the capital’s immediate occupation. She mentions both rape occurrences by American soldiers in the West and rapes by Soviet soldiers in Berlin. She associates hunger mostly with people from the lower class or Jewish friends, as she manages to provide for herself due to her influential family. Even though Kardorff’s account attempts to be apolitical, the objective claims are exposed as false by Carsten Wurm.⁴³ Upon researching Kardorff’s initial manuscripts, Wurm identifies passages with racial propaganda in reference to the Russian Army.

What Wurm in particular exposes about Kardorff’s work is, in the eyes of literary scholar Angelika Schaser, typical for autobiographies that deal with the immediate postwar period. Schaser claims that the strict denazification processes forced authors to

⁴³ Carsten Wurm, “Die Autobiographik,” *Deutsche Erinnerung. Berliner Beiträge zur Prosa der Nachkriegsjahre (1945-1960)*, ed. Ursula Heukenkamp (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2000) 248. Hereafter cited as “Die Autobiographik.”

change their works as they tried to avoid any consequences for “unacceptable” utterances.⁴⁴ This common measure to portray a politically “clean West” demonstrates that an engagement with autobiographies is a complicated enterprise. Autobiographies may mirror the cultural norms of any given time period and obscure unpopular opinions of the author, or even omit (in the case of rape) experiences altogether. Birgit Dahlke degrades autobiographies as valuable works featuring rape narratives, suggesting they either do not aesthetically engage with a narration of rape or, due to political and societal reasons, silence rape altogether.⁴⁵ What Dahlke overlooks, however, is not that autobiographies themselves obscure stories of women, but that our reading of autobiographies is predominantly targeted towards a historical understanding. In other words, we tend to read autobiographies, in Carsten Wurm’s words, “als ein Medium zur Bewertung der Zeitgeschichte und zur Konstituierung von kollektivem Bewußtsein [...]”⁴⁶ Wurm indicates that our engagement with autobiographies obscures individual stories of women for the benefit of creating a collective understanding of female experiences on the home front. In addition, beyond even the political justifications of authors, autobiographies are always a performative act, a construction of the self,⁴⁷ which can sometimes distort the borders between an autobiography and a literary text. As the aforementioned analyses of the seven autobiographies demonstrate, these works are all highly constructed in the way they use rape and hunger. While the former becomes a form of political resistance, the latter either foregrounds women’s victimization or

⁴⁴ Angelika Schaser and Christiane Eifert, *Erinnerungskartelle – Zur Konstruktion von Autobiographien nach 1945* (Bochum: Winkler 2003) 9. Hereafter cited as *Erinnerungskartelle*.

⁴⁵ Dahlke, “Frau Komm” 295.

⁴⁶ Wurm, “Die Autobiographik” 239.

⁴⁷ Schaser, *Erinnerungskartelle* 10.

“confirms” racial prejudices. However, these texts are all a far cry from what Birgit Dahlke imagines as an aesthetic depiction of rape narratives.

Anonyma, however, constructs a carefully thought-out piece of fictional writing, a text that focuses on the body and offers a usable reference point in its aesthetic construction of the personal experience of rape (and hunger). Many scholars who engage with Anonyma’s work, like Janet Halley, overlook that *Eine Frau in Berlin* is classified as an autobiography, as the work justifies a reading from an “*imagined* point of view.”⁴⁸ Halley believes that literary concerns must have played a crucial role in Anonyma’s writing process, as her initial manuscripts were edited multiple times.⁴⁹ In the following sections of part I, I discuss Anonyma’s investment with the body through the frequently literary depiction of personal experiences of rape and hunger. Moreover, I analyze how Anonyma uses her body in the exchange for food and obliterates men’s power positions as rapists by manipulating the offenders. In addition, *Eine Frau in Berlin* demonstrates how women bond over rape experiences and ridicule their assaulters in sharing their experiences, which is yet another way to disempower men.

⁴⁸ Janet Halley, “Rape in Berlin: Reconsidering the Criminalisation of Rape in the International Law of Armed Conflict,” *Melbourne Journal of International Law* Vol.9 (2005) 22. Hereafter cited as “Rape in Berlin.”

⁴⁹ Halley, “Rape in Berlin” 21.

II. Existing Scholarship and My Reading

In 2003, two years after the death of the autobiography's author Maria Hillers, *Eine Frau in Berlin*⁵⁰ became a powerful symbol for the attempts to break the silence about women's suffering on the home front in Germany after 1945. Mass rapes committed by members of the Red Army now stand at the center of public and scholarly interests. The 2003 edition, which quickly jumped to the top of Germany's bestseller lists, is the second attempt to publicize the work in Germany. The autobiography was first released anonymously in the United States in 1954. Translations followed in England, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, and Japan. Due to its easy marketability in the midst of the Cold War era, the first edition achieved international success. That reception, however, did not find its echo in the Federal Republic. In 1959, the author allowed a publication⁵¹ in German, undertaken by Hans W. Marek, who released her work in Genf and Frankfurt am Main. Journalistic reviews doubted the authenticity of Anonyma's experience and judged the account as a false and lascivious memory of sexual relationships with members of the occupying troops.⁵² Anonyma's writing style, understood as an attack on masculinity, openly invited the public and literary institutions to marginalize the work.

In the first half of this section, I discuss what I identify as the four major streams in contemporary research on the autobiography. First, I expose how mainstream culture

⁵⁰ *Eine Frau in Berlin: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen vom 20. April bis 22. Juni 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: btb, 2005). Hereafter cited parenthetically in text.

⁵¹ This publication was anonymous as well.

⁵² See "Schlechter Dienst an der Berlinerinnen – ein verfälschender Sonderfall," *Der Tagesspiegel* 6 Dec. 1959.

and academic circles justify the autobiography's importance by categorizing it as a historical document. Second, I reconsider the subsequent disputes about the autobiography's authenticity that ultimately led to the revelation of the author's name, Marta Hillers. Third, I show how the autobiography inspires scholars to discuss the thin line between rape and prostitution. Fourth, I lay out literary scholars' attempts to place *Eine Frau in Berlin* into the larger context of rape narratives in German literature after 1945. The second half of this section is dedicated to my reading of *Eine Frau in Berlin*, which engages heavily with the thesis of feminist historian Annette Tröger. In comparison to other scholars and journalists, Tröger reads the autobiography as socio-historical evidence for women's emancipation from traditional patriarchal powers, put forth by the author's decision to break with heterosexual normativity by engaging in sexual relations with members of the occupying troops.

Journalists, historians and publishers ponder over the autobiography's historical significance. Many of them argue that the account illuminates the story of approximately one million women who were raped by members of the Red Army in the greater area of Berlin in 1945. Newspaper reviews in particular sell and propagate *Eine Frau in Berlin* with lurid headlines as *the* story of women's victimization. Titles of book reviews range from "At the very extreme of human suffering,"⁵³ to "Bearing and recording degradation"⁵⁴ to "[...] a shocking account of mass rape during the fall of the German capital."⁵⁵ These headlines made the 2003 edition of *Eine Frau in Berlin* famous, which

⁵³ Nigel Jones, "At the very extreme of human suffering," *The Daily Telegraph* 9 Apr. 2005.

⁵⁴ Edie Meidav, "Bearing and recording degradation," *Chronicle* 7 Aug. 2005.

⁵⁵ Linda Grant, "The Rubble Women," *The Observer* 2 July 2005.

led to the sale of its film rights “for an undisclosed amount.”⁵⁶ Journalists’ reviews justify the contemporary significance of the work by arguing that it fills a historical gap that should necessarily be of interest for the populace: “Only now, it seems, is a new Germany ready to read this searing handbook of this particular journey to hell.”⁵⁷ The *New York Times* proclaims in less dramatic words: “It is one of the most important documents to emerge from World War II.”⁵⁸

For the most part, that is just how *Eine Frau in Berlin* has been approached: As an important document. Erich Kuby is one of the first historians to use the autobiography as an eyewitness account. In his 1965 work *Die Russen in Berlin*, Kuby exposes men as weak and selfish, based on Anonyma’s descriptions of men’s behavior at the Red Army’s arrival in Berlin. Historian Antony Beevor, who wrote the introduction to the 2005 English translation, uses Anonyma’s descriptions of drunken soldiers as evidence for the Soviet Union’s “barracks eroticism” during the 1930s, which, according to Beevor, inevitably caused mass rapes.⁵⁹ Feminist historian Annemarie Tröger, however, employs the autobiography to try to find an explanation for the quick rise and fall of women’s emancipation in the occupation period,⁶⁰ while historian and filmmaker Helke Sander, along with Barbara Johr, use the autobiography to bring the issue of female rape victims

⁵⁶ See Max Fäberbrock production *Eine Frau in Berlin* in 2008.

⁵⁷ Nigel Jones, “At the very extreme of human suffering,” *The Daily Telegraph* 9 Apr. 2005.

⁵⁸ Joseph Kanon, “‘A Woman in Berlin’: My City of Ruins,” *New York Times* 14 Aug. 2005.

⁵⁹ Anthony Beevor, “Introduction,” *A Woman in Berlin* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005) xix.

⁶⁰ A closer investigation of Annemarie Tröger’s article follows section III and IV. See Annemarie Tröger, “Between Rape and Prostitution: Survival Strategies and Chances of Emancipation for Berlin Women after World War II,” *Women in German Culture and Politics: A Century of Change*, ed. Judith Friedlander, Blanche Wiesen Cook, Alice Kessler Harris and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). Hereafter cited as “Between Rape.”

into the public eye. Atina Grossmann, who refers to Sander's and Johr's 1992 documentary film *Befreier and Befreite*, criticizes the film's black and white approach that equates Anonyma and all other rape victims with victims of National Socialism. According to Grossman, we should not forget that it was in fact the downfall of the Third Reich that caused the mass rapes: "It is critical, however, to remember that in the case of mass rape of German women, it was not the Third Reich but rather its collapse (*Zusammenbruch*) that led to women's violation."⁶¹ In other words, Grossman questions debates that obscure women's involvement and benefits under the Nazi regime, which complicates the notion of victim. Again, the aforementioned critical responses have one thing in common: they all categorize the account as a historical document. The writing style seems to underline the autobiography's historical significance, a fact that Christian Esch emphasizes by noting that the account is a "rücksichtslos ehrliche Beschreibung der sexuellen Gewalt."⁶²

While skepticism about its authenticity was first raised in 1959 in order to mitigate the author's harsh critique on German men, it was the publishers' concealment of both the author's identity and the changes made in the original manuscripts that led to heated debates about the truth-value of *Eine Frau in Berlin* after 2003. Eventually, Jens Binsky, co-editor of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, revealed the author's name and a short biography, which made waves in Germany and abroad. Under the headline "Wenn Jungen Weltgeschichte schreiben, haben Mädchen stumme Rollen,"⁶³ Jens Binsky

⁶¹ Grossmann, "A Question of Silence" 49.

⁶² Christian Esch, "Eine belanglose Person?" *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 25 Sept. 2003.

⁶³ Jens Binsky, "Wenn Jungen Weltgeschichte schreiben, haben Mädchen stumme Rollen," *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* 24 Sept. 2003.

revealed that Anonyma's name is Marta Hillers. Hillers (1911-2011) was a journalist during the Third Reich who worked for various Nazi magazines. Binsky declares that she was a small-time propagandist, although never a member of the Nazi party. He bases most of his clues about the author's identity off the account itself: the fact that she spoke various languages, including Russian, and that a Hungarian editor, whom Hillers cooperated with on several projects, is mentioned in the autobiography. In an interview with the *Spiegel*, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who released her work in the Eichborn publishing house, declares Binsky's investigations and revelations distasteful: "Selbst die 'Bild'-Zeitung würde vermutlich das Gesicht einer vergewaltigten Frau unkenntlich machen."⁶⁴ Still, as Binsky and others acknowledge, the name of the author does not demystify the origin of the text. According to Binsky and other journalists, like Christian Esch and Edie Meiday, the text should not be treated as a historical document, since too many questions remain unanswered: "what did she keep, and what did she change?"⁶⁵

In January 2004, the Eichborn publishing house hired the author Walter Kempowski, who analyzed the original manuscripts and compared them to the 1959 first edition. He confirmed that the journal is an authentic document.⁶⁶ Still, Kempowski is unable to give any indication of what kind of changes publishers had made from the first publication in 1954, to the 1959 edition, to the newest 2003 publication. Based upon these ambiguities, Felicitas von Lovenberg's declarations appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* under the headline "Historisches Potenzial verspielt;" the article

⁶⁴ Szene Kultur, Interview with Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Verdeckte Ermittlungen von Schnüfflern," *Der Spiegel*, 29 Sept. 2003.

⁶⁵ Edie Meiday, "Bearing and recording degradation," *Chronicle* 7 Aug. 2005.

⁶⁶ Felicitas von Lovenberg, "Walter Kempowski über das Tagebuch 'Eine Frau in Berlin,'" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Nr. 16 2004.

stated that *Eine Frau in Berlin* does not qualify as a historical text. Lovenberg reiterates the problematic issues once again: “Wie sich der Inhalt der Schulhefte zu dem des Typoskripts verhält: unklar. Worin die Korrekturen zur jetzigen Ausgabe bestehen: unklar.”⁶⁷ The original manuscript is still in the hands of Hans W. Marek’s widow. Even today, the widow remains unwilling to hand out the documents for a professional investigation. Christoph Gottesmann asserts that fiction is a more or less correct term for the autobiography, considering the current insufficient pool of information: “Until a serious and critical edition of the diaries of the ‘woman in Berlin’ is published, this book should be regarded as a work of fiction rather than of fact.”⁶⁸

Literary scholars also raise questions concerning the account’s authenticity. In their debates, we find a more flexible approach to the matter of truth-value. Constanze Jaiser reflects on the limitations of the diary as a genre, which is unable to capture reality. Moreover, the act of writing always expresses an individual’s agenda, an “individueller Bewältigungsversuch.”⁶⁹ Daniela Puplinkhuisen’s reading of the autobiography allows for an interpretation that considers both its fictional and autobiographical elements. She declares *Eine Frau in Berlin* a “‘gattungshybride’ Zwischenposition des Werkes,”⁷⁰ which she defines as a “*literarisiertes Tagebuch*.”⁷¹ Besides genre-specific reflections, literary scholars try to anchor the autobiography in the discourse of rape narratives in

⁶⁷ Ursula März, “Das Prinzip Aussitzen,” *Frankfurter Rundschau* 12 Dec. 2003.

⁶⁸ Christoph Gottesmann, “A Woman in Berlin,” *New York Times* 25 Sept. 2005.

⁶⁹ Constanze Jaiser, “Rezension zu Anonyma,” *H-Soz-u-Kult* 5 Dec. 2003.

⁷⁰ Daniela Puplinkhuisen, “Kleine Fußnote zum Untergang des Abendlandes: Das Zusammenspiel von kollektiver Erinnerung und weiblicher Perspektive in Anonymas *Eine Frau in Berlin*,” *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 155 (2009): 152. Hereafter cited as “Kleine Fußnote.”

⁷¹ Puplinkhuisen, “Kleine Fußnote” 152.

German literature after 1945. Caroline Schaumann argues for the necessity to shed light on rape, expulsion, and hunger from a female perspective. In her article “‘A Different Family Story’: German Wartime Suffering in Women’s Writing,” *Eine Frau in Berlin* serves as a significant breakthrough to pave the way for future publications on women’s experiences. Birgit Dahlke attempts to anchor the autobiography into the larger discourse on rape narratives in East and West German literature and film after 1945.⁷² *Eine Frau in Berlin* appears among many autobiographies in Dahlke’s attempt to establish a discourse and earns her appreciation for Anonyma’s attack on a conservative morality during the occupation period: “Die anonyme Autorin attackierte eine nachträgliche kleinbürgerliche Moral in bezug auf jene Tage, wenn sie erzählte, wie nur die Verabschiedung von den bis dahin gültigen Moralvorstellungen das Überleben sicherte [...]”⁷³

One other area of interest, although not at the center of contemporary debates, concerns Anonyma’s reflection upon her decision to sell her body for food. Does that behavior classify her as a prostitute? Is she still a victim of rape if she chooses the rapist? Janet Halley discusses these questions from a legislative point of view. In her article “Rape in Berlin: Reconsidering the Criminalization of Rape,” published in *The Melbourne Journal of International Law*, Halley focuses on the difficulty in classifying Anonyma’s sexual relationships with members of the occupying troops as rape: “It is a repeated problem [...] that the woman accepts her rapist [...] and her rapes, with

⁷² Dahlke used the second edition. Her discourse “theory” was established in 2000. See Dahlke “Frau Komm.”

⁷³ Dahlke, “Frau Komm” 295.

calmness, almost with complacency.”⁷⁴ Constanze Jaiser also acknowledges that there is no clear-cut terminology for Anonyma’s decision. The borders between rape and prostitution are often, in fact, blurry. Rape and prostitution almost seem to overlap, thus “[...] die Grenzen zwischen Vergewaltigung und Prostitution [...] verwischen.”⁷⁵

My reading of *Eine Frau in Berlin* ties in with the complication of assigning the account to pre-assembled categories.⁷⁶ In the following sections, I demonstrate how Anonyma deconstructs the notions of victim, perpetrator, and heterosexual normativity through the experiences of rape and hunger. While journalists and historians merely acknowledge Anonyma’s fight against hunger, which stands far behind their general interest in rape, section III brings Anonyma’s overall fight for survival to the fore. Anonyma filters her environment through her feelings of hunger, which destroys any sympathy for other individuals and keeps the “food barrier,”⁷⁷ even among women, intact.⁷⁸ In other words, I argue that Anonyma’s fight against starvation breaks with the expectation of women as caretakers. That notion also breaks radically both with depictions of women in literature of the rubble⁷⁹ and historical studies, such as *Wie wir*

⁷⁴ Janet Halley, “Rape in Berlin: Reconsidering the Criminalisation of Rape in the International Law of Armed Conflict,” *Melbourne Journal of International Law* Vol.9 (2005): 22-23. Hereafter cited as “Rape in Berlin.”

⁷⁵ Constanze Jaiser, “Rezension zu Anonyma,” *H-Soz-u-Kult* 5 Dec. 2003.

⁷⁶ See Jaiser, “Rezension zu Anonyma,” *H-Soz-u-Kult* 5 Dec. 2003.

⁷⁷ Tröger, “Between Rape” 101.

⁷⁸ I distance myself from feminist historian Annemarie Tröger’s notion, which identifies a unique space for women to bond through obtaining food: “Any food one managed to plunder, or otherwise get hold of – including that which she gained through sex – belonged to the other.” See Tröger, “Between Rape” 111.

⁷⁹ See part III in the introduction.

das alles geschafft haben, which use autobiographies to illuminate a female view on German history after 1945.

Section III discusses both the connection of rape and hunger, put forth by Anonyma's decision to exchange her body for food, and the author's attempt to put rape into words. The categories of rape and prostitution are blurry in the autobiography, complicated through Anonyma's conscious decision to choose a soldier for sexual relations. I consider all sexual relations with members of the occupying forces in the autobiography as rape and follow Helge Sander's and Barbara Johr's definition of sexual abuse in a time of emergency: "Nach unserem Verständnis wurde eine Frau immer dann vergewaltigt, wenn sie sich in einer Notlage befand, die ausgenutzt wurde."⁸⁰ Section III draws heavily on the thesis by feminist historian Annette Tröger. In her article "Between Rape and Prostitution," Tröger distances herself from the notion of the victim-perpetrator dichotomy, which leaves, according to her, no ground for women's agency and individualism at the end of World War II. Tröger identifies a new space for German women's "sexual and social emancipation."⁸¹ For Tröger, Anonyma achieves the latter by viewing herself merely as a human being concerned with survival, rather than performing her role as a woman. During the act of rape Anonyma consciously distances herself from her body or, in Tröger's words, enacts "the consciously effected separation between her woman's body as an object of masculine dominance and her sense of self."⁸² While Tröger merely filters out key points in the emancipation process, I demonstrate how

⁸⁰ Sander, *Befreier und Befreite* 47.

⁸¹ Tröger, "Between Rape" 98.

⁸² Tröger, "Between Rape" 111.

Anonyma preserves her agency in the process of narrating rape. The augmentation of every description of rape experiences culminates in Anonyma's switch into the third-person narration. The last sections, V, VI, VII, VIII, "Narrating Rape in a Humorous Way," tie in with the analyses of rape and what Anonyma calls the "demystification of men." Anonyma's use of humor in women's discussions of rape have barely attracted the attentions of reviewers and literary scholars, but is a significant tool employed in the autobiography to break with heterosexual gender norms, allow for women to bond, and deconstruct men's power over women.

Two presuppositions guide my reading in Chapter 1: first, positioning the autobiography as a work of fiction, and second, the acknowledgement of the perpetual construction of personal experience. As opposed to what editors, journalist reviewers and historians would have us believe, Anonyma's account is not a loose collection of sentences scribbled into three notebooks, which were after the war merely connected and edited together. My reading of *Eine Frau in Berlin* views the autobiography as very carefully and deliberately constructed.⁸³ In comparison to the existing scholarship that overemphasizes its historical value and declares Anonyma's persona as "belanglos,"⁸⁴ I focus on Anonyma's, or the narrator's, imagination and experiences of rape and hunger. I am in accordance with feminist historian Joan Scott who points to the necessity of allowing difference in analyzing female narratives. In her 1991 article "The Evidence of Experience," Scott criticizes historians for generalizing female stories in order to tell *the history* of all women. Scott appeals for an open reading strategy, a strategy that considers

⁸³ Wurm, "Die Autobiographik" 239.

⁸⁴ C.W. Ceram, "Vorwort," *Eine Frau in Berlin. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen vom 20. April bis 22. Juni 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: btb, 2005).

the individual perspectives and emotions of each writer, but one that also bears in mind that experience is always constructed:

Experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* is in need of interpretation. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, always therefore political. The study of experience, therefore, must call into question its originary status in historical explanation.⁸⁵

It makes sense then to interpret Scott's suggested method as grounds for a nuanced literary analysis of *Eine Frau in Berlin*. According to the story Anonyma tells, we learn that experiences with rape and hunger after Germany's defeat break with the discourse on female suffering that always equates woman with victim. Even though Anonyma breaks with established dichotomies and engages in deconstructing notions of male and female gender roles, it is important to acknowledge that Anonyma never escapes the boundaries of a heteronormative and patriarchal world.

III. Hunger and Food

In an interview conducted to illuminate women's experiences after World War II, an elderly woman says indignantly, "'I mean, after '45 no one thought about confronting the past. Everyone thought about getting something on the stove so they could get their children something to eat.'"⁸⁶ This quote, translated into English by Elizabeth Heineman and taken out of Meyer and Schulze's 1985 study *Wie wir das alles geschafft haben*, forms the basis for Heineman's article "The Hour of the Woman." According to

⁸⁵ Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 17, No. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 69.

⁸⁶ Heineman translated the quote here from the original. See Sibylle Meyer and Eva Schulze, *Wie wir das alles geschafft haben. Alleinstehende Frauen berichten über ihr Leben nach 1945* (München: Beck, 1985) 178.

Heineman, the elderly woman's statement is not indicative of what women actually experienced, but is the response expected and accepted from the war generation: "The older woman, however, does not simply propose a generational history. In casting her generation's understanding of the past, she universalizes on the basis of stereotypically *female* experiences."⁸⁷ In other words, women establish themselves as universal caretakers of the family, a notion that obscures women's individual wartime experiences and goes hand in hand with the Federal Republic's attempt to re-establish the nuclear family during the economic miracle.

Heineman identifies three stories that significantly shape West German national identity: one, women as victims, second, the image of rubble women, and third, women's sexual promiscuity. All of these stories are constructed; they silenced and redirected women's experiences for the benefit of the Federal Republic, as Heineman asserts.⁸⁸ The image of rubble women in particular leads to a whitewashing of women's involvement with the Nazi past and presents women as brave rebuilders of the country, managing to provide for their families during hard times.⁸⁹ Heineman is not interested in discovering essentialist truths in her research about the past; rather, by exposing the construction of experiences, she reveals that there are crucial "counter-memories"⁹⁰ that contribute to a diversified understanding of women's individual histories.

My reading of *Eine Frau in Berlin* likewise questions what Heineman terms "stereotypically female experiences." Through the eyes of the narrator Anonyma, I focus

⁸⁷ Heineman, "The Hour" 354-355.

⁸⁸ Heinemann, "The Hour" 355.

⁸⁹ Heineman, "The Hour" 365.

⁹⁰ Heineman, "The Hour" 355.

on the individual's perception of hunger and food. In the act of writing, the narrator attempts to provide an outlook of her environment impacted by both the feelings of hunger and fullness. The importance of food makes everything else secondary for the narrator, even her relationship with her fiancé.⁹¹ Atina Grossman reflects upon the meaning of food in the context of the Allied occupation in Germany after 1945: "[...] food – its supply, distribution, and, not least, symbolic meaning – had been clearly established as a key political and psychological issue for military and occupation policy."⁹² Grossmann reveals how the occupiers tactically used food for politics, and lured the population to their political side.⁹³ Thus, food, especially in the context of Germany's occupation, is a symbol and a form of power. While Grossman discusses how different groups within (Western) Germany competed for the "good parent,"⁹⁴ Anonyma shows how food divides people from the same group. She demonstrates that hunger is in fact an individual concern; the "food barrier"⁹⁵ always remains intact and necessarily turns all people into competitors. In illuminating this reality, Anonyma deconstructs the notion of women as caretakers, found in other autobiographies⁹⁶, public memory, historical studies, such as the aforementioned *Was wir alles geschafft haben*, and in literature of the rubble. In order to climb the food chain, Anonyma eventually decides to

⁹¹ *Eine Frau in Berlin* stands in direct opposition to Käthe von Normann's or Lina Haag's accounts, in which the well-being of the family and the husband prevail as primary concerns.

⁹² Grossmann, "Grams, Calories" 118.

⁹³ Grossman, "Grams, Calories" 126.

⁹⁴ Grossmann, "Grams, Calories" 126.

⁹⁵ Tröger, "Between Rape" 111.

⁹⁶ We are able to see these concerns in Käthe von Normann's and Ursula Pless-Damm's accounts in Section I. See also Meyer, *Wie wir das alles geschafft haben*.

exchange her body for food⁹⁷, because for her, “Brot is absolut” (13). This section specifically focuses on Anonyma’s attempt to write through the lens of a hungry female narrator, the differences between German men and women in obtaining food, and a female perception of the “well-fed” occupying soldiers.

Hunger and the search for something to eat are central experiences through which Anonyma carefully frames her work. In the beginning of the work, she writes, “Mein Zentrum ist, während ich dies schreibe, der Bauch. Alles Denken, Fühlen, Hoffen beginnt beim Essen” (11). One of the last sentences of the available text emphasizes this urgency yet again. Discussing her dedication to her next meal, Anonyma notes that her instinctual survival mechanism exists without sense and reason: “Ich weiß nur, daß ich überleben will – ganz gegen Sinn und Verstand, einfach wie ein Tier” (277) The author attempts to convey a perception of her environment caused by her body, or more specifically the empty stomach. Anonyma offers a unique focus here in her autobiography: a narrator who operates on her body’s sensations, which puts her in stark contrast with other autobiographies written alongside her account. Anonyma does not hide her subjective focus, but rather uses the impact of the body as strength for the process of writing. That specific perspective is used to construct immediacy and thus, authenticity.

The search for food determines and structures her life before the Red Army approaches Berlin and after the occupiers’ temporal disappearance. In the private sphere of her top floor apartment, Anonyma suffers from the most severe repercussions of hunger. She describes her private “Hungerdasein,” as she terms it, with the following words:

⁹⁷ See section IV.

Heute fing mein selbständiges Hungerdasein in der Dachwohnung an [...]. Für den Abend ist nichts Rechtes da außer Brennesseln. Das macht einen so matt. Jetzt, wo ich dies schreibe, hab ich ein Gefühl, als sei mein Kopf ein Luftballon, der gleich davonfliegen könnte. Und bücke ich mich, so wird mir schwindlig. Der Übergang ist zu kraß. Trotzdem freue ich mich, daß ich die paar fetten Wochen hatte. Davon bleibt mir Kraft. (247)

In this passage, she contrasts her meager meals in the top floor apartment with the “fat weeks” during the early weeks of occupation. While back then she gained strength from the soldiers’ food supplies, her body is now weak. Anonyma reveals that she indeed enjoyed the weeks in the widow’s place due to the access to food, and excludes the sexual abuse and constant fear from her memory. This exclusion indicates that food is her first priority, the actual cause for happiness and suffering. Uncontrollable hunger attacks place her on the verge of starvation when she has to provide for herself: “Das Brot muß ich vor mir selbst bewachen. Bin schon um 100 Gramm auf die morgige Ration voraus, darf solche Vorgriffe nicht einreißen lassen” (267). Her personal sensation of hunger manifests itself in a food obsession that she can barely control: “Theoretisch bin ich so satt wie lange nicht. Praktisch quält mich tierischer Hunger. Vom Essen bin ich erst richtig hungrig geworden” (12). Her hunger affects her when she is trying to relax, when she experiences fear, even when she is feeling stuffed. The reader takes part in her uncontrollable food loathing, the fear of having her food stolen, and the urge to scratch an imaginary meal out of a piece of fiction: “[...] ertappte mich dabei, wie ich mit den Nägeln über die Buchstaben kratzte, als könnte ich die unberührte Mahlzeit [...] aus dem Schmöker herauskratzen” (12). Anonyma compares her “Hungerwahnsinn” to the I-narrator in Knut Hamsun’s autobiographical text *Hunger*, written in 1890. This intertextual reference rarely receives any notice in the existing scholarship on *Eine Frau in Berlin*. Daniela Puplinkhuisen, however, suggests that the mention of *Hunger* is not

only of thematic nature, but that the intertextual reference carefully constructs Anonyma's superiority in handling the numbing feeling of hunger more professionally than the male narrator in Hamsun's work.⁹⁸ In contrast to her anonymous male counterpart, Anonyma structures her thoughts and does not appear completely helpless due to her daily fight for survival: "Erstens gelingt es ihr nämlich wohl, Wahnsinn, Verzweiflung, Schwermütigkeit und Scham in eine positive Richtung zu kanalisieren, sodass sich für sie die psychische Belastung unterm Strich in Grenzen halt. Zweitens ist sie stets darum bemüht, sich in Momenten der Selbstbesinnung in komprimierter Form die wichtigsten Ereignisse zu vergegenwärtigen."⁹⁹ Moreover, due to his immense hunger, Hamsun's narrator loses his sense of reality, engages in odd conversations with random people, and publicly exposes his anger. His chaotic state of mind is underlined by the stream of consciousness narration. Anonyma remains fairly lucid and willing to sacrifice the well-being of her body, which eventually helps her to climb the food chain.

Anonyma carries her personal experience of hunger over to her perception of the environment. With the words, "homo homini lupus," Anonyma asserts that she, like everybody else, would do anything for food: "Das Wölfische im hungernden Menschen überwiegt. Ich warte auf den Augenblick, wo ich zum ersten Mal im Leben einem Schwächeren sein Stück Brot aus der Hand reißen werde" (208). The instinctual fight for survival feeds Anonyma's fantasy. When a bomb falls next to the butcher's shop, Anonyma portrays the surrounding women's greed in vivid descriptions: "Trotzdem muß ich staunen. Mit etlichen Rindervierteln und Schweinshacken vor Augen halt auch die wackligste Großmutter stand" (35). The promise of food alleviates the fear of a bomb

⁹⁸ Puplinkhuisen, "Kleine Fußnote" 159.

⁹⁹ Puplinkhuisen, "Kleine Fußnote" 160.

attack and activates even in the fragile elderly an “astonishing” discipline. Anonyma uses these images to delineate an inhumane world, in which the fear of hunger changes civilized people. It is an atmosphere that has impacted her entire environment:

“Allerorten spürt man die Angst ums Brot [...]” (263). Everyone thinks of themselves and people do not intend to share their food: “Sonst verkramt und verbirgt ein jeder das Seine und denkt gar nicht ans Weggeben” (36). The brutality and coldness that occurs when people are able to attain meat is exemplified by the public butchering of a horse: “Ein jeder schnitt und wühlte, wo er gerade angefangen hatte” (178). Scuffling and cutting stands in direct opposition to civilized manners. The population views the animal as prey and behaves like wild carnivores. In addition, people plunder empty apartments in the search for food: “Auch wir betrachten die verlassenen Wohnungen als vogelfrei, nehmen uns daraus, was wir brauchen, betreiben Mundraub” (135). “Mundraub” here suggests a justified way to obtain food in a time of hunger. Still, this justification appears ironic in Anonyma’s overall descriptions of greed, brutality, and selfishness.

A distinct gendered perception in obtaining food is clearly constructed in the autobiography. Anonyma frequently emphasizes the strength of women in comparison to men: “Die Wurst steht zur Zeit im Vordergrund dieser Hirne und verstellt ihnen perspektivisch die großen, doch fernen Dinge” (41). She grants women practical intelligence and the immediate understanding that a strong food supply is the highest good in the time of occupation. While women develop their own space for bonding through the collective experience of rape, food or the imagination of an individual woman’s advantageous supply situation draws a sharp line between the characters. When members of the Red Army openly display their attraction to overweight women and

attempt to catch them as war booty, Anonyma does not sympathize with the terrified women: “Die Likörfabrikantin freilich hat keine Not gelitten. Sie hat den ganzen Krieg hindurch was zum Tauschen gehabt. Nun muß sie ihr ungerechtes Fett bezahlen” (59). Being stuffed, or possessing the mere resemblance to a well-fed appearance, is a privilege. Anonyma reveals her disapproval about the women’s “fat” body and suggests that she gained the weight undeservedly. Moreover, she presents the threat of rape as a rightful punishment for obese women. Anonyma displays the same vengeful reaction when she coolly comments on the baker’s wife’s well-nourished appearance: “Diesmal wollen sie die Bäckerin, die es ebenfalls fertiggebracht hat, etliches Körperfett über die Kriegsjahre hinwegzuretten” (60).

The widow, who shares her apartment with Anonyma during the early weeks of occupation, also receives harsh critique when it comes to food. It is not the widow’s body that stands at the center of Anonyma’s attention, but the widow’s obsessive behavior once she fears the end of provisions: “Mit den Händen schaufelt sie verschüttetes Mehl vom Boden, stäubt es lose in den Koffer hinein, wie von Sinnen” (89). The widow almost functions as Anonyma’s bad conscience that guards and controls the narrator’s food consumption: “Hab soeben eine Pfanne voll Speckgrieben vertilgt, streich mir die Butter fingerdick, während die Witwe finstere Prophezeiungen auf mich häuft” (143). In general, the widow’s worries prevail over food, her personal food supply specifically: “Die Witwe war gleich wieder daseinsängstlich, sie unkte was von schwindender Butter, und daß es gut wäre, wenn der Major recht bald neue Vorräte brächte” (169). Anonyma describes the widow as weak and fearful, almost despicable. Eventually, due to her

overwhelming fear of hunger, the widow is partially responsible for throwing Anonyma out of the shared apartment.

Women's competition or malevolence toward each other over the issue of food is one aspect of the fight for survival. When German men take part in the competition, Anonyma asserts that their behavior is more brutal and happens at the expense of women. Twice in the autobiography men claim Anonyma's food. The first incident happens when Anonyma and other women plunder an abandoned building. A man yells at the narrator and steps on her finger when she is trying to get ahold of a can: "Im Dunkeln bekomme ich eine Konservenbüchse zu fassen, da tritt mir einer auf die Finger, und eine Männerstimme schreit: 'Das sind meine Sachen!'" (46). This passage exemplifies the power structures between men and women. The man is solely identifiable by his voice, which orders the disorientated woman to let go of the items. The authority of the voice is augmented by the physical force, which causes Anonyma's immediate withdrawal. Moreover, the man claims the items as his possessions, even though he, like all other people in the building, is a scavenger. This unjustified entitlement is also characteristic of Pauli, the second German man who endangers Anonyma's food supply. After the occupying soldiers leave Berlin, Anonyma becomes a burden for Pauli (and the widow), since she is unable to contribute food through sexual relations with the occupation soldiers. When she asks for a second plate of soup, the widow and Pauli seem to make a silent agreement about no longer accommodating her: "Sie spinnt bange Zukunftsgedanken, sieht uns alle verhungern, wechselte einen Blick mit Herrn Pauli, als ich um einen zweiten Teller Erbsensuppe bat" (173). Anonyma assesses that Pauli is indeed the driving force in the decision to throw her out: "Herr Pauli hat der Witwe

angesichts des beinah geleerten Kartoffelkorbes den längst fälligen Krach gemacht und gefordert, daß man mich nicht länger hier mitessen und mitwohnen lassen solle” (243).

This quote also exemplifies the rebirth of patriarchal power structures. Pauli, who lives off the women during the first weeks of occupation, had to subordinate himself to the will of the occupying forces. Now that the Allies are (temporarily) gone, he claims a power position in the apartment, even though the widow is technically the head of the household.

During the early occupation period in particular, the destiny of the Germans was determined by the Red Army: “Die geben uns nichts. Die haben schon ausgemacht, daß die Deutschen erst mal acht Wochen hunger sollen” (12). Hunger here is clearly understood as a means to put pressure on the population and display the Allies’ power. The female characters draw a sharp line between the occupation soldiers and German men. The latter have lost their value in a time of hunger: “Bei dem knappen Futter ist so ein armer Ehemann natürlich nicht viel wert. Meiner kriegt schon Komplexe und bildet sich ein, daß die Rote Armee mit ihrer Draufgängerei tatsächlich bei uns Frauen Chancen hätte” (221). Men suffer from inferiority complexes because they are equally aware that their position of power has faded in the eyes of women.

The first encounter with Red Army soldiers exemplifies their strength through Anonyma’s description of their confident and well-fed appearance: “Zum ersten Mal erkennen wir Typen, Gesichter: pralle Breitschädel, kurzgeschoren, wohlgenährt, unbekümmert” (54). In contrast to the soldiers’ confidence, Germans act terrified and submissive: “Herzklopfen, Ängstliche halten ihm ihren gefüllten Suppenteller hin. Er schüttelt den Kopf und lächelt, immer noch stumm” (55). This first interaction between

the Germans and the Red Army happens over food. The Red Army's position of power is underlined by the soldier's refusal of the German's food. The text parallels the adjective "unbekümmert" with "ängstlich," which become characteristic descriptions of occupiers and Germans respectively, especially during the early weeks of the invasion.

Access to food means power. As Anonyma asserts, the soldiers express that power in different ways. Petka, for example, celebrates his give-aways in an almost child-like fashion, and expects Anonyma, the widow, and Herr Pauli to play along:

Die Witwe und ich [...] müssen uns mit an den Tisch setzen, müssen mit den Burschen trinken. Petka legt vor jeden von und seine Scheibe dunklen, feuchten Brotes auf die Tischplatte, zerteilt dann kurzerhand auf dem polierten Mahagoni die Heringe und drückt uns mit dem Daumen Stücke davon aufs Brot, wobei er uns anstrahlt, als sei dies eine ganz besondere Gunst und Delikatesse. (75)

The passage emphasizes that German women and men have to obey the soldier and must sit down. It is not a friendly demand, but rather an order. The food is "feucht," and the soldier disregards civilized table manners by using his bare fingers in preparing the food. The widow's table, the "polierter Mahagoni," suggests the Germans belong to a higher culture than the soldier, which is obviously not understood or acknowledged by Petka. His grin when offering the food makes him appear naïve und uneducated. Anonyma's ironic comment, labeling the soldier's food as a special "Delikatesse," demonstrates that Anonyma, the widow and Pauli are in fact used to finer meals. Moreover they, unlike the soldier, are very well aware of the fact that they belong to a more sophisticated culture. Here, the symbolic meaning of food stands at the center of the scene. It signifies the differences between the two cultures. The ironic undertone through which Anonyma, as the female narrator, imagines this episode, establishes her, even though dependent on the occupier's food supply, as the better educated party. The female narrator reveals that she

is able to comprehend the man's culture through the simple act of offering food, while the man remains ignorant and unaware of the Germans' cultural codes.

As time under occupation advances, women begin to measure the value of the soldiers by the quantity and quality of products they are able to provide. The behavior of the widow demonstrates that women's close relations to the Allied soldiers entitle them to treat individuals with varying levels of respect, according to that individual's potential food contribution: "Die Witwe begrüßte ihn freundlich, doch gemäßigt" (138). In other words, women can afford to treat soldiers, like Anatol, with less respect than higher ranked officers. Anonyma explains the widow's behavior: "Sie sieht die Dinge vom Küchenschrank her und zieht den Major vor, der auf den Schrankborden einen ganz anderen Niederschlag hinterläßt" (138).

The occupiers provide an overabundance of food, which gives the narrator the much-needed feeling of fullness. The happiness about the food situation after the occupiers arrive is repeated quite frequently: "Mittagessen. Noch haben wir alles reichlich. Im Vergleich zu den mageren Mahlzeiten meiner einsamen Wirtschaft oben in der Dachwohnung führe ich jetzt ein fettes Leben. Keine Brennesseln mehr, dafür Fleisch, Speck, Butter, Erbsen, Zwiebeln, Gemüsekonserven" (96). This emphasizes yet again that Anonyma prefers the current situation to her time alone in the top floor apartment, even if she is now reduced to the soldiers' "prey."

At the end of the autobiography, Anonyma suffers again from hunger, which makes her quarrel with her fiancé a secondary issue. "Manchmal wundere ich mich darüber, daß ich nicht starker leide unter dem Zewürfnis mit Gerd, der mir doch sonst alles war. Mag sein, daß der Hunger die Gefühle dämpft" (277). On a symbolic level,

hunger has reached its peak. Hunger is able to destroy a whole culture built upon heteronormative values. The urge to concentrate on romantic heterosexual relationships are destroyed by hunger. The last sentence exemplifies the idea that the fight against starvation is indeed an individual quest: “Ich muß herumlaufen und Grünzweig auf den Straßenrändern suchen, muß anstehen nach Grütze. Ich habe keine Zeit für ein Seelenleben” (277).

IV. Anonyma’s Narration of Rape Experiences

The anonymous author sees the power of the occupying troops in their access to food, which strictly divides well-fed Red Army soldiers from the starving Berlin population. While hunger is an overall concern, women, in contradistinction to men, have to fight against yet another form of danger: the danger of becoming victims of rape.¹⁰⁰ In *Eine Frau in Berlin*, however, the notion of the victim-perpetrator dichotomy that rape almost always postulates is deconstructed. After a series of arbitrary rapes, Anonyma slowly but surely develops, in particular through the “affair” with a Russian major, an elevated status among Berlin women and men (as well as lower ranked members of the Red Army). Due to that connection, she both protects herself from arbitrary rape and gains access to an overabundance of food supplies.

In general, the participation of women in the exchange economy of trading their bodies for food alters the rules of the chaotic early weeks of occupation. Women play a dictatorial role in the relations with soldiers who “obey” the new procedures of gaining

¹⁰⁰ The author acknowledges that while German men were endangered as representatives of the former Nazi Military State, women became victims of rape.

access to women's bodies: "Tja, mit dem wilden Drauflosschänden der ersten Tage ist es nichts mehr. Die Beute ist knapp geworden [...]. Allgemein versucht jeder, der nicht schon zum Abmarsch bereitsteht, etwas Festes, ihm Gehöriges zu finden, und ist bereit, dafür zu zahlen. Daß es bei uns mit dem Essen elend bestellt ist, haben sie begriffen" (127). For Anonyma and other female characters, the fight against starvation makes everything else secondary. If sexual abuse guarantees survival, women are able to tolerate their temporary position as Red Army prey. In other words, women's active participation in shaping a society in the midst of occupation slowly abolishes heteronormative behavior: married or engaged women publicly "fraternize" with members of the enemy army; they refuse to behave as "stereotypical" victims of rape who are expected to feel ashamed and remain silent about their experiences.¹⁰¹ Anonyma demonstrates that in the chaotic early weeks of occupation, German men have nothing to offer. The most valuable exchange good, the female body, becomes an instrument of power, a means to arrive at the top of the food chain. The decision of choosing a rapist, as presented in *Eine Frau in Berlin*, has raised fundamental questions among scholars as to whether to read women's behavior as rape or prostitution.¹⁰² Annette Tröger illuminates the problematic nature of defining women's behavior as either rape or prostitution and points to the severity of women's decisions. Even though Tröger uses the term prostitution for choosing a rapist, she makes clear that this option allows women to preserve some agency: "The conditions under which prostitution becomes necessary at all dictate a dangerous contradiction: to

¹⁰¹ This reading, however, is complicated, as Halley suggests: "For one thing, we might bring some skepticism to feminist representations that carry forward the 'worse than death' figuration of rape." Halley, "Rape in Berlin" 36.

¹⁰² See section II.

avoid being the *unwilling* prey of many men, or in order to survive, I offer my body ‘*of my own free will*’ to one man as a sexual *object*.”¹⁰³

This section focuses both on the narration of personal rape experiences and Anonyma’s continuous rise to the top of the food chain. Anonyma’s specific method of putting rape into language illuminates the problems in pigeonholing women into the category of victim, which, by definition, renders women helpless, disempowered and passive.¹⁰⁴ Despite Anonyma’s deconstruction of that notion, it would be problematic to anchor Anonyma’s account outside of heteronormative societal structures. Anonyma’s writing cannot escape the limitations of gender dichotomies, even if she turns them on their head. As feminist scholar Nancy Armstrong rightfully argues, “[...] there is no way to position ourselves outside of an ongoing struggle among viewpoints.”¹⁰⁵ Armstrong supports Laura de Lauretis’ thesis that “violence is en-gendered in representation.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, the object of representation remains always female and degrades women in comparison to men, no matter how humane or liberal a text might appear. Even though Anonyma deconstructs a victim-perpetrator dichotomy, she uses essentialist gender distinctions that mark women as passive and men as active, especially in her descriptions of arbitrary rape. With that in mind, we have to value Anonyma’s narration of rape,

¹⁰³ Tröger, “Between Rape” 113.

¹⁰⁴ Joanna Bourke emphasizes that neither the category victim nor perpetrator can be defined clearly (see introduction section III). I am referring here to victim as a popular pre-conceived notion of how women were forced to react when they were raped.

¹⁰⁵ Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, “Representing Violence, or ‘How the West Was Won,’” *The Violence of Representation – Literature and the History of Violence*, eds. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (Routledge: New York, 1989) 25.

¹⁰⁶ Laura de Lauretis, “The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations on Representation and Gender,” *The Violence of Representation – Literature and the History of Violence*, eds. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (Routledge: New York 1989) 240.

despite its limitations, as a unique attempt to question traditional parameters with regards to the early weeks of occupation. The more Anonyma gains control of and power through her role as Red Army war booty, the more we are able to detect forms of resistance in her narration of rape. We recognize a development from the passive and silent female victim to the woman who forcefully resists the overpowering male. Resistance in Anonyma's narration of rape does not mean that she manages to escape sexual abuse, but that Anonyma learns to strategize within the boundaries of rape. In other words, as a supposedly surrendered victim, Anonyma finds spaces of resistance.

To write about one's rape means to gain back power. Anonyma displays that power and evolves from a silent victim to an outspoken woman who strategizes and negotiates her relationships with the occupying soldiers on a daily basis. For Anonyma, writing is a process of self-extension that mitigates the pain of rape by transforming it into words. As Elaine Scarry puts forth in *The Body in Pain*: "[...] to bring pain into the world by objectifying it in language" means "the pain is objectified, articulated, brought into the world in such a way that the pain itself is diminished and destroyed[...]"¹⁰⁷ Even though Elaine Scarry focuses on the meaning of torture, we are able to recognize structural similarities between torture and rape, and the victims' perceptions of bodily suffering.¹⁰⁸ Scarry's observations concerning the victim's changing relation to his¹⁰⁹ body are of particular interest for my reading of Anonyma. The body of the victim

¹⁰⁷ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 51. Hereafter cited as *The Body in Pain*.

¹⁰⁸ Birgit Dahlke suggests that there are structural parallels between torture and rape. Dahlke, "Frau Komm" 295.

¹⁰⁹ I use the male personal pronoun here in order to create a clear distinction between the victim of rape and the victim of torture.

becomes an obstacle in the victim's process to free himself from the pain inflicted on him by the enemy regime. In other words, the body is made responsible for the victim's suffering: "[...] fleeing from its own body as though it were a part of the environment that could be left behind."¹¹⁰ I identify Anonyma's fantasies of distancing herself from her body as key moments in her narration of rape experiences. This split of body from mind helps Anonyma, like Scarry's torture victim, to push the abuse outside herself. The rejection allows Anonyma to survive under extreme circumstances that dominate the postwar rape culture. The rejection of the body, in its most severe form, is indicated by the switch from the first to the third-person narration. Feminist historian Annette Tröger is one of the few scholars to identify that process in Anonyma's narration of rape as a crucial moment for women's emancipation in postwar Germany. Tröger remarks that Anonyma's distance "[...] is the consciously effected separation between her woman's body as an object of masculine dominance and her sense of self."¹¹¹

Anonyma narrates her first experiences of rape in a way that suggests her hesitation to put rape into language, displayed by abruptly ended sentences, and the use of hyphens or dots, which serve as replacements for descriptions of the act of sexual abuse. The narration depicts female bodies as inanimate puppets that show no resistance when being physically attacked by men. Men's violent behavior is emphasized by the focus on their strong hands and fists, which are used to make women amenable. One of the first instances when a woman is attacked by members of the Red Army mirrors the distinction between female passivity and male activity. Berlin men and women bear witness when two soldiers publicly molest a woman. The soldiers' power is openly

¹¹⁰ Scarry, *The Body in Pain* 47.

¹¹¹ Tröger, "Between Rape" 111.

displayed by both attacking *one* woman while the whole basement community watches the woman's public humiliation: "Mal zerrt der eine Arm der im Liegestuhl daliegenden Frau, mal stößt der andere sie, die hochwill, wieder auf den Sitz zurück. Es ist, als sei sie eine Puppe, ein Ding" (60). The bodily postures – the woman lying and the two men standing – suggest the oppression of the female. Her efforts to get up are abruptly and violently ended by the men who force her down to the recumbent and therefore surrendered posture, over and over again. She neither asks for help from the other members in the basement nor attempts to resist men's power by fighting back with words. The only instinct she shows is fleeing from the situation. The men's actions make her appear inanimate, as her movements seem like a mere reaction to the force the men put on her body. She remains passive while her body is under complete male control.

The dynamic of two men against one woman is maintained when Anonyma becomes a victim of rape for the first time. This scene serves as an augmentation of the former scene in the basement, using similar narrative strategies to render the woman helpless and establish men's power position. However, we see slight attempts by Anonyma to resist, expressed by her screams when the rapist lures her into a dark corner outside of the room where the basement community waits: "Ich schreie, schreie...Hinter mir klappt dumpf die Kellertür zu" (62). In comparison to the other woman, Anonyma's initial reaction is an active cry for help. Her screams attempt to reach the attention of the other men and women. However, the basement community denies her any help. While they merely choose to remain silent when the aforementioned woman is attacked in their midst, in this passage they deliberately shut the door. That harsh reaction enables the dynamic of one woman surrendered to two men and indicates that the Berlin population

accepts and even contributes to the Red Army power position. Anonyma describes her rape experience as follows:

Oben am Türspalt, durch den etwas Licht fällt, hält der eine Mann Wache, während der andere an meinem Unterzeug reißt, sich gewaltsam den Weg sucht – Ich taste mit der Linken am Boden herum, bis ich endlich den Schlüsselbund wieder finde. Fest umklammere ich ihn mit den Fingern der Linken. Mit der Rechten wehre ich mich, es hilft nichts, den Strumpfhalter hat er einfach durchgerissen. Als ich taumelnd hochzukommen versuche, wirft sich der zweite über mich, zwingt mich mit Fäusten und Knien an den Boden zurück. Nun steht der andere Schmiere, er flüstert: ‚Schnell, schnell.‘ (62)

The rapists show a strong companionship and support each other in abusing the woman.

The female stands alone. The little light illuminates her attackers, which makes her surrendered position even clearer. The brutality of the act is displayed and repeated through the verbs “reissen,” “zwingen,” and the noun “Fäuste.” There is no indication of how the men look, only how they use their body parts to overwhelm the woman.

Anonyma does not talk about the act itself. The three dots serve as placeholders for her experience. Even though she receives no help in response to her screams, she does not give in to the situation. She is trying to fight back with her key. Her attempt remains unsuccessful, but the confidence of the two men seems to fade, especially if we parallel this scene with the attack of the aforementioned woman among the other members in the basement. While the two men molest the former woman publicly and enjoy the endless repetition of displaying their power by pushing her around, here they seem under pressure and even fear an interruption from outside. In addition, Anonyma’s screams are paralleled with the man’s whispers, which, at least on an auditory level, mitigates the man’s power position in comparison to the woman.

In the next narration of rape, Anonyma becomes even more vocal. While in the earlier scene she screamed for help, now she tries to negotiate the sexual abuse:

“Riesenpratzen, Schnapsdunst. Mein Herz hüpfte wie verrückt. Ich flüstere, ich flehe: ‚Nur einer, bitte, bitte, nur einer. Meinetwegen Sie. Aber schmeißen Sie die anderen raus’”

(66). The rapist’s overpowering bodily features are emphasized by his enormous hands. The danger of his bodily strength is augmented by a sense of unpredictability due to his smell of alcohol. The text demonstrates the immediate danger of the situation by the anacoluthons, which mirror Anonyma’s fragmented train of thoughts and demand a quick reaction by the woman. Anonyma knows that she is inevitably going to get raped, but she realizes that she might be able to negotiate the number of rapists. Even though her wish marks her weak position, the negotiation itself is a sign of agency. The actual experience of rape, however, is a passive surrender: “Mir ist taumelig, ich bin nur noch halb da, und diese Hälfte wehrt sich nicht mehr, sie fällt gegen den harten, nach Kernseife riechenden Leib. Endlich Ruhe, Dunkelheit, Schlaf” (67). The man is described not as a fully aware human being, but only as a bodily force. Darkness and sleep are the only ways for Anonyma to escape reality. Here, we see the beginnings of a split of body and mind, indicating that only one half of the person, the body, is abused. That body, that other half, feels repulsive to her.¹¹² This time, the body that “is no longer resisting” any more is made responsible for the act. A little later, the act of blaming the body manifests again through Anonyma’s feeling of disgust toward her own skin: “Mir ist so klebrig, ich mag gar nichts mehr anfassen, mag die eigene Haut nicht anrühren” (70). This desire to avoid touch becomes a way of distancing mind from the body. Her daydream in particular expresses her imagined split of body from mind: “Mein Ich läßt den Leib, den armen, verdreckten, mißbrauchten, einfach liegen. Es soll nicht mein ‘Ich’ sein, dem dies

¹¹² This underlines yet again that it is not the loud utterance that allows for the split of body from mind, but that the process happens beforehand.

geschieht. Ich schiebe all das aus mir hinaus. Ob ich wohl spinne? Aber mein Kopf faßt sich in diesem Moment kühl an, die Hände sind bleiern und ruhig” (70-71). The dream is full of metaphors that express distance and an escape from the unwanted situation. Anonyma protects her mind (herself) by sacrificing the body, which is imagined as spoiled and dirty.

The process of writing rape down and saying rape aloud is a crucial step for Anonyma’s process of self-extension. She is coming to terms with the situation. Sexual abuse becomes more comprehensible, even bearable by saying it loud and writing it down: “Was heißt Schändung? Als ich das Wort zum ersten Mal laut aussprach, Freitag abend im Keller, lief es mir eisig den Rücken herunter. Jetzt kann ich es schon denken, schon hinschreiben mit kalter Hand, ich spreche es vor mich hin, um mich an die Laute zu gewöhnen. Es klingt wie das Letzte und Äußerste, ist es aber nicht” (72). She distances herself from the rape and surrenders only her body to the abuse. The adjectives “eisig” and “kalt” are the adjectives she uses when reflecting on rape. They indicate indifference, and thus a conscious distancing from the abuse.

Anonyma’s last rape experience as unprotected “prey,” that is, before she decides to actively choose a rapist, manifests itself as the most detailed and graphic description of rape in the account: “Kein Laut. Bloß als das Unterzeug krachend zerreißt, knirschen unwillkürlich die Zähne. Die letzten heißen Sachen” (73). Other than the involuntary grinding of her teeth, Anonyma chooses to remain silent. Anonyma refers to the grinding as a response to the rapist’s destruction of her last untorn pieces of clothes. Thus, the narration implies that rape is less harmful to the woman than losing clothing. In the next episode, Anonyma once more breaks with the reader’s expectations of her reaction to

rape. Again, the rapist's bodily features, especially fingers, are emphasized, appearing as instruments that invade the woman:

Auf einmal Finger an meinem Mund, Gestank von Gaul und Tabak. Ich reiße die Augen auf. Geschickt klemmen die fremden Hände mir die Kiefer auseinander. Aug in Auge. Dann läßt der über mir aus seinem Mund bedächtig den angesammelten Speichel in meinen Mund fallen. Erstarrung. Nicht Ekel, bloß Kälte. Das Rückrat gefriert, eisige Schwindel kreisen um den Hinterkopf. Ich fühle mich gleiten und fallen, tief, durch die Kissen und die Dielen hindurch. In den Boden versinken – so ist es also. (73)

In contradiction to the other rape scenes, this experience displays a drastic physical closeness between the rapist and the woman, expressed by the look into each other's eyes. Again, the facial expressions of the man do not receive any attention in the narrative. Anonyma perceives his presence through his overwhelming smell, which extends his persona beyond his body. As in the earlier scene, one emphasis lies on his hands, which are used like instruments. These descriptions serve as further distancing from the act, since the rapist's hands are portrayed as less than human. When he opens her mouth and spits into it, Anonyma emphasizes that she does not feel disgust but coldness. While disgust implies a sensitive reaction and rejection of a certain behavior or smell, a reaction that is to some extent beyond someone's control, coldness implies a learned reaction, the conscious decision not to feel. The narration builds this notion on Anonyma's aforementioned description of rape, which causes the feelings of coldness in her. The split of body from mind achieves a more defined description here in comparison to her aforementioned discussion of the meaning of rape. Disgust is a bodily reaction, while coldness is driven by the mind. Even though Anonyma indicates that the situation renders her out of control through the metaphor of falling, the text ends abruptly through

a hyphen¹¹³ and blocks any of her thoughts that might surrender her even further. The hyphen indicates the process of leaving the experience and going back to reality, which allows her to see that rape has not yet destroyed her.

This most graphic and humiliating experience of rape becomes the catalyst for Anonyma's decision to actively choose her rapist in order to stop the danger of arbitrary rape. The strength of her intent is indicated through the loud utterance: "Sagte dann laut: Verdammt! Und faßte einen Entschluß. Ganz klar: Hier muß ein Wolf her, der mir die Wölfe vom Leib halt. Offizier, so hoch es geht, Kommandant, General, was ich kriegen kann" (74). This intent reflects positively on her bodily condition as well: "Fühlte mich körperlich wieder besser, nun, da ich etwas tat, plante und wollte, nicht mehr nur stumme Beute war" (74). After engaging with the Ukrainian soldier Anatol, Anonyma's status in the early postwar society skyrockets. She is protected for the most part from arbitrary rape. In addition, the women enjoy an overabundance of food, provided by the rapists. Anonyma's "safe" position, however, is only temporary. Upon close contact with the occupying troops, along with her steadily improving language skills, Anonyma realizes quickly that the Ukrainian Anatol is unable and unwilling to protect her: "Mir wird etwas bange für mein Tabu. Die uns vertraute preußisch-militärische Rangordnung gilt hier offenbar nicht" (80).

Still, rape committed by Anatol and a soldier who enters Anonyma's household one night are different in the perspective of the narrator from earlier attempts at rape. The woman, still aware of her victimized status, again distances herself from a graphic narration of rape. Once more there are dots, sentence fragments and the notion of being a puppet, but this time the numbness during the abuse is foregrounded. She imagines

¹¹³ See the original German text.

herself without any feelings and gains power over the situation due to her lack of involvement. The rapist's power is decreased because she demonstrates that she is able to look through him. She gains control, through her role as narrator, of the portrayal of the rape, at times acting as if the rapist is being childish, or even friendly. When paralleled to the prior experiences of rape, these instances seem to deprive rape of much of its power: "Freundlich, zutunlich, kindlich...Aber Mai geboren, Stier, Stier...Ich glaube eine fühllose Puppe zu sein, geschüttelt, herumgeschoben, ein Ding aus Holz..." (81). Instead of continuing to compare Anatol to a child, Anonyma uses the word "bull" for his behavior and complicates the supposed innocence of the man. In addition, Anonyma realizes quickly that Anatol is unreliable and does not guarantee her protection from arbitrary rape. He remains absent for many nights. Thus, Anonyma is raped yet again. The following passage demonstrates that Anonyma's behavior towards her rapists, however, has undergone a drastic change:

Nein, er will ins Bett, so quengelt er, bockig, eintönig, wie ein übermüdetes Kind. Gut – soll er. Ich lege mich, angezogen, wie ich bin, aufs Sofa. Nein, ich soll zu ihm ins Bett kommen. Ich mag nicht. Da wird er mir auf dem Sofa lästig. Ich drohe mit Anatol [...]. Wenig später schreke ich hoch, höre im Dunkel den Stock näher tappen. Wieder ist er da, will zu mir ins Bett. Ich bin trunken von Müdigkeit, wehre mich, lalle irgendwas, mag nicht. Er läßt nicht nach, zähes, trübes Drängen, freudlos. (100)

She refuses to go to bed with the young man, even though he is insistent. His demand is perceived as uncalled for and compared to the behavior of a child. Moreover, she threatens him with Anatol, thus reminding him of the other man's power that he has to accept. When he still follows her to the sofa, she resists him. His insistence is not depicted as brutal, but unmotivated. That the act is dispassionate is underscored by the fact that, in between their struggles, they both fall asleep: "Zwischendurch fallen wir

beide für Minuten in erschöpften Schlaf, dann drängt und wühlt er wieder...Ich bin so wund, so kaputt, wehre mich im Halbschlaf dumpf weiter, er hat ganz kalte Lippen...” (100-101). Anonyma emphasizes that her body hurts due to the sexual violation, which forces her to resist the young man. However, as the abrupt end of the sentence indicates, along with the notion of his cold lips, she has fallen victim of rape again.

She negotiates her status with Anatol and decides to enter a relationship with an even higher ranked officer. When the major enters her life, the narration of rape committed against her disappears from the text. The absence of telling rape is yet another indication of Anonyma’s attempt to establish her position of power. Even though Anonyma remains subjected to sexual abuse by the major, she refuses to define his demands for sex as rape: “Es läßt sich keinesfalls behaupten, daß der Major mich vergewaltigt” (128). She underlines her rank by both raising the major above other soldiers and even more significantly, by her ability to control him: “Denn unter den Mannsviechern der letzten Tage ist der doch der erträglichste Mensch. Ihn kann ich überdies lenken” (128-129). The necessity of staying with him is clearly defined by her access to an overabundance of food. The luxurious food items the major continuously contributes to the household distinguish him from other soldiers (see previous chapter). Anonyma emphasizes that she despises the fact that she is selling her body to him and that food dictates her decision making processes: “Ich steige aus diesem Gewerbe, wenn ich mein derzeitiges Tun schon so nennen muß, mit tausend Freuden aus – wenn ich nur mein Essen wieder auf andere, angenehmere, meinem Stolz besser zusagende Weise verdienen kann” (129-130).

Both the act of narrating and silencing rape allow Anonyma to gain control in a time of supposed victimization – especially as a woman in the early weeks of occupation. Anonyma is able to guarantee her survival and refuses to accept the norms of a patriarchal society, which stigmatizes women into the position of complete surrender. Another form of female agency develops when women discuss their experiences of sexual abuse among each other. As the following sections demonstrate, humor allows women to bond and helps them to gain confidence. It is, in Scarry's words, sympathy that "provides the hurt person with worldly self-extension."¹¹⁴

V. Narrating Rape in a Humorous Way

The split between body and mind is only one way Anonyma frees herself from societally acceptable behavior as a victim of rape in Soviet-occupied Berlin. As mentioned above, Anonyma both protects and rejects her body in favor of survival. She accepts food in exchange for sex (rape) to save herself from starvation, but she also distances herself from her body by perceiving it as foreign territory, which becomes a temporary possession of someone else. While the split between body and mind happens as a silent and private protest, humor serves as a public and therefore outspoken attack against sexual abuse and heterosexual normativity in general. Anonyma imagines a public space for women in which female victims are encouraged to share their experiences of rape both openly and in a humorous way. The victim-perpetrator dichotomy is ruptured. The text imagines women as narrators, protagonists and audiences of humorous rape anecdotes. Through storytelling, they become more powerful than their rapists.

¹¹⁴ Scarry, *The Body in Pain* 50.

When *Eine Frau in Berlin* was first published in 1959, its use of humor became one of the reasons why journalistic reviewers rejected the autobiography.¹¹⁵ The comical descriptions of rapists' sexual clumsiness and crudity particularly disturbed the public. These descriptions undermined the image of the strong and self-confident man as well as societally acceptable norms of how women were supposed to behave as victims;¹¹⁶ the public looked down upon Anonyma's comments on the sexual qualities of women's assaulters.¹¹⁷ Even though humor played a powerful role in former debates concerning Anonyma's text, contemporary scholarship ignores that aspect of the work. As mentioned above, *Eine Frau in Berlin* has been assigned a crucial place within contemporary scholarship and German culture concerning women's suffering on the so-called home front. Yet theories considering why victims of sexual abuse might narrate rape in a humorous way have not emerged in feminist scholarship yet. Contemporary feminists who focus on rape narratives, and the chances and pitfalls of theorizing rape, like Zoë Brigley Thompson and Sorch Gunne, have argued that texts need to be interpreted against a simplified victim-perpetrator dichotomy, in which women are always passive victims and men are always active perpetrators.¹¹⁸ I argue that Anonyma's autobiography offers a new approach to reading a rape narrative, in which humor offers a way for

¹¹⁵ See section VIII for a closer analysis of the review in *Der Tagesspiegel*.

¹¹⁶ Tröger implies that notion when she emphasizes that women break with heteronormative norms. See Tröger "Between Rape" 113.

¹¹⁷ "Schlechter Dienst an der Berlinerinnen – ein verfälschender Sonderfall," *Der Tagesspiegel* 6 Dec. 1959.

¹¹⁸ Sorch Gunne and Zoë Brigley Thompson eds., *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives: Violence and Violation* (New York: Routledge, 2010) 3.

women to escape the pre-assigned role as the female victim. Humor becomes a form of female agency and diminishes the control of the male rapist.¹¹⁹

Sections V, VI and VII look at the places in the autobiography when humor as a bonding (public) mechanism occurs, considering how humor is used, and why humor becomes a powerful weapon against women's assaulters and also against the male-dominated military culture. Humor, however, does not occur as a rapid response to sexual abuse. The establishment of a space for women to openly engage in humorous anecdotes needs to undergo multiple paradigm shifts to arrive at a steady position where women feel comfortable and confident. How small and how temporary that space actually is will be discussed through the analysis of one place in the novel when a man (Herr Pauli) joins women in narrating humorous rape anecdotes. Humor then becomes a way to reestablish heterosexual gender norms, in which women are expected to behave as "typical" victims and tolerate sexual abuse in silence, thus allowing rape to fulfill its symbolic meaning in wartime.¹²⁰ Humor among women, however, helps create spaces to bond.

The autobiography carefully constructs the perception of hunger and rape as a corporeal experience, and we see a similar aesthetic engagement when Anonyma imagines the female subculture (i.e. the space where women bond). In the following sections, I discuss three developmental stages, all of which slowly disempower the roles of men. First, the image of the strong German men vanishes; second, humor becomes a reaction to imagined abuse; and third, the actual rape experience is shared in a humorous way. For the latter stage, which I identify as the high culture of female bonding, I

¹¹⁹ Here it becomes clear (yet again) that we need to read Anonyma's work as a fictional piece, because a historicization would contribute to the victimization.

¹²⁰ See Robert Lilly's and Susan Brownmiller's definition of wartime rape in section III of the introduction.

consider Paul Lewis' theories of humor as a part of social interactions. His study, entitled *Comic Effects*, examines interdisciplinary approaches to humor in literature. Lewis argues that a character's flexibility in extraordinary situations stands in direct relation to their ability to react humorously. Or, in his words "humor allows us [...] to bend rather than break."¹²¹ If we apply his theory to the female characters in *Eine Frau in Berlin*, we might read the mere act of applying humor in a state of exception as indicative of women's agency in occupied Berlin.

VI. Female Bonding and the Obliteration of Men

The dichotomy between the overpowering male and the overpowered female seems well-established by the "simple" fact that men rape women. The perspective of *Eine Frau in Berlin*, however, allows for a reading that preserves women's agency in the act of rape. Anonyma consciously chooses to split body from mind, rejecting a pre-assigned role of the victim and breaking with heterosexual gender norms (see section IV). This section looks at the victimization of women from a different standpoint. I argue that the reduction of women from people to war-booty offers a chance for women to view and define their space in the absence of men, which in turn leads to the obliteration of men. I will discuss how the text systematically deconstructs the power of men by including women into the discourse of wartime suffering, demystifying the image of the men as protectors of women, and exposing men as easily manipulated by female sexuality. Ridiculing of men demonstrates the ultimate rejection of men's supposed power position in a military culture. The character Pauli is the first target of Anonyma's humorous

¹²¹ Paul Lewis, *Comic Effects: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Humor in Literature* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989) 21. Hereafter cited as *Comic Effects*.

descriptions. He exemplifies women's "collective disappointment," a term Anonyma uses to demonstrate the dissolution of the heterosexual gender norm and with it the notion of the strong male.

In the expectation of rape, the split between men and women receives its first significant rupture. Before the Red Army approaches Berlin, women were already stigmatized as victims of rape. The propaganda machine carefully constructed an atmosphere of fear against the enemy soldiers and reported sexual abuse on the Eastern outskirts of the former Third Reich on a wide scale. When the Berlin population was cut off from the media, rumors and mistrust against the enemy troops remained: "Soweit die Vox Populi. Man weiß ja nichts. Kein *Völkischer Beobachter* liegt mehr auf der Treppe. Keine Frau Weiers kommt und liest mir zum Frühstück die fetten Schändungsbalken vor. 'Siebzigjährige Greisin geschändet. Ordensschwester vierundzwanzigmal vergewaltigt.' (Wer zählte da mit?)" (13). While Anonyma reacts doubtfully to these incriminations and tries to distance herself from the exaggerations of the media, she is not immune to the general fear that surrounds her. At the end of her work, Anonyma refers back to the importance of experiencing that fear and accepting rape as women's wartime destiny, a suffering that excluded men: "Hier aber handelt sich um ein Kollektiv-Erlebnis, vorausgewußt, viele Male vorausbefürchtet – um etwas, das den Frauen links und rechts und nebenan zustieß, das gewissermaßen dazugehörte" (161). Men are neither part of the bargain nor do women expect any protection from them. In the imagination of rape, Anonyma describes men's behavior as cowardly and labels any attempt from the media to motivate men to help women as "lachhaft": "Sollen sie etwa die Männer Berlins anstacheln, uns Frauen zu schützen und zu verteidigen? Lachhaft" (13). The usage of the

adjective “ridiculous” belittles men’s supposed role as protectors and demonstrates that women have freed themselves from expectations dictated by traditional gender norms.

The following passage exacerbates that view by popularizing men as a “collective disappointment”:

Immer wieder bemerke ich in diesen Tagen, daß sich mein Gefühl, das Gefühl aller Frauen den Männern gegenüber ändert. Sie tun uns leid, erscheinen uns so kümmerlich und kraftlos. Das schwächere Geschlecht. Eine Art von Kollektiv-Enttäuschung bereitet sich unter der Oberfläche bei den Frauen vor. Die männerbeherrschte, den starken Mann verherrlichende Nazizeit wankt – und mit ihr der Mythos ‘Mann’. In früheren Kriegen konnten die Männer darauf pochen, daß ihnen das Privileg des Tötens und Getötetwerdens fürs Vaterland zustand. Heute haben wir Frauen daran teil. Das formt uns, macht uns krötig. Am Ende dieses Krieges steht neben vielen anderen Niederlagen auch die Niederlage der Männer als Geschlecht. (51)

Anonyma emphasizes that the feeling of all women towards men has changed. She separates women from men by nullifying traditional gender norms. The end of World War II also means the end of a heterosexual community with fixed roles for men and women. Anonyma labels men as the weaker sex, assigning them the role that has been traditionally assigned to women. Lowering the position of men simultaneously means to place women over men. Even though Anonyma claims that the collective disappointment has not come to the surface yet, by turning traditional gender norms on its head, Anonyma refers to an inner process of redefining the role of men. The glorification of men, which Anonyma associates with the Nazi world, has come to an end. In addition, the reference to “the myth” of men shows that the male image is indeed a construct. The reality of the occupation period makes it easy for women, according to Anonyma, to look through the constructs of a male-dominated society. Anonyma’s changing perception of men is not only disenchantment, but rather a reckoning with men. Men, as well as the Nazi world, have become obsolete.

Since German men are obsolete, the hope for protection from mass rapes lies on the authorities of the occupying troops. The act of rape is downplayed by the authorities and women's suffering is ridiculed: "'Ach was, es hat Ihnen bestimmt nichts geschadet. Unsere Männer sind alle gesund.' Er schlendert zu den anderen Offizieren zurück, wir hören sie halblaut lachen" (63). The mayor disregards the psychological damage caused by rape and makes fun of women's fear. Again, men fail as protectors. Women stand alone as victims of rape, surrendered to rape and laughter. Anonyma states on multiple occasions that women are indeed treated as war-booty, as men's "prey." Heterosexual norms, however, have broken down – both for men and women.

A first reckoning with men is the conscious uplifting of women over men. Anonyma obliterates men's power by emphasizing that men, regardless of their cultural background, fall prey to their sexual instincts. Within the position of the victim, Anonyma grants all women the chance to control men's behavior with female sexuality: "Ich spüre, wie einige Ängste von mir weichen. Denn schließlich sind ja auch Russen 'bloß Männer', denen man auf irgendeine weibliche Art, mit Listen und Kniffen, beikommen könnte, ablenken, abwimmeln kann" (56). Anonyma reduces all men to their instincts and summons them as a simplistic and instinctual sex, "bloß Männer," easy to manipulate by any woman.¹²²

The ultimate reckoning with the new order is humor.¹²³ Men, first Germans and then Russians, serve as steady subjects of women's amusement throughout the autobiography. The character Pauli functions as the symbol for the German male at the end of the war, now weak and dependent on women. He is the only German who is part

¹²² See also IV.

¹²³ The element of ridiculing men is discussed in section VIII as well.

of the living community in the widow's apartment; a former soldier of the "Volkssturm," he benefits from women's bonds with the higher authorities of the occupying troops. He appears whiny, weak, and self-centered. Ironically, when Anonyma or the widow falls prey to sexual assault, Pauli is excluded from the narration, underscoring the inability of men to protect women. Yet he continuously appears when women receive food or alcohol from the Red Army, which causes him to eat like a "Scheunendrescher" (96) and to praise Russian culture "stockbetrunken" (76): "Sind doch dolle Kerle, diese Russen, da steckt Saft und Kraft drin!" (76). Anonyma exposes his deceptive character by his mood swings, childlike behavior, and contradicting statements. Ultimately, Anonyma reveals that women as pre-assigned and actual victims of rape develop strategies to reckon with the notion of men as the stronger sex; the next section discusses how women process the imagination of rape.

VII. Humor as a Reaction to Imagined Abuse

Rape becomes part of women's conversations in the Berlin society before the Red Army arrives. This section discusses the mitigation of the fear of rape among women. Three women weigh in with their thoughts on rape, while residing among other women in the private space of a basement in the absence of men. Every statement is a culmination of the former, adding more layers to the meaning of rape. Women slowly break the silence both through their roles as narrators and through their reactions to the predominantly crude statements. The ultimate bonding between women happens when they laugh about a graphic story of rape. This reaction in particular breaks with

heterosexual norms and demonstrates that humor becomes an appropriate response among women to the inevitable.

Even though the basement with its usual female occupants indicates physical closeness, Anonyma foregrounds that women are uncomfortable with each other. She describes the atmosphere as a “nervöse Heiterkeit” (20), exposing the general aggravation. Frau W. is the first woman who breaks the silence. She implies that rape is better than falling victim to the area bombing in the West: ““Lieber ein Russki auf’m Bauch als ein Ami auf’m Kopf”” (28). The text gives no indication if the other women agree with her or not. Anonyma excludes any reaction, suggesting that Frau W.’s attempted joke fails. Moreover, the joke does not stand in accordance with Frau W.’s sad appearance: “Ein Witz, der schlecht zu ihrem Trauerkrepp paßt” (28). In emphasizing the woman’s sad appearance, Anonyma unmasks the woman and her supposedly funny statement as unreliable. To this end, Frau W.’s remark achieves the opposite effect: it suggests rape *might* be worse than death.

Fräulein Behn mitigates the fear of rape by referring to the assault as something familiar. She builds upon women’s sexual experiences, implying that rape is not a foreign territory. Unlike Frau W., Fräulein Behn addresses the women directly: ““Nu woll’n wir doch mal ehrlich sein – Jungfern sind wir wohl alle nicht mehr”” (28). Fräulein Behn tries to create a “we” sentiment by the usage of the personal pronouns. In addition, the mention of her full last name underlines the narrator’s attempt to create closeness (unlike the abbreviation Frau W.). Fräulein Behn breaks the boundaries of sexual privacy. As an unmarried woman, a status implied by the use of “Fräulein,” she lives outside of heterosexual accepted behavior. She also demonstrates that all women are sexual

individuals and should not hide that fact. By extension, she implies that all women live outside socially acceptable norms. Even though no one reacts to Fräulein Behn's exclamation, Anonyma still shifts the attention to the audience and comments on it: "Sie bekommt keine Antwort" (28). She implies that a reaction might be expected, even appropriate. After Frau W.'s remark, however, Anonyma excludes the audience completely. She quickly moves on from Frau W.'s utterance to Fräulein Behn. While Fräulein Behn's attempt to create a sentiment of bonding between women fails, her statement does serve the function of raising awareness among women, encouraging them to understand themselves as sexual human beings. Thus, this statement works as a first attempt to break with traditional gender roles.

The third woman, residing for the first time among the women in the basement, manages to break the distance between individuals in the group. The misfit, marked by a weeping excema and an obscure private life, exists outside the strict rules of the patriarchal society. Anonyma speculates about whether her marriage is still intact: "Sie lebt allein in ihrer Wohnung, ob verwitwet, verlassen oder geschieden, weiß ich noch nicht" (29). She is presented as the other, the indefinable. While Frau W. and Fräulein Behn leave no doubt about their married status, the woman with the eczema exists in a blurry state. The reader learns much later that she lives separated from her husband. Her openly shared thoughts on rape play with marriage as a shaky concept, a bond that can easily break. In her imagination, sexual assault is not a distant concept anymore, but shifts here into a personal, even graphic, experience: "Sie berichtet, erst flüsternd, dann laut, daß sie sich ihren Ehering am Gummi ihres Schlüpfers festgezurrt hat. 'Wenn die erst da dran sind, ist mir auch der Ring egal'" (29). The focus of the story lies on the

meaning of rape for a married woman. As a victim of rape, the ring, a symbol of the woman's sexual monogamous relationship, becomes worthless (as does the relationship with her husband). This woman literally breaks the silence of socially accepted behavior, indicated by the raising of her voice (shifting from a whisper to loudness). Rape splits with heterosexual norms, a split that finds its strongest expression in the destruction of the institution of marriage. Despite all of the differences between the occupants and the woman with the eczema, women respond with "allgemeines Gelächter" (29). She is the first one who manages to break the silence and receives a unified and loud reaction from all women. It is a sign that bonding has become possible and ultimately audible. Moreover, the woman's thoughts suggest that heterosexual normativity will be corrupted by the experience of rape.

The utterances of the three women illustrate that boundaries among women are slowly breaking down. Women become more comfortable with each other and openly demonstrate their new-won bond with shared laughter. The imaginations of rape by these women are graphic, expressed not only by the content of women's words but by their colloquial speech. Anonyma observes that language becomes more and more in tone with the terrifying realities of the near future: "Man kommt der drohenden Erniedrigung auch sprachlich entgegen" (41). Vulgar language becomes a characteristic element of the female subculture. This phenomenon will grow even more nuanced when women become actual victims of rape.

VIII. Collective Experience of Rape and Women's "Funny Stories"

Ridiculing the assaulters is a standard measure in the rape stories shared by women in Anonyma's account. These women both emphasize and silence different aspects of the abuse they face, in their attempt to ensure an empowered perception of the victim in the eyes of their audience. Every story adds a new layer to how women distance themselves from becoming reduced to nothing more than rape victims. They belittle their rapists by becoming ironic commentators on the assaulter's behavior. Moreover, women turn rape into a playful, even humorous act, in which they are granted the choice to escape rape. This section discusses the social effects of humor for both women and men. Humor can act as a means of female empowerment, but also as the driving force to reestablish heterosexual gender norms. Four instances in which rape victims share humorous anecdotes about sexual abuse stand at the center of the analysis.

Why does humor become such a popular instrument in *Eine Frau in Berlin* when women talk about rape? A connection between narratives of rape and humor appears evident, yet has not become part of theoretical approaches to rape narratives. However, interdisciplinary studies on humor can further our understanding of character formations in literature, which in turn can illuminate why and how characters use humor when narrating rape. Paul Lewis claims that "[...] our understanding of almost any character can be extended through an analysis of his or her way of dealing with the incongruous."¹²⁴ In his study, entitled *Comic Effects*, Lewis declares literary scholars' engagement with humor as too reductive in its attempt to find universal concepts of what the reader/audience considers funny. Lewis considers Sigmund Freud's *Der Witz und*

¹²⁴ Lewis, *Comic Effects* 20.

*seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*¹²⁵ (1905) and Czech Sociologist Antonin Obrdlik's 1942 journal article "Gallows Humor' – A Sociological Phenomenon"¹²⁶ – among others – as inspirational engagements with humor. Both theorists approach humor from a different angle. Freud focuses on the joke-teller's individual inability to laugh at their own joke, thus being forced to share humor with others. The laughter of the listeners then fulfills the joke-teller's intention "Lust zu gewinnen."¹²⁷ While Freud is more interested in laughter's significance in the individual psyche, Obrdlik looks at humor as a social phenomenon. He focuses on humor as a form of resistance among the oppressed in wartime.¹²⁸ Based upon his observations in occupied Czechoslovakia, he states that humor is "constructive for the oppressed and destructive for the oppressors."¹²⁹ It strengthens the morale of the weak and deconstructs the power of the winners. Even though Lewis reflects upon Freud's and Obrdlik's theories as helpful approaches to engage with humor in literature, he shies away from simply forcing their theories onto literary texts. Lewis' approach is more flexible. The multiple meanings of humor serve as the primary focus for Lewis. Asking the right questions in attempts to interpret fictional texts allows for conclusions in terms of characters' social, ethnic and cultural

¹²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten* (Leipzig: Deuticke, 1925). Hereafter cited as *Der Witz*.

¹²⁶ Antonin Obrdlik, "Gallows Humor' – A Sociological Phenomenon," *American Journal of Sociology* 47.5 (1942): 709-716. Hereafter cited as "Gallows Humor."

¹²⁷ Freud, *Der Witz* 113.

¹²⁸ Obrdlik, "Gallows Humor" 712.

¹²⁹ Obrdlik, "Gallows Humor" 713.

backgrounds. The self-display of humor, as Lewis asserts, demonstrates characters' ability to adapt to unforeseen situations, thus displaying strengths and weaknesses.¹³⁰

In *Eine Frau in Berlin*, we see many aspects that may lead us to conclusions as to how and why characters use humor when dealing with what Lewis calls "the incongruous."¹³¹ As mentioned, humor is a way to bond and alleviate the fear of assaulters. Moreover, women deconstruct men's power and dissolve heterosexual gender norms when using humor. All female characters who laugh about rape experiences contribute to the general entertainment. The text excludes almost all instances in which rape experiences are openly labeled as female suffering. Female characters who laugh about rape appear stronger and are given more space in the narration. Those who do not laugh remain side characters, and are excluded from the general plot.

The understanding of rape as a collective experience is a precondition for bonding and enables women to openly talk about sexual assault. This comprehension motivates women to invent their own language, which becomes a defining characteristic of their subculture. The "new" language consists of neologisms like "Schändungshumor," Majorszucker and the verb "anschlafen." Women bond over their specific way of communication. When women felt surrendered by the public propaganda against the Red Army, any ground to articulate their fear failed: "Das Wort 'Russen' spricht keiner mehr aus. Es will nicht über die Lippen" (10). Later on, the initial silence turns into the urge to talk and even to entertain. The occupying troops, especially those who rape, become the center of daily conversations. Anonyma explains that three steps are crucial for bonding over rape: knowing beforehand, fearing beforehand and getting over it collectively. Men

¹³⁰ Lewis, *Comic Effects* 16.

¹³¹ Lewis, *Comic Effects* 22.

are not only excluded from women's suffering, but systematically disempowered in their conversations:

Hier aber handelt sich um ein Kollektiv-Erlebnis, vorausgewußt, viele Male vorausbefürchtet – um etwas, das den Frauen links und rechts und nebenan zustieß, das gewissermaßen dazugehörte. Diese kollektive Massenform der Vergewaltigung wird auch kollektiv überwunden werden. Jede hilft jeder, indem sie darüber spricht, sich Luft macht, der anderen Gelegenheit gibt, sich Luft zu machen, das Erlittene auszuspeien [...] (161).

What Anonyma classifies here as “speaking about it,” she expresses more accurately at a different place in the autobiography: “Überhaupt fangen wir langsam an, den Schändungsbetrieb humoristisch zu nehmen, galgenhumoristisch” (134). Telling rape (in the absence of men) turns the victim-perpetrator dichotomy on its head.

The widow experiences rape twice. The usual consensus in the autobiography declares rapists in general as barbaric and simple due to their brutal rape practices and randomness in selecting a victim: “Denen ist Frau Frau, wenn sie sich im Finstern einen Leib greifen” (68). In the case of the widow, this brutal stereotype gives way to a more complicated, and more comical, reality. She belittles both her assaulters due to their age and inexperience. She comments on the first one: “Ein Kind noch, so flüstert sie; bartlos, glatt und unerfahren – und sie lächelt dabei mit dickverheultem Gesicht” (68). The humorous aspect, underlined by the widow's smile, stems from the fact that the rapist is much younger than the widow. The age differences between the forty-year old widow and sixteen-year old Polish Wanja, is used here to underline the rapist's low standard in women. After the widow was raped, the rapist shows contrition for what he has done and becomes the widow's personal servant: “Jedenfalls folgt Wanja der Witwe wie ein Hündlein, trägt frische Gläser herzu und wäscht am Spülstein die gebrauchten” (81). The formerly raped woman degrades the rapist to household work. The text achieves a comic

effect through the widow's complete power over him and deconstructs the victim-perpetrator dichotomy.

The widow comments on her second rapist's sexual inexperience as well. This time, the power dynamics are dissolved right from the start. While Anonyma mentions the widow's tears behind her smile after her first rape experience, the widow behaves here as an equally powerful participant in the act of rape. She judges the rapist's sexual performance, which turns the adjectives "zahn" and "friedlich" into negatively connoted character traits: "Demnach war der jugendliche Wutdeibel zahn und friedlich, ja von ermüdender Langweiligkeit, bevor er die Witwe preisgab" (140). While he appears as sexually inadequate, the widow takes pride in exceeding his expectations. She deliberately takes his obscene remark concerning her body as a compliment:

"'Ukrainerfrau – so. Du – so.' Wobei das erste 'so' durch einen Kreis aus zwei Daumen und Zeigefingern illustriert wird, das zweite 'so' durch ein Kreislein aus einem Daumen und einem Zeigefinger" (140). This "compliment" frames the beginning and the end of women's public rejection of men's power on multiple levels. It initiates the dissolution of expected power dynamics when men rape women. The widow presents herself as an equal sexual partner, thus turning rape into the "harmless" sphere of mere intercourse. Moreover, the "compliment" becomes a steady part in women's conversations about rape and has developed into an inside joke, a means for the widow to show off, entertain, and introduce herself to other women. The repetition on multiple occasions of these all-female get-togethers intensifies the meaning of the compliment for women. The more the widow talks about it, the more intensified the humorous effect becomes. Thus, the widow shares her story on every occasion people get together: "(Übrigens weiß inzwischen

schon das ganze Haus den Unterschied: ‘Ukrainerfrau – so. Du – so!’”) (166). Her statement suggests that the women are becoming less concerned with keeping up an appearance of traditional moral propriety, as stated by Anonyma: “Wir tranken, ließen die Hausfrau leben, die Witwe gab den Vergleich mit der Ukrainerfrau zum besten – wir haben alle kein Maß mehr” (179). As Anonyma indicates here, it is not the widow alone who behaves inappropriately here, but all women have given up their senses of moderation.

When the woman with the eczema falls into the hands of two rapists, humor transpires differently in comparison to the widow. Once again, Anonyma foregrounds the bad taste of the rapists who assault a woman with a weeping eczema. However, Anonyma does not only ridicule the assaulters but emphasizes the woman’s naiveté in her interaction with the rapists:

So hat an diesem Vormittag wahrhaftig auch die Frau mit der grindigen Wange, entgegen meiner Prophezeiung, dran glauben müssen. Zwei Kerle fingen sie, als sie treppauf zu Nachbarsleuten wollte, und zerrten sie in eine der verlassenen Wohnungen. Dort bekam sie es zweimal ab, oder vielmehr anderthalbmahl, wie sie sich rätselhaft ausdrückte. Erzählte, daß einer der Kerls auf den Grind gedeutet und gefragt habe: ‘Syphilis?’ Worauf das Schaf im ersten Schreck doch den Kopf schüttelte und Nein rief. Kurz danach kam sie bei uns hereingestolpert, brauchte Minuten, ehe sie sprechen konnte, wir labten sie mit einer Tasse voll Burgunder. Schließlich erholte sie sich wieder und grient: ‘Und darauf hat man nun sieben Jahre gewartet.’ (So lange lebt sie von ihrem Mann getrennt). (134-135)

Anonyma turns rape into almost a playful situation, which offers different forms of escape for the victim. Anonyma asserts that the woman could have easily escaped rape, but failed, which makes her responsible for the assault. Here, the woman does not take advantage of the chance to convince the rapist that she suffers from a sexual transmitted disease. Anonyma calls the woman “Schaf,” which makes her appear unintelligent and slow, contributing to the comic effect. Rape then does not appear as a crime committed

by men against women, but as a consequence for a naïve answer. Moreover, the use of language such as “fingen,” underlines the game-like character of rape that the unattractive woman played poorly. The colloquial expression “es abbekommen” makes the sexual act appear as a punishment for playing a game poorly. The raped woman entrenches herself again in the shared humor of the public by pretending that she desperately awaited a sexual act. Therefore, the forced assault is transformed into an imaginary scenario of mutually enjoyable intercourse which the woman desperately awaited for seven years.

While the widow portrays her rapists as sexually inexperienced, Anonyma and her friend immerse themselves into a conversation about their assaulters, thus exposing all rapists’ erotic qualities as insufficient for the victims:

‘Kümmertlich,’ so sagt sie und zog die Nase kraus. ‘Denen fällt aber auch gar nichts ein. Simpel und grob, einer wie der andere. So weit ich hier im Haus herumgehört habe. Aber vielleicht hast du mit deinen höheren Offizieren bessere Erfahrungen gemacht.’

‘Nein, in dem Punkt nicht.’

‘Mag sein, daß die zu Haus das Neueste an sozialistischer Planwirtschaft haben,’ meint Ilse. ‘In puncto Erotik sind sie jedenfalls bei Adam und Eva stehengeblieben. Das hab’ ich auch meinem Mann zum Trost gesagt.’ (220)

Here, the degradation of men happens again on multiple levels: they are perceived as unimaginative, simple and rude. Again, women present themselves as equal participants in the sexual act, thus reducing rape to intercourse. Moreover, this conversation demonstrates that the boundaries of propriety between women have eroded and rape has become a kind of normality. In the quote, Anonyma disregards the higher ranks of the military, which in turn means that women also disregard the ranks of the patriarchal order. All men are the same. The ultimate rejection of heterosexual gender norms happens when Anonyma refers to her husband, who unwillingly experienced his wife’s

assault. The woman constitutes herself as the stronger part in her relationship, since she has to comfort her husband.

This passage became the center of the critique in a newspaper article, published on December 6, 1969 in *Der Tagesspiegel*.¹³² The headline “Schlechter Dienst an der Berlinerinnen – ein verfälschender Sonderfall” exemplifies why the public reacted with such disgust for the autobiography. In particular, the comments on men’s sexual performance were a reason for the overall critique concerning the credibility of the autobiography:

In endloser Ausführlichkeit, deutlich bis ins winzigste Detail, schildert uns die Verfasserin im einprägsamen Ich-Ton ihre unzähligen ‘Erlebnisse’. Es ist schrecklich, aber dies Wort drängt sich auf. Man gewinnt die Überzeugung, daß das wirklich für sie ‘Erlebnisse’ sind. Die Gespräche mit Freundinnen über dieses Thema, die selbst berichtet, die widerwärtige Art, in der da etwa Vergleiche angestellt werden, das hornhätige Erstaunen, wenn jemand anders davon nicht gern reden mag, die abfälligen Bemerkungen über deutsche Männer... Es ist mir leider nicht möglich, mein negatives Urteil über dieses Buch durch wörtliche Zitate zu erhärten. Nicht, daß es nicht solche Zitate in Fülle gäbe. Aber in einer Tageszeitung sind sie ihrer Formulierung wegen nicht druckbar...¹³³

This one-sided critique of her account says much about the Federal Republic’s attempt to silence wartime rape victims and establish men as the dominant gender in society.

Anonyma is well aware of the fact that the female bonds, and with it the open narration of rape, are only temporary. The outer patriarchal forces pressure women to remain silent about sexual abuse: “Wir dagegen werden fein den Mund halten müssen, werden so tun müssen, als habe es uns, gerade uns ausgespart. Sonst mag uns am Ende kein Mann mehr anrühren” (163). The sentence “fein den Mund halten müssen”

¹³² It underlines Paul Lewis’ thesis that “humor can be a contest, a weapon and a trap.” Lewis, *Comic Effects* 33. Compare also “Schlechter Dienst an der Berlinerinnen – ein verfälschender Sonderfall,” *Der Tagesspiegel* 6 Dec. 1959.

¹³³ “Schlechter Dienst an der Berlinerinnen – ein verfälschender Sonderfall,” *Der Tagesspiegel* 6 Dec. 1959.

acknowledges that the shared humorous language, the exchange among women, turns back into silence and erases the female subculture of the immediate postwar weeks.

Her prediction proves right, especially when it comes to humor. Female bonding becomes endangered by men on the home front. Pauli wishes to see the homosexual girl raped. She is a member of the former basement community who dresses like a man and has not been identified as female by the members of the Red Army. This time, humor is used to ridicule the imagined victim and not the assaulters. The soldiers' masculine strengths and the forced sexual abuse are foregrounded as positive. What Pauli displays as an outsider of sexual assault is nothing less than the wish to establish traditional heterosexual gender norms: "Pauli reißt Witze über dies Mädels, wünscht ihr eine ordentliche Umschulung, behauptet, es sei geradezu ein gutes Werk, ihr Kerle zu schicken, den strammen Petka beispielsweise mit den Holzfällerpratzen" (134). Pauli's attack against homosexuality, which is embedded in a "funny" anecdote of imagined rape connotes the assault positively by advertising it as a cure. By marking the imagined sexual abuse of the girl as a "gutes Werk," rape becomes a valid method to secure a normalized heterosexual orientation. Furthermore, the language the author chooses to reproduce the anecdote depicts the power dynamic men have over women. She uses the belittlement "Mädels" and contrasts her weakness to the brutal males, the "Kerle." In addition, the imagination of sexual abuse is strengthened by the bodily superiority of men like Petka, whose physical features (his hands are characterized as "Holzfällerpratzen") are imagined to invade the girl. Moreover, the fact that Pauli insists on the patriarchal order and openly exposes his concern about the girl's sexual preference shows once again that the subculture of women is only temporary. Pauli's comments demonstrate that

(German) men, who are momentarily dependent on women's food supply and steady relations with occupying soldiers, will in fact reclaim the patriarchal order.

With the return of Gerd, Anonyma's fiancé, the patriarchal order is re-established. Anonyma's fiancé, like Herr Pauli, wishes for normalcy and rejects women's openness in discussing rape. After the widow tells him about how she compares to a Ukrainian woman, the gap between men's expectations and women's openly shared experiences becomes apparent: "Ich sah, daß Gerd befremdet war" (274). Later on he utters his disgust with women openly: "Ihr seid schamlos wie die Hündinnen geworden, ihr alle miteinander hier im Haus. Merkt ihr das denn nicht?" (274). This quote demonstrates once again how powerful humor is.¹³⁴ What Gerd perceives as the moral decline of women leads ultimately to the split between Anonyma and her fiancé. Anonyma is both unwilling to keep silent about the abuse and hide the new-found strength she gained in the early weeks of occupation.

The end of the relationship is not a sign for women's emancipation from men at the end of the story. On the contrary, it marks the end of the female subculture and men's undertaking to reclaim their power position in a heteronormative society. According to Annette Tröger the dissolution of "women's own standards and norms"¹³⁵ lies in their failure to define their subculture: "Women created this space which they referred to as the 'women's public sphere,' but they never understood it politically. They never defined it. And that which is not conceptualized cannot be defended."¹³⁶ Tröger asserts here that a

¹³⁴ See Obrdlik, "Gallows Humor" 716: "[...]if they can afford to ignore it, they are strong: if they react wildly, with anger, striking their victims with severe reprisals and punishment, they are not sure of themselves, no matter how much they display their might on the surface."

¹³⁵ Tröger, "Between Rape" 111.

¹³⁶ Tröger, "Between Rape" 111.

stronger self-awareness among women could have saved their “morality independent of men.”¹³⁷ What she fails to consider is the power of humor that endangers, visible in Gerd’s reaction to the widow’s compliment, masculinity. Women who speak up in subversive ways are immediately punished by the male society. Gerd leaves Anonyma and makes clear that the behavior exhibited by Anonyma and by other women cannot be tolerated.

IX. Conclusion

Eine Frau in Berlin popularized the notion of German women as Red Army war booty after its re-publication in 2003 in and outside of Germany. Chapter 1 offers, in contradistinction to the mainstream understanding of women as victims, a diversified perception of women’s statuses during the early occupation period in Berlin. The aesthetics Anonyma applies when she narrates her personal experiences of rape break in particular with traditional heteronormative dichotomies and allow for a reading that grants women a more powerful position than widely propagated in contemporary debates.

The fight against hunger equally deconstructs the role of women as caretakers. Standard cultural perceptions of women as selflessly seeking out food, not primarily for themselves but for their family, justifies their place as brave rebuilders of the German state and secures the re-establishment of traditional family structures. In *Eine Frau in Berlin*, however, fighting starvation is indeed an individual concern and turns women into competitors. Women do not primarily engage in obtaining edible items among the rubble, but use their bodies in exchange for food. They (inevitably) engage in relations with

¹³⁷ Tröger, “Between Rape” 111.

members of the occupying troops. German men as well as the male-dominated military culture are harshly attacked by the narrator. The female society views (German) men as obsolete and weak due to their inability to provide for women. Red Army rapists are not fully in control of women's bodies and behaviors either. Anonyma demonstrates that women are equally able to alter the rules of a postwar society and are able, even as victims of rape, to disempower men. In *Eine Frau in Berlin*, telling rape and hunger means the deconstruction and demystification of the strong man.

Part II and Part III demonstrate a different perception on gender relations. In Part II, Anna Seghers' "Die Saboteure" ties women to the domestic sphere and grants a moral valence to women's cooking talents, the lack thereof, and their ability to withstand hunger. In the narration of rape in *Die Vergeltung*, Gert Ledig deconstructs any notion of female agency. During a twenty-minute air raid, the rape and death of the text's female character is rendered meaningless in a time of total destruction. Part III focuses on rape and hunger in two works of Group 47 authors. Heinrich Böll's male protagonist claims his power over the female body due to his sole access to food in *Das Brot der frühen Jahre*. Wolfgang Koeppen degrades women as side characters who are dominated by man who cook and overindulge on food. The rape of the Jew Ilse Kürenberg is equated with the Nazi character's uncontrollable will to consume a woman.

Part II: Transitions

Chapter Two

Between Politics and a Higher Violence: the Cleaving of Anna Seghers' "Die Saboteure" and Gert Ledig's *Die Vergeltung*

I. Ideology versus Normalization

The meaning of rape and hunger undergoes a paradigm shift as it travels from women's autobiographies to prose written between 1945 and 1960. While the exchange of the female body for food was a means in autobiographies for women to secure survival and to escape sexual assault, fictional narratives cleave these themes apart. Rape and hunger no longer connect in the literary imagination of German prose from the rubble years. In addition, rape and hunger emerge as separate phenomena and their thematization no longer is intent on capturing the authenticity of embodied female experience. This chapter compares two unlikely kindred spirits. Both authors, Anna Seghers and Gert Ledig, are radically different as are their respective works. In this chapter I discuss their texts' multi-faceted distinctions, why "Die Saboteure" and *Die Vergeltung* qualify for a comparison in terms of rape and hunger, and the existing scholarship on both works.

Why undertake a comparative analysis of Anna Seghers' "Die Saboteure" and Gert Ledig's *Die Vergeltung*? Both texts depict the separation of rape and hunger. They demonstrate two different strands of imagining these themes: on the one hand, Seghers shows food and hunger as having been ideologically loaded and, on the other hand, shows the normalization of the experience of rape. Seghers does not stand alone with her

charged depiction of food and hunger. She falls into a tradition of resistance fighters who write both fictional prose and autobiographies after 1945. Lina Haag's *Eine Handvoll Staub* (1948) and Ruth Andreas-Friedrich's *Der Schattenmann* (1947) foreground the discipline of self-declared communists when it comes to tolerating hunger and sharing food items. Other writers demonstrate instinctual greediness or a lack of self-control when it comes to snatching and eating food. Writer Bodo Uhse depicts such a value system in his novel *Leutnant Bertram* from 1943, which he wrote in Mexican exile. Resistance fighters either snack or go hungry in his novel, while Nazis enjoy elaborate meals.¹³⁸

Anna Seghers' short story "Die Saboteure" was published in Mexican exile in 1946. As such, the author knew nothing of postwar reality. Her depiction of food and hunger is thus an imagined representation marked by the exilic perspective. The narration takes place in the midst of the war, specifically when German troops marched into the Soviet Union in 1943. Female characters that prepare elaborate meals and take their roles as housewives seriously demonstrate their political discipline within the Nazi state. Conversely, women who support communist resistance never cook or have no talent for food preparation, but rather use the kitchen as a space for communicating their political investment with their husbands. They are the ones who suffer from hunger in the immediate postwar period. These wives tolerate their hardships and support each other with great care.

The realities in Gert Ledig's novel *Die Vergeltung*, published in 1956 almost one decade after "Die Saboteure," are quite different. Ledig did in fact experience the realities of war, both as a soldier in the battlefield and during the area bombings on the home

¹³⁸ Bodo Uhse, *Leutnant Bertram* (Berlin: Aufbau –Verlag, 1959).

front. In an interview with Volker Hage, he commented on the importance of real life experience when writing about the air war: “Die Angst muß dir selbst im Genick sitzen, du mußt das genau kennen. Sonst bist du bloß ein Berichterstatter, kein Schriftsteller.”¹³⁹ His personal experience led to the publication of two novels: his bestseller *Die Stalinorgel* (1955) and his poorly received novel *Die Vergeltung* (1956), in which he depicts the suffering and destruction caused by the area bombing of a German city that lasted sixty-nine minutes. In contradistinction to Seghers, Ledig does not imagine protagonists with a clear-cut morale or political affiliation, but makes destruction itself the hero of his narrative. Surprisingly, Ledig’s work is also one of the few fictional texts written between 1945 and 1960 that broaches the issue of rape in the context of World War II. Apart from expulsionary novels like *Wintergewitter* (1951) by Kurt Ihlenfeld, *Das verschüttete Antlitz* (1957) by Gertrud Fussenegger, and *Die schlesische Barmherzigkeit* (1950) by Ruth Hoffmann, there exist few if any literary works published in the course of fifteen years that explicitly imagine rape.¹⁴⁰ Rape in Ledig’s novel is part of a larger violence, depicted like any wartime-related crime. In contradistinction to Seghers’ depiction of an ideologically charged way of eating, Ledig avoids any ideologically-loaded depictions of power or violence. Rape in his novel is rendered meaningless. Even though he is only one of the few who dared to write about the topic,

¹³⁹ Volker Hage, *Zeugen der Zerstörung. Die Literaten und der Luftkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2008) 45. Hereafter cited as *Zeugen der Zerstörung*.

¹⁴⁰ I exclude expulsionary novels from my project because they focus primarily on the loss of home and the concept of “Heimat.” The so-called “Vertriebenenverbände” supported a lot of publications in the mid-fifties in order to establish a subculture of former war refugees. Gertrud Fussenegger herself comments on the lack of credibility and exaggerations of many accounts: “Da blieb dann der steinige Acker hinter dem Haus vergessen so wie die quietschende Pumpe im Hof. Sie paßten nicht mehr in das vergoldete Erinnerungsbild.” See Gertrud Fussenegger, “Verlust und Rückgewinn. Notizen zur Literatur der Vertriebenen,” *Flucht und Vertreibung in der Literatur nach 1945*, ed. Frank Lothar Kroll (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1997) 26.

he dismisses the validity of the experience of rape completely. His rape episode stands in stark contradiction to female autobiographies after 1945 that depicted rape or redirected rape into an exchange of sex for food. In Ledig's imagination, rape is just one crime, a crime among many that happens during an area bombing. Ledig's writing radically belies any positive outlooks on the future in the Federal Republic. Additionally, it stood against the literary aim of the Group 47, which tried to offer an artistic way to come to terms with the past in new German literature. The negativity in his novel, ultimately, led to Ledig's poor reception in the 1950s.

As different as Ledig and Seghers may be, both authors turn the twin discourse of rape and hunger, first imagined in female autobiographies, on its head. While Seghers uses food as a way for women to demonstrate political involvement, she nevertheless invokes female power through food preparation for the real agents, hungry men. Thus, Seghers turns the domestic sphere traditionally occupied by women into a space of political activity for male resistance fighters. Women become the facilitators of men's decision making processes by preparing food. Nevertheless, Seghers binds them to the domestic sphere, denying them any independence or political activity (beyond exposing their attitudes). Ledig does not leave any agency at all for the female rape victim. She dies with the perpetrator buried under the rubble, which was, like so many other deaths in his novel, the inevitable destiny for the girl. Having gone through a rape has only intensified her torture. Strangely, rape and hunger have never been a concern in scholarship on either text. Unlike the renewed interest in Ledig, the presence of Anna Seghers' short story "Die Saboteure" in literary scholarship is slight, even though "Die Saboteure" is a sequel to one of Seghers' most successful novel *Das siebte Kreuz* (1942),

which is still discussed to wide acclaim.¹⁴¹ “Die Saboteure,” which Seghers published in Mexican exile along with other shorter narratives, was republished in the GDR in 1959 in a collection of three narratives entitled *Brot und Salz*. Even though “Die Saboteure” has garnered some attention in terms of close textual analysis, the narrative nevertheless warrants further attention, especially if we believe Stephen Brockmann’s assertion that:

Using some of the same figures from *Das Siebte Kreuz*, Seghers subsequently wrote a story entitled ‘Die Saboteure’ (published in 1946), in which she celebrated the struggle of German workers who had sought to sabotage the Nazi military industry. This story is even more explicit about the positive nature of sabotage than Zuckmayer’s play *Des Teufels General*.¹⁴²

Brockmann suggests that the appreciation of the text should be based upon its politics, a point that resounds in most of the literary scholarship on Seghers’ work. In one of the few textual analyses of “Die Saboteure,” Kathleen LaBahn sees the goal of Seghers’ text as advocating the underground work of Communist resistance fighters.¹⁴³ My reading of Seghers focuses instead on the overlooked roles women play as managers of their husbands’ sabotage. Of particular concern for my analysis are women’s abilities to cook and to cope with hunger in the immediate postwar years.

Set in 1943, the narration is framed by the underground political activities of three male factory workers who deliberately produce faulty material for hand grenades. Even though the conspiracy of the male protagonists Hermann Schulz, Franz Marnet and Paul

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Birgit Maier-Katkin, *Silence and Acts of Memory. A Postwar Discourse on Literature, History, Anna Seghers, and Women in the Third Reich* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007). Hereafter cited as *Silence and Acts of Memory*.

¹⁴² Stephen Brockmann, “Heroes of the Zero Hour,” *Heroes and Heroism in German Culture: Essays in honor of Jost Hermand, April 2000*, eds. Stephen Brockmann and James Steakly (New York, NY: Rodopi, 2001) 151-152.

¹⁴³ Kathleen LaBahn, *Anna Seghers’ Exile Literature. The Mexican Years (1941-1947)*, American University Studies: Germanic Language and Literatures Vol. 37 (New York: Peter Lang, 1986) 54. Hereafter cited as *Exile Literature*.

Bohland against Nazi Germany seems to stand at the center of the narration, the importance of women as the driving forces for their husbands' political actions must not be overlooked. This involvement of these women in the acts of sabotage manifests itself in the form of food. The realm of choosing, preparing and serving food demonstrates female involvement, manipulation of and knowledge about their husbands' fights against Nazism. In Seghers' writing, food becomes the mediator between the two sexes that otherwise lack open communication in everyday life. In this sense, women are able to develop their own form of resistance, a political rhetoric of cooking. As previously mentioned, scholarship on Seghers' story emphasizes its political agenda.

A reassessment of Seghers' work that goes beyond ideology seems, however, impossible if we believe the dominant trends in research on Seghers. Scholarship by Birgit Maier-Katkin, for example, makes a first important stand against the critical reduction of Seghers' works as solely political.¹⁴⁴ Maier-Katkin's work *Silence and Acts of* argues for the importance of ordinary people's experiences during the rise of fascism. She looks at female characters in Seghers' texts in order to provide a more diversified understanding of wartime experiences and thus helps us to complicate our grasp of collective memory, silence and guilt. Maier-Katkin makes clear, however, that she does not wish to reduce fiction to history. She emphasizes the importance of historical and fictional interrelations, through which the reader will arrive at a higher truth about the character's constitution. Still, ideology seems to be the core of the protagonists' constitution. Like Maier-Katkin, Erika Haas wishes to make especially clear that readers must look beyond ideology in Seghers' work, and thus she sets up Seghers' use of myth

¹⁴⁴ Maier-Katkin, *Silence and Acts of Memory* 9.

against ideology, which, ironically reaffirms again the primacy of ideology: “Die Kategorie der ‘Widerspiegelung’ wird nun zum wesentlichen Prüfstein der Bewältigung des Gegenstandes gemacht, Probleme der Gestaltung des Typischen und der Durchgängigkeit gesellschaftlicher Motivation rücken in den Mittelpunkt der Diskussion.”¹⁴⁵ The task of ignoring ideology in Seghers’ texts seems, as scholarship affirms, almost impossible, which raises the question as to whether this attempt is at all useful, or whether it might just block our understanding of her works.

It is certainly relevant to look closely at Seghers’ text for its ideological standpoint. Even at the beginning of the narrative, the text’s political goal is foregrounded. The protagonists’ value is determined by their political engagement. The event of sabotaging the Nazi military, therefore, becomes the most important event in the narrative. In my understanding, Seghers’ depiction of food and hunger follows a stereotypical trend by sympathizers with Communist ideals. It is common to portray good and bad characters according to their relation to food.¹⁴⁶ Yet it appears that a closer analysis of Seghers’ work is lacking in the scholarship, since her political intention is always foregrounded. It is curious as well that the twelve-part rape episode in *Die Vergeltung* has not lead to further discussions in contemporary literature debates in Germany, especially if we take into consideration that female suffering on the home front has triggered great interest in recent years.

¹⁴⁵ Erika Haas, *Ideologie und Mythos: Studien zur Erzählstruktur und Sprache im Werk von Anna Seghers* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag H.-D. Heinz, 1975) 10.

¹⁴⁶ This discourse is furthered by other writers of the rubble years and members of the Group 47, like Wolfgang Borchert, Siegfried Lenz, Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll, Wolfgang Koeppen, and Wolfdietrich Schnurre.

A detailed analysis of single fragments in *Die Vergeltung* invites an overall reevaluation of Ledig's work in contemporary Germany. The debate around W.G. Sebald's airwar essay is responsible for rediscovering *Die Vergeltung*.¹⁴⁷ Sebald criticized postwar German literature for failing to depict home front suffering appropriately. More specifically, literature did not establish an acceptable way for him to depict the air war. Sebald's thesis, in other words, is about the ethics of representation of total destruction. Such representation is not a taboo per se, as his thesis was perceived to suggest by Volker Hage for instance. Sebald rather claims that the literature we have is deficient because it fails to represent German suffering ethically. Thanks to his so-called taboo thesis, put forth in his 1997 Zürich lecture and two years later in his essay *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Ledig's work was rediscovered by Volker Hage as one famous example of depicting the air war in literary fiction. Hage proves, or so he thinks, Sebald's thesis wrong, which led to the republication of *Die Vergeltung* in 1999, *Die Stalinorgel* (1955) and *Faustrecht* (1957) followed in 2000 and 2001.¹⁴⁸ Unlike its reception in the 1950s, *Die Vergeltung* became a major success in contemporary Germany. Without bias, Hage praises the aesthetics of Ledig's novel: "Damals stand er in der deutschen Nachkriegsliteratur einzigartig da. So klar, so hart, so inverblümt hatte vorher noch niemand vom Luftkrieg erzählt, ganz ohne Schnörkel, mit einem Pathos der Nüchternheit."¹⁴⁹ Volker Hage sees the complexity and bare description of destruction as

¹⁴⁷ W.G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur: Mit einem Essay zu Alfred Andersch* (München: C. Hanser, 1999).

¹⁴⁸ Gregor Streim, "Der Bombenkrieg als Sensation und als Dokumentation. Gert Ledigs 'Die Vergeltung' und die Debatte um W.G. Sebalds 'Luftkrieg und Literatur.'" *Krieg in den Medien*, ed. Heinz-Peter Preußner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 302. Hereafter cited as "Bombenkrieg als Sensation."

¹⁴⁹ Hage, *Zeugen der Zerstörung* 44.

the reason why Sebald did not mention Ledig's work in *Luftkrieg und Literatur*.¹⁵⁰

Collette Lawson, however, claims that Sebald's demand for a literary depiction of the air raids in the proposed style of a natural history of destruction has been achieved in Ledig's novel: "It is a history that is natural in the sense that it is 'of nature,' displacing man as the subject and instead allowing the world (or, in this case, the destruction) to be subject of history [...]." ¹⁵¹ As diverse as the opinions about Sebald and Ledig's novel may be, the main concerns of scholarly engagement with *Die Vergeltung* nowadays are Ledig's writing style, his emphasis on destruction and attempts to explain why Ledig's work failed in the 1950s.¹⁵²

Ledig's account consists of many narrative fragments. The novel jumps between civilians trapped in a basement, an American commanding officer in an airplane, an old couple ready to commit suicide, a German officer who yells out desperate orders to his underage flak helpers, and many more scenes. The reader follows the destinies of the protagonists, simply to see them fail in the quest to search for loved ones and to survive in the hail of bombs. Susanne Vees-Gulani argues that the fragmentation of the narration as a whole mirrors the depiction of the characters: "Each is only a fragment of his or her earlier self, mirroring how the world around them has gone to pieces. There are no strict categories, but everything, such as force and love, guilt and innocence, life and death,

¹⁵⁰ Hage, *Zeugen der Zerstörung* 43.

¹⁵¹ Colette Lawson, "The Natural History of Destruction: W.G. Sebald, Gert Ledig, and the Allied Bombings" *Germans as Victims in the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic*, eds. Stuart Taberner and Karina Berger (Rochester: Camden House, 2009) 33. Hereafter cited as "Natural History of Destruction."

¹⁵² See, for example Hage, *Zeugen der Zerstörung* and Streim, "Bombenkrieg als Sensation."

becomes fluid.”¹⁵³ Any potential for identification, though interrupted by the back and forth between the multiple fragments, leaves the reader disillusioned by the inevitable deaths of the protagonists. The absurdity of their struggle to survive finds its peak when the protagonists comment retrospectively on the brevity of their lives, framed by the date of birth and death, in a hard-headed statements like: “Ich, Alfred Rainer, von meiner Frau Fredi genannt, wurde am 9. März 1871 in dieser Stadt geboren. Wir besaßen hinter dem Friedhof einen Garten [...]. Am 2. Juli 1944, mittags zwischen eins und zwei, starb ich. Mein Tod war wohl sinnlos. Er hat niemandem geschadet und niemandem genützt, aber deswegen klage ich nicht an.”¹⁵⁴ Life and death, as this quote shows, are made equal. Neither life nor death have a deeper meaning according to Veas-Gulani: “The people featured, like all objects of the narrative, become nothing more than datives of destruction, which is, rather than the people, the subject of the narrative. Both before and after death, humans feature as nothing more than bodies *to whom* violence is done.”¹⁵⁵ Destruction itself becomes the true hero of the narrative.¹⁵⁶

Why *Die Vergeltung* did not resemble Ledig’s great success of *Die Stalinorgel* in the 1950s lies, according to Gregor Streim, who reevaluated *Die Vergeltung* in 2005, in the author’s exaggerated writing style that he took too far in his airwar account: “Wie in *Stalinorgel* verwendet Ledig vorwiegend eine variable interne Fokalisierung und verknüpft eine Vielzahl von Handlungssträngen nach dem Prinzip der Parallelmontage,

¹⁵³ Susanne Veas-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt. Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003) 89. Hereafter cited as *Trauma and Guilt*.

¹⁵⁴ Gert Ledig, *Vergeltung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999) 43. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

¹⁵⁵ Lawson, “Natural History of Destruction” 35.

¹⁵⁶ Veas-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt* 90.

allerdings mit sehr viel höherer Schnittfrequenz als im ersten Roman.”¹⁵⁷ In other words, the sobriety of Ledig’s contemporary account that Hage praises, did not match the zeitgeist of the immediate postwar society. Vees-Gulani writes: “While the audience of the 1950s was apparently ready for the literary depiction of the cruelty of war at the front, it could not deal with revisiting the realities of the ‘home front.’ Critics were appalled by the book, the audience largely ignored it.”¹⁵⁸ This is precisely why Gregor Streim sees Ledig’s style as too exaggerated for a fifties’ audience. He points to a cruel suicide-scene in the novel and calls Ledig’s method an “Effekthascherei.”¹⁵⁹ Maya Zeyfuss argues that his work was widely discredited due to its lack of a happy ending and clear-cut good and bad characters: “It is something of a manifesto against war, but it does not simply demonize the Allies, nor does it in any way heroicize the Germans, not even as victims.”¹⁶⁰ The novel’s lack of identifiability potential and simplified portrayals of Germans and wartime enemies leaves readers without positive signposts for making senses of the fragmented events of *Die Vergeltung*.

Susanne Vees-Gulani follows the same line of argumentation as Lawson does by labeling *Die Vergeltung* an existentialist novel. She discusses three works depicting the air war in postwar German literature: Borchert’s *Billbrook*, Erich Nossack’s *Der Untergang* and Gert Ledig’s *Die Vergeltung*.¹⁶¹ Her main concern, as her title suggests, is

¹⁵⁷ Streim, “Bombenkrieg als Sensation” 307.

¹⁵⁸ Vees-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt* 87.

¹⁵⁹ Streim, “Bombenkrieg als Sensation” 308.

¹⁶⁰ Maria Zehfuss, *Wounds of Memory: The Politics of War in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2007) 100. Hereafter cited as *Wounds of Memory*.

¹⁶¹ Vees-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt* 92.

to track down a new beginning by emphasizing like never before the cruelty of war for each individual.¹⁶² According to Veas-Gulani, Nossack and Borchert do not question the events that lead to the war: “Neither one of them deals directly with the truly burning issues of the war events, namely the reasons for the bombings and the guilt Germany had loaded onto itself during the Nazi era.”¹⁶³ Gert Ledig, according to Veas-Gulani, addresses these issues head on and complicates for its readership the likelihood of accepting guilt.

At the heart of Ledig’s novel, the reader finds a twelve-part episode about a young girl and a former German soldier who end up being buried under the rubble of a bombed building. The older man takes advantage of the situation and rapes the young woman before perishing. Both die under the rubble. He commits suicide by cutting his wrists, while the girl dies of internal bleeding. The narration leaves open whether her injury was caused by the rape. This horrifying episode has barely received any attention in scholarship. In an overall reevaluation of Ledig’s work, critics have offered brief commentaries about the rape. Their estimation of the rape scene remains rather ambiguous, varying from assertions about love between the rapist and his victim, lust, revenge and guilt. Hage mentions the rape scene in connection with the public rejection on Ledig’s unemotional depictions about suffering on the home front: “[...] einen Begriff wie ‘gegrillt’ empfand man als zynisch, die Darstellung einer Vergewaltigung im

¹⁶² Veas-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt* 92.

¹⁶³ Veas-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt* 92.

verschütteten Keller als obszön (zumal der Gewaltakt zwischen Todesangst und verzweifelter Lust irritierend changiert).”¹⁶⁴

Even though Hage’s comment is brief, he manages to capture the ambiguity of the rape scene in terms of avoiding depicting the girl as a pure victim and the man as a pure villain. By labeling the rape scene as “obszön,” Hage also points to an erotic component. Other scholars, like Maya Zehfuss, sum up the death of the raped girl as one of the most gruesome ways of dying described in Ledig’s work.¹⁶⁵ All in all, scholarship has failed to study carefully the larger significance of this rape. Even though Veas-Gulani underlines complicated relationship between the girl and the rapist, she comes to the conclusion that the characters end up having true feelings for each other: “[...] what starts out as a shocking rape of a young woman who is buried alive under the rubble of a house together with a man she does not know, suddenly can end in a love act.”¹⁶⁶ Gregor Streim argues for the weaknesses of human beings that come to the fore under extreme circumstances. He rejects any strict classification of the rape scene and protagonists’ behavior:

Ledigs Darstellung verweigert eine Klassifikation in Täter und Opfer. Sie evoziert weder Mitleid mit den Figuren noch heroisiert sie ihr Leiden. Stattdessen präsentiert sie ein Pandämonium menschlicher Schwächen, moralischer und körperlicher Auflösungen – eine Vergewaltigung im verschütteten Keller, einen sadistischen Lynchmord und vieles mehr: ein Reigen von Angst, Schmerzen und Hinfälligkeit, der keinen Unterschied zwischen Angreifern und Angegriffenen, Soldaten und Zivilisten, Männern und Frauen, Alten und Jungen kennt.¹⁶⁷

Streim complicates the clear-cut division of good and bad characters, perpetrators and victims, especially in reference to the rape scene. For him, the episode is solely

¹⁶⁴ Hage, “Zeugen der Zerstörung” 48-49.

¹⁶⁵ Zehfuss, *Wounds of Memory* 96-97.

¹⁶⁶ Veas-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt* 89.

¹⁶⁷ Streim, “Bombenkrieg als Sensation” 307.

contextualized as a victim's story, much like Vees-Gulani's view. She is the only critic who points to the complication of the rape scene in her extended analysis: "In addition, the young woman, who in this scene is portrayed a victim, had shortly before been anything but that. Overburdened by her responsibility to carry a sick old woman down to the cellar at every air raid alarm, she had pushed her down the stairs and killed her."¹⁶⁸ Gulani makes a harsh judgment about the young woman, indicating that rape could be read as a revenge on the girl. Ledig's style, however, deliberately avoids depicting stable categories of right and wrong. In general, analyses of Ledig's works fall prey to the overall reevaluation of his work in contemporary literary studies concerning German wartime suffering:

Der Erfolg von Ledigs Roman zur Jahrtausendwende war kein Zufall. Er wurde möglich im Rahmen einer öffentlichen Debatte über die Opfererfahrungen der Deutschen im Zweiten Weltkrieg und einer Konjunktur historischen Erinnerns an Nationalsozialismus und Zweiten Weltkrieg als den kollektiven Traumata der wiedervereinten Nation, in der zuletzt auch die Bombardierung der deutschen Städte in den Blick rückte.¹⁶⁹

But before we turn all of our attention to Ledig, let us first consider Seghers and her attention to women's investment in political resistance through their preparation of food and surrender to hunger.

II. Hunger and Resistance: the Politics of Food in Seghers' "Die Saboteure"

In general, Seghers' story has a very concise and solid structure: we have a beginning that sets the stage for a political story. We have an act of sabotage in the middle of the narrative, which is ultimately responsible for the boycott against the Nazi

¹⁶⁸ Vees-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt* 90.

¹⁶⁹ Streim, "Der Bombenkrieg als Sensation" 304.

state. And we even have a moral in the end: the Nazi regime fails and leaves the firm supporters of Communism with true friendships and the possibility for a happy future. Even one of the resistance fighters, Franz Marnet, returns home to his family. Frau Bohland, a firm believer in the Nazi State, is left widowed. Her husband Paul and her son die in the battlefield. Ultimately, the hardships of the war only pay off for the good people. Seghers depicts a stark contrast between good and bad characters: the good ones are resistance fighters, the bad ones are those people who serve the Nazi regime. The three male protagonists are portrayed as heroes with a sophisticated morale: “Es gab drei in der Belegschaft, die dachten: Ich will lieber heute und hier verrecken, als gegen dieses Land auch nur einen Finger zu rühren. Die drei waren Hermann, Franz und Paul, das Zwetschkernchen.”¹⁷⁰ Kathleen LaBahn comments on Seghers’ political intention by reckoning that she wrote her story to demonstrate that resistance fighters were indeed politically active during the fascist regime: “Most likely, Anna Seghers simply sought to explain the observable decrease in political activity which characterized German Communist resistance, especially in the period preceding the attack of the Soviet Union.”¹⁷¹ Within the clear-cut superficial way of describing the protagonists, I argue that there is one element that complicates the narrative of resistance: the gendered discourse on food and hunger.

Anna Seghers tells a political story. The narration starts out with a historical event from Nazi military history: the failure of hand grenades in the Reich’s attempt to conquer an Ukrainian village: “Im Frühjahr 1943, in einem Abschnitt der ukrainischen Front, als

¹⁷⁰ Anna Seghers, “Die Saboteure,” *Brot und Salz* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1960) 65. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

¹⁷¹ LaBahn, *Exile Literature* 149.

der Befehl an die deutschen Soldaten ausging, das Dorf Sakoje zurückzuerobern, versagten ein paar Handgranaten bei dem Sturm auf das Gehöft, das die Schlüsselstellung war” (41). The three protagonists Hermann Schulz, Franz Marnet, and Paul Bohland, who caused the sabotage by manipulating the grenades in a German ammunition factory, are introduced at the very end of the first paragraph. The narration emphasizes thereby that the agents of resistance are secondary. The higher goal, in this case the struggle against the Nazi regime, stands at the center of the narrative. The third-person narrator emphasizes the political intention of the narrative by using Marxist language. The narrator foregrounds, for instance, that only the crowd can make a vital change in the Nazi dictatorship. The motivation to act comes from “[...] dem Willen der Völker, o Lenker der Schlachten!” (42-43). The firm belief in the Soviet Union as a utopia of a better world determines the thoughts of all protagonists who seek to engage in political action: “Es gäbe dort hinten im Osten ein unversehrbares Land, verschieden von allen Ländern der Erde” (62). The political motivation stands above the private lives of the protagonists who understand that they have to give up their private security in order to make a change: “Er hatte an das gedacht, was man ihm als Kind über das Leben erzählt hatte, daß man es wegwerfen muß, um es zu gewinnen” (50-51).

If the agents of sabotage are three male factory workers, then what shall the reader make of these male characters’ wives? Marie Bohland, Lotte Marnet, and Frau Bohland show their true investment and support of their husbands through their domestic skills, in particular through their different skills and investment in cooking. The less the women are depicted preparing food for their husbands, the more politically involved they are. Lotte, for example uses the kitchen to show her true feelings and communicate

openly with her husband, Franz Marnet. Marie, on the other hand, who is a terrible cook, secretly knows about her husband's political involvement. Frau Bohland, Paul's wife, is a perfect cook and housewife. Her kitchen is a place where any and all communication fails. Hunger, which plays an important historical role after the downfall of Nazi Germany, only affects the Marie and Lotte. Both support each other. Even their young children show a strong discipline during the time of hunger. Food and hunger are indeed techniques for moving into women's political involvement.

Mrs. Bohland shows all the qualities of a good housewife. Her kitchen is her personal territory, in which she prepares delicious and greasy food, which her husband Paul consumes with great delight. She is an obsessive cleaner, which makes her kitchen appear hygienic and flawless. Mrs. Bohland is a firm believer in the successes of the Nazi regime. Even the death of her son, who died as a soldier, cannot shatter her view of Germany's *Endsieg* and the rightness in forming the actions of Hitler's state. In coming to terms with the death of their child, the Bohlands pursue different types of mourning, which creates a divide in their outlook of the world. While Mrs. Bohland takes pride in having sacrificed a child for the state, her husband becomes friends with the former Red Army activist Hermann Schulz and engages in conspiracies against the Nazi regime by deliberately producing faulty hand grenades at work. The divide between the married couple is also visible in Mrs. Bohland's indifference about her outward appearance after their son's death. She is not concerned with looking younger than her husband anymore and turns into a dictator in their home:

Pauls Frau hatte sich immer, solange ihr Sohn noch daheim war, jung gemacht, damit die Leute nicht merkten, daß sie viel älter als ihr Mann war [...]. Als die beiden Alten allein blieben, legte sie keinen Wert mehr auf Jugend. Sie schien die beiden Männlichkeiten in ihrer Familie zu verwechseln, oder sie schmolzen in

ihrem Kopf zusammen. Sie schimpfte das Zwetchgenkernchen aus für Flecke oder verlorene Taschentücher, sie schalt es, wenn es zu spät kam oder einen Einkauf vergaß. (103)

Her relationship is blemished. She pays overmuch attention to formalities and sacrifices a true connection between husband and wife. Frau Bohland, curiously enough never mentioned on a first-name basis, manages her household exemplarily: “Das Fenster war mit Gardinen und Geranien verziert. Frau Bohland hatte dafür sogar einmal einen Preis bekommen, als kurz vor dem Krieg die Blockwartsfrau, die gleichzeitig einen Posten in der NS-Frauenschaft hatte, die Renovierung des Hauses zu einem Wettbewerb benutzte” (43). On account of the decoration which is supported by a member of the *NS Frauenschaft* and a prize, the narrative identifies Frau Bohland’s political attitude as belonging to her domestic sphere. The communication between her and Paul in the kitchen continually fails. Throughout the narration, Mrs. Bohland’s kitchen undergoes several stages of failed communication. While the couple communicates in a superficial scene, the conversations become shorter over the course of the narrative. In the end, the kitchen is a place of silence after Mr. Bohland participates in the conspiracy.

It is essential to look closely at these instances of failed communication. When Paul Bohland returns home from work, he is eager to talk about the interaction between Franz Marnet and Hermann Schulz. He suspects that they are preparing another strike against the regime. In the attempt to talk about his thoughts with his wife, the lack of real conversation between them is foregrounded by the narrative. The wife turns the conversation to the soup: “Als Paul zehn Minuten später, zu steif und zu müde, um sich zu waschen, vor dem Küchentisch saß, sagte er in den Suppenteller: ‘Komisch.’ Die Frau sagte: ‘Was ist denn komisch an der Suppe?’ – ‘An der Suppe nichts’, sagte Paul, ‘an der

Feindschaft zwischen dem Franz und dem Hermann” (46). This scene has a humorous component to it in its overt focus on the soup rather than on more burning issues.

Hermann and Franz pretend to be enemies in public. They display their hostility in order to distract Nazi atrocities from their secret plans of boycotting the regime. Paul Bohland, even though he is friends with both of them, does not belong to the circle of insiders. He realizes that something is happening in the relationship between them. He wants to talk about the suspicion, but his wife is more worried about the quality of her soup.

Paul Bohland never shows his true feelings to his wife. Even though he is eager to communicate his understanding of Hermann’s and Franz’s behavior, Paul realizes quickly that he cannot trust his wife with his thoughts. He keeps any assumptions about Hermann and Franz to himself: “Er brach sofort ab. Er machte sich noch einmal an den Knochen [...]. Doch solche Beobachtungen waren nicht einmal für die Frau bestimmt” (47). His focus turns to food and nibbling on the bones. Food destroys any real communication in this scene, and silences the actors. Moreover, food in the relationship of the Bohlands is a constant reminder of the day when they received the death notice of their son. Meals and eating always foreshadow bad events in the life of the Boylands. Eating, therefore, is negatively connotated: “Als er dann, wie gewohnt, das Mark aus dem kahlen Knochen sog, gedachte sie voll Verzweiflung, als seien alle menschlichen Schmerzen verschwistert, des Sonntags, an dem sie genauso beisammengesessen hatten. Das dünne Pfeifen des Knochens war seither gleich einer Fanfare für immer mit der Ankündigung des Unglücks verbunden” (47). When Mrs. Bohland receives the death notice of her husband at the end of the narration, the narrator points to the kitchen as a place of failed communication, leaving the actors speechless: “Paul mußte bestimmt

gleich wieder irgendwo auftauchen, auf seinem Fahrrad oder an der Werkbank mit eingezogenen Lippen oder gleichmütig in einer Ecke der Küche, wo er bei Hermann's letztem Besuch wortlos gesessen hatte" (106). Considering Seghers' attempt to divide characters into good and bad while punishing and rewarding their actions at the end of the narration, the two deaths in Frau Bohland's life can be seen as well-deserved for her flirtation with the Nazi state.

Lotte is the most politically involved of the three wives. Lotte is never depicted as serving Franz in the kitchen. In their relationship they communicate openly (even though true love is one-sided). The kitchen is not a place of food preparation, but rather a place to exchange burning issues about the Nazi state, especially when troops march into Russia: "Die Lotte war weiß wie die Wand. Was war ihr denn widerfahren? [...]. 'Wir haben Krieg mit den Russen.' Sie wandte sich ab. Beide gingen ein paarmal in dem engen Raum auf und ab, aneinander vorbei, wie in einem Käfig" (57). Even though, they walk past each other, they have the same attitude politically. There is no secret about true feelings: "[...] und daß der Mensch die erste, die einzige Liebe für sie geblieben war. Die letzte Nachricht brannte aber so stark, als daß ihn das andere jetzt schmerzen konnte" (58). Lotte throws herself against the picture of her daughter's father who was slayed by the Nazis in 1933. The kitchen is the place of authentic emotions and open display of political attitudes. Husband and wife are equal in the kitchen; no one dominates the space and sets up rules. Lotte is the most radical resistance fighters. She not only supports the boycotts, but also accuses the men of having done too little in order to stop the fascist terror.

Lotte is introduced by the narrator as a very unattractive woman. Franz is depicted as an unfortunate man who never had the chance to make a relationship with other women work: “Der Franz mußte etwas an sich haben, was den Mädchen mißfiel. Zahlreiche Liebschaften waren ihm schiefgegangen, bis er endlich auch bloß die Lotte bekam. Das war eine nicht ganz junge, nicht gerade hübsche Person; ein Auge verschandelt durch irgendeinen Betriebsunfall” (44). It turns out, however, that Lotte and Franz have the closest connection. She is a true comrade who disregards any traditional gender roles. She refuses to be a housewife and her attractiveness is defined by her political investment. Lotte, in comparison to Paul Bohland’s wife, is introduced, like Marie, on a first-name basis. The narration bestows a personable touch to these two female characters and makes them politically sympathetic.

Even though Marie, Hermann’s wife, seems to be naïve and clueless about her husband’s political involvement, she does, in fact, know about his activities. Similar to Lotte, Marie is not the perfect housewife. Moreover, she supports Hermann by pretending that she has no idea about his actions, since he wants his family to stay out of his activities. Conversely, Marie admires Hermann and knows about his political involvement. She tries to do everything to please him. She always fears being judged as a bad cook, since she has no talent for preparing meals: “In ihren klaren Augen lag unbedingte Ergebenheit. Sie zog etwas ängstlich die Brauen zusammen, als fürchte sie einen strengen Vater, wie Hermann sich an die Suppe machte, die etwas angebrannt war. Doch Hermann merkte es gar nicht oder stellte sich so, worauf sie vergnügt hinauslief und sang” (50). It is not her cooking that has a true effect on him, but her singing that revitalizes his strength and appeases Hermann. Her singing is despised by her mother

who always judged her youngest daughter Marie: “Sie hatte immer bei allen als unvernünftig gegolten, bei den Nachbarn, bei ihrer eigenen Mutter, die selbst von ihr sagte: Meine fünf anderen sind schlauer. Die kann nur singen, aus der wird nie was Gescheites” (114). Ironically, Marie is very aware that the singing has a positive effect on Hermann and makes him forget the fear of getting caught by the Nazis. This kitchen, in that sense, is not a place for displaying perfect cooking skills or that furthers open conversation. It is a place where an underground conversation between husband and wife takes place. By displaying Marie’s lousy cooking skills, the narration demonstrates that she is not completely bound to the domestic sphere: “Sie hatte auch andere Sachen seinetwegen versucht, die weniger gut gelungen waren: Kochen und Nähen und so was, was andere Frauen besser verstanden” (114). She is not a clueless housewife, but has other talents. She has great insight into her husband’s needs, which she meets by singing for him.

Besides Marie, Lotte and Mrs. Bohland, a fourth wife is worth mentioning. She is married to Mr. Kreß, a controller in the hand grenade factory. He helps with the conspiracy, but never gains complete trust from Hermann. Kreß is at once entangled with resistance against the established regime, but also benefits from the fascist state. His wife despises her husband’s cowardness by serving him meals in a cold and unemotional manner. Kreß knows that she is disappointed in him: “Du hast einmal die ganze Welt ändern wollen, und darum hab ich dich liebgehabt; sie hat aber dich geändert. Sie wird mir vergnüglich und höflich das Essen richten, verächtlich und geduldig. Ich werde es dabei lassen müssen. Ich werde ihr nicht erklären können, warum sie gerade heute mit mir zufrieden sein kann” (75). In this instance, communication fails between husband and

wife. The kitchen serves here as the place where an orderly marriage again is portrayed by the housewife's duties. When Kreß tries to bond with Hermann once more at the end of the narration, his son interrupts any political conversation by reminding his father: “Wir wollen heim, die Mutter wartet schon mit dem Essen” (101). Here food serves as the interlocutor. Kreß indeed proves to be an untrustworthy character. He remains shady and unhappy in the end of the narration. A true bond with Spengler, a former friend of Hermann, does not happen.

At the end of the narration, only the good characters, like Lotte and Marie, suffer from hunger. Marie and her son are cut off from food supplies after Hermann's execution: “Sie hatten langsam das Mehlsäckchen leer gegessen, den kleinen Vorrat, den Hermann noch heimgebracht hatte. Sie wären verhungert, wenn sie nicht manchmal morgens in ihrem Fenster dies und jenes zum Essen gefunden hätten. Es war so still in der Dunkelheit hingelegt worden, als ob sie der Geist des Toten versorgte” (115). They are the outsiders, cut off from any publicly displayed sympathy. Only Lotte becomes Marie's true friend and they take care of each other: “Die Lotte hatte einmal den eigenen Wollschal um Mariens Hals gewickelt. Marie hatte ihr einmal einen Rest Grieß in die Tasche gesteckt” (116). Even their children must suffer from hunger, but they have learned discipline and tolerate their hunger silently: “Jetzt saßen die beiden Kinder, im stillen auf eine Suppe hoffend, auf der Bank unter dem Fenster” (116). It is Marie who is rewarded at the end of the narration with a friendship with Lotte and Spengler, the former friend of Hermann. Marie and Lotte share the same destiny. Both have lost the fathers of their children who were killed by the Nazis. In the absence of Marie's husband, Spengler takes care of her food supply out of political alliance: “[...] er hatte dem Jungen die

Pfeife fertig geschnitzt; er hatte ihm einen Bissen zugestopft, dem Kind seines toten Freundes und nicht seiner Schwester und nicht seiner Mutter” (124). Hunger is used thus as a metaphor when Spengler searches for company in the postwar world: “[...] fühlte er Hunger und Durst nach den wenigen Menschen, die seine Gedanken teilen konnten” (121) is no coincidence that this ideological bonding between Marie and Spengler happens over the dinner table: “Sie richtete auf dem Tisch drei Teller, für sich, für den Kleinen und für den Gast. Später fing sie von selbst an, als sie ihre Suppe verlängert hatte und auf das Feuer gestellt” (126). She even sings for him, indicating that they have undergone an intimate bonding.

III. Rape... Just a Larger Part of Violence

If hunger is a specific function of one’s convictions against fascism, then the violence of rape is for Ledig a function of a greater violence, namely war. In Ledig’s world, bodies, buildings and war machinery are just materials that fall prey to the overall destruction. In the remainder of this section provide a careful analysis of the twelve-part rape scene that has been neglected in large part in scholarship. Each of these twelve parts is carefully constructed and carries a different meaning. In general, Ledig’s depiction of rape is an arched construction. It is a random circumstance, caused by a greater evil, and ends with a stylized image of a girl buried under the rubble. Ledig’s story plays with the reader’s expectations by following the girl’s carefully constructed destiny. In doing so Ledig suggests this scene contains a deeper meaning for the overall narrative. Various critics, as I have shown above, comment on the rape scene and pick different perceptions that assign the rape different meanings. They foreground the irony of the event, because

the girl feels pleasure during the sex act. They focus on rape as revenge for the murder of an old woman for which the girl is supposedly guilty. And they demonstrate the cruelty of her death as an aesthetic climax in the novel.¹⁷² All these perspectives on the rape scene, as I demonstrate, are not necessarily false. I argue, however, that Ledig shows, by charging and discharging rape equally with meaning, the meaninglessness of rape, since a greater destruction ultimately rules over any character in the narrative. The man and the girl both die. He commits suicide and she dies from internal bleeding. This relativization of rape stands, therefore, at the center of my textual analysis, which I divide into four larger parts. Part one focuses on the introduction of the girl as possibly responsible for the death of the old and sick woman. Part two demonstrates the power dynamic between the young girl and the man, which the narration underlines by fragmenting the girl's body. Part three focuses on the actual rape scene, in which stereotypical behaviors of assaulter and rape victim are turned on their head. In part four, I demonstrate how the deaths of the protagonists are discharged of meaning, because the devastation from the bombing reigns supreme as the overpowering and everlasting force of total destruction.

Even though she is the tragic main protagonist in the multiple fragments leading up to her rape and death, the girl is not introduced immediately. It is rather the sick old woman, for whom the girl takes care during the air raid, that is introduced first: "Die Kranke lag im Bett" (15). The second person who enters the scene is the widow: "Die Tür öffnete sich, eine Frau in Trauerkleidern und ein Mädchen traten herein" (15). The girl appears insignificant, as suggested by the lack of any information concerning her personal background. In comparison to the old woman, who misses her son, and the widow, who wears "Trauerkleider" (indicating that she just lost her husband), the girl is

¹⁷² See previous section.

introduced just as “das Mädchen.” In other words, the girl is no one and at once every girl. A nameless character, the girl remains a distant figure, one without a specific name or personal connection. Her outer appearance is bare. In contrast to the widow, whose clothes are mentioned in detail, the reader only gains an understanding of the girl’s body, which appears attractive and even erotic. Single body parts are foregrounded by the narrator: “Dem Mädchen fiel eine blonde Locke in die Stirn [...]. Das Mädchen lehnte sich nach vorn. Der Träger des Kleides rutschte über ihre Schulter. Er fiel auf die Knochen am Hals” (16). Moreover, the narration focuses on the hands and the arm of the girl, body parts she explicitly uses to carry the woman down the stairs on a chair.

The narration leaves the reader in the dark as to whether the widow or the girl is in fact guilty for pushing the old woman down the stairs in the attempt to save their own lives. The girl and the widow work together and perform sufficient and impersonal “Handgriffe” (16) while carrying down the old woman. Both the widow and the girl feel exhausted. Readers understand their exhaustion through the depiction of sweat running down the girl’s back. The articulation of her feelings happens on a bodily basis. The reader does not gain access to her thoughts, but rather relies on descriptions of her outer appearances. As for the old woman, the death is ambiguous. The reader is left with only speculations of who is to blame. The fact that the girl and the widow both pick up the chair simultaneously complicates the question of blame. In addition, any assumption of guilt on the part of the reader is put in doubt, since the detonation of bombs could have also caused the woman’s chair to fall. Thus the narration obscures the true circumstances by focusing on the chair and not on the women who carry it before the old woman falls and dies: “Als die Kranke auf dem Stuhl saß, schleppten sie ihn hinaus” [...]. Er bewegte

sich bei jedem Abschuß” (16). Ultimately, the chair is more at fault than the characters, as it is the one thing that is not stable but rocking: “Sie hoben den Stuhl auf; er wankte” (17). Ledig plays with the notion of guilt and revenge by suggesting that the young girl might have been to blame for pushing down the chair. The narration, however, ultimately underlines the lack of importance of the true circumstances of the old woman’s death. Ledig rejects a black-and-white judgement in matters of guilt. It is not necessary for the narrator to justify rape by suggesting that the girl is guilty. Rape and death inevitably happen. They are detached from any moral value-system.

It is also important to take a closer look at the fragmentation of the female body, which becomes intensified once the girl enters the cellar. Her body is shrouded by darkness when she enters the space. While the girl is exposed in the beginning of the narrative by a detailed depiction of her body parts, her body is rendered insignificant in the cellar. Only the sound of voices fills the basement, where she fails to communicate with others. The encounter of the girl with the man, who later on rapes her, is radically different from the introductory scene. The man clearly dominates the scene by ordering around the girl and the other cellar members. Any and all bodily contact between the man and the girl is ungentle. When the girl enters the cellar, she does so forcefully, but her agency for self-preservation is undercut by the man’s voice, which brings to her attention that she stumbled over his foot: “Das Mädchen riß die Tür zum Lutschutzkeller auf, da erlosch die Kerze. Es stolperte durch die Dunkelheit hinein. Eine Männerstimme erklärte: ‘Das war mein Fuß’” (35). The first thing she hears is the man’s voice complaining about her clumsiness.

In contrast to the introductory scene, the narrator finally provides insight into the girl's thoughts. It is not her body that communicates her feelings anymore. She is obsessed with the death of the old woman and wishes to hide what has happened: "Vielleicht brennt das Haus ab, dachte sie, dann bleibt es ein Geheimnis" (35). Again, the narration plays with the notion of guilt. It is still to be proven, however, who is indeed responsible. While the girl feels guilty, a voice in the darkness accuses her of deliberately leaving the old woman behind: "Sie Fräulein, ich denke, Sie tragen die Kranke herunter?" (35). The girl appears alone again. The same voice follows her and insists on interrogating her throughout the whole episode. The girl's heart beats rapidly due to the accusations and fuses together with the noises of the bombing outside. In effect, uninformed accusations and the justice of aerial bombing begin to merge.

The girl's wish for the house to burn down (in order to hide the death of the woman) ultimately comes true. Ironically, even though the supposed crime does remain a secret, the girl's "luck" is belied by the fact that she does not escape rape and death. Moreover, the only person who sympathizes with her dies: it is an old man who understands why the girl could not carry the old woman down the stairs: "'Wenn Sie mich fragen', begann aus der Ecke eine alte Stimme, einen so schweren Menschen heruntertragen, das kann niemand'" (37). The girl finally expresses aloud that she did not intend what happened: "Das habe ich nicht gewollt" (37). When she confesses, her voice is overpowered by the machines from above. All of these circumstances could be read yet again as coming from a sympathizing narrator who supports the girl by veiling her crime. The reader may even hope that the girl, an identification figure, is spared. Readers' sympathies may also attach to the man, who later on rapes her, as he is characterized as a

noble figure. He orders the widow to stop laughing at the dead old man's mourning wife. Yet, the narrator sets the reader's sights on the wrong figure. The man is not noble, but rather just displays power by ordering other people.

The rape scene portrays the female victim as weak and passive and the rapist as overpowering and active. But the narrative proves this to be false. Even though the girl surrenders to him and lies on the ground with her arms widely spread before the assault, she and the man undergo several developmental stages that complicate stereotypical conceptions of assaulter and victim. She even seems to enjoy the assault at some point during forced intercourse. It becomes clear that the man is in fact responsible for the girl's surrendered position, as he wishes to deafen her in order to keep her quiet. In this respect the text emphasizes again that any bodily contact between the two is ungentle. While the girl is still lying on the floor and confused what has just happened to her, the noises of the bombing seem more dominant in her field of perception than the other people around her. Others in the cellar are rendered passive when they too realize that they are trapped under the bombed building. The only audible sounds are the outside noises from the falling rubble. All of a sudden, the detonations become stronger and leave the man and the girl alone. The others are presumably dead: "Als sich die Steine beruhigten, lag er auf einem Menschen. Es war das Mädchen. Von den anderen hörten sie nichts mehr. Sie waren allein in einer Höhle" (85). The man's domination is foregrounded by the fact that he lies on top of her. He is also the first one who takes the initiative to examine whether the other is dead: "'Leben Sie noch?'" (96). He touches her, but he does it forcefully, without any respect: "Er griff dem Mädchen ins Gesicht, berührte die Nase. Die Dunkelheit war undurchdringlich" (96). Again darkness veils bodies rendering them

imperceptible. Whereas the girl's first encounter with the man was dominated by voices, it is now touching that dominates their interaction.

The rape scene is long and cruel. The girl constantly struggles to break free from the man, but every attempt fails. In the end, she becomes involuntarily attached to the man and possibly feels lust during the assault. The posture of the entangled bodies displays the man's domination. The girl is involuntarily and uncomfortably pressed against him: "Ihr Kinn drückte gegen seine Brust. Dort stand das Hemd offen. An den Lippen spürte sie die Haare. Der Mann röchelte" (96). The bodily contact, initiated by the man, develops in multiple steps. First, as I mention before, he tests if she is still alive. Then, he touches her sexually: "Die fremde Hand strich über ihre Lippen. Ein Finger fuhr in ihren Mund. Der Mann lag auf ihr. Durch ihr Haar wehte sein Atem. Sie fühlte seinen Körper" (96). The narration underlines the sexual undertone by using vocabulary as "keuchen," "röcheln," and the fact that he "schmiegte sich an sie" (96). Bodily fluids are exchanged when the man's saliva falls onto the girl's forehead. He then begins to caress the girl and touches her exposed naked body, as her dress is broken: "Unterhalb ihrer Brüste strich die Hand über den Leib. Ihr Kleid war zerrissen. Sie spürte seine Finger" (98). The girl abhors his touch and the heavy weight with which he presses her against the rubble. She asks him again to move, but his movements become more sexual, and he presses himself yet again against her: "Auf ihr liehend, begann er sich zu schlängeln" (98). He does not give her space, but remains on her. She suddenly realizes that he desires her sexually: "Sein Körper wurde schwerer. Er lag auf ihren Brüsten wie ein Tier. Angst drohte sie zu ersticken. Sie fühlte plötzlich, daß er sie beehrte" (98). As the

narration shows, it is not his physical weight that makes her fear suffocation, but the fear of his sexual attraction to her.

The girl tries to convince him not to assault her by engaging in a personal conversation, reminding him of his own daughter. When she realizes that he will not change his mind, she threatens to scream. The man displays his cruel intentions and total disregard of her pleading by goading her to shout for help: “Tu’s doch!”(99). He is aware that no one will hear them under the rubble and he can take advantage of the situation. His preparation to rape her is paralleled with the bombing above. Timelessness underlines her state of surrender and victimhood: “Ein wenig wich er zurück, aber an seinem Keuchen hörte sie, daß er sich vorbereitete. Ich muß warten, empfand sie. Warten! Sie wartete auf das, was kam. In der Stille hörte sie dumpfes Murren, dann spürte sie auch Bewegung. Die Erde wurde gebombt. Sie dachte: Wieviel Tage liege ich hier? Sie wußte es nicht” (99). He lifts her skirt and removes her underwear. It is a violent act of sexual behavior, in which the girl is dominated by the man’s brutal force, but also by the rubble. Both the man and the rubble trap the woman and force her to surrender her body: “Seine feuchten Lippen preßten sich an ihren Hals. Sie saugten sich fest, und er grub die Zähne in die Haut. Mit dem linken Arm hielt er ihr die Hände hinter dem Kopf auf den Steinen fest. Sie waren eingehüllt in die Finsternis des Loches. Geröll, Schutt, der Rest von einem Gewölbe. Es umgab sie wie ein Panzer” (121). She is disgusted with his behavior and desperately tries to break free. In this attempt, she accidentally touches his penis. He responds by biting her neck: “Klebriges geriet zwischen ihre Finger, da biß er zu. Sie schrie auf. Der Schmerz an ihrem Hals war unerträglich” (122). His brutality is accentuated by attacking her entire body and not only her sexual

organs. When he assaults her, she experiences a pain that burns like fire: “Seine Zähne begannen sich zu lockern, dann durchfuhr der Ruck ihren Unterleib. Es brannte wie Feuer” (122). Despite the cruelty of the sexual assault, the girl participates in the sexual act by moving her body as the man orders. At this point the narrator suggests that they are both guilty of the sexual act: “Alles vermischte sich: Schmerz, Ekel, Ascheu. Sie dachte nichts mehr. Im Rhythmus mit den Leibern begann sie zu wimmern. Das Keuchen seiner Lust in den Ohren, seine Schwere auf sich. Geröll drückte sich in ihre Schultern. Die Luft roch nach Exkreten. Sie bewegte sich. Sie bewegte sich. Über ihr gurgelte er wie ein Tier” (122). Ultimately, the rape scene becomes distorted. The borders between victim and assaulter are rendered impossible to determine, as the girl seems to experience lust. Her supposedly sexual behavior is underlined by the fact the man calls her whore after the assault.

The last part of my analysis focuses on the deaths of the protagonists. The rubble becomes the man’s and the girl’s death bed: “Der Altar des Vaterlandes bestand nicht aus Stein, sondern aus Geröll. Das Mädchen hatte auf ihm die Unschuld und einen Liter Blut verloren” (174). The cruelty of her death is foregrounded by losing her virginity through sexual assault and losing a liter of blood. The narration leaves open whether the blood loss stems from the rape. Again, the true circumstances of her death, like the death of the old woman, remain unresolved. The narration discharges the deaths of any meaning. Additionally, the fear of death or any last thoughts are extinguished. The girl and the man appear emotionless, like the stones that surround them: “Er war apathisch wie sie” (175). Upon realizing that they cannot escape and death inevitably awaits them, the man cuts his wrists: “Der Mann gab keine Antwort. Er atmete kurz. Als sie nach

seinem Gesicht griff, stand der Mund offen. Ihre Finger stießen gegen Zähne” (175). By touching his dead body, his lifeless materiality is foregrounded for her. She is alone with stones. She too becomes one with the ruins: “Unter ihre Fingernägel schob sich Erde” (175). There is no emotional attachment when the girl touches the dead man. The wetness, stemming from his blood, is explained clinically by the narrator as the man’s self-inflicted injury. It is a mere description of lifeless body parts: “In die Lücke zwischen ihre Leiber rollte der Körper des Mannes. An ihr Bein drückte sein Arm. Als sie ihn wegschob, berührte sie sein Handgelenk. Vom Daumen bis zum Puls lief ein Schnitt. Die Nässe kam von dort” (176). The circumstances of his death do not touch the girl. She is indifferent toward him and gives into her own death, which appears in the narration as liberation from previous torture of rape: “Das Mädchen schlief ein. Aus ihrem Gesicht löste sich die Spannung, und es bekam jene Züge, die auf der Photographie zu sehen waren, die ein Soldat von ihr erhalten hatte” (192). Any and all tension or anguish disappears (in her face). Her death might or might not have been peaceful; the text leaves this question open by indicating she *maybe* had a pleasant memory in her final moments: “Vielleicht erinnerte sie sich, umgeben von Trümmern und unter den dumpfen Wirbelschlägen der Bomben, noch an etwas, das stärker war als das Grauen. An die drei zaghaften Worte unter dem letzten Brief, den sie geschrieben und den sie erhalten hatte” (192). In the end, the destruction moves forward, hiding the rape that has happened to her: “Sand rieselte auf ihren Unterleib und versuchte zu verbergen, was mit ihr geschehen war” (192). The sand attempts to cover up the rape or the injury of the attack. Humans become one with destruction: “Unter ihr zitterte die Erde. Geröll verschob sich. Sie

berührte nichts mehr” (193). Destruction goes on; it is, the narration suggests, the only life that is left.

IV. Conclusion

Why do “Die Saboteure” and *Die Vergeltung* cleave rape and hunger? In Anna Segher’s narrative, men and women work together for a political goal. In their marriage, political alliance is more important than fulfilling stereotypical gender norms. Even though women are bound to the domestic sphere and prepare food, they display their willingness to fight against the regime. Rape has no space in a world in which men and women are comrades. Hunger and food serve as metaphors for resistance or flirtations with the Nazi state. Resistance fighters’ women are the only ones who have to suffer from hunger during the postwar period. They do not complain about their suffering and even their young children act mature about the lack of food. Bonding happens over the scarcity of food. The mutual suffering connects the resistance fighters. In general, food and hunger are rendered secondary. During the war, resistance fighters’ wives did not pay attention to preparing high quality meals. After the war these women do not complain about the lack of food. Food and hunger display power. They are metaphors for political resistance, friendship, and discipline. An imagination of bodily experience as it occurs in female autobiographies would load food with an individual point of view. Seghers, however, sees the characters’ relationship to food and hunger as a collective experience, pointing to their comradeship.

In Gert Ledig's *Die Vergeltung*, hunger is completely detached from wartime suffering of German civilians on the home front. Ledig's novel depicts a sixty-nine-minute airwar in which multiple events happen at the same time. Ledig is interested in the moment. His point of view leaves no time for hunger, because experiencing hunger takes time. In addition, hunger accounts for the will to survive. In Ledig, individual instincts only play a momentary role. Surviving is rendered meaningless, since individuals constantly fall prey to destruction. Rape is a momentary crime. It is rendered meaningless, part of a higher violence. The experience of rape is depicted from the perspective of a third-person narrator who is not invested enough to portray the girl's bodily experience of rape. Ledig focuses on bodies only in the sense that they are material, nothing more or less than rubble and war machinery. Ultimately, the different perspectives on war and postwar realities of "Die Saboteure" and *Die Vergeltung* allow for a separation of rape and hunger.

Part III: The Rise of the Diskurswache

Chapter Three

The Rise of the Diskurswache

I. Heinrich Böll and Wolfgang Koeppen as Group 47 Writers

Contemporary debates in and outside of Germany have challenged mainstream understandings of Germans as perpetrators and victims. Stuart Taberner and Karina Berger outline in the preface to their essay collection *Germans as Victims in the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic*, how key cultural mechanisms, such as historical exhibitions, autobiographies, literature and movies contributed to “the integration of the story of German suffering into the larger wartime narrative [...]”¹⁷³ Taberner and Berger identify literature as the most sufficient medium to uncover neglected discourses and perspectives on the Nazi period.

Yet, the role of literature is more complicated in postwar Germany than the two authors suggest. Literature can indeed reveal, but it also has the power to silence. By rereading overlooked literature of the immediate postwar years, my dissertation tells a forgotten story – the story of female experience. I argue that, in the time period from 1945 to 1960, hunger and rape became key motifs that find vital articulation in female autobiographies. Women tell what it means to obtain food in a rape culture. Their stories are not stories of victims. Women developed creative survival strategies, which strengthened their confidence – a confidence that was not welcome in the time of

¹⁷³ Stuart Taberner and Karina Berger, “Introduction,” *Germans as Victims in the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic*, eds. Stuart Taberner and Karina Berger (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009) 5.

reconstruction. Female experience vanishes slowly but surely from the literary landscape. Following the discourse of hunger and rape during the course of fifteen years, my story ends with the beginning of what Klaus Briegleb calls the Diskurswache”¹⁷⁴ of the Federal Republic, namely the dominating role of the Group 47.

Much has been written about the mysterious nature of the group. Speculations circle around its membership, its meetings, its influence on promoting new authors, and the range of the group’s power in shaping the postwar German literary landscape in the Federal Republic in particular. Membership questions led to searches in the archives for letter correspondences of authors in touch with its leaders Hans Werner Richter and Alfred Andersch.¹⁷⁵ Eugen Satschewski claims that even nowadays “[...] ist das Problem der Zugehörigkeit noch ungelöst. Wegen des informellen Wesens der Gruppe 47 ist es schwer, den Grad der seelischen Verbundenheit der Autoren mit den ästhetischen und ideologischen Prinzipien der Gruppe zu bestimmen.”¹⁷⁶ The burning issues, however, have been raised by Klaus Briegleb and Frank Trommler. Both critics question in different ways how authors of the group adulterate a German understanding of the Nazi past.¹⁷⁷ I show that Heinrich Böll’s *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* and Wolfgang Koeppen’s *Der Tod in Rom* qualify for Trommler’s and Briegleb’s multi-faceted critique concerning

¹⁷⁴ Klaus Briegleb, “‘Neuanfang’ in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsliteratur – Die Gruppe 47 in den Jahren 1947-1951,” *Bestandsaufnahme: Studien zur Gruppe 47*, ed. Stephan Braese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999) 48. Hereafter cited as “Neuanfang.”

¹⁷⁵ Eugen Satschewski, “Wolfgang Koeppen und die Gruppe 47,” *Wolfgang Koeppen: Mein Ziel war die Ziellosigkeit*, eds. Gunnar Müller-Wadeck and Michael Gratz. (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1998) 46. Hereafter cited as “Wolfgang Koeppen.”

¹⁷⁶ Satschewski, “Wolfgang Koeppen” 46.

¹⁷⁷ See Briegleb, “Neuanfang” and Frank Trommler, “Dichter, Richter und Leser – Zum Verhältnis von Autor und Leserschaft in den fünfziger Jahren,” *Bestandsaufnahme: Studien zur Gruppe 47*, ed. Stephan Braese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999). Hereafter cited as “Dichter, Richter.”

the group's supposed antisemitism, male dominance, and the constant reproduction of recurring themes. I extend Trommler's and Briegleb's claims by one element: the missing imagination of female experience.

Before I outline Trommler's and Briegleb's theses in more detail, it is necessary to determine Böll's and Koeppen's role within the group. As different and problematic as their relationship with the group is, Böll and Koeppen are both members who Trommler and Briegleb would call typical. Böll was an active member who participated in many of the group's meetings. He praised and criticized the group publicly, especially when in the 1960s it became more politically active. At times Böll is a strong advocate from the group, at other times he acts as one of its harshest critics. In his Nobel Prize speech, for example, he did not even mention the group.¹⁷⁸ In spite of Böll's reservations against the group's enthusiasm for SPD politics, he becomes its eager defender in 1965. He makes a public stand in his article "Angst vor der Gruppe 47" against those who claim that the group forecloses any literary movements.¹⁷⁹ Throughout, however, Böll's role remains highly problematic. Even within the group, the attitude towards Böll's writing remains torn. When he received the group's prize, some voices saw the quality of the group vanishing.¹⁸⁰

Wolfgang Koeppen's membership is far less settled. Wolfgang Satewski comments on the difficulty of classifying Koeppen as a member: "Trotz der Unklarheit über die Mitgliedschaft in der Gruppe gibt es in der bundesdeutschen Literatur keinen

¹⁷⁸ J. H. Reid, "'Diesem Böll der Preis...' – Heinrich Bölls problematisches Verhältnis zur Gruppe 47," *Bestandaufnahme. Studien zur Gruppe 47*, ed. Stephan Braese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1999) 107. Hereafter cited as "Diesem Böll."

¹⁷⁹ See also Reid, "Diesem Böll" 112.

¹⁸⁰ Reid, "Diesem Böll" 103.

anderen Schriftsteller, über dessen Zugehörigkeit zur Gruppe 47 so verschiedene und so widersprüchliche Meinungen bestehen.“¹⁸¹ Koeppen maintains a close relationship with Richter and attends various meetings, particularly in the 1950s.¹⁸² In interviews Koeppen publicly advocates his support of the group. As Briegleb explains the ritual membership: “Eine Grenze zwischen dem personellen Innen und Außen der Gruppe ist nie gezogen worden, wer eingeladen wurde, ist drinnen, kann aber zur nächsten Tagung schon wieder draußen sein: nicht eingeladen.“¹⁸³ Koeppen and Böll are both part of the group. Their writing style, however, differs radically: they belong to two different schools within the group. Böll is in Reid’s terms an “Erzähler,” while Koeppen’s style is geared towards literature of the Weimar Republic, which makes him an outsider even within the group.¹⁸⁴ Despite the formal distinctions that differentiate Böll’s and Koeppen’s writing, their themes of coming to terms with the Nazi past, are indeed highly symptomatic of the group.

Briegleb and Trommler doubt the propagated complexity of depicting victims and perpetrators in literary fiction of group members that deal with fascism. The literary portrayal of Jewish characters in particular remains stereotypical and artificial. In that context, Trommler criticizes Alfred Andersch’s *Sansibar oder der letzte Grund* and Günter Grass’ *Die Blechtrommel* for their heavy-handed way of responding to cultural debates in the fifties and sixties.¹⁸⁵ Briegleb goes one step further and accuses the group

¹⁸¹ Satschewski, “Wolfgang Koeppen” 46.

¹⁸² Satschewski, “Wolfgang Koeppen” 52.

¹⁸³ Briegleb, “Neuanfang” 39.

¹⁸⁴ Satschewski, “Wolfgang Koeppen” 53-54.

¹⁸⁵ Trommler, “Dichter, Richter” 284.

of repeating in their literary imagination what has become the Jewish destiny under National Socialism: authors kill off the Jewish characters in their narrations. Briegleb exemplifies this practice with Böll's *Wo warst du, Adam?* and in particular criticizes the lack of response to the murder of the Jewish woman in the narrative: "Juden werden in die Literatur überführt, um dort symbolisch noch einmal zum Verschwinden gebracht zu werden."¹⁸⁶

Frank Trommler points to the lack of themes concerning the so-called home front suffering in the fiction of group members: "Wie wurden deutsche Nachkriegsautoren den realen Erfahrungen von Massensterben an der Front, in Bombenangriffen und bei den Vertreibungen bei Kriegsende gerecht?"¹⁸⁷ Trommler here poses a rhetorical question and thereby demonstrates his skepticism about group members' capability of addressing the explosive issues at hand: "Bei der Darstellung der deutschen Literatur nach 1945 als einer Erfolgsgeschichte haben Literaturhistoriker hervorgehoben, daß sie nur durch die Abrechnung mit dem Nationalsozialismus, wie bei Böll, Walser, Andersch, Kluge, Hichhuth, Koeppen beispielhaft geschehen, ihren internationalen Erfolg erzielen konnte."¹⁸⁸ Even today, he suggests these issues have not been resolved. He especially challenges the notion of a "Erfolgsgeschichte." He successfully illuminates the missing link between reader and author, which Richter tries to artificially, and unsuccessfully, overcome with the discussion on the so-called "elektischer Stuhl."¹⁸⁹ Still, Trommler

¹⁸⁶ Briegleb, "Neuanfang" 58.

¹⁸⁷ Trommler, "Dichter, Richter" 286.

¹⁸⁸ Trommler, "Dichter, Richter" 284.

¹⁸⁹ Trommler, "Dichter, Richter" 279.

judges the group more favorably than Klaus Briegleb. While the former sees the gaps in literary depictions as a result of a lack of sensitivity in the author and reader relationship, Briegleb presumes the group's conscious intention of writing fragmentary texts with a male overtone:

Andersch führt vor, daß man zu diesem Zweck erst einmal einen Männlichkeitsbeweis ablegen muß. ‚Die Junge Generation‘, sagt er, ‚stand für eine falsche Sache. Aber sie stand.‘ Dies ist das Phantasma einer fallischen Wir-Erzeugung. Wir schaffen das Neue, die Einheit, die Revolution, wie es auch hieß, ohne Atempause aus dem unmittelbar Alten. Es ist die Unmittelbarkeit zum Krieg.¹⁹⁰

Briegleb argues that the immediacy of war leads to the depiction of former soldiers as heroes. Therefore, coming to terms with the past becomes an exclusively German male enterprise, always excluding women, Jews and other minorities. Briegleb does not stand alone. Georg Guntermann sees the non-international formation of the group as highly problematic: “Problematische Voraussetzung dafür war eine damals kaum bemerkte, aus heutigem Abstand umso spürbarere Betonung des Nicht-Internationalen, eine herausgehobene Weise, in der das Deutsche als historische Verpflichtung praktiziert werden sollte.”¹⁹¹ Guntermann claims the group is narrow-minded and exclusively German, which prevents any profound engagement with their texts beyond a German perspective.

Heinrich Böll's short novel deals with Germany's restoration period and reduces women to mere possessions who become status symbols for the male protagonist. The way to force women into a heterosexual relationship is to align male power with access to food. Or, more specifically, capitalist security is achieved through the trade of the female

¹⁹⁰ Briegleb, “Neuanfang” 47.

¹⁹¹ Georg Guntermann, “Einige Stereotype zur Gruppe 47,” *Bestandaufnahme. Studien zur Gruppe 47*, ed. Stephan Braese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1999) 27.

body for bread. The connection with the immediate postwar years and the overall hunger from which the public suffered after World War II, is only processed through the main male character. Hunger, therefore, renders women passive. They depend on men's will to supply for them. Rape is well-disguised in heterosexual traditional gender norms. The rapist is not a former wartime enemy, but rather the husband. In this regard, the social suppression of women in Westernized capitalism asks for a different type of female surrender: housewife security in exchange for giving up female bodily integrity.

Wolfgang Koeppen, on the other hand, includes a Jewish character, Ilse Kürenberg, in his narrative, and, as Böll proceeds in *Wo warst du, Adam?*, kills the woman off at the end of the narration. In addition, she is murdered as part of the "Endlösung" by the former Nazi officer Gottfried Judejahn. In general, women remain side characters who are barely psychologized, while male characters receive more narrative space and occupy the sphere of food and hunger. Only the men are presented as able to carry a possible future for Germany on their shoulders. Additionally, rape becomes part of a fascist quest to fight their bodily dissolution. Women, reduced to bodies used to keep men alive, vanish slowly but surely from the postwar literary landscape, in which they still managed to "survive" in fictional writings by non-group authors.

II. In the Name of Love – Rape Economies in Heinrich Böll's *Das Brot der frühen Jahre*

The flurry of scholarship on Heinrich Böll and his writings has ceased within the past fifteen years. Whereas the Nobel Prize winner had once triggered vast discussions about his political involvement (especially during the 1970s), his role within the Group

47, and his fiction, interest in Böll today has dissolved almost entirely.¹⁹² This is not say that his works are not discussed anymore, but no new innovative scholarship on Böll seems to have moved past labeling his writing as a constant repetition of typical themes, like food¹⁹³, alcohol, religion and his clear-cut moralism.¹⁹⁴ Many critics focus on his style, which is often termed as being too simplistic, resulting in rather aggressive discussions of Böll's entitlement to his literary success and prizes.¹⁹⁵ In spite of this lull, there are grounds for reassessing Böll. Contemporary research is beginning to reengage with established notions and to reevaluate his lesser known writings as aesthetically more complicated than formerly assumed.¹⁹⁶ Böll's 1958 novel *Billard um Halbzehn* is still held in high regard.

Das Brot der frühen Jahre, however, one of Böll's earliest works, has been spared from scholarly discussions. In Balzer's extensive study on Heinrich Böll's complete works and their reception, *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* is a lacuna. In comparison to other early stories, like *Der Zug war pünktlich*, *Wo warst, du Adam?* or *Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa...?*, this short novel was overlooked or, still worse, judged as one of Böll's

¹⁹² One exception is the publication of *Der Engel schwieg* by Heinrich Böll. See, for example, Hage *Zeugen der Zerstörung*.

¹⁹³ Ludwig Fischer introduces Böll in *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur bis 1967* as always using these themes. Ludwig Fischer, *Literatur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis 1967*, vol. 10 (München: C. Hanser, 1986).

¹⁹⁴ Böll, however, focuses specifically on women in *Frauen vor Flusslandschaft* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1985).

¹⁹⁵ See, for example Reid, "Diesem Böll."

¹⁹⁶ Kristin Rebien, "Dimensions of Engagement: Politics and Aesthetics in Heinrich Böll's Early Fiction," *German Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 350-368. Rebien looks at Böll's rather complicated textual construction in *Der Zug war pünktlich*.

weakest works.¹⁹⁷ While journalistic reviews were undecided, the majority of literary criticism on the text was negative. Böll scholar Rainer Nägele even goes so far as to classify Böll's novel as a "Nebenwerk."¹⁹⁸ Manfred Durzak is, however, one of the few critics who praised this novel in terms of its aesthetic conceptualization. He points out that *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* is an exemplification of Heinrich Böll's proposed "Ästhetik des Brotes."¹⁹⁹ Durzak refers to Böll's speech held at the Frankfurter Vorlesungen in 1964. The author outlines an aesthetic of humanity, still to be found in postwar German literature. Böll's aesthetic embodies "das Wohnen, die Nachbarschaft und die Heimat, das Geld und die Liebe, Religion und Mahlzeiten [...]"²⁰⁰ Böll reflects on Germans' consumption in literary fiction as sloppy and superficial, something to which people do not pay much attention. Especially after 1945, German literature according to Böll has focused increasingly on fast snacks like bread and soup, rather than on elaborate meals. In that context, he believes it to be necessary to develop an aesthetic of bread in literature:

Was ich natürlich gern entwickeln würde, da die Abfälligkeit einer abfälligen Gesellschaft mich, was dieses Thema angeht, präpariert und prädestiniert hat: eine Ästhetik des Brotes in der Literatur, des Brotes, das zuerst das reale, vom Bäcker oder von der Hausfrau, vom Bauern gebackene ist, doch auch mehr, viel mehr – Zeichen der Brüderlichkeit nicht nur, auch des Friedens, sogar der Freiheit, und wiederum noch mehr: das wirkungsvollste Aphrodisiakum, und weiterhin: Hostie, Oblate, Mazze, magisch verwandelt zur Pille, die ihre Form von der Hostie hat, Ersatz ist für Brüderlichkeit, Frieden, Freiheit, Aphrodisiakum...doch ich bin

¹⁹⁷ Bernd Balzer, *Das literarische Werk Heinrich Bölls. Einführung und Kommentare* (Nördlingen: dtv, 1997) 240. Hereafter cited as *Das literarische Werk*.

¹⁹⁸ Rainer Nägele, *Heinrich Böll: Einführung in das Werk und in die Forschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Fischer Taschenbuch, 1976) 129. Hereafter cited as *Einführung Werk*.

¹⁹⁹ Heinrich Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, ed. Manès Sperber (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1966) 97. Hereafter cited as *Vorlesungen*.

²⁰⁰ Böll, *Vorlesungen* 9.

nicht in dem Alter, werde es wohl nie sein, in dem einer anfängt, wiederkauend sich selbst zu interpretieren, und so überlasse ich das Thema, über das ich schon viel geschrieben habe, anderen.²⁰¹

Durzak refers to Böll's multiple repetitions of bread, which forces the reader to interpret its various uses as a way to point to underlying truths about characters and events.²⁰² I regard the bread obsession of the main character as a way to push women out of their formerly owned position of food suppliers. The main protagonist, whose value system is measured in bread units, becomes the judge of right and wrong in a postwar German society. Bread helps him to determine the morality of his fellow men. His money gives him access to as much bread as he wants. Thus far, bread symbolizes power. The more bread one can provide (and male protagonist Walter Fendrich is clearly at the top of the financial ladder for his age group), the more power one has. This power is played out when he meets Hedwig Muller for the first time. His access to food pays off. He actually wins her body through the supply of bread.

Alexander Mathäs attempts to rescue Böll's short novel from obscurity. He, however, provides a feminist reading. He sees the decline of interest in Böll's fiction "attributed to some rather old-fashioned, if not sexist, moral undertones which no longer conform to the horizon of expectations of a new generation of gender conscious academics."²⁰³ According to Mathäs, Böll's depictions of male-female-relationships are

²⁰¹ Böll, *Vorlesungen* 97.

²⁰² See, for example, Manfred Durzak, "Bölls filmische Metamorphosen. Am Beispiel von *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* und *Ansichten eines Clowns*," *The University of Dayton Review* 24.3 (1997): 148-175. Hereafter cited as "Filmische Metamorphosen."

²⁰³ Alexander Mathäs, "Love, Narcissism, and History in Heinrich Böll's *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* and *Ansichten eines Clowns*," *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 33.2 (1997): 149. Hereafter cited as "Love, Narcissism."

not at all reflective of the author's beliefs, but rather belong to the protagonist's quest to find an alternative identity to postwar capitalism. His search for real love – an alternative to capitalism – exposes itself as an affirmation of middle class gender traditions. Even though Mathäs criticizes the protagonist's view of women, he denominates women, in this case Hedwig Muller, to be as corrupt as Walter Fendrich. In Mathäs' view, women become the victims of the protagonist's attempt to find a new postwar identity, but once they smell the opportunity to enter a traditionally safe marriage, women are more than willing to give up their integrity: "Hedwig's corruptibility is further underlined by her willingness to give up her professional goals for the promise of being taken care of. Her readiness to marry Fendrich is to a large extent financially motivated. Yet by making the offer in the first place, it is Fendrich who initiates the business transaction and continues to treat women as commodities."²⁰⁴ I do not agree with Mathäs' assessment of Hedwig's decision making process. In my reading, Hedwig remains a victim. She is clearly in a weaker position than the male protagonist, since she has no income. Additionally, her career choice had been made by her father. What Hedwig ultimately wants and needs is up for debate, but her willingness to enter a relationship with Walter is based upon her need to survive. There is no evidence in the text that shows that Hedwig is happy with the decision. Quite the opposite is the case. She is fully aware that he longs for her sexually and plans to seduce her. Both times he tries to do this, the young woman feels uncomfortable and even begs him to leave her.

I wish to extend Mathäs' thesis by arguing that the male and female gender roles are based on the exchange of food for sex. Put in even more radical terms, the protagonist Walter Fendrich attempts to enter a relationship with Hedwig Muller, through the

²⁰⁴ Mathäs, "Love, Narcissism" 155.

negotiation of bread for her body, by deliberately disregarding her fears and disgust of opening up her body to him. I thus propose to read *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* as a story of rape in an imaginary postfascist society, in which women fight to survive. They fight against a male-dominated society, in which the only chance of securing food and shelter lies in their willingness to let men provide for them. The novel thus promotes the conservative norms of postwar Western Germany insofar as they victimize women and, under the umbrella of marriage, encourage women to agree upon an exchange of food for sex. The fear of hunger impacts men and women in the novel equally, yet puts the male protagonist in the powerful position of the food supplier, who in turn wins total control over the woman and her body. My reading stands in direct opposition to the readings of Lawrence Glatz, Bernd Balzer, Rainer Naegele and Manfred Durzak who are in agreement that *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* depicts an innocent love story between Walter Fendrich and Hedwig Muller.

The main protagonist Walter Fendrich, who narrates the story, is in his early twenties and repairs washing machines for a living. He is employed at a small business in Berlin and lives in an apartment tended by his female landlord. The novel is set approximately in the midfifties. The encounter with Hedwig Muller drives him to change his life. Through the metaphor of a passing train, he sees his past fading away into the distance while he pursues a new future, one that distances him from mainstream conservatism and materialism in the time of growing reconstruction and material wealth: “[...] ich wäre in ein anderes Leben eingestiegen, wie man aus Versehen in einen anderen Zug steigt, ein Leben, das mir damals, bevor ich Hedwig kannte, als ganz passabel erschien [...] und ich weiß, daß die Hölle geworden wäre, was mir damals ganz passabel

erschien" (8). The fact that he chooses a different life has inspired many scholars of Böll to read his story solely as a resistance against capitalist values²⁰⁵, in which the young Walter Fendrich functions as the hero.²⁰⁶ The scholarship overlooks, however, that the change of Walter's mind happens at the expense of the female character Hedwig Muller.

III. "Wenn Sie wollen [...], werde ich Sie ernähren" – Buying Hedwig Muller

Hedwig Muller, the supposed love object of Walter Fendrich, adopts the role of a victim of male dominance from the start. Moreover, as I show in this chapter, Hedwig becomes a victim of rape. She does not want to enter a relationship with Walter. Hedwig acts distant toward Walter and even asks him to leave once she realizes that he desires her sexually. But upon Walter's tempting offer of providing for her eternally, Hedwig agrees to enter a relationship with him. Mathäs assesses that Walter's proposal is indeed a promise to marry her, but I wish to question this notion.²⁰⁷ Even though, the relationship might be contained under the umbrella of marriage, their connection is foremost sexual. Hedwig becomes nothing more than a victim of rape who secures her survival by selling her body for food to a husband.

The encounter with Hedwig frames the narrative and is, therefore, the most crucial event for the main protagonist. The first sentence introduces Hedwig to the reader in the reflections of the first-person narrator, Walter: "Der Tag, an dem Hedwig kam, war

²⁰⁵ See also Lawrence Glatz, *Heinrich Böll als Moralist. Die Funktion von Verbrechen und Gewalt in seinen Prosawerken*, Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature, ed. Horst Daemmrich, vol. 42 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999). Glatz's work is mainly concerned with crime, which is seen as a form of resistance against mainstream values of the fifties. Hereafter cited as *Böll as Moralist*.

²⁰⁶ See, for example, Nägele, *Einführung in das Werk*. His work is still today one of the most referenced resources on the scholarship of Böll, even though it was published in 1976.

²⁰⁷ Mathäs, "Love, Narcissism" 155.

ein Montag [...]” (7). His father informs Walter about Hedwig’s arrival in a letter. This is the third letter Walter has received from his father since moving to the city. The former two letters notified him of his mother’s death and his father’s accident. Walter assumes the worst when he opens the notification. It is this negative light in which the letter appears that makes my reading question both the positive aura that Hedwig brings to the narrative and, ultimately, the supposedly beneficial influence she has on Walter, an influence for which many critics have argued.²⁰⁸ Clearly, the encounter with Walter is uncomfortable for Hedwig. Even before she arrives in Berlin, she is surrounded by various male characters. His father asks Walter for help to find an apartment for her in the city. Walter’s father reminds him in the letter of Hedwig’s youth and helplessness. Walter is not only supposed to organize an apartment and picking her up from the station, but provides guidance and comfort for the young woman.

It is interesting, however, that up to this point Hedwig has not spoken as part of the narrative. Decisions are to be made for her without her involvement. She has no agency: male characters determine what type of profession she should pursue, where she should live and her need for help is assumed by Walter’s father: “[...] sie kommt zum ersten Mal in die Stadt, sie kennt die Strasse, kennt den Stadtteil nicht, wo sie wohnen wird; alles ist ihr fremd [...]” (8). These lines in the letter mark her dependence on Walter. Additionally, the only memories Walter has about Hedwig focus on her childhood, playing on her parents’ property. Her childish behavior (associated with flower pots) and her outer appearance (her blond hair) are foregrounded. Mathäs sees these constant reflections on the past as a way for the main protagonist to flee his

²⁰⁸ See, for example Glatz, *Böll as Moralist*, Durzak, “Bölls Metamorphosen,” and Naegele, *Einführung Werk*.

contemporary capitalist environment through Hedwig.²⁰⁹ The innocence of childhood in the immediate postwar years, one not poisoned by the immorality of Westernized consumerism, merge in the persona of Hedwig. Hedwig becomes the personification of innocent youth that Fendrich himself would like to possess. For this reason Alexander Mathäs questions the truthfulness of his feelings of love: “The women they love reflect the male protagonists’ self absorption and have no voice of their own.”²¹⁰ Walter’s quest to conquer Hedwig is indeed an act of self-fulfillment. Hedwig merely plays a side character that triggers Walter’s search of identity. The narration barely lets Hedwig speak and depictions of her appearance and thoughts are distorted or absent.

The wish to possess Hedwig dominates their first encounter at the train station. He sees Hedwig as his territory that he has to defend against others:

[...] und ich hatte plötzlich Angst, jene Angst, die Entdecker empfinden, wenn sie das neue Land betreten haben, wissend, dass eine andere Expedition unterwegs ist, die vielleicht die Flagge schon gesteckt, schon Besitz ergriffen hat; Entdecker, die fürchten müssen, die Qual der langen Reise, alle Strapazen, das Spiel auf Leben und Tod könnte umsonst gewesen sein. (44)

Again, their first encounter triggers negative feelings in Walter. As the arrival of the letter stands in a contextually negative light (mother’s death and father’s accident), so does the encounter with Hedwig. On a semantic basis, the vocabulary the text uses repeats “Angst” twice, switches to “Besitz ergriffen” over to “Qual” and finally “Tod.” Even though, it is a fear of losing Hedwig, the narrative suggests that winning Hedwig necessarily turns her into the founder’s property.

²⁰⁹ Mathäs, “Love, Narcissism” 152.

²¹⁰ Mathäs, “Love, Narcissism” 150.

His wish to possess her transforms into a violent desire to destroy her face rather suddenly: “ [...] ich hatte für einen wahnsinnigen Augenblick den Wunsch, dieses Gesicht zu zerstören, wie der Maler den Stein, von dem er nur einen einzigen Abdruck genommen hat” (44). Mathäs reads the desire for destruction as the mere wish to erase Hedwig’s past. In other words, by destroying her face, which is not as innocent anymore as when she was a child, Walter destroys any present time capitalist influences, which might have spoiled her assumed innocent character.²¹¹ As much as Mathäs attempts to make the actual destruction of her face into a metaphor, I think it is worthwhile to consider the protagonist’s imagined attack on her face as literal. In this reading the protagonist does not long for innocence, but desires to express the actual aggression. Thus, Walter’s imagined violence would have occurred at the expense of the young woman.

The desire to destroy her face shifts into the wish to destroy anything that could stand in his way to possess Hedwig. All of these mental images and his thoughts are solely triggered by looking at her: “In dieser halben Minute, in der ich hinter ihr herging, dachte ich daran, dass ich sie besitzen würde, und dass ich, um sie zu besitzen, alles zerstören würde, was mich daran hindern könnte” (45). Manfred Durzak sees the destruction as a way to destroy his involvement with postwar status symbols and a lifestyle of pure consumption. Durzak connects the face destruction with the destruction of the washing machines, which he sees as symbols for capitalism: “Mitte der 50er Jahre war die Waschmaschinen-Ära im vollen Gange.”²¹² Walter frees himself from Westernized consumerism by destroying the washing machines: “Ich sah mich

²¹¹ Mathäs, “Love, Narcissism” 152.

²¹² Durzak, “Bölls Metamorphosen” 150.

Waschmaschinen zertrümmern, sie mit einem zehnpfündigen Hammer zusammenschlagen” (45-46). In my understanding, Durzak’s reading is much too simplistic for Böll’s short novel. The narration clearly focuses on Hedwig’s reaction of indifference, her fragmented body and Walter’s constant repetition of a desire for destruction and aggressiveness. The encounter with Hedwig is a radical, quick and brutal way for Walter to distance himself from his former lifestyle. His attempts to liberate himself are more problematic than Durzak suggests. First, the attempts happen at the expense of the woman in the total disregard of her feelings. Only later comes the realization that Walter’s escape is indeed just an illusion. His value-systems, his view of women and his selfish endeavor are in fact reactions displaying his disgust with his life, yet he does not change. He remains entrenched in a capitalist postwar society by winning control over the female body with bread. His wealth turns the female into an object.

Walter’s will to destroy is overpowering once he meets Hedwig. First, his aggression is directed against Hedwig’s face. It already foregrounds Walter’s low estimation of Hedwig as a person. Her body, even though perceived as fragmented, is destined to belong to him in its entirety. Only he alone may mistreat her body. It is indeed the body Walter is after. The time period of half a minute changes Walter’s entire life without her active participation in that process. He plans out their future, anticipates staying with her, even following her, and promises to always be at her side: “[...] denn ich würde nicht mehr von ihrer Seite weichen, an diesem Tage nicht und nicht in den vielen Tagen, die kommen würden, diese Tage alle, deren Summe Leben heißt” (47). Not leaving her side is another way of controlling the young woman. Mathäs comes to the same conclusion when he argues, “Böll’s women characters in these works are not

granted the status of self-reflecting individuals and are therefore deprived of the opportunity to tell their own story. Instead, they embody the male protagonists' projections of remembered or imagined history."²¹³ Again, this is more evidence of Walter's dominance over Hedwig. What Walter proposes is the ultimate control, where he forces her to surrender. His imagined aggression has already victimized her and leaves her no choice than to obey.

Moreover, he does not anticipate any rejection from her side. Manfred Durzak sees Walter's selfish act as an identity crisis that the first-person narrator tries to solve with the help of the female character.²¹⁴ Hedwig is completely under his control once she arrives in Berlin. He tries to win time with her and deliberately drives around in circles. His lunch invitation seems more like an order than an act of generosity. She is not comfortable with his proposal, as he remembers her nonverbal reply: "Sie nickte nur und blickte nachdenklich an mir vorbei, und es sah aus, als schlucke sie an irgend etwas" (49). As this quote demonstrates, there is no mutual attraction between the two. Hedwig is a bystander of her own life.

Hedwig's outer appearance is described as almost unreal. The narrative leaves open to the reader whether she is a construct of Walter's fantasy. Many instances in the text support this reading: "[...] es schien mir unfassbar, dass noch kein Mann gesehen haben sollte, wie schön sie war; noch keiner sie erkannt hatte: vielleicht war es auch so, dass sie in dem Augenblick erst da war, als ich sie ansah" (48). In that sense, his vision creates her. The fact that she might not be real is underlined by Walter's description of her as "blutleer," and the notion that her hands are "trocken und kühl." As mentioned

²¹³ Mathäs, "Love, Narcissism" 150.

²¹⁴ Durzak, "Bölls Metamorphosen" 151.

before, she does not verbally communicate with him, but expresses her discomfort through her body. Walter, obsessed with his thoughts about Hedwig, does not comfort her when she feels potentially scared by him: “Sie blickte zu mir hin, als ich einstieg und mich neben sie setzte, und ich sah in ihren Augen die Angst vor dem, was ich sagen, was ich jetzt tun könnte [...]” (48). Still, attention needs to be paid since Walter as the first-person narrator projects that fear on her. The fear that Walter anticipates from her is clearly connected to his desire to have sex with her, which again makes her feel uneasy. An even more direct sexual implication is presented later in the narrative when Walter picks Hedwig up at her apartment to eat. Here, again, the characters have eye-contact and Hedwig rejects his sexual longing that he now confesses to have:

‘Gehen Sie’, sagte sie, ‘gehen Sie sofort.’ ‘Ja’, sagte ich, ‘ich gehe’, aber ich ging nicht; ich hatte das, was ich jetzt mit ihr tun wollte, noch nie mit einer Frau getan; es gab viele Namen dafür, viele Vokabeln, und ich kannte sie fast alle, ich hatte sie während meiner Lehrzeit, im Heim und von den Mitschülern auf der Ingenieurschule gelernt, aber keine einzige von diesen Vokabeln paßte auf das, was ich mit ihr tun wollte – und ich suchte das Wort noch immer. Liebe ist nicht das Wort, das alles ausdrückt, vielleicht nur das, das der Sache am nächsten kommt. (55)

She actively tells him to leave, but he refuses and remains standing in the doorway. It is the first time she shows agency by articulating her wish, but he ignores her. Instead, he blocks the doorway. He does not hear her wishes. He already seeks and wins power over her by imagining the sexual act. Even though he is alluding to “Liebe,” it is not the word he is looking for. As the quote suggests, it proves problematic to determine if Walter refers to “Liebe” as a sexual act or if he is talking about genuine feelings. If he means a sexual desire, one could even go so far as to understand Hedwig’s anticipated fear as something to which Walter is attracted. The text gives no indication of a sympathetic dialogue. Alexander Mathäs sees Hedwig’s distorted appearance as evidence for her

being the perfect victim for Walter's desire to own her, since he can ascribe a personality to her body: "Hedwig has no distinct features and maintains the aura of mystery which makes her viable as an object for Fendrich's possessive yearning."²¹⁵ The possession is a direct request for her body. In his fantasy, he destroys her face, undoing any possible identification as his actual endeavor is more of a bodily longing, rather than communication. Walter is forcing a relationship between them, pursuing the satisfaction of his sexual desire from the outset. The step of getting to know her in an amorous relationship is dismissed.

Knowing his destructive constitution, Walter describes himself as a hand grenade ready to explode and maim. This observation stands in direct connection with Walter's desire for a physical union with Hedwig while he is standing in her doorway:

[...] einen ursprünglich so gefährlichen Gegenstand in so harmloser Funktion zu sehen, zumal der Witzbold, der den Aschenbecher herstellte, die Zundschnür auf eine so originelle Weise mitverarbeitet hat: man kann an dem weißen Porzellanknopf ziehen, der aussieht wie die Porzellanknöpfe an Nachttischlampen – und wenn man ihn zieht, bringt eine verborgene Batterie ein paar Drähtchen zum Glühen, an denen man die Zigaretten anzünden kann: ein friedliches Instrument nun, was für so unfriedliche Zwecke hergestellt war: neunhundertneunundneunzigmal kann man daran ziehen, ohne Schaden zu nehmen, doch niemand weiß, daß beim tausendstenmal ein verborgener Mechanismus in Gang gesetzt wird, der das witzige Spielzeug zur Explosion bringt. (67-68)

Walter's desire to destroy is a ticking timebomb and solely sexual. Interestingly, his sexual fantasy occurs in the context of an invitation to lunch. Eating plays a crucial role. In the café, Walter finds a metaphorical way to describe his sexual longing for Hedwig by using the word "ernähren." In that context, food and sexuality again go hand in hand:

"'Wenn Sie wollen', sagte ich leise, werde ich Sie ernähren.' Sie wurde rot, und ich war

²¹⁵ Mathäs, "Bölls Metamorphosen" 152.

froh, daß ich es endlich gesagt hatte und auf diese Weise hatte sagen können” (92).²¹⁶ By offering to feed her, Hedwig becomes the recipient of his sexual advances. In addition, she does not actively resist, but rather turns red, showing his power of embarrassing her and making her feel uneasy. She accepts the lunch invitation and eats the bread roll, but her acceptance of the food stems far more from learned mannerisms towards men, which underlines that she is used to obeying. It is the first time they eat together and communication finally does occur. In that sense, Hedwig agrees upon the exchange of her body for food. She is granted a perspective in the narrative now. She comments on his desire to seduce her, demonstrating once more that she is aware of his sexual thoughts: “‘Wenn sie uns hier sehen würde, würde sie sagen: der will dich verführen.’ ‘Es stimmt genau’, sagte ich, ‘ich will Sie verführen.’ ‘Ich weiß’, sagte Hedwig [...]” (94). Mathäs sees Hedwig as calculating because Hedwig chooses the easy way out, by playing the housewife, instead of pursuing her own career. I understand her willingness to enter a relationship with Walter as pointing to her desire to nourish not her heart, but rather her body. Hedwig has been overpowered by men throughout the whole narrative. Her agreement is a mere reflection of what she has learned in life so far: to obey men and accept other people’s decisions for her. She understands that she will be cared for and this is all she can expect as a woman in Westernized capitalism during the 1950s. Her body is a necessary factor to make the trade possible and she is fully aware that she has lost the power over her body. It is a form of rape, because Hedwig shows no sign of actual attraction to Walter, and even rejects him actively before. Yet her society is male-

²¹⁶ Manfred Durzak is also referring to his passage, which he sees as “Fendrichs erste Liebeserklärung [...] im Zeichen des Brotes.” Durzak, “Bölls Metamorphosen” 149.

dominated. Hedwig does not have the tools to survive, but becomes just another link in the chain of male-dominance that determines her life.

The anti-amorous connection becomes particularly clear when death is introduced. The text reaches its climax when Walter assimilates Hedwig's encounter with death. He looks into her face and sees all the dead people he has known and cared about in his life: "[...] und ich fiel durch diese Bilder hindurch auf Hedwigs Gesicht, prallte auf Brolaski, auf Helene Frenkel, auf Fruklahr, fiel durch diese Gesichter wieder hindurch auf Hedwig [...]" (140). Furthermore, it is not only the dead people that he encounters, but a longing to be dead himself: "[...] und ich sehnte nach Hedwig und nach dem dunkelgrünen Schatten der Brücke, in dem Jürgen Brolaski verschwunden war" (116). He seems to care for her, since he interprets her as pure, but he cannot get away from sexual violence, domination, and the wish to destroy her face (and identity). The last passage of the novel shows that death and sexual suppression go hand in hand when he thinks of Hedwig:

Ich sah mich selbst wie einen Fremden mich über Hedwig beugen, und ich war eifersüchtig auf mich selbst; ich sah den Mann, der sie angesprochen hatte, seine gelben Zähne, seine Aktentasche [...], und die Frau aus der Kurbelstraße weinte in alle Bilder hinein, und immer noch war Montag, und ich wußte, daß ich nicht vorwärtskommen wollte, zurückkommen wollte ich, wohin wußte ich nicht, aber zurück (141).

As this quote reiterates again, Walter is indeed obsessed with possessing Hedwig sexually. His jealousy can be read as a distant insight that he might not treat Hedwig the way she deserves. Still the same person as before, he now knows what he wants. Unfortunately, his wish to go back, possibly to his childhood, is doomed to fail. Hedwig, though she triggered his identity crisis, remains merely a victim. The future is at too far a

distance from the past, and both remain entrenched in Westernized normalized gender norms.

IV. Food, Sex and Violence: Killing the Leib

In the previous section, I established why Hedwig is a victim of rape. I outlined the aggressiveness of Walter directed towards her body. Hedwig's decision to give up her body to Walter happens ultimately due to his suggestion of feeding her. Bread, in this case, can be seen as a metaphor for financial security: a metaphorical replacement for money. But bread is even more than that. Offering bread can be seen as a proposition of intercourse. Walter needs to satisfy both hunger and his sexual desire. Using Böll's proposed "Ästhetik des Brotes," bread, as suggested, has many different meanings. While it is certainly a food item, bread can also mean an aphrodisiac.²¹⁷ I show how Walter, the bread addict, loses control over his instincts when he feels or fantasizes about hunger. His eating habits lay bare his desire to destroy. The destruction of food is a replacement for the destruction of the female body. I thus read his ripping apart of the "Brotleib" as a desire to actually consume women. In other words, Böll plays with the notion of "Leib" as a loaf of bread and the female body, the human "Leib," body.

In *Das Brot der frühen Jahre*, bread also has an appeasing effect on Walter. In general, Walter's relationship to food is absurd. Even though he could technically buy as much food as he desires, he constantly fears the hunger he once experienced reflecting back on the hunger years: "[...] der Hunger lehrte mich die Preise; der Gedanke an frischgebackenes Brot machte mich ganz dumm im Kopf, und ich streifte of abends stundenlang durch die Stadt und dachte an nichts anderes als: Brot [...]. Ich war

²¹⁷ Böll, *Vorlesungen* 147.

brotsüchtig, wie man morphiumsüchtig ist” (20). Walter does not suffer from hunger, but his bread addiction is like a drug addiction. Only when he is stuffed does he feel calm.

Walter is aware of what happens to him when he does not eat: “Ich hatte Angst vor mir selbst, und immer dachte ich an den Mann, der einmal im Lehrlingsheim einen Lichtbildvortrag über eine Nordpolexpedition gehalten und uns erzählt hatte, daß sie frischgefangene Fische lebend zerrissen und roh verschlungen hätten” (20). This anecdote becomes crucial throughout the narration and terrifies him. Why is Walter scared? If hunger is supposedly his ultimate fear and bread satisfies his hunger, is he then scared of ripping the bread, “Leib,” into pieces? If we read this passage through the lens of cultural anthropologist Carol Adams, we might be able to comprehend what lies beneath Walter’s fear of this anecdote. The focus on butchering animals signifies, in Adams’ interpretation, women as the absent referent. Violence done to animals goes hand in hand with sexual violence done to women, since female bodies are objectified and fragmented in our visual culture. Adams proposes that “consumption is the fulfillment of oppression.”²¹⁸ When Walter fragments Hedwig’s body and finally takes possession of her through his offer to feed her, her identity completely dissolves and he can ascribe any meaning onto her: “Finally consumed, it exists only through what it represents.”²¹⁹ He directs his hunger and aggression onto a female body. Bread in that sense serves as a replacement for the sexual desire of consuming women. The North Pole anecdote exemplifies his fear of his aggressiveness, the potential to do something to another body. He absorbs this presentation by comparing the bread rolls he sees in a shop window with

²¹⁸ Adams, *Politics of Meat* 47.

²¹⁹ Adams, *Politics of Meat* 47.

fish: “[...] die Brötchen stauten sich vor der Scheibe, und ich konnte ihre glatten braunen Bäuche sehen, ihre knusprigen Rücken und das helle, sehr helle Weiß oben [...] sie rutschten noch [...] und für einen Augenblick erschienen sie mir wie Fische, stumpfe, platte Fische, die in ein Aquarium gepfercht sind” (78). Additionally, Walter personifies the bread rolls by ascribing human-like features to them like “Rücken” or “Bäuche.” Moreover, he imagines them being alive. He fantasizes about ripping the bread into pieces, imagining the bread as a living being: “[...] manchmal dampfte es noch, war immer ganz warm, und ich hatte für Augenblicke das Gefühl, ein lebendes Wesen in den Händen zu haben, es zu zerreißen, und ich dachte an den Mann, der uns den Vortrag über die Nordpolexpedition gehalten und uns erzählt hatte, daß sie lebende Fische zerrissen und roh verschlungen hatten” (25). It is thus women he wants to devour.

Aggression here is always directed against women. Good women are women who give bread. In my reading, women who share their food with Walter are also willing to share their body. It needs to be emphasized, however, that Hedwig’s decision to share her body does not happen out of lust or attraction. She merely chooses survival. Walter on the other hand becomes aggressive when he suspects women of being greedy. He lives out his anger by taking revenge on women’s false behavior through imagining violence against the women, imagining parts of their bodies as animalistic, and seeing their beauty vanish into death-like appearances. I will now take a closer look at several women he encounters.

When he visits his dying mother in the hospital, Walter’s distorted judgment of women becomes apparent. He suspects the patient who shares a room with his mother of stealing food: “Neben ihr im Bett lag eine Frau, in deren Augen ich den Wolf sah, und

ich wusste, dass diese Frau alles essen würde, was Mutter stehen ließ, und ich spürte Mutters heiße Hände an meinem Arm und sah in ihren Augen die Angst vor der Gier ihrer Nachbarin” (26-27). Walter believes he sees the fear of his mother stemming from the old woman’s greediness. His mother, however, gives Walter and his father a description of the old woman’s character, which marks her as very loving and giving. After the old woman’s death, her husband shows up in the hospital and physically attacks a nurse who he suspects has stolen a can of meat: “ [...] weil er anfang, auf die Schwester loszuschlagen; aber er war klein und behende, viel flinker als ich, und es gelang ihm, die Schwester mit seinen kleinen, dunklen Fäusten gegen die Brust zu schlagen. Ich sah, daß er durch seinen Zorn hindurch grinste, mit gebleckten Zähnen” (28). He beats her with his fists and thus wishes to destroy a “lebendes Wesen.” In addition, Walter imagines a grin on his face and “gebleckte Zähne,” which account for the parallel feelings when Walter’s hunger attacks appear. Walter sees himself as a wolf and projects these animalistic emotions, and ultimately his hatred for women, onto the old man: “[...] und ich weckte den Wolf, der immer noch in mir schlief” (33). It is thus important to recognize that the text connects the loss of food with the guilt of women who are degraded into objects. The narrator’s perception and imagination of women is deemed wrong by the text: “Die Schwester wurde rot, fing an zu schreien, und ich glaubte ihrem Gesicht anzusehen, dass sie das Fleisch geklaut hatte” (28). Walter’s belief that she stole is proven wrong in the text. His mother tells him that the old woman ate the meat herself before she died. Still, Walter imagines this act of the final dinner before death as dirty and disgusting: “Und ich versuchte mir vorzustellen, wie das gewesen sein musste: die dunkle, gierige Frau, schon im Sterben, wie sie in der Nacht neben Mutter lag und das

Fleisch aus der Büchse aß" (29). Even though Walter knows from his mother that the old woman was in fact a good person, he has a hard time giving up the image of greediness. The woman eats her food alone; she does not share. She is not an active participant in the exchange of the body for food. The anger of the old man over the loss of food can be read as the loss of his sexuality.

Still, there are other women who always thought highly of him. Yet he suddenly despises them. He dates Veronika who sometimes fed him, which again seems to connect to a sexual wish of his. Her desire is a different desire, a desire for consumption of luxurious goods:

Manchmal hatte sie mir Brot mitgebracht von einem Vetter, der in der Brotfabrik arbeitete; Veronika hatte darauf bestanden, mich zu füttern, und jedesmal, wenn sie mir ein Stück Brot gab, hatte ich diese Hände nah vor meinen Augen gehabt. Doch einmal hatte ich ihr den Ring von Mutter gezeigt und hatte in ihren Augen dasselbe gierige Licht gesehen, das in den Augen der Frau gewesen war, die neben Mutter im Krankenhaus gelegen hatte. (31)

A woman must constantly give to Walter and never want something of her own. Moreover, women always need to satisfy a man's hunger for bread. Nurse Clara is the ideal woman, since she is always generous and giving. Now dead, her flaws are forgotten and she remains perfect in his memory:

[...] ihr gehört mehr Zärtlichkeit als allen denen, die ich so kennenlernte, wenn ich mit Ulla ausging: ich las in ihren Augen, sah in ihre Hände geschrieben die Preise, die ich ihnen hätte zahlen müssen; ich zauberte den Charme von mir weg, nahm die Kostüme, nahm die Gerüche von ihnen weg, diese ganze Grandezza, die so preiswert ist...und ich weckte den Wolf, der immer noch in mir schlief, den Hunger, der mich die Preise lehrte: ich hörte ihn knurren, wenn ich beim Tanz meinen Kopf über die Schulter eines schönen Mädchens legte, und ich sah die hübschen kleinen Hände, die auf meinem Arm, auf meiner Schulter ruhten, zu Krallen werden, die mir das Brot entrissen hätten. Nicht viele haben mir etwas geschenkt: Vater, Mutter und manchmal die Mädchen in der Fabrik. (33)

In stark contrast to his dead mother and the dead nurse, Ulla never completely earned the trust of Walter. She betrays her father's business along with that of the main protagonist. His disgust with Ulla, however, does not stem from the fact that she stole. Ulla is constantly reminded of her indifference toward other people's needs. He decides thus to leave her, since she embodies the value-system of the fifties. In addition, he always envisions death when he approaches her sexually: "Wenn ich sie küßte, hatte ich manchmal den Totenschädel gesehen, den ihr Vater einmal haben würde: einen Totenschädel, der einen grünen Filzhut trug" (100). This fantasy repeats itself when he meets Hedwig Muller. In conclusion, sexuality stands in direct connection with death. The only difference between Ulla and Hedwig is that the image of death with the former terrifies him, while death in connection with Hedwig fulfills his desire.

The sale's assistant who sells pralines falls prey to his imagination of women who are unable to share. He sees her in his fantasy as an animal (goose) that grabs the food away from him:

Ich blickte genauer in diese hübschen Augen und versuchte, mir vorzustellen, wie sie wohl mit mir gesprochen hätte, wenn ich vor sieben Jahren gekommen und sie um Brot gefragt hätte – und ich sah diese Augen noch schmaler werden, hart und trocken wie die einer Gans, und ich sah diese reizenden, zierlich gespreizten Finger sich krampfen wie Krallen, sah diese weiche gepflegte Hand runzelig und gelb von Geiz [...] (111)

This passage shows very clearly that his imagination does not reflect reality. Rather, his fantasy is dictating if a woman is trustworthy or not. Walter's way of eating underlines the anger he feels when he encounters most women. He murders his food, which he sees as a living being – a replacement for the actual female body. Therefore, Walter does not go along with civilized ways of eating when it comes to bread, in this case "Brötchen."

Instead of using a knife to cut a bread roll, he insists on using his hands. Like a surgeon, he “cleanly” divides the bread roll with his thumbs:

[...] und ich schüttelte den Kopf, als sie mir ein Messer geben wollte. Ich legte die Brötchen auf den Teller, ging in das Zimmer zurück, setzte mich und öffnete ein Brötchen, indem ich die beiden Daumen nebeneinander in den weißen Schnitt setzte und es dann nach außen aufbrach, und als ich den ersten Brocken gegessen hatte, spürte ich, wie die Übelkeit aufhörte in mir zu kreisen. (79)

Finally, bread is not only seen as food, but as a living prey that has to be killed. The main protagonist sees bread as a “lebendes Wesen” which he has to rip into pieces. He “murders” the bread with his hands. Interestingly, his hands are at the root of this self-hatred: “Es hatte Stunden gegeben, in denen ich mich selbst haßte, meine Arbeit, meine Hände” (10). In general, the perception of hands overtakes a crucial role in Böll’s work. Hands are the main body parts essential for food intake. They are the instruments that “kill” in the name of procuring food.

Chapter 4

Erasing Women in Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom*

I. The Abolition of Sensuous Pleasures

The exchange of food for sex, which mutually empowered and victimized women in female autobiographies, is erased in Wolfgang Koeppen's novel *Der Tod in Rom*. Food and sex are no longer part of a postwar trade among women and men as in *Das Brot der frühen Jahre*. In this novel rather the past returns to haunt the interplay of gender.

Undead male desires reduce women to their bodies, "Fleischlichkeit," in order to preserve fascism after its defeat. The fascist male consumes female bodies in the same way he consumes food. Koeppen's novel depicts eating and sex as embodied engagements with fascism drives in general as problematic and entangled with fascism. The only hope for a positive future not poisoned by fascist ideologies lies in the engagement with art and the abandonment of *all* sensuous pleasures.

In response to all the multi-faceted scholarship on Koeppen's works, my reading interrogates *Der Tod in Rom* status as one of the most important postwar German novels.²²⁰ In my argument, Koeppen does not demonstrate the process of coming to terms with the past in all its complexities,²²¹ especially as it leaves out female experience altogether. While my reading of Koeppen's novel rests on Gary Schmidt's perception of

²²⁰ Ralf Schnell, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur nach 1945* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003) 125.

²²¹ Simon Ward, *Negotiating Positions. Literature, Identity and Social Critique in the Works of Wolfgang Koeppen* (New York, NY: Rodopi, 2001) 1. Hereafter cited as *Negotiating Positions*.

homosexuality, the critical enterprise of affirming Koeppen's homophilia invariably excluding female experience, the past, present and future of the novel offer no space for female experience. An engagement with the past as imagined by Koeppen's novel only scratches the surface of female suffering, let alone the dimensions of female hunger and rape. Art, as depicted as homosexual fantasy, excludes women altogether. In the present, women are victims every time male characters eat or seek sexual pleasure. Their victimization reaches its peak through murder. It is, therefore, crucial for my reading to look at the ways hunger and rape have been translated into an exclusive male concern. Koeppen tells a story of German history solely perceived through a male lens. The narrator paints a dark picture of a postfascist society, the struggle of the individual is masculinist. Women are only secondary characters, silent in their hopes and wishes and thus the perfect victims. In light of my concerns, we need to ask ourselves: how does Koeppen's novel depict *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as an exclusive male concern? How are women disenfranchised because of this?

Siegfried, a composer and member of the young generation, exemplifies the only hope for a respectable existence in a postfascist society.²²² Siegfried's atonal music serves as a gateway to the past, while his love of art paves a way toward a future of pure beauty,²²³ free from fascist ideologies. This unification of past and future merges in the person of Siegfried. He lives in the present, set in Rome during the time of the German restoration period, and absorbs both positive and negative aspects of the postfascist

²²² Richard Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1983) 128. This interpretation rejects Gunn's line of argumentation. He sees the young generation as incapable to offer a hopeful engagement with Germany's future. Hereafter cited as *Art and Politics*.

²²³ Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (Bielefeld: Velhagen & Klasing, 1929).

society. Siegfried confronts every listener of his music with their personal repression of Third Reich ideologies. In other words, listening to Siegfried's music offers characters a possibility to confront the past.²²⁴

Siegfried's love for art, his *ästhetische Verehrung männlicher Schönheit*,²²⁵ as Gary Schmidt puts it, exemplifies a path for pure beautification and happiness. His aesthetics is directly linked to his homosexuality, in particular his attraction to boys. Siegfried has produced diverse assessments in secondary literature. While the fascist Gottlieb Judejahn receives unanimous discredit in the scholarship, critics remain torn about Siegfried. Critics tend to interpret Siegfried as a failed hero due to his artistic outsider status and his homosexual orientation.²²⁶ Gary Schmidt is one of the few who evaluate Siegfried's sexual orientation as positive in a postwar German context. Schmidt makes a stand against a common German literary tradition that equates homosexuality with fascism: "Kein Kritiker hat versucht, die Homosexualität bei Koeppen im Rahmen der bundesrepublikanischen Literatur der Vergangenheitsbewältigung zu untersuchen."²²⁷ As Schmidt rightfully argues, Koeppen turns the association with facism through Greek art on its head. What has commonly been accepted in German literature and culture as having been deeply connected to fascism, offers a new space detached from any Third Reich ideologies going beyond Schmidt. Dirk Linck formulates Koeppen's attempt to

²²⁴ This line of argumentation stands in direct opposition to Tillmann Ochs' evaluation of music. He sees music as an expression of a disorientated worldview of Siegfried; therefore, Ochs denies music the role of enlightening characters. Tillmann Ochs, *Kulturkritik im Werk Wolfgang Koeppens*, diss., U Köln, 2003, (Münster: LitVerlag, 2004. Literatur – Kultur – Medien) 5, 247. Hereafter cited as *Kulturkritik*.

²²⁵ Gary Schmidt, *Koeppen, Andersch, Boell: Homosexualität und Faschismus in der deutschen Nachkriegsliteratur* (Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript, 2001) 88. Hereafter cited as *Homosexualität und Faschismus*.

²²⁶ See, for example, Ochs, *Kulturkritik*.

²²⁷ Ochs, *Kulturkritik* 18.

assign the character Siegfried and his homosexuality a positive role in even more radical terms:

In *Der Tod in Rom* ist Siegfried Pfaffrath eine positive Figur, Koeppen läßt ihn seine Homosexualität nicht als Beschädigung, sondern als selbstbewußten Versuch empfinden, auf Beschädigung zu reagieren. Bei dem gespensterhaften Treffen einer deutschen Familie, das der Roman erzählt, ist das Schwulsein Siegfrieds Möglichkeit, aus Familientradition und Generationsfolge endgültig auszusteigen.²²⁸

Many critics and journalistic reviews, however, overlook the positive view on Germany's future which Siegfried represents in the narrative. They focused rather on the graphic descriptions of sexual intercourse and judge Koeppen's illuminations on cultural outsiders in the Federal Republic like lesbians and gay men.²²⁹ To be fair, some critics (among them Marcel Reich-Ranicki) praise Koeppen's work in terms of its unusual aesthetic conceptualization. As Gundula Sharman asserts, "The aesthetic merits of the text might have been appreciated by a few, but the content was utterly rejected [...]."²³⁰ Current research on *Der Tod in Rom* has left behind the hostile reception of Koeppen's contemporaries. Critics seem to be in agreement that Koeppen's work was not only overlooked for the wrong reasons, but that it contributes to a postwar German wartime discourse that illuminates the immediate postwar period in a critical light. Two tendencies stand, however, in the focus of contemporary scholarship on *Der Tod in Rom*. Critics are overwhelmingly concerned with classifying the novel into what Sharman calls

²²⁸ Dirck Linck, "'Solidarisieren wollte ich mich nämlich eigentlich nie': Zum Tod Wolfgang Koeppens," *Forum Homosexualität und Literatur* 25 (1996): 138. Hereafter cited as "Solidarisieren."

²²⁹ Linck, "Solidarisieren" 135.

²³⁰ Gundula Sharman, "Fragmentation: Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* and Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom*," *Twentieth-Century Reworkings of German Literature*, ed. Gundula Sharman (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002) 72. Hereafter cited as *Reworkings*.

“Wahrheitsgehalt” or “Sachgehalt.”²³¹ In other words, is Koeppen’s novel a socio-critical work of the twentieth century in the time of restoration, or does *Der Tod in Rom* depict a higher truth about the individual, independent from a historical momentum?²³² A different strand in scholarship engages with Koeppen’s novel as either a failed, intensified, or improved version of Thomas Mann’s *Tod in Venedig*.²³³ My reading of Koeppen’s novel taps into a gap of this body of scholarship. I illuminate how the novel imagines hunger and rape in a postfascist society, and how this discourse, formerly experienced by women, vanishes into the sphere of art.

Three families meet in the city of Rome, the Kürenbergs, the Judejahns, and the Pfaffraths. The family members consist of Nazism’s victims, perpetrators, witnesses, and their offspring. Gottlieb Judejahn is a former Nazi leader, who lives underground in Rome in spite of the fact that he was convicted at the Nuremberg Trials. The Kürenbergs consist of a famous composer, Kürenberg, and his Jewish wife Ilse. She was persecuted by the Nazis during World War II. Her father was killed, and her parents’ home was burnt down. The Pfaffraths are beneficiaries of postwar German politics who enjoy their smooth transition from being former Nazis to well-respected citizens in a capitalist society. Her older son, Siegfried, has fled his family ties and is trying to establish himself as an avant-garde composer in the foreign city of Rome. Adolf Judejahn is Gottlieb Judejahn’s son who is on his way to becoming a priest. He has also broken with his

²³¹ Sharman, *Reworkings* 72.

²³² See, for example, Ward, *Negotiating Positions*.

²³³ See, for example, Sharman, *Reworkings*.

family, whose fascist past was unbearable to him. Laura is an Italian bartender, whose only talent and function consists of bewitching men with her smile.

In general, males dominate the postfascist society depicted in *Der Tod in Rom* and occupy the sphere of food and sex in all of its many forms. Men cook, eat, vomit, and show either culinary expertise or mere ignorance towards the Italian cuisine. They also seek sexual pleasure, from making love to lusting after another sexual conquest. In Koeppen's imagined postfascist society, men engage in power relations with other men. Coming to terms with Germany's past is an exclusively male quest. The narration underlines the dominance of men numerous times: "Rom ist eine wunderbare Stadt für Männer" (14). All of the men are in search of a postfascist identity. The narrator reveals that the official end of the Third Reich is a myth. Fascism is still pursued underground.²³⁴ What we see in the text is merely a distorted picture of Germans coming to terms with the past. The discourse of female victimization reads like a red thread throughout the novel, and manifests itself every time characters eat or seek sexual pleasure. Throughout the novel, eating and sexuality are closely intertwined. After eating, the characters strive to satisfy their sexual needs. The contradictory ways in which food consumption and sex are lived out by the different characters find their extreme opposites in the couple Kürenberg and Judejahn.

Men engage in the power of male bonding by eating and through potential sexual relations. Five male bonds form throughout the narration: Siegfried and the composer Kürenberg, Judejahn and the Führer, Adolf and God, Wilhelm Pfaffrath and the state (understood as a space of male leadership), Dietrich Pfaffrath and the fraternity. These

²³⁴ Tilmann Ochs sees his death as proof that the Third Reich is dead, while other critics like Dirck Link see a continuous engagement with fascism. See Ochs, *Kulturkritik* 20 and Link, "Solidarisieren" 140.

relationships are primarily power relationships.²³⁵ In the narration, however, there are numerous allusions to the possibility of underlying homosexuality. In general, these homosocial bonds are poisoned by fascism. Siegfried's homosexuality, his attraction to young boys, proves to be the only healthy way to escape the fascist past.

II. Food and Hunger

As is the case in Böll's *Das Brot der frühen Jahre*, the choice of food and the ways protagonists eat reveal much about their characters. In Koeppen's novel, however, Böll's implications are turned on their head. Food is always foreboding. The bay leaves Siegfried sees in the concert hall remind him of the soup he had to eat when he was forced to attend the Third Reich's ideological institutions: his former school and the military. "Das Gestrüpp deprimierte Siegfried, der in Rom nicht traurig sein wollte. Aber das Blattwerk erinnerte ihn allzusehr an eine Suppe die ihm nicht geschmeckt hatte, an den Eintopf der Reichsschule der Partei [...] an den Verpflegungskessel der Wehrmacht" (10). Very early on in the novel, food takes over the mnemonic role of the path to the past, which characters try to escape. Either by looking at food or by eating, the protagonists encounter what they repress. Food, however, in contradistinction to art, does not offer a way to work through the past. Rather it paralyzes characters in their quest to lead a life after fascism.

In the relationship between Kurenberg and Siegfried, food plays a special role. It is not only a gateway to the past for Siegfried who eats what his mentor prepares, but also

²³⁵ Eve Sedgwick argues that homosocial bonds need not necessarily encompass any sexual desire. However, she views homosocial bonds as necessary establishments in patriarchal systems to secure the male dominance over females. Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). Hereafter cited as *Between Men*.

lays bare Kürenberg's ignorance towards his wife's personal suffering and his way of taking advantage of postfascist capitalism. The mutual pleasure that Ilse and Kürenberg find together in eating turns into an instrument of male power when the composer tries to bond with his advisee, Siegfried. Kürenberg is in charge of the food. The conductor expresses the highest compliment and respect for another person through his cooking skills. It is not Ilse whom he tries to impress but the young composer Siegfried. He is none other than the son of the former mayor Pfaffrath, a beneficiary of fascist politics who shares the responsibility for the death of Ilse's father. Kürenberg disregards Ilse's discomfort with the young man. His affection for Siegfried is more intense than his affection for his wife: "[...] und doch glaubte Ilse, daß die Förderung, die er Siegfried angedeihen ließ, gefühlsbetont war [...]" (18). Ilse gets slowly but surely phased out. While she is still present the first time Siegfried and Kürenberg bond over eating, she disappears at the end of the narration when both men eat again. She remains silent and respects her husband's wish to invite Siegfried to the dinner table, even though she feels uncomfortable with Siegfried: "Da wußte Ilse, daß Kürenberg, der selbst auf Reisen, und sie reisten immer, ein leidenschaftlicher Koch war, kochen wollte, und das war ein Zeichen, daß er Siegfried wirklich schätzte und ihn umwarb, und wieder schwieg sie" (17). In an effort to strengthen his relationship with the young composer, Kürenberg chooses and carefully evaluates the quality of the food items he prepares for the young artist:

[Sie] kauften vom sauberen schräggerichteten schönen Marmorbrett des Metzgers zarte abgelagerte Steaks, die Kürenberg mit bohrenden Fingern auf den Grad ihrer Reife hin drückte und prüfte, sie besorgten an offenen Ständen Frucht und Gemüse, sie erwarben in alten Gewölben Öl und Wein, und nach längerem Suchen und nachdem er ihn mit den Zähnen getestet hatte, fand Kürenberg einen Reis, der körnig zu kochen versprach. (19)

In Kürenberg's almost sacred act of cooking, Ilse serves only as her husband's sous chef, following his orders with the strictest obedience: "Ilse, schnell, das große Sieb" (45). In contradiction to Ilse, Siegfried actively helps Kürenberg in the kitchen: "Ich wollte nicht müßig stehen. Ich fragte Kürenberg, ob ich helfen könne, und er drückte mir eine Schüssel, eine Reibe und ein Stück Parmesan in die Hände und forderte mich auf, den Käse zu reiben. Erst bröckelte der Käse vom steinharten Klumpen in die Schüssel, und Kürenberg zeigte mir, wie es zu machen sei [...]" (44). Male-bonding happens during food preparation. Siegfried is clearly a virgin in the kitchen and is guided by his mentor's advice. Ilse is not involved in the act of cooking, but instead sets the dinner table. Kürenberg almost seems pedantic when it comes to his cooking skills. His behavior is cold and organized, and the cooking utensils he needs underline this unemotional atmosphere, in which he functions as the sole authority:

[...] und überhaupt fragte ich mich, wie er es sich mit der Direktion arrangierte, denn man mußte ihm Sondersicherungen gebaut haben, in die Stromdosen hatte er Drei- und Vierfachstecker gepreßt, und Leitungsschnüre liefen wie ineinander verschlungene Schlangen zu blinkenden elektrischen Geräten, Grillrosten, Backhauben, Infrarotstrahlern, Dampftöpfen, Schnellkochern, es war die vollkommenste transportable Küche, an der er seine Freude hatte und die mit ihm reiste, und hier bereitete er das Mahl, zu dem er mich geladen, er rührte, schmeckte, klopfte, würzte und hatte ein festes ernstes Männergesicht, das in seiner gesammelten Ruhe anzusehen mir guttat [...]. (44)

The vocabulary Siegfried uses to describe Kürenberg seems almost militaristic; his face is described as "fest" and "ernst." He does not show any emotional engagement when working in the kitchen. The modern kitchen equipment unmasks him as a beneficiary of Western capitalism. The "Leitungsschnüre" and "Infrarotstrahler" remind the reader of a surgeon's operation room, impersonal and cold. His cooking utensils are not life-giving, but foreground the emotionally detached handling of the meat in the most sophisticated

technical manner. His cold character traits are amplified even more when he eats with Siegfried in a restaurant at the end of the novel. Similar to Walter Fendrich who brutally opens the bread rolls, Kürenberg sucks the meat out of crustaceans: “Er saß vor mir, brach die Schalen der monströsen Seetiere, sog ihre wohlschmeckenden Kanäle aus [...]” (180). Ilse is completely phased out of the second encounter between Kürenberg and Siegfried: “Er entschuldigte seine Frau, weil sie nicht mit uns frühstücken würde, und ich verstand, daß Ilse Kürenberg nicht mit mir feiern wollte, und ich begriff es. Das Restaurant war zu dieser Stunde noch leer, und Kürenberg bestellte allerelei Seetiere, die wie kleine Ungeheuer auf unseren Tellern lagen [...]” (180). Seafood plays a special role here. On the one hand, Kürenberg demonstrates his appreciation and knowledge of local Italian cuisine. On the other hand, the fascist Judejahn consumes seafood by mistake, since he cannot read the Italian menu. In that sense, the “Meertiere” who look like “Ungeheuer” have a negative connotation, deeply connected with guilt, death, and facism. The consumption of “Meertiere” could be a foreshadowing of Ilse’s death or yet another allusion to Kürenberg’s untrustworthy character. Kürenberg has as a dominating personality, as is displayed by his cooking skills and method of turning others into mere assistants in the kitchen. His way of eating suggests some type of coldness, and even aggressiveness. His joy in life is based on sensuous pleasure, like eating in expensive restaurants. In other words, Kürenberg does not devote his life to art in the same manner as Siegfried does. He is not a true artistic mentor. He rather puts his earthly pleasures before art. The money he makes as a conductor merely serves to finance his sophisticated lifestyle. An indication for his suspicious and even buyable character is his opinion about music managers: “Er war dafür, daß man die Manager schaffen ließ, damit man mit der

Muse der Musik zuweilen in ein teures Restaurant gehen konnte“ (176). This quotation reveals that music is not primarily a piece of art for Kürenberg, but a source of income. In addition, his love for food presents itself in a negative light, since he enjoys eating by sacrificing the free spirit of art.

Because of Kürenberg's and Siegfried's different understanding of art, the male bonding initiated by Kürenberg fails. Siegfried has trouble relaxing when attending Kürenberg's dinner invitation. Siegfried, in comparison to Kürenberg, feels uncomfortable as he knows that it was his father who was involved in Ilse's father's death: "Konnte ich sie ansehen? Wohin fliehen die Gedanken? Die Gedanken wehrten sich. Sie sagten mir: Sie hat sich gut gehalten, sie muß über vierzig sein, dabei kaum eine Falte. Und der Gedanke wehrte sich weiter: Die Aufhäusers waren reich, ob man sie entschädigt hat?" (47). When he eats, his thoughts become even more intensified. Memory flushes through his body and he tastes the ashes of Ilse's burning house. Siegfried realizes that his thoughts are forms of torture that spoil his enjoyment of the food. He tries to fight his thoughts, but the taste of the food always confronts him with the guilt of his father's crimes.

Und ich dachte: Das ist geschehen geschehen geschehen das ist nicht zu ändern nicht zu ändern das ist verdammt verdammt verdammt. Ganzblättrigen Spinat gab es, in feinstem Öl gesotten, und darüber streuten wir den Käse, den ich gerieben hatte, und die Steaks waren zwei Finger dick, wie in Butter schnitt das Messer, und rot lief das Blut aus dem Mittelstück, und der Wein war kalt und herb wie eine frische Quelle, das spürte ich noch in all der trockenen flizigen Asche auf meiner Zunge. (48)

The narration does something very interesting here. Past and present are directly connected through the consumption of food. Food is thus poisoned by fascism and, by extension, so too is the present. As the main provider of the food, Kürenberg takes great

responsibility for evoking the ghosts of the past in the present. He is guilty of torturing Siegfried, but he is also guilty of torturing his wife. In that sense, Siegfried and Ilse are both traumatized by the event, while Kürenberg remains indifferent, unaware of the reactions and feelings he has caused. In addition, the preparation of the bloody meat, an invocation of death and suffering, is Kürenberg's creation. In the same manner as Kürenberg prepares food unemotionally, he also remains cold at the dinner table. Siegfried is paralyzed and unable to praise his host for the delicious meal: "Und wir gingen zu Tisch, wir setzten uns, Kürenberg tat die Speisen auf, sie schenkte den Wein ein, und sicher war es ein köstliches Mahl, ich hatte den Koch zu loben, aber ich konnte nicht, ich schmeckte nichts, oder doch – Asche schmeckte ich, lebenslose zum Verwehen bereite Asche, und ich dachte: Sie hat ihres Vaters Haus nicht brennen sehen" (47). Ilse's persistent suffering and her traumatic past become Siegfried's memory. Even though he has nothing to do with his father's guilt, he feels for the victim. He seems to suffer even more than Ilse, who tries to displace her memory. The fact that Siegfried is haunted by Ilse's past without being responsible for it, shows yet again the memories that the consumption of food triggers. Kürenberg's food tortures him, but it does not change anything. One key component of the Kürenberg's relationship is eating. Unlike Siegfried and Kürenberg, the couple never communicates verbally. In addition, the consumption of food never triggers unpleasant memories. Enjoyment stands at the center of their lives. Their way of eating is always sophisticated and civilized. When the Kürenbergs eat, the narrative descriptions of the food read almost like menus:

Sie speisten kleine knusprige in Butter gesottene Krebse, zartgegrilltes Geflügel, trockene mit Zitronensaft und Öl bestropfte Salatblätter, wollüstig rote Riesenerdbeeren, und dazu tranken sie herben anregenden Frascatiwein. Sie genossen den Wein. Sie genossen das Essen. Sie tranken andächtig. Sie aßen

andächtig. Sie waren ernste ruhige Esser. Sie waren ernste heitere Trinker. Sie sprachen kaum ein Wort; doch sie liebten sich sehr [...]. Sie genossen ihre Gedanken; sie genossen die Erinnerung; danach genossen sie sich und fielen in tiefen Schlummer [...]. (18, 20)

As much as they enjoy food, the couple also enjoys their sexual union. The narrative even talks about love when describing their relationship. The couple, however, seems unreal in the depictions throughout their narration. They appear beyond history, “übergeschichtlich” (51), and not truly anchored in the present. As much as their silent connection receives praise throughout the narration, their relationship remains superficial, embedded in a world of reserved and refined pleasure, detached from the present concerns in a postfascist society. Their perfect outer appearance, closely connected to their enjoyment of food, stands in direct opposition to Gottlieb Judejahn’s: “Nach der Probe gingen Kürenbergs essen. Sie aßen gern; sie aßen oft, sie speisten viel und gut. Zum Glück sah man es ihnen nicht an. Sie vertrugen das viele und gute Essen; sie waren beide wohlproportioniert, nicht fett, gut genährt, nicht üppig, gut beisammen, wie wohlgepflegte Tiere” (17). Food has no mnemonic effect on the Kürenbergs. It is important then to note that the narrator uses the same descriptions of animals for both the Kürenbergs and the fascist Gottlieb Judejahn. As much as the narration describes the couple as civilized people, the designation “animals” belies their sophisticated characteristics. In addition, Kürenberg and Ilse do not, in fact, present that perfect symbiosis²³⁶, as many literary critics, like Gundula Sharman, have argued.²³⁷ As stated

²³⁶ Ochs uncovers that both Kürenberg and his wife bond over a mutual aesthetic taste, but remain separate, alone. Ochs, *Kulturkritik* 263.

²³⁷ See also Sharman, “Reworkings.”

above, their inability to communicate happens at the expense of Ilse, who becomes more and more distanced throughout the narration.

Food takes on a different meaning for Adolf, the son of Gottlieb Judejahn. For him, food is a key component of his past. Yet again, eating creates an uncomfortable atmosphere in regard to male bonding. When Adolf was young, he provided food for a Jewish boy, a former concentration camp captive. He vividly remembers the different bodily constitutions of the German boys and the Jewish boys who suffered from severe hunger at the end of the war:

[...] die Kinder in braunen Jacken standen allein den Häftlingen im blauweißen Sträflingskleid gegenüber, und die Gerippe und die Toten schauten aus tiefliegenden Augenhöhlen wie durch die Parteijunker hindurch, und denen war es auf einmal, als ob sie selbst keine Skelette mehr hätten, kein Knochengerüst, als ob sie nur noch braune Parteijacken seien, die durch bösen Zauber in der Frühlingsluft hing. Die Kinder liefen vom Bahnkörper hinunter in den Wald. Sie blieben nicht beisammen. Sie zertreuten sich (71).

This episode of Adolf's childhood is part of the narrative's intention to psychologize Adolf. It serves as the key event that made Adolf swear off his parents' lifestyle and pursue a career as a priest. Hunger and Adolf's care of the Jewish boy seems to stand at the center of the narration and foregrounds food as the key medium for fostering social bonds. Such a reading however, is misleading. It is not food that makes the two boys bond. It is the exchange of the jackets. Hunger is the main concern of the Jewish boy who is close to starvation, but by approaching Adolf he appears primitive and potentially dangerous. The Jewish boy screams and holds up a club: "[...] und das Gespenst, den Knüppel erhoben in der Hand, schrie nach Brot" (71). Adolf helps the young boy and provides him with food. The Jewish boy invites Adolf to share the food with him: "Und Adolf aß, ohne Hunger und ohne daß es ihm schmeckte, aber auch ohne Ekel" (72).

Adolf is not hungry, but he shares the food, and makes a connection with the boy. Still, Adolf remains unemotional when he shares the food with the Jewish boy. The effort at bonding proves to be a shallow attempt at forging a meaningful human link. This failure is expressed by the fact that the German and the Jewish boy reject the food: “Der jüdische Junge erbrach sich. Er gab die Wurst und das Brot und die Margarine wieder von sich. Er gab auch die Mandeln wieder von sich” (73). A truthful bonding cannot happen through food. Food is, in Adolf’s and the Jewish boy’s case, poisoned with fascism. It is not a way to make a real connection with another person. As mentioned before, the actual bonding of the boys happens over the exchange of the jackets: “Nachher tauschten sie ihre Jacken. Adolf zog die blauweißgestreifte Sträflingsjacke mit dem Judenstern an. Das berührte ihn. Sein Herz schlug so, daß er den Schlag in den Adern spürte. Die Jacke brannte. Er fühlte es” (73). The exchange of food, therefore, proves in this context to be an unfruitful attempt to bond in the past and present.

Another instance when male bonding fails to materialize through food happens when the fascist Gottlieb Judejahn encounters former members of the Austrian SS: “Braungebrannte Zwiebeln brutzelten auf großen gehackten Steaks. Man aß. Man stopfte sich voll. Die Zwiebeln schmeckten den Männern. Die Zwiebeln schmeckten Judejahn. Man freundete sich an” (67). Eating has a double function in this context. First, it supposedly enables men to bond. Then, by participating in the act of eating, the supposed friendship between the characters unmask itself as a way to form hierarchies at the table: “Er fürchtete sich nicht, seinen Namen zu nennen; aber nachdem er mit ihnen gegessen und getrunken hatte, verbot ihm sein Rang, sich zu offenbaren. Der kommandierende Mörder saß nicht mit den Handlangern bei Tisch; das widersprach den Kasinositten”

(68). The distance between Judejahn and the other men reaches its climax when Judejahn unmasks the former SS members as contract killers. Food, or the rejection thereof, proves an effective method to break Judejahn free from their trap. Judejahn vomits onto the young men and enjoys himself: “[...] aber Judejahn ließ sich nicht auf der Flucht erschießen [...] sein Ziel blieb Deutschland [...] nichts konnte ihn beirren, er kotzte sie an [...] Es tat Judejahn wohl, sie anzukotzen” (80). It is the act of vomiting that prevented Judejahn from getting killed. Food is the key medium that brings these fascists together and proves that Nazis still roam postfascist society. In the same way food becomes a trap for Judejahn, the rejection of the food buys him out of his capturers’ hands. Judejahn survives only to murder Ilse Kürenberg at the end of the narration.

III. The Fascist Quest: Fressen and Huren

Eating assumes yet another role for the fascist Gottlieb Judejahn. Eating triggers his desire for sex and reminds him of his own bodily decay. The “Fleischlichkeit,” the reduction of a living being into pure flesh is a necessary condition for Judejahn when he encounters women and when he eats. Being the judge over life and death exemplifies the highest power for him, which he lived out freely when he was a member of the “Genickschußpatrouille:” “Die Macht war der Tod. Der Tod war der einzige Allmächtige” (54). Death symbolizes the ultimate transformation of a living being into material. It is a material state to which Judejahn is attracted. Consuming the female material saves Judejahn from his bodily dissolution. He consumes both food and bodies equally. Judejahn eats in an uncivilized way. In his sexual fantasies, he imagines women as bodies, with which he exchanges bodily fluids. Judejahn’s drives are as basic and

infantile as is his entire character. In what Thomas Richner calls his “pervertiert-primitive Ursprünglichkeit,” the Nazi war criminal is captured between “Nahrungstrieb” and “Geschlechtstrieb.”²³⁸ Going beyond this, I supplement these two drives typical for Judejahn, eating and sexual desire, with a third one: Tötungstrieb.²³⁹ The three drives are so closely connected that they serve the same goal: the preservation of Judejahn’s body by murdering living beings. The psychology behind Judejahn’s actions is, in fact, hard to grasp at face value. The application of Klaus Theweleit’s theory on fascist male fantasies illuminates, however, Judejahn’s quest to sexually possess women as an act of self-preservation. Theweleit discusses in his two-volume work *Männerphantasien*²⁴⁰ how fascism is produced and established in male domination over the female. He analyzes the psychology behind the behavior of Freikorps soldiers towards women. Fascism for Theweleit is a product of the male’s control of women regarding their body, their social status, and their sexuality. Masculinity, then, is constructed at the expense of women. In Freikorps literature, it is the foreign woman that serves as a sexual object of desire. She is usually killed off in the narration. Respectable women, wives, fiancés and sisters always remain untouched and sacred. In *Der Tod in Rom* Judejahn does not seek sexual pleasure; he seeks an act of male dominance over the foreigner that threatens him. Koeppen’s novel uses food and hunger as key components that initiate this fascist quest.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Thomas Richner, *Der Tod in Rom. Eine existential-psychologische Analyse von Wolfgang Koeppen* (Zürich: Artemis, 1982) 68.

²³⁹ Gunn, *Art and Politics* 128.

²⁴⁰ See Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, vol 1-2. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Roter Stern, 1977-).

²⁴¹ Gary Schmidt also uses Theweleit in his reading of *Der Tod in Rom*. He points specifically to the red fog as a sign of Communism and women’s bodily fluids, which endanger the steady bodily borders of the fascist male. Schmidt, *Homosexualität und Faschismus* 88.

Judejahn's way of thinking about women is] poisoned by his militaristic psyche, in which women either serve as men's support in traditional marriage or they become the ultimate object of hatred, a wartime enemy. Theweleit, however, demonstrates that the fascist in fact fears all women.²⁴² He flees his wife Eva and tries to overcome his fear of foreign women by sexually possessing and killing them. This is also true for Judejahn. He fears Eva, who is a strict believer in Third Reich ideologies, even though she is just an extension of Judejahn, obedient to his wishes: "Aber Eva war ihm treu gewesen, eine treue deutsche Frau, das Musterexemplar, für das zu leben und zu kämpfen man vorgab; und manchmal glaubte man daran. Er fürchtete sich. Er fürchtete sich vor Eva, der ungeschminkten und haargeknoteten, dem Frauenschaftsweib, der Endsieggläubigen" (26). The passage shows that Eva is merely an excuse for his male desires for power and militaristic success.

Women's bodies stand in the center of his attraction. The reduction to "Fleischlichkeit" is central for Judejahn. Sexual intercourse for Judejahn is merely an exchange of bodily fluids, in which women are reduced to bodies that he can torture and hate:

[...] und er sah ihre Taille, er sah ihren Hals, das, was zu umfassen war, er haßte dies Leben, er haßte diese Art Frauen, als Kriegsbeute ließ er sie gelten, im Puff noch, man zahlte, man zog sich aus, oder man zog sich nicht mal aus, man ließ Gier ab, schnappte Weibdunst ein, duftwasserüberspritzt, doch blieb man sich der Fleischlichkeit des Vorgangs bewußt. (130)

"Fressen" and "huren," his life's philosophy, become realizable when he sees the beautiful bartender Laura for the very first time. Feasting and sleeping around always go

²⁴² See, for example, Theweleit, *Männerphantasien* 21.

hand in hand and exemplify Rome's attractiveness for Judejahn. In Rome, he can find "raffinierte Huren" (28) and feast at a "reiche Tafel" (28).

Laura, an Italian bartender, is one of Judejahn's objects of sexual desire. It is hard for Judejahn to communicate with Laura. It is not only the language barrier between them, but also Laura's disembodied appearance. She has power over men, expressed through her smile and her air of innocence. Judejahn needs to reduce Laura constantly to her body, because he realizes that she eludes his power. Laura possesses an aura. She even bewitches the homosexuals who visit the bar with her smile:

Niemand betrog Laura, denn selbst die homosexuellen Männer, die zu später Stunde und an Sonntagnachmittagen in diesem Etablissement verkehrten, fühlten sich durch Lauras stilles Lächeln beschenkt. Auch Judejahn war beeindruckt. Aber Unmenschlichkeit machte ihn blind, und so erkannte er nicht, daß er ein kindliches Wesen vor sich hatte, das sein Bestes umsonst hergab. Er dachte: Eine hübsche Nutte. (36)

By reducing Laura to her body and imagining her as a whore, Judejahn denies her of all these immaterial qualities and robs Laura of her innocence. He needs to convince himself of her foreignness, possibly Jewishness, in order to trigger hatred and overcome his fears of her. Through her outer appearance and her smile, Laura exemplifies an image of perfection that detaches her from the materiality of her body, which creates a problem for the fascist. Judejahn's solution entails the reduction of her body in successive steps. It is Laura's aura that Judejahn first needs to destroy. The narration compares Laura with "Schneewittchen," whose innocent traits Judejahn turns on their head: "Er sah Haar schwarz wie Lack, ein Puppengesicht vom Lächeln belebt, er sah den roten Mund, die roten Nägel, er hatte Lust, sie zu kaufen, und in dieser Stunde des Reichtums mußte man als Käufer auftreten, wenn man nicht Knecht sein wollte" (36). He wants to buy her and reduces her to a whore. Still, his insecurity remains overpowering: "Aber schon stand er

wieder hilflos und tölpelhaft da und wußte nicht, wie er sich benehmen und wie er es sprachlich beginnen sollte, er war ja nicht in Uniform, das Mädchen fürchtete ihn nicht, es war nicht mit bloßem Winken getan” (36). This statement suggests that he needs her fear in order to fulfill his sexual desire. She is both an object of desire and an object of hatred. Laura becomes part of his sexual fantasy, in which she serves as an objectified prey, a body Judejahn can both possess and hate.

Das Mädchen war nicht sein Fall. Sie war nicht deutsch [...]. Sie war halt eine Hure. Oder sie war doch eine Jüdin. Eine magere geile jüdische Hure. Das war Rassenschande. Er brauchte das Mädchen nicht zu fürchten. Er konnte sie hassen. Das war es, er brauchte eine Frau, um sie zu hassen, er brauchte für seine Hände, für seinen Leib einen anderen Leib, ein anderes Leben, das zu hassen und zu vernichten war, nur wenn man tötete, lebte man. (86)

For Judejahn, murder is the highest form of possessing a human being. His body, or “Leib,” can only exist if he consumes another body. The fact that Laura has power over any man with her smile scares Judejahn. He despises female confidence. The thought of female strength makes him even lose his erection:

[...] mit ihrem Lächeln auf Weibesgleichberechtigung und Menschenrechte weisend, pfui Teufel Menschenrecht, das kannte man, er langte in seine Hose, dies konnte zur Unterwerfung führen, zu jämmerlicher Manneserweichung, so wurden Kriegspläne verraten, Reiche zerstört, der kleine Gottlieb wußte Bescheid, Judejahn fühlte in seiner Hose eine weichrauhe, eine sanfteste Geschwulst, wie eine Maus glitt sie in seine Hand und war das Wildlederbeutelchen mit Austerlitz’ schallgedämpften Pistole. (130)

The pistol, an instrument of power, is linked to his sexual organ, the penis. Laura endangers male power and sexuality with her confidence. Judejahn needs her submission for his sexual arousal. Any female power, “Weibesgleichheit,” disturbs his fascist quest to reduce Laura to her body. Koeppen’s text uncovers the necessity of reactionary gender values, represented by Judejahn, in a postfascist society.

As Sedgwick argues, a world dominated by homosocial bonding, constantly needs to protect its conservative power structure. Homophobia and the repression of any female bondings, which could undermine patriarchal power structures, are necessary to keep the established male-dominated system alive.²⁴³ Laura does not only have power over him, because of her aura and her confidence, but she even rejects Judejahn. She is not passive prey, but confident enough to meet Judejahn on her own terms:

[...] und als Judejahn sie fragend anblickte, schüttelte sie verneinend den Kopf. Er trat zur Kasse und stierte sie an. Was war los? Was fiel der Hure ein, Judejahn zu narren? Leider fehlten ihm die Worte, sie fehlten ihm in jeder Sprache, und Laura lächelte, sie fand es schmeichelhaft, daß der Blaubebrillte nun wütend war, und überhaupt schlief sie gern am Tage mit Männern und nicht in der Nacht, wo sie von den Zahlen müde war und wirklich schlafen wollte, und so sagte sie ihm, er könne sie am Morgen treffen [...]. (163-164)

Laura is in control. Judejahn's anger surpasses hers. Rather than grasping the extent of his brutal character, she feels flattered by his anger. Judejahn feels yet again overpowered. Age becomes his new enemy: "Aber ein neuer Feind war gegen ihn aufgestanden [...] das Alter" (166). His aging body stands in the way of possessing the woman. Laura, imagined as a wartime prey, betrays Judejahn's logic of winning women as war booty. Judejahn realizes that the younger generation, unaffiliated with any military actions, conquer women: "Aber die neue Jugend hatte ihn verraten und verriet ihn immer weiter, und nun bestahl sie ihn, brachte ihn um die Siegeschancen, raubte ihm das Weib, das zu allen Zeiten dem Eroberer zufiel, dem Überwältiger [...]" (166). It is not only the physical age of Judejahn that is responsible for his bodily decay, but also the disempowerment of his persona. The text emphasizes that his body is just another body among many. His body is not loaded anymore with the aura of privilege on account of his militaristic rank: "Judejahn stieß und wurde gestoßen. Er wunderte sich. Er staunte, daß

²⁴³ Sedgwick, *Between Men* 1-4.

keiner ihm Platz machte, niemand vor ihm zurückwich. Es wunderte ihn, daß auch er gestoßen wurde” (40). His body, the German body, is nothing special any more. His life is almost over: “[...] doch jetzt war ihm übel, er spürte Schmerz und Fieber, empfand die Schnitte, die sein Leben nur noch zu einem bloßen Rest machten, empfand die Schnitte, die diesen Rest aus der breiten Fülle seiner Macht trennten. Was war er? Er war ein Clown seines Einst” (41). Once, he was powerful and his body exceeded its material space. His body was, in other words, an extension of his power, and thus metaphorically loaded. The women he desires, Laura and Ilse Kürenberg, possess charismatic personalities, which makes them powerful beyond their corporeality. Because of his own postwar transformation, the reduction of women to base material proves almost impossible when he encounters Laura.

Eating falls into the same material category. It is the desire to fill oneself with food (stuff). Food triggers in him blind frenzied consumption, whereby the quantity of the food stands at the center. Feasting, or better yet uncontrollable stuffing, manifests itself as a way to fight his bodily dissolution:

Judejahn spürte Gier, sich zu füllen. Schon im Freikorps hatte er Anfälle von Gefräßigkeit gehabt und Schlag nach Schlag die Löffelerbsen der Gulaschkanone in sich hineingefüllt” [...]. Er schlang [die Meerestiere] hinunter; sie schmeckten ihm wie gebackene Regenwürmer, und ihm grauste. Er fühlte, wie sein schwerer Leib sich in Würmer auflöste, er erlebte lebendigen Leibes seine Verwesung, aber um der Auflösung zu begegnen, schlang er gegen alles Grausen weiter hinunter, was auf dem Teller lag. (42)

The dissolution of his body is inevitable. Eating does not make him feel satisfied or filled, but produces the opposite effect. Rather than nourishing his body, food enhances a fear of death. Food serves to heighten self-awareness. It demonstrates to him the shortness of his life that he needs to fight. The narrator refers numerous times to his

weakened and aging body. Emotions, however, come to the fore only when he eats. Judejahn's bodily constitution is marked by his overconsumption of food. His appearance is heavy and unattractive: "[...] wuchtig der Nacken, breit die Schultern, gehoben der Brustkorb, gerundet und elastisch wie ein praller Boxball der Bauch und stämmig die Schenkel" (15). He appears as an animal and a monster. The narrator uses expressions like "stiernackig" (16) and "Ungeheuer" (16). These animalistic and instinctual traits emerge when he encounters food. He smells the food, as if it had an animal's scent: "[...] jetzt roch er am Eingang der gesuchten Gasse Speisegeruch. [...] und Judejahn forderte die Leber mit dieser Täfelchenbezeichnung 'fritto scelto', das hieß aber nur 'nach Wahl', und man brachte ihm aus Mißverständnis und nicht rechtem Hinhören in Teig und Öl gebackene kleine Meertiere" (42). Judejahn is confused about the foreign language and the foreign cuisine shows him once again that he is not a part of the mass, but separated from the postfascist lifestyle. He has lost his identity and his goals:

Er ging in eine Garküche irgendwo an seinem Weg, der jetzt ziellos war, er trat ein in Öl- und Teig- und Meergerüche, er stellte sich an das Büfett, er hätte alles in sich hineinschlingen mögen, ein wahnsinniger Hunger quälte ihn. Da waren dicke weiße Bohnen, ein deutsches Gericht, ein Schulhauskinderzeitgericht, er deutete drauf hin, aber die Bohnen waren kalte Speise, kein deutsches Gericht, sie glitschten glatt in Öl [...] die Tomatensauce schmierte sich ihm weich und fettig um den Mund (56).

He eats like an animal and shows no table manners. What he thinks to be German food unmasks itself as Italian. While the Kürenbergs dine and enjoy the foreign cuisine with fine table manners, Judejahn stuffs himself in order to fight a frenzied hunger. While the Kürenbergs eat outside, he eats in dark alleys and basements, far away from civilized culture: "In dem Keller mochten Ratten nisten, aber es zog Judejahn hinab, es zog ihn von der breiten langweiligen Via Nazionale hinunter in diesen Keller, die feuchten

schmutzigen Steinstufen hinab, die Freßlust trieb ihn, der Durst trieb ihn, ein Schild
‘Deutsche Küche’ lockte, ein Schild ‘Pilsener Bier’, deutsch sei der Mann, deutsch sei
das Essen [...]” (65). He cannot explain to himself why he is so attracted to the basement.

He foregrounds his wishes to feast and to whore:

Fressen, saufen, huren, das war Landknechtsweise. [...] er wollte fressen, saufen,
huren, er hatte Lust dazu, Unruhe zwickte seine Hoden, warum nahm er sich
nicht, was er haben wollte, warum die Garküchen, die Stehkneipen, warum dieser
Keller? Es zog ihn hinunter. Es war einverhängnisvoller Tag. Lähmung lag in der
alten Luft dieser Stadt, Lähmung und Verhängnis. Ihm war, als könne in dieser
Stadt keiner mehr ficken. Ihm war, als hätten die Priester der Stadt die Hoden
abgeschnitten. (66)

Feasting and whoring go hand in hand for Judejahn. His sexual drive, however, is
endangered in the foreign city of Rome. His hunt for the women he desires proves more
complicated, since Laura and Ilse Kürenberg have a powerful charisma. The consumption
only gives him a temporary relief. After eating, he strives to another higher form of
consumption, the consumption of a female body. Since feasting is unsatisfying, Judejahn
strives to fulfill his sexual desire. Therefore, women are in danger every time the fascist
eats.

Judejahn’s hunt does not just encompass one woman. Ilse Kürenberg also
becomes a victim to Judejahn’s act of self-preservation. As much as the loathing of food
becomes a daily routine, the imagined brutal sexual act with a woman obsesses Judejahn
throughout the narrative.

When Judejahn encounters Ilse Kürenberg at a concert hall, he makes her part of
his sexual fantasy. Ilse becomes even more important than Laura. It is again hunger that
triggers his sexual fantasy. The text mentions both of Judejahn’s desires in a row, raising
hunger to the metaphorical hunger for a woman: “Hunger grimmte in seinem Magen [...]

er konnte nicht klären, ob er mit Laura schlafen möchte oder lieber mit dieser Frau in der Loge” (145). Food and women are necessary fuels to keep Judejahn alive. The former manifests itself in an uncontrollable act of stuffing, the latter in a brutal sexual act, which eventually ends with the murder of the woman. In this instance, the sexual desire is imagined as rape.²⁴⁴ He fantasizes about physically hurting the woman by choking her: “[...] und Judejahn konnte derweilen, ohne daß sie es zu merken brauchten, sich schon auf Lauras schmale, von seinen Händen leicht zu umschließende Taille, sich schon auf der lächelnden Kassenschönheit zierliches, zu umhalsendes Hälschen freuen” (159). He also degrades women psychologically by imagining himself throwing Laura out after the sexual act: “Er hätte sie gevögelt, und nachher hätte er sie ‘rausgeschmissen. Es hätte ihm gutgetan, sie zu vögeln, und es hätte ihm gutgetan, sie ‘rauszuschmeißen” (85). Judejahn tries constantly to fight away the obstacles he encounters with Laura. As much as he imagines her as a helpless victim, Judejahn is always torn in his attempt to possess Laura: “Da war ihr Lächeln, und einen Moment lang dachte Judejahn, laß sie laufen, aber dann dachte er wieder, sie ist eine Jüdin, und wieder erregte es ihn” (179-180). In this passage it is clear that her smile scares him away, but her possible Jewishness arouses him sexually. Judejahn gets what he wants in the end. He takes Laura to his hotel room and becomes scared. When he takes off the glasses that successfully camouflaged his voracious gaze, she becomes terrified:

Sie hatte noch gedacht, ob er die blaue Brille im Bett abnehmen würde, und dann hatte er sie abgenommen, es hatte sie amüsiert, aber dann erschrak sie vor seinen Augen, sie waren blutunterlaufen, und sie bebte zurück vor seinem tükisch gierigen Blick, vor der gesenkten Stierstirn, die auf sie zukam, und er fragte ‘hast du Angst?’, und sie verstand ihn nicht und lächelte, aber es war kein volles Lächeln mehr, und er warf sie auf das Bett. (181)

²⁴⁴ Gunn also identifies Judejahn’s use of sex not as an expression of love, but as a mere act to degrade women to “Kriegsbeute.” Gunn, *Art and Politics* 123.

On the quest to possess Laura's body, he nearly rapes the young woman: "[...] aber dieser warf sich wie eine Bestie über sie, er spreizte ihre Glieder, zerrte an ihrer Haut, und dann nahm er sie roh, ging roh mit ihr um, wo sie doch schmal und zart war, er war schwer, er lag schwer auf ihrem Leib [...] dies ist widerlich, er stinkt nach Schweiß, und er stinkt wie ein Bock, wie ein dreckiger gemeiner Ziegenbock im Stall stinkt er [...]" (181).²⁴⁵ Laura is the victim in Judejahn's fantasy. The sexual act reminds her of two childhood experiences outside of Rome: the forced copulation of goats with a he-goat, and the memory of a boy who forced Laura to touch him:

[...] sie war als Kind einmal auf dem Land gewesen, sie war in Kalabrien auf dem Land gewesen, sie hatte sich gefürchtet und hatte sich nach Rom gesehnt, nach ihrer herrlichen Stadt, und das Haus in Kalabrien hatte gestunken, und sie hatte zusehen müssen, wie die Ziegen zum Bock geführt wurden, und auf der Holzstiege hatte sich ein Junge vor ihr entblößt, und sie hatte den Jungen anfassen müssen [...]. (182)

Even though Laura feels sexually satisfied by Judejahn, the rape is a crucial component during intercourse with the fascist on two levels. First, Judejahn is convinced that he is copulating with Laura against her will, as implied by his fantasy about her fear and the brutal way of touching her. Secondly, Laura remembers two scenes of sexual assault from her childhood.

Judejahn needs to imagine Laura as a Jew in order to enhance his sexual desire. He does hurt her. But, as mentioned before, Laura takes pleasure in the sexual act. "[...] du tust mir weh', aber Judejahn verstand sie nicht, da sie auf italienisch rief, und es war auf gleichgültig, denn es tat weh, aber es tat schön weh, ja, sie wollte diese Hingabe, der Alte befriedigte sie [...] und der Mann war böse, er flüsterte ,du bist eine Jüdin, du bist

²⁴⁵ Sharman interprets this passage in the novel as a rape scene and also sees Ilse Kürenberg as playing a crucial part in the sexual assault. See Sharman, *Reworkings* 87.

eine Jüdin‘ [...] und legte die Hände um ihren Hals, und sie rief ‘*no e poi no, cattólico*’ [...]” (182). She is, in fact, sexually satisfied by him. The failed communication allows them both to fulfill their fantasy. She interprets his effort as genuine and he deceives himself into thinking that he is indeed not sleeping with a Jewish woman.

Ilse, however, fulfills the ultimate desire. Judejahn clearly identifies her as Ilse Aufhäuser, as a Jewish woman when he sees her at Siegfried’s concert. It is the murder that completes Judejahn’s quest of saving his body. He identifies her as a wartime enemy, which sexually attracts him to her: “[...] eine deutsche Jüdin schlief mit seinem Sohn, der ein römischer Priester war, es erregte Judejahn, es erregte ihn, wie den Leser der Gerichtszeitung der Blutschandeprozess entrüstet und aufregt [...]” (157). Ilse’s encounter reminds him of the propagated hatred of Jewishness in the Third Reich, but also draws a connection to his sexual attraction to the foreign. The forbidden territory triggers an uncontrollable sexual desire in him. The destruction, “Zerschlagen,” of the female body is a necessity after the intercourse.

[...] die Erinnerung an die Photographien nackter Frauen vor dem Leichengraben nun perverse Vorstellungen in ihm weckten, es war Sünde, sich mit Jüdinnen zu vermischen, es war artur Dinters vom kleinen Gottlieb verschlungene *Sünde wider das Blut*, aber der Gedanke an die Sünde reizte die Hoden, regte die Samenzellen an, doch die Verbindung blieb unerlaubt, es sei denn, dies war ein Traum in einem roten Nebel, der ihm dann vor die Augen trat, war keine klare Überlegung, war ein Wachschlafgedanke, man zerschlug nach vollzogenem Samenopfer, nach den befreienden, Dumpfes lösenden Stößen des Lusthasses die Muschel beschnittener Zuneigung, das unreine Gefäß unbegreiflicher Verführung und kabalistischer Magie, welches das kostbare Gen des Ariers erlistet hatten. (157)

The “Lusthass” finds its greatest fulfillment in the murder of the Jewish woman. The sexual act and the murder belong together. After sleeping with Laura, he turns to his

higher object of desire, Ilse Kürenberg. She becomes part of the very same sexual act.

The ultimate sexual satisfaction is reached through the murder of Ilse with his pistol:

[...] Ilse Kürenberg stand da in einem weißen Frisiermantel, ein wenig vom Fenster entfernt, aber er sah sie nackend, nackend wie in der Nacht, nackend wie die Frauen vor dem Leichengraben, und Judejahn schoß das Magazin von Austerlitz' Pistole leer, er schuss die Grabensalve, diesmal schoss er eigenhändig, diesmal befahl er nicht nur, Befehle galten nicht mehr, man musste selber schießen, und erst beim letzten Schuss fiel Ilse Kürenberg um, und des Führers Befehl war vollstreckt. (183)

His quest of feasting and whoring has come to an end and so has his life. Judejahn, however, has reached his goal. He destroys Laura's untouchable aura, reducing her to flesh. He manages to sleep with her and lives out his imagined brutality. Laura is shocked after Judejahn fires the shots. She not shocked because of the murder, which she does not see, but she understands that something horrifying has happened: "Laura schrie, aber sie schrie nur einmal auf [...]. Judejahn fand die Tür, und Laura weinte ins Bett hinein [...]. sie begriff nicht, was vorgefallen war, aber Entsetzliches war geschehen, der Mann hatte geschossen, er hatte zum Fenster hinausgeschossen – und er hatte ihr kein Geschenk gegeben" (183). Judejahn has executed what has always been his goal, the murder of the foreign wartime enemy. In this sense, even though Judejahn dies in the end, women remain victims. In Judejahn's postfascist world women are erased from the picture. They are another type of food, a materiality that fascist men consume in the same way they consume food. The narration emphasizes the materiality of the sexual act between Laura and Judejahn when they sleep together. Bodily fluids are exchanged. "Schweiß" is a crucial part of this sexual union. The text foregrounds the same materiality when Judejahn dies. He could not save his body from dissolution. Food as the initial force of saving himself only leads to the sexual abuse of women, and ultimately murder:

“Judejahn lag leblos, aber er war nicht tot. Schweiß und Ausscheidungen liefen seiner Auflösung voran. Er purgierte, er reinigte sich. Das Purgatorium ist das Fegefeuer” (186). Death awaits Judejahn. His persona and his fascist body have no future in a postfascist society. It is the young generation that not only manages to survive former Nazi atrocities like Judejahn, but might even be able to lead Germany to a better future, not poisoned by Nazi ideologies. Music and art are presented as potential gateways to a better Germany.

IV. Music, Art and Sexual Desire

Siegfried’s music and art serve two different goals. Music is the way to engage critically with the past, while art serves as an escape from any secular bounds. It exemplifies complicated engagement with pure beauty, detached from a fascist past. Music and art prove to be more useful tools than the focus on instinctual desires in *Der Tod in Rom*. Learning from the past happens through music, and looking at art is more aesthetically pure than sexual intercourse. Siegfried’s taste in art stands in a Winckelmanian tradition, since he desires the young boys who appear, like Greek cultures, at one with nature.²⁴⁶ His passion for art is linked to his homosexuality. Siegfried rejects women as sexual objects and despises their ability to procreate. Siegfried does not engage in the exchange of food and sex with women. He is the only male character who never seeks to nourish himself, except when he is invited by the Kurenberg’s to the dinner table. The admiration of male Greek statues stands in for women altogether as his solution to the perfect postfascist world. To this end, escaping Germany’s past by engaging with art accounts for yet another way of phasing women and their experiences out of a postwar German discourse.

²⁴⁶ See Winckelman, *Nachahmung*.

Throughout the whole novel other characters engage with music and art, but their understanding of Siegfried's cultural sophistication fails. In addition, they endanger Siegfried's vision. Siegfried understands the problematic position that the young generation faces when trying to escape fascism. Siegfried's prognosis for Germany's future is dark. He sees the beneficiaries of newly won Western capitalism, personified by his brother Dietrich, as dangerous and overpowering: "'Wir werden gegen Dietrich unterliegen. Mein Bruder Dietrich siegt immer über uns'" (127). Siegfried hopes that his music can help change people by agitating them: "Wen sollte meine Musik erfreuen? Sollte sie überhaupt erfreuen? Sie sollte beunruhigen. Sie würde keinen hier beunruhigen" (138). Ilse is the only person who is "beunruhigt" (*disquiet*) because of his music. She is the only character who understands his music on Siegfried's terms. She can read him better than his mentor. His mentor wants him to strive for harmony, without understanding what exactly Siegfried is trying to express. Ilse on the other hand gains real access to his music: "Ilse kam es vor, als seien diese Noten von einem geschrieben, der nicht wußte, was er wollte. War er verzweifelt, weil er keinen Weg sah, oder gab es für ihn keinen Weg, weil er über jeden Pfad die Nacht seiner Verzweiflung breitete und ihn ungangbar machte?" (17). She sees the emotional component in Siegfried's music, while Kürenberg foregrounds the technical methods. In this sense, Ilse also reacts purely emotionally to his music. Because of its affective draw, she wants to flee the music. But Siegfried's music and Kürenberg's investment in it are the only reasons why the couple is in Rome. Even though Siegfried feels raped by Kürenberg's improvements on his composition, he still appreciates Kürenberg's expertise and benefits from the older mentor.

For Ilse, the music is pure torture. She is forced to listen to it. She also loses her close connection to her husband who replaces her with Siegfried: “Jetzt beunruhigte sie Siegfrieds Musik, und sie wollte nicht beunruhigt werden. Es war ein Ton da, der sie wehmütig machte. Sie hatte aber in ihrem Leben erfahren, dass es besser sei, Leid und Wehmut zu fliehen” (17). Through Siegfried’s music, Ilse is able to enter her past, but she refuses. She only expresses uncomfortable emotions, but there are no images or specific events that she remembers. By refusing to analyze her thoughts and memories as a victim of the German past, her victimhood remains unmastered. It is interesting that the door to her past is opened by Siegfried. Her past, however, foregrounds the men’s hardships in her life. She as the girl is barely mentioned. It is her father’s life and Kürenberg’s career that are at stake in her memory. She understands it is better to ignore the cruelty of the past by rejecting the interpretation of any past events: “[...] sie durchschaute die Konvention, den Tod nicht zu sehen, das allgemeine Übereinkommen, den Schrecken zu leugnen [...]” (50). Even though she refuses to take the chance and engage critically with the past through Siegfried’s music, she knows that other people in her life used art to distort and to distract from reality: “[...] und wie einfältig war es von ihrem Vater, zwischen ihrem Mädchenleben und dem Kaufhof eine Mauer aus Büchern, Musik und Kunst zu errichten, eine Bastion, die trog [...]” (51). Kürenberg displays this fakeness, this false engagement with art as a distraction or mere convention. Thus, his hand only *feels* trustworthy, indicating that in reality his character is fake. Ilse has in fact no real connection with the composer: “Sie nahm Kürenbergs Hand, drängte ihre Hand, die kalt und für einen Augenblick wie gestorben war, in die Faust des Dirigenten, die sich warm, trocken, fleischfest und vertrauenswürdig anfühlte” (51). In contradistinction to

Kürenberg's half-hearted engagement with art, Siegfried believes that his music is more than just music. It can clearly contribute to societal changes over long periods of time:

Die Musik war nicht dazu da, die Menschen zu ändern, aber sie stand in Korrespondenz mit der gleichfalls geheimnisvollen Macht der Zeit, und so konnte sie vielleicht mit der Zeit zu großen Veränderungen beitragen, aber was ist in der Zeit ein Jahrhundert, was ein Jahrtausend, wir messen die Zeit aus dem Standort unseres flüchtigen Lebens, aber wir wissen nicht, was die Zeit ist. (127)

Siegfried thus views his music as being detached from any and all individual listeners.

The narration, however, proves his assessment to be wrong. His music may reach the listener, but, admittedly, may not make the listener change. Siegfried's music does help people to question the past. Friedrich Wilhelm Pfaffrath, for example, thinks about his youth in which he could have chosen a different path, other than the one he took in German fascist society: "Aber jetzt, in der Verwandlung der Nachtstunde fragte er sich noch, ob Siegfried mit seiner Symphonie vielleicht die bessere Heimat gesucht und ob er in seinem Pfaffraths Ohr mißklingenden Tönen vielleicht Zwiesprache mit seiner jungen Seele gehalten hatte" (170). It is just a realization and not necessarily an event that changes Pfaffrath instantly. But it might be seen as a first step to question former decisions that could have led to a better future.

Siegfried's music is powerful, but also painful. In general, as the narration emphasizes, Siegfried's atonal music signifies "[...] eine Annäherung an die Wahrheit der Dinge, die nur unmenschlich sein konnte, das wurde unter Kürenbergs dirigierender Hand human und licht, eine Musik für gebildete Zuhörer, doch Siegfried klang es fremd und enttäuschend, die gebändigte Empfindung strebte zur Harmonie [...]" (8). Kürenberg distorts the clear message of the music, or as Schelling puts it, he fulfills the wishes of a

bourgeois audience.²⁴⁷ He even domesticates Siegfried's music, which ultimately distorts Siegfried's attempt to uncover the truth: "[...] und Kürenberg dachte an Siegfrieds Musik, die er morgen für diese Stadt aufs neue straffen, kühlen und im Strom ihres Gefühls komprimieren wollte" (50). "Straff" and "kühl" suggest an unemotional vocabulary, one that is almost militaristic. Kürenberg cooks and conducts in the same manner Judejahn encounters women. Siegfried's music is so distorted and distanced from his original composition that he barely recognizes the composition as his: "[...] und hin und wieder vernahm ich ein paar Töne meiner Symphonie; die Töne klangen wie der Ruf eines verirrtten Vogels in einem fremden Wald" (140). Kürenberg is eager to shape Siegfried's composition according to musical rules. In that context, Siegfried feels like the helpless, potentially sexual victim, expressed through "vergewaltigt."

By using this term, the text plays with sensuous desires that Kürenberg tries to incorporate in the composition. Sensuous pleasures, however, as I have shown, often lead people down the wrong path. They may lead to the rape and murder of women. It is a connection to the past, which in Siegfried's perception becomes a male concern. "Vergewaltigt" thus far leads in that context to the distortion of past experiences (*Verzerrung*), or yet again to silencing female experience: "[...] er hätte weinen mögen, doch Kürenberg war guten Mutes und lobte die Symphonie. Siegfried bewunderte Kürenberg, wie er den Noten diente und mit dem Taktstock herrschte; aber es gab Augenblicke, da sich Siegfried von Kürenberg vergewaltigt wähnte. Siegfried ärgerte sich dann, weil er sich nicht wehrte" (8). This artistic relationship between Siegfried and

²⁴⁷ Klaus von Schilling, "'Erinnerung an eine Zeit vor aller Schuld' – *Der Tod in Rom* als artistischer Roman zwischen Thomas Mann und Franz Kafka," *Wolfgang Koeppen: Mein Ziel war die Ziellosigkeit*, eds. Gunnar Müller-Wadeck and Michael Gratz (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1998) 87.

Kürenberg turns into a dirty sexual sphere when Siegfried says that he feels raped by Kürenberg's improvements. The act of male bonding, the mentorship between an older man with a boy in Ancient Greece, in which a sexual relation was a crucial part of their connection, is turned on its head.²⁴⁸ Kürenberg does not really have access to Siegfried's music. But Siegfried already understands that. After Kürenberg gives Siegfried the advice to be alone and discover his own sense of art, pretending to be a good mentor, Siegfried knows that he can never please him by composing music of which Kürenberg approves: "Und er dachte: Und morgen wird er mich ducken, wird mir mit den Harmoniegesetzen und schulmeisterlicher Strenge begegnen, ein berühmter Orchesterleiter, ein genauer Notenleser, vielleicht ein Gärtner, der alles beschneidet, und ich bin Wildwuchs und Unkraut" (52). Instead of building up Siegfried's confidence, Kürenberg makes him feel unhappy and inadequate. Friendship with Kürenberg: "[...] er war mein einziger wirklicher Freund, aber ich verehrte ihn zu sehr, um wirklich freundschaftlich mit ihm umgehen zu können, und so war ich still [...]" (181). His tip for Siegfried is for him to become an outsider, but never live for art alone: "Ich rate Ihnen nicht, in den berühmten Elfenbeinturm zu steigen. Um Gottes willen – kein Leben für die Kunst! Gehen Sie auf die Straße. Lauschen Sie dem Tag! Aber bleiben Sie einsam! Sie haben das Glück, einsam zu sein" (52). Kürenberg in fact does not live for art, but for prestige. The couple Kürenberg merely display an image of perfection in public, but their Greek-like beauty belies particularly Kürenberg's corrupt character; he sees society as a medium for his success:

Im Dirigentenzimmer wartete Kürenberg auf mich. Er war wahrhaft von der Antike geformt. Sein Frack saß wie auf einer Marmorbüste, und über dem Weiß aus Hemdbrust, Kragen und Schleife blickte sein Kopf augusteisch. Er war weise.

²⁴⁸ Sedgwick, *Between Men* 5.

Er stellte sich nicht töricht vor das Haus und betrachtete sein Publikum. Er war überlegen. Was kümmerten ihn Wahn und Eitelkeit? Die Gesellschaft hatte für ihn eine Funktion, sie hatte das Märchenschloß der Musik zu unterhalten, den magischen Tempel der Töne kyraatidengleich zu stützen, und es war belanglos, aus welcher Einbildung sie es taten. Ilse Kürenberg trug ein einfaches schwarzes Kleid. Auch ihr Kleid saß wie auf Marmor genäht. Es lag wie eine enge schwarze Haut auf einer wohlerhaltenen Marmorbüste. (139)

Siegfried understands that Kürenberg could never comprehend his music. Siegfried is not concerned with pleasing the audience. He is looking for an inapprehensible way apart from any mainstream taste: “Ich hoffe immer noch, ohne zu rechnen zur Summe zu kommen, auf einem unbegreiflichen Weg, der Kürenberg wohl zuwider wäre und den er unsauber und töricht fände” (148). Just as Siegfried is not invested in meeting the audience’s taste, he also does not care about appropriate behavior as an artist: “Ich wußte, Kürenberg würde mir nun böse sein. Er würde mir böse sein, weil ich die Konvention, die den Kunstbetrieb erhielt, wieder mißachtet und mich vor dem Publikum nicht verneigt hatte” (150). Adolf, however, gains access to his past and sees his childhood mirrored in Siegfried’s composition: “Es war ihm, als würde ihm in einem zerbrochenen Spiegel die Kindheit reflektiert” (147). The narration makes clear that it is in fact the younger generation (albeit only that generation’s males) that is able to come to terms with the past.

Siegfried and Adolf are indeed similar. Their ability to engage with art is fruitful, and their rejection of any heterosexual relationships is rewarded in the narration. As we have seen above, heterosexuality is in general doomed in *Der Tod in Rom*. Even worse, sexuality gets translated into a male-dominated discourse on homosexuality that suggests a continued misogynistic sacrifice of women. Sex between Kürenberg and Ilse is confusing for Siegfried. It is clean and pure, almost unreal:

Es entsetzte Siegfried nicht, aber es beirrte ihn doch, das breite, ungemachte Bett zu sehen, es zog seinen Blick an, den er nicht hinzuwenden sich vergebens bemühte, das breite Bett, das Ehebett stand großmächtig im geräumigen Zimmer, es war sachlich und schamlos, es war ganz unsinnlich und schamlos, es war aufgedeckt, kaltes und reines Linnen, und sprach kalt und rein von Gebrauch, den niemand verbergen wollte, von Umarmungen, deren niemand sich schämte, von tiefem gesunden Schlaf. (43)

Because of this perfection, Siegfried imagines the couple as a single flawless human being. They represent the ultimate symbiosis, the everlasting human in Siegfried's eyes:

[...] und auf einmal begriff ich, daß Kürenbergs mir voraus waren, sie waren der Mensch, der ich sein möchte, sie waren sündelos, sie waren der alte und der neue Mensch, sie waren antik und Avantgarde, sie waren vorchristlich und nachchristlich, griechisch-römische Bürger und Flugreisende über den Ozean, sie waren in Körper gesperrt, aber in saubere gekannte und klug erhaltene Leiber; sie waren Exkursanten, die sich's in einer vielleicht unwirtlichen Welt wirtlich gemacht hatten und sich des Erballs freuten. (44)

Siegfried's perceptions, however, are proven wrong by the narrator. Their perfect relationship is betrayed by the materiality of Ilse's body. Even though she seems perfect and unreal, her body remains pure flesh. Their love for antique art connects them, but it is a fake connection that does not foreground perfection, but materiality and coldness: "Sie liebten die Antike. Sie liebten den festen Marmor, die erhabenen Gestalten, die der Mensch nach seinem Bilde schuf, die kühlen Sarkophage, die verheißende Wölbung der Mischkrüge. Sie besuchten die Eroten, die Faune, die Götter und die Helden" (19). Ilse and Kürenberg try to live out the Greek art of beauty in their sexual life. Therefore, sexual reunion is a sacred, but also distanced and clean act. It seems that no bodily fluids are exchanged: "Sie entkleideten sich im Licht und legten sich zwischen die Tücher und deckten sich zu. Sie dachten an die schöne Venus und dachten an die springenden Faune. Sie genossen ihre Gedanken; sie genossen die Erinnerung; danach genossen sie sich und fielen in tiefen Schlummer" (20). Even though, Siegfried sees the Kürenbergs as pure

beautification, Siegfried is aware that everyone's body decays. He becomes aware of the transience of youth when he goes to a beauty salon: "Man deckte ein in Eiswasser getauchtes Tuch auf mein Gesicht, ich war Petronius, der Dichter, ich genoß das Gespräch weiser Männer und die Schönheit der Knaben, und ich wußte, es gib keine Unsterblichkeit und die Schönheit verfault [...]" (174). In that sense, the Kürenbergs' belief in everlasting beauty is unmasked as misguided by the narrative.

Siegfried, in comparison to Judejahn, despises any traits of corporeality. Any type of exchange of bodily fluids is disgusting for him, whether it be a result of eating or sexual desire: "Siegfried graust es vor dem Glas des Mannes, dessen Zwiebelmund schon ölig und ätherisch den Rand beschmiert hat, aber er überwindet den Ekel und kostet den Wein" (60). When he sees the unmade bed in his hotel room, he imagines heterosexual intercourse with the purpose of procreation: "Ich sah einen Mann ein Weib begatten, und mich ekelte, weil ihre Vereinigung das Leben fortsetzen konnte" (81).²⁴⁹ His disgust for procreation is again a rejection of any sensuous desires. His hatred finds its starkest expression when he sees an older woman eating a bread roll. Female sexuality is rejected as a procreative force: "[...] eine Reinmachefrau aß eine Semmel, und aus der Semmel hing eklig das in der Wärme zerlaufende Fett des Schinkens, und eklig hingen die Brüste der Frau ungehalten in der verschwitzten weitgeöffneten Bluse, und Siegfried dachte an den Schoß des Weibes und daß sie Kinder hatte, und es ekelte ihn [...]" (104).

Yet Siegfried distinguishes Ilse from other women in the narration, since she does not participate in procreating: "[...] und sie war ihm sympathisch, weil sie kinderlos war"

²⁴⁹ Oliver Herwig connects this disgust with Siegfried's negative view of history, "sein desillusioniertes Verständnis des Geschichtsprozesses." Oliver Herwig, "Pandorabüchse der Not: Aufbau und Funktion des negativen Geschichtsbildes in *Der Tod in Rom*," *Wolfgang Koeppen: Mein Ziel war die Ziellosigkeit*, eds. Gunnar Müller-Wadeck and Michael Gratz (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1998) 64.

(104). He does not want to be with girls because he hates procreation. He does not see a positive future for Germany in its present state and therefore rejects any desire to bring children into the world. The mere thought of doing so disgusts Siegfried:

[...] und Siegfried wollte sich nicht fortpflanzen. Der Gedanke, ein Leben zu verursachen, das unabsehbaren Begegnungen, Zufällen, Aktionen und Reaktionen ausgesetzt sein und durch Tat, Gedanke oder weitere Vermehrung seinerseits wieder noch in alle Zukunft wirken konnte, die Vorstellung, Vater eines Kindes zu sein, diese Herausforderung der Welt, entsetzte ihn wahrhaft und verdarb ihm den Umgang mit Mädchen [...]. (160)

Still, we cannot consider Siegfried's attitude in the narration as incomprehensible. He is indeed surrounded by overwhelmingly fascist characters, people who make Siegfried understand that the world has to undergo significant changes.

Siegfried's love for art, and his admiration of flawless Greek statues of young boys, are linked to his same-sex orientation. His sexual desire is torn between the ugly and the beautiful: "Auf dem mit dürrer Gras, mit Exkrementen und glitzernden verborgenen Blechstücken bedeckten Flußrain, zu dem von der Brücke eine steile Treppe hinunterführte, wurde ein Knabe von zwei Jünglingen verfolgt und rauh zu Boden geworfen" (114). His desire finds its longing in a beautiful young boy: "Der Knabe war schön. Die beiden Burschen aber hatten eine fleckige und kranke Haut; sie hatten ordinäre und böse Gesichter" (114). He longs for the bodily closeness that he has tried to escape for a long time: "Aber ich war einsam. Ich wollte einsam sein, aber manchmal sehnte ich mich nach Nähe, nach Berührung, nach einem Herden- und Stallgeruch, nach einer Welt leiblicher Gemeinsamkeit, die ich verloren und von der ich mich losgesagt hatte [...]" (115). His sexual attraction to the ugly boy is in actuality no real closeness at all. Every time Siegfried tries to cross the border from cultural pleasures to sensuous pleasures, he fails: "Er war mir sehr widerlich. Auch der andere Bursche war mir

widerlich. Aber der schöne Knabe lag zwischen ihnen, rauh angepackt, nicht von Adlerfängen, von scheußlichen unreinen Geiern, Zeus-Jupiter war wohl tot, ich verfluchte mich, ich stieg zu den Toten hinab” (115). He desires the beautiful boy, but he does not seek a sexual union with him. He is content with merely looking at him: “[...] der Bademeister war wie ein Faun, feistbäuchig, faltenhäutig, listig, ich nahm Ganymed mit in die Zelle, ich löste das rote Dreieck von seinem Geschlecht, ich sah den Knaben an, er war schön, und Glück und Traurigkeit erfüllten mich beim Anblick seiner Schönheit [...]” (117). He does not want to sleep with the beautiful boy; he cannot even touch him. He simply stares at him in admiration. This way of interacting with the boy points to an even more intimate and sacred connection than the sexual act: “[...] ich sah den Knaben an, glücklich und traurig. Ich wagte kein Wort ihm zu sagen. Ich wagte nicht, ihn zu berühren. Ich wagte nicht, sein Haar zu streicheln. Wehmut erfüllte mich, Wehmüt aus Glück und Trauer und glücklich traurige Einsamkeit” (118). Again, it is the “Einsamkeit” (*lonliness*) that he feels when looking at the boy that is responsible for his creativity, for his music, which strives to find a higher truth. The sexual desire lures him to the ugly boy, but the connection is not genuine; it is engraved into “die Welt der Männerbünde” (115):

[...] und Kürenberg lobte mir die Einsamkeit des schöpferischen Menschen, aber mit diesen Burschen verbanden mich Herkunft und Erziehung in unterweltlicher Weise, und sie waren Erscheinungen eines schlechten Gewissens, von dem ich mich noch befreien mußte. Als nun einer der Burschen zu mir aufblickte und mich auf der hohen Uferbrüstung bemerkte, griff er die Spitze seines Badehosendreiecks an und lockte mich mit einer obszönen Geste, die Treppe zum Uferrain und zum Badeschiff hinunterzukommen. (115)

He sleeps, however, with the dirty kid. He despises himself for engaging in the sexual act. The sexual act reminds him of the fascist past, which he tries to escape. Sexual

satisfaction carries the ghosts of fascism into the future: “Ich verabscheute ihn. Er war nackt, und ich verabscheute ihn. Ich haßte mich. Mein Knabe schlüpfte zur Tür hinaus. Ich haßte mich. Der Ekel war mit mir allein in der Zelle. Ich haßte mich und preßte mich an seinen geschändeten Leib [...]” (118). The narration explains Siegfried’s love for boys in more depth. His admiration is a distanced admiration. It is the gaze that stands in the center and not the bodily sexual satisfaction:

[...] Siegfried war Päderast, er war keine Tunte, die Zuneigung erwachsener Männer war ihm unangenehm, er liebte die herbe bittere Schönheit der Knaben, und seine Bewunderung galt etwas dreckigen und wilden Spielen zerschrammten Straßenjungen. Sie waren unerreichbar und unverletzlich, und deshalb enttäuschten sie nicht, sie waren ein Anblicksbegehren und eine Phantasieliebe, eine geistig ästhetische Hingabe an die Schönheit, ein aufregendes Gefühl voll Lust und Traurigkeit; doch Umarmungen wie die auf dem Badeschiff waren Geschehnisse blinder Torheit, waren freudlose Höllenfahrten, ein wahnsinniger Versuch, das Unberührbare zu berühren [...]. (159-160).

Siegfried understands that it is the gaze that is satisfying, not the actual bodily contact. Laura, like Ilse, is an exception for Siegfried in terms of female beauty. She is like the boys. She seems disembodied, which attracts Siegfried to her: “Auch mir gefiel sie, ihr Lächeln war gleichsam körperlos [...]” (161). Siegfried evaluates Adolf’s attraction to Laura as pure, as long as he does not touch her. Adolf experiences with Laura the same sacred admiration of pure beauty that Siegfried experiences with the beautiful boy. In comparison to Judejahn, Siegfried and Adolf see beyond Laura’s Fleischlichkeit. They focus on her aura, displayed by her beautiful smile: “Er glaubt, er kann sich mit dem Ansehen begnügen, und er hat Recht, das Ansehen ist das Glück, und wenn er standhaft bleibt und nicht mit ihr ins Bett geht, wird er etwas gewonnen haben” (169-170). As much as Siegfried does not sleep with the girl, Adolf does not do that either: “[...] er saß im Lächeln Lauras wie unter einer großen Sonne, der herrlichen Sonne eines

unschuldigen Paradieses” (168). Adolf contents himself with touching Laura’s face. Similar to Siegfried’s encounter with the beautiful girl, the sexual act does not stand in the center. It is an attempt to capture Laura’s aura: “[...] und er berührte Luras Gesicht, er versuchte, das Lächeln zu greifen, einen hohen Ton, die Menschlichkeit, eine süße Lust, und dann erschrak er und lief in die Nacht, die nun lächellos war und lange währen sollte” (176). It is the gaze that is important, not the (sexual) body. Adolf participates in the gaze, but it is not fulfilling with a woman. He feels that he has sinned and goes to confession the next day, rejecting the engagement with pure female beauty. As much as a future in heterosexual relationships with the purpose of procreation proves impossible for Siegfried and also for Adolf, music cannot be raised to a higher level in the postfascist society.

Siegfried decides to go to Africa with the prize money for his music. He flees and breaks with a world poisoned by fascist ideologies and violence:

Mir war das Geld des Preises willkommen. Ich würde nach Afrika reisen. In Afrika würde ich eine neue Symphonie schreiben. Vielleicht würde ich sie im nächsten Jahr in Rom den Engeln vorspielen; die schwarze Symphonie des schwarzen Erdteils würde ich den weißen Engeln von Rom auf dem Götterhügel vorspielen. Ich weiß, Europa ist schwärzer. (177)

Only in physically distancing himself does Siegfried see a fruitful development in his music. Siegfried has not given up on the chance for Europe to change. He plans to return back to Rome and play his advanced music again.

While Siegfried engages in a higher form of art, Judejahn’s understanding of art, like his taste in music, taps into the accepted and promoted *Volksmusik* and *Marschmusik* of the Third Reich. In Rome, he hears a female choir singing a German song, which reminds him of his heyday in Nazi Germany: “Judejahn war dem Lied nachgegangen,

dem deutschen Lied, und andächtig lauschte der mächtig gewesene Mann dem Gesang der deutschen Frauen, ihr Singen war Deutschland, ihr Singen war die Heimat, war ‘Am Brunnen vor dem Tore’, war der deutsche Lindenbaum, war alles, für das man lebte, kämpfte und starb” (79). Music for Judejahn is an unreflected way to relive the past. It symbolizes German ideology and military success. Male bonding happens over the music, but only due to disdain against foreign cultures: “[...] und der Mann, der ‘Fresse, alter Makkaroni’ gerufen hatte, schüttelte Judejahn die Hand und dankte ihm für seine markige Rede, und beide spürten sie Tränen fließen, und beide drängten sie männlich die Tränen zurück, denn deutsche Männer weinen nicht und sind voller deutscher Härte, aber weich ist ihr Gemüt [...]” (79-80). Music connects men in the postfascist landscape.

When Judejahn enters the concert hall to listen to Siegfried’s composition, he distances himself from the modernist atonal music: “Im Grunde ließ er nur Militärmusik gelten. Warum spielten sie nicht einen flotten Marsch, statt das Publikum mit ihrer Stimmerei anzuöden?” (143). Still, Siegfried’s disharmonic tones have a strong effect on Judejahn: “Er war gelähmt. Die Geräusche des Orchesters paralyisierten ihn. Judejahn konnte bei diesen Klängen nicht denken, er konnte nicht überlegen [...]” (145). The music does not bring Judejahn actively to engage with his past, but subconsciously the music seems to reach him. After the orchestra’s performance, Judejahn finds himself applauding loudly, and seems to have displaced himself from the present time: “Am lautesten aber klatschte in seltsame Prolemik versetzt Judejahn. Seine schweren Hände arbeiteten wie Dampfhämmer” (148). When Ilse listens to the music for the second time in the concert hall, the music tells her what is about to come. She sees the fog which surrounds Judejahn right before he shoots Ilse. She also understands the sexual

component in the symphony: “[...] aber es war Nebelunheimlichkeit darin, die perverse Hingabe an den Tod, die ihr widerstrebte, ihr gräßlich war und sie widerwillig erregte [...]“ (144). In this sense, the music is a warning for Ilse that she disregards completely.

Ilse does not want to engage in the past. Even though she is the only character who understands Siegfried, she remains distant from him: “Ilse Kürenberg kam, und gratulierte mir. Aber ihre Hand, die sie mir reichte, war kalt [...]. Dann aber erkannte ich, daß sie nicht mich mit diesem Entsetzen ansah, sondern daß sie hinter mich blickte, und als sie mich umdrehte, um ihren Schrecken zu begreifen, sah ich meine Eltern auf mich zukommen [...] (151).

The past makes any discussion impossible. Siegfried’s parents demonstrate to her the gap between her life and Siegfried’s life. She does not fall for the fake theater in the concert hall. She has true insight into the music and the male characters. She knows that Judejahn is sexually attracted to her and that he is a killer: “[...] der Mann der Endlösung, der sie mit enkleidenden Blicken ansah” (152). Ilse and Siegfried, even though they have a strong emotional connection via his music, remain strangers. Both are outsiders in their own way. Kürenberg engages in the ultimate betrayal against his wife by talking to Siegfried’s parents, who were responsible for the death of Ilse’s father: “Und sie dachte: Der mit Kürenberg spricht, das ist Siegfrieds Vater, der Oberbürgermeister unserer Stadt, er war Oberpräsident der Provinz, als wir ihn um Verschonung baten, und er sagte, er sei Oberpräsident, aber er sei nicht zuständig” (152). Ilse does not want revenge, but she can never be close to Siegfried. His music tortures her with past memories that she tries to forget: “Ich will keine Rache, ich habe sie nie gewollt, Rache ist etwas Schmutziges, aber ich will nicht erinnert werden, ich kann es nicht ertragen, erinnert zu werden, und

Siegfried, er kann nicht dafür, er erinnert mich, und ich sehe die Mörder” (175). This instance demonstrates again Ilse refusal to engage and come to terms with the past. It is an active rejection of Siegfried’s music, even though she is one of the rare characters who gain true access to the music.

The narrator makes very clear that only men, via art or music, can help Germany to escape the ghosts of fascism. Siegfried sees a glimpse of hope in his relation to Adolf: “Wenn Adolf und ich das Leben nicht meistern, dann sollten wir uns gegen die verbinden, die skrupellos sind und nach dem Grad ihrer Beschränktheit herrschen wollen, gegen die echten Pfaffraths, die echten Judejahns, die echten Klingspors, vielleicht könnten wir Deutschland ändern?” (112-113). Still, the music serves for Siegfried as a way to a new start, away from Germany, and maybe even detached from the German past. In other words, Koeppen’s novel implies that the engagement with music in Africa serves to free his music from any ideological connection. Therefore, a German part is erased at the expense of working through the past effectively. Women neither engage in the past nor in the future. In the present, they remain victims, deprived of their personality, and reduced to their bodies.

Final Conclusion

Elizabeth Heineman's question, "Is perpetratorship male and victimhood female?"²⁵⁰, leads to an array of answers. Multiple paradigm shifts in the depiction of rape and hunger as female experiences in German literature between 1945 and 1960 suggest that an application of essentialist dichotomies are insufficient for a diversified understanding of Germany's past. While power dynamics that favor men over women are rejected in *Eine Frau in Berlin*, patriarchal structures are depicted and highlighted, within the short time period of fifteen years, in *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* and *Der Tod in Rom*. *Female Experiences of Rape and Hunger* demonstrates how literature mirrors German culture's interpretations of hunger, food and rape. While hunger is overtly associated with women's sufferings, representations of food are frequently used to depict male power over females. The silencing of accounts of (wartime) rape in East and West Germany is equally detectable in literary texts. We are able, however, to identify spaces in literary texts that contradict cultural understandings of the time period (1945 until 1960), cultural understandings that persist in debates today.

Eine Frau in Berlin offers a unique depiction of female experience through the interrelation of rape and hunger. Anonyma rejects the label of rape victim for herself and other women, as she foregrounds the fight against hunger as a primary concern for women, which transforms rape into a more tolerable (and advantageous) suffering. Group 47 works depict rape and hunger as male power discourses and do not offer female characters the chance to reflect extensively upon their suffering at the end of World War II. The depictions of rape and hunger

²⁵⁰ Heineman, "Gender, Sexuality" 42.

processed through the female body (as in *Eine Frau in Berlin*) are obsolete in Böll's and Koeppen's works. Both authors foreground male characters' enterprise to position themselves in a postwar German society. Women are degraded to sexual objects only and, as depicted through the male protagonist Siegfried in *Der Tod in Rom*, are actively shut out from men's sympathy. In *Das Brot der frühen Jahre*, the narration uses rape and hunger as a way to control the female character Hedwig Muller. Even though rape remains a mere threat used by the male character Walter Fendrich to intimidate the (hungry) female, the "identifiable sexual 'meaning'"²⁵¹ of this threat humiliates and terrifies the woman. Böll and Koeppen mirror in their writings (West) Germany's attempts to overshadow female experiences of wartime sufferings by reclaiming men's dominant roles within a patriarchal postwar society. Even though Group 47 actively shaped a male-dominated literary and cultural landscape, the textual portrayal of male domination in *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* and *Der Tod in Rom* is indeed a tricky concept. If we apply to these texts Sorcha Gunne's and Zoë Brigley Thompson's suggested reading strategy, which focuses on the deconstruction of male/female power dynamics, then men as the dominant gender fail to establish stable power positions as they are left searching for happiness.

The cleaving of rape and hunger in literature of the rubble is yet another instance that complicates a one-dimensional interpretation of female experiences between 1945 and 1960. In turning to Anna Seghers' and Gert Ledig's works, we are able to detect the silence of rape in German literature, especially apparent in texts that deal with wartime Germany or the early occupation period. In "Die Saboteure," food becomes a form of female agency. Although women are tied to the domestic sphere, they are able to demonstrate their political alliance or opposition to the Nazi states through their cooking skills. Seghers' text stands in conformity with literature

²⁵¹ Sabine H. Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture: Rereading and Rewriting the Tradition* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998) 32.

of the rubble, which predominantly associates the suffering of hunger with women. Food and hunger display a highly metaphorical meaning for Seghers' characters, yet rape is not schematized at all in her text. Gert Ledig's work *Die Vergeltung* is the only work in (Western) postwar literature that elaborately narrates rape. Ledig's depiction, however, rejects any preconceived and metaphorically overloaded notions of wartime rape upon Germany's defeat. Ledig lifts rape out of the victor/defeated dynamic, which became a prominent image in GDR literature during the seventies, and instead complicates the depiction of rape by having a German soldier rape a German girl. Rape is presented as an "insignificant" occurrence during a time of total destruction. In Ledig's work, rape possesses many meanings, which equally nullify the meaning of rape. He complicates a male/female power dynamic by assigning guilt, punishment and even lust to the victim of rape.

Birgit Dahlke sees the "Vergewaltigungsdiskurs" in East and West German literature as detached from autobiographical writings due to authors' simplified and naive engagement with female experiences, which merely underlines authors' political agendas and conforms to the silencing of accounts of rape (as a reflection on cultural norms). In contemporary scholarly engagements with Germany's immediate postwar years, however, historians often seem hesitant to grapple with the fact that autobiographical texts are deliberately constructed, in a manner not dissimilar to the construction of a fictional work of literature. Historians engage with autobiographies like *Eine Frau in Berlin* as historical documents and foreclose the possibility of aesthetic construction in the narratives. The treatment of Marta Hillers' autobiography as a deliberately constructed text, as suggested by Janet Halley and Daniela Puplinkhuisen, opens new ways for a diversified engagement with the work. Viewed in this manner, *Eine Frau in Berlin* carefully deconstructs male/female power dynamics, sheds a new light on the thin line

between rape and prostitution in 1945, and depicts the experience of rape from a female perspective. *Eine Frau in Berlin* offers a unique narrative by a female who explicitly engages with the embodied perception of rape and hunger. The depictions by male authors of rape and hunger are equally important in opening new spaces for an engagement with postwar German literature; these depictions make us question the reductive claims by scholars like Leslie Adelson, who suggest that a focus on the body in German literature did not occur until 1967/68. By recognizing that that interest in representing hunger, food, and rape occurred much earlier in German culture, we see that a reassessment of Adelson's thesis can teach us more about hidden discourses concerning women's experiences in literature of the immediate postwar years.

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