MATTERS OF RECOGNITION IN

CONTEMPORARY GERMAN LITERATURE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation deals with current political immigration debates, the conversations about the philosophical concept of recognition, and intercultural encounters in contemporary German literature. By reading contemporary literature in connection with philosophical, psychological, and theoretical works, new problem areas of the liberal promise of recognition become visible. Tied to assumptions of cultural essentialism, language use, and prejudice, one of the main findings of this work is how the recognition process is closely tied to narrative. Particularly within developmental psychology it is often argued that we learn and come to terms with ourselves through narrative.

The chosen literary encounters written by Alev Tekinay, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Maxim Biller, Rafael Seligmann, and Finn-Ole Heinrich magnify this particular human experience on an aesthetic level and dismantle "mechanisms of recognition," particularly three aspects illustrating the recognition process: the role of the narrator and his or her description of the characters, the construction of family bonds within the texts, and the linguistic and cultural practice of naming with all of its connotations.

Within the chosen texts there is no unified depiction of the recognition process, but rather the texts elucidate a multidimensionality of this concept, tying it closely to the political, social, and aesthetic sphere. In this context the analysis brings to light that the

notion of "authenticity" crucially informs recognition as well as the circumstances of a power imbalance that dominates the process. My analysis shows that contrary to popular assumptions in philosophical and political debates, the concept of recognition turns out to be rather limiting instead of liberating.

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This dissertation is dedicated to everyone “in between,”
for others will not determine your being,
but you will find ways to express ourselves.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a recent interview with *Der Tagesspiegel*, actor Elyas M'Barek[1] spoke about his experiences with everyday racism and racial profiling. Answering the question whether he had experienced racism growing up in Germany, M'Barek states,

> Mir wurde klargemacht, dass ich kein Deutscher bin. Ich habe ein paar Semester Betriebswirtschaft in München studiert. In der Uni, wo es keine Kleiderordnung gibt, wollte ich einmal meine Mütze nicht abnehmen. Der Professor fing an, mich als dumm zu beschimpfen, und sagte schließlich, ich solle so etwas dort machen, wo ich herkäme. Das ist schon verletzend. Auch heute werde ich noch gefragt, wo ich wirklich her sei. Ich möchte nicht, dass jemand das Gefühl bekommt, nicht willkommen zu sein oder nicht zur Gesellschaft zu gehören.[2]

M'Barek's anecdote illustrates the fate of being a German or Austrian citizen by paper, but not "looking the part." His encounter with a university professor in Munich elucidates the problem of being identified by others as an outsider of the mainstream, meaning white, German society. It reveals that there seems to be a certain "national particularity" tied to the cultural and national concept of belonging to Germany that is

[1] M'Barek is currently one of the most popular German-speaking actors (he holds an Austrian passport) and grew up in Austria. Despite him being Austrian, M'Barek is often type-casted as the "exotic" and desirable Turkish man with migration background in his movies, for example in *Türkisch für Anfänger* (2012) and *Fack Ju, Göhte* (2013), despite the fact that he is neither Turkish nor a foreigner.

[2] Translation of the quote, all translations are my own: "It was pointed out to me that I am not a German. I used to study business management for a couple of semesters in Munich. I was attending the university and there were no particular rules concerning one's clothing and I refused to take off my hat. The professor called me stupid and said that I should behave like this in my home country. This is really hurtful. Today I am still frequently asked where I am really from. I do not want that people have the feeling that they do not belong or they are not welcome in our society." (www.tagesspiegel.de, "Bei Fremdenfeindlichkeit hört der Spaß auf," February 25th, 2015.)

based on appearance, rather than cultural custom. This is puzzling when we take into account recent debates about the supposed unwillingness of foreigners to integrate into German society, mainly targeting the Muslim population, as the recent "Pegida" protests have shown.[3]

One crucial question that arises through these two positions is the tension between being part of society and yet still being excluded. In other words, it constitutes a serious problem when one is factually a legal member of society, yet not recognized as such by others. For the assimilation and integration[4] debate this poses a serious issue: Why should one give up one's cultural heritage when belonging and acceptance in everyday life seem to be based on rather superficial criteria? M'Barek has no migration background, as his father does, yet based on his appearance his belonging is frequently questioned; he constantly has to justify himself and claim his German status. As he points out, this struggle for recognition is painful. Racist experiences are hurtful.

[3] Pegida understands itself as a grassroots movement protesting against the "Islamization" of Europe. Emerging in late 2014 the "movement" organized protests in Dresden, and soon in other cities such as Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, and many more, in order to draw attention to the ongoing "religious wars" in Europe. In the beginning, Pegida very successfully organized a large number of participants from all social classes and political parties, yet lost momentum due to conflict in leadership (Weiß).

[4] For a detailed academic discussion concerning the terms "assimilation" and "integration" in Germany I would like to highlight two anthologies. First, Örkan Ezil, Andreas Langenhol, Valentin Rauer and Claudia Marion Voigtmann's *Die Integrationsdebatte zwischen Assimilation und Diversität* (2013). In this anthology, authors from very different disciplines approach the term assimilation in various fields such as public discourse analysis, law, film, and literature. In the introduction, the editors define "assimilation" as a term that designates a part of society as outside and that needs to dissolve beyond recognition (9). The second publication engaging with the question of assimilation, yet on a more pedagogical level, is Paul Mercheril, Ìnci Dirim, Mechtild Gomolla, Sabine Hornberg, and Krassimir Stojanov's anthology *Spannungsverhältnisse: Assimilationsdiskurse und interkulturell-pädagogische Forschung* (2010). In this anthology the question of how to approach a multicultural classroom and how to approach the issue of multiculturalism in the field of pedagogy is explored in the framework of intercultural pedagogy. In his essay *Vergesellschaftung statt Integration: Zur Kritik des Integrations-Paradigmas* Thomas Geisen points out that, "[i]ntegration and assimilation are usually seen as two different concepts. While integration is more referring to a cultural self-determination in a private sphere, assimilation is understood as the complete adaptation to the 'Aufnahmegesellschaft' [the accommodating society]" (13).

This anecdote also raises the question whether or not it is even possible to be fully recognized as German when one does not "look the part"? M'Barek's experience in the auditorium of his former university can be described as a key moment where his self-perception was challenged by someone else's perception of him. In this moment he was confronted with a challenging heteronomy[5] leaving him injured. To me, these key moments, when our own understanding of self is challenged by rejection, are the moments when identity ascription is put to a test and the importance of recognition is made obvious. In this moment it is not up to the individual whether he or she can claim to be a part of society, but the power lies within a recognition process often out of the subject's control. This process not only focuses on appearance but includes the recognition of names. A recent study conducted by *Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration and Migration,* for example, has shown how applicants with foreign names, mainly Turkish names, on average have to apply 1.5 more times in order to get a trainee position (Schneider/Yamane/Weinemann 4). It should be obvious that simply based on a name, it is hard to tell whether a person has grown up in Germany, is fully assimilated, or belongs to the category of the unassimilatable foreigner. The fact is there is a structural disadvantage to having a foreign sounding name. The hiring committees are rejecting people based on their last names rather than based on qualification. Recognition therefore seems to be a crucial factor in whether one succeeds in society or not.

In this context, the question of what enables recognition and how recognition is manifested is intriguing. In order to investigate the recognition process more clearly and

[5] Heteronomy [Fremdbestimmung] designates the act of someone else determining the understanding of someone's being, for example his or her character or his or her cultural affiliation. In the context of recognition and identity formation the tension between self-determiniation and heteronomy is crucial.

to dismantle what I will be calling "mechanisms of recognition," I am dedicating the following literary analysis to moments of incompatibility, focusing on incidences when self-perception and heteronomy collide and in which recognition becomes the deciding factor for either belonging or being marginalized. Literary accounts of marginalization can provide an intriguing insight into the dilemma of assimilation. They can provide an alternative outlook on the current, mainly philosophical and political, debates about recognition. They can lead away from statistics and personal anecdotes toward an understanding of the dichotomies and normative and descriptive powers at play. One of the main questions guiding this project therefore is the question of how literary analysis can contribute to these political and philosophical debates in order to challenge and test out these concepts?

Moments of identity ascription and recognition constitute a main theme within the context of multicultural encounters in contemporary literary texts. This project analyzes texts written by five authors: Alev Tekinay, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Maxim Biller, Rafael Seligmann, and Finn-Ole Heinrich. The chosen texts have been published between 1986 and 2007 and include short stories as well as novels. In all of these texts the question of belonging and exclusion are central motifs. In this context, I am aiming to connect philosophical aspects of recognition with current political debates surrounding integration and assimilation. Here I am primarily focusing on the contributions of Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Judith Butler. My work aims at bringing the philosophical discussion surrounding the recognition issue into a conversation with the literary depiction of assimilation and cultural encounters. In this context I am investigating the challenges to our linguistic capabilities of identifying who belongs and

who does not belong to German society and how this dilemma is expressed in contemporary narratives. Central to my analysis is the question of how one learns the aesthetic dimension of who "looks the part" and who does not, and how an aesthetic dimension informs perception in our narratives. In this context, the process of developing a notion of "self" within a multicultural context and how a lack of recognition influences this process is key to my analysis. I find that within the topic of migration the process of identification is particularly challenging and these challenges force authors to find new forms of expression and to renegotiate the status quo within a society that understands itself as homogenous, white, and Christian. Dealing with this area of conflict the texts show the limits of self-determination within the recognition process and the struggle of re-negotiating identity ascription.

Despite the necessity to locate some of the authors in the context of migrant literature[6] and minority literature,[7] because they are usually discussed in this context, this

[6] The term "migrant literature" came to prominence in the 1990s and has its roots in "Gastarbeiterliteratur." It usually describes works of "non-German" authors, written in German. But it is a questionable term, first because migration could also be understood thematically rather than autobiographically. In a presentation for a symposium concerning migration and literature, Volker Dörr challenges the concept of migration literature. He divides this area into two categories, including "Migratenliteratur," literature written by people with migration background and "Migrationsliteratur," literature dealing with migration as a topic (18). Dörr argues that "Migratenliteratur" depends on a paratextuality, tightly connected to the autobiography of the author, and he claims that this autobiographical expectation is directed at the collective identity of the authors as immigrants rather than their own individual understanding (26). This aspect is also emphasized in Monika Schmitz-Emans' essay *Literatur und Vielsprachigkeit: Die Heimat ist die Fremde.* Here Schmitz-Emans elaborates on the aspect of national literature, arguing that nationalist demarcation is no longer fitting as a principle of classification for literary works. She argues that not only are literary texts emerging beyond German borders but also further linguistic similarities, as in language use, are no foundation for "national" similarities. According to Schmitz-Emans literary criticism is challenged by multilingual texts and their understanding of "Beschreibungskriterien" [criteria of description].

[7] The term "minority literature" goes back to Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze. They define the term as follows: "A minor literature is not the literature of a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language. […] The second characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political. In "great" literatures, on the contrary, the question of the individual (family, conjugal, etc.) tends to be connected to other, no less individual questions, and the social milieu serves as environment and

project neither aims at making claims about a certain cultural particularity of these authors based on their heritage, nor does this project aim to contribute to the migrant or minority literature debate. Rather than making claims about the Turkish or Jewish experience in Germany per se, it intends to show what aspects could influence recognition and how these aspects are influencing the experience and construction of "the Other", regardless of which cultural group the character within the novel belongs to.

This project aims to reveal how this process influences perception and recognition based on representation and perception and therefore affects all groups deviating from the German norm. In this context, it is crucial to analyze how narrative is used to establish and/or challenge such a norm. It further attempts to illustrate how the recognition process is informed by an aesthetic ascription closely tied to appearance. Therefore, the chosen texts do not necessarily always directly deal with migration, but with the process of establishing oneself in a German society, when one does not share the common cultural background. I aim to show that even though the stories and writers have different backgrounds and experiences, the determination of a cultural identity is more similar than different.

In order to develop a theoretical framework for this project, I am investigating a key body of philosophical and psychological research surrounding the questions of recognition and identity ascription mainly situated within the fields of moral philosophy, developmental psychology, linguistic anthropology, and critical literary analysis. In this context the question of how narrative informs these processes of recognition and identity ascription is crucial. Here the word "ascription" relates to the Latin *ascribere*, "a written

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background. […] Minor literature is completely different: because it exists in a narrow space, every individual matter is immediately plugged into the political" (16).

addition." To me this provides already an insight into the two forces at play: on the one hand, it connects identity formation and recognition to a linguistic process, which will be pivotal for some of my readings, and on the other hand, it supports the idea that not only ascribes people to an identity, but people also "read" this ascription. To me, recognition is a thriving force in our daily "Identitätsbildungsprozess" (process of identity formation) and the texts I analyze. Recognition, as the analysis of the texts will show, is displayed as a making and breaking point of the characters' understanding of self; it is essential to survive. However, the process of recognizing someone is a problematic one, and the way in which ideology and prejudice are informing this process is questionable and problematic to say the least.

Further, I want to argue that the texts show that recognition rarely is a direct process, meaning, we rarely ever make the process of recognition transparent, for example, we rarely ever say "I recognize you," yet there are other ways in which recognition is expressed, learned, and perpetuated. My analysis aims to bring these mechanisms of recognition to light and there are three aspects that will make the recognition process most transparent: the role of the narrator, the construction of family within the text, and the linguistic and cultural practice of naming, which is tied to the cultural connotations of names.

There are various ways in which to organize the authors and their literary works, for example, by the author's heritage and cultural belonging or the gender of the authors, to name a few. One approach often championed in this context is reading writers of one particular national group together, for example Turkish writers, and searching for a particularity within these writings. In my opinion such an approach supports the notion of

cultural essentialism and classifies these authors in hyphenated subcategories. Even though it is almost impossible to avoid this kind of grouping, my choice of authors aims at a broader spectrum. I read authors with a Turkish heritage, Alev Tekinay and Emine Sevgi Özdamar, in connection with authors with a Jewish heritage, including Maxim Biller and Rafael Seligmann, and Finn-Ole Heinrich. Finn-Ole Heinrich has no immigration background, yet touches on the topic of migration thematically in his novel.

Further, one could group them according to the concepts of recognition they are working with or working against. However that is a complex liaison that is challenging to narrow down, because as we will see, the authors use multiple approaches to the topic. I decided therefore to organize the authors chronologically according to the publication year of their texts. The texts I am analyzing were published between 1986 and 2007. The theoretical texts I refer to were published within the same timeframe. It seems remarkable that around the time of the German unification, the question of recognition becomes such a prominent matter. Yet, I am not trying to make any historicizing claims, it just seems that this particular period of time is highly concerned with the shifts of identity construction and ascription and the negotiation of matters of recognition.

My overall dissertation project is organized in three main sections. In the following I introduce the authors and a selection of the secondary literature in which they are usually discussed. This includes a detour to the fields of migrant and minority literature as well as short biographical introductions of the authors. The second part elaborates on the philosophical conversations about recognition and key issues tied to this debate. Out of this debate I aim to develop crucial vocabulary and concepts that will be crucial for my close reading of the novels and short stories, which will manifest as the

third, and main part of this project. The main question guiding my analysis of the literary works focuses on the contribution of these literary works to the philosophical debate about recognition. How do these literary accounts challenge and complicate matters of recognition and how do they use mechanisms of recognition in order to comment on the aspect of identity ascription? The section containing the literary analysis focuses on six key texts here listed in chronological order: Alev Tekinay's short story *Das Fernrohr* (1986), Emine Sevgi Özdamar's short stories *Mutterzunge* and *Großvaterzunge* (1990), Maxim Biller's short story *Wie Cramer anständig wurde* (1994), Rafael Seligmann's novel *Der Musterjude* (1999), and Finn-Ole Heinrich's novel *Räuberhände* (2007).

Tekinay's short story *Das Fernrohr* (1986) is the oldest text examined in this project and was written prior to German unification in 1990. In her story, Tekinay depicts the everyday struggles of an intercultural marriage and shows how disrespect and lack of recognition can lead to a failure of interpersonal relationships. In the text, recognition is tied to cultural hegemony and dominance and the concept of assimilation is presented as one that does not accept otherness in any way. Through the exploration of stereotypes Tekinay contrasts the German and the Turkish worlds and portrays them as inviolably separated. This chapter explores the notion of imposition and cultural hegemony and its relationship to recognition.

Özdamar's short stories, on the other hand, shows how the intersection of different cultural spheres can lead to a fruitful and promising re-negotiation of an understanding of oneself. Within Özdamar's story, writing and language use are crucial elements for the process of self-definition and self-discovery. The search for recognition and belonging to a cultural home are not resolved with simple elucidations but through

challenging detours and creative narrative and linguistic recreations. Language use and the symbolic realm of language and its forms of aesthetic expression are crucial tools through which Özdamar's protagonist is reinventing herself. This chapter focuses on the exploration of an unfamiliar language and its symbolisms in order to internalize the foreign language to move into the new cultural realm.

Maxim Biller's short story *Wie Cramer anständig wurde* takes us on the journey of Max and Ali, two young Jewish boys, whose families have been deported during the Holocaust, leaving the boys on their own. Biller's text demonstrates how within the story the judgment of the protagonist is connected to his superficial perception influenced by a racist ideology and understanding of aesthetics. In this context recognition is presented as a political tool yet has a strong emotional and psychological side to it. Biller's text shows how these spheres are closely connected and only positive recognition can provide safety.

The question of Jewish and German identity is the center of Seligmann's novel *Der Musterjude*, the story of Moische Bernstein's attempt to become a famous journalist in Germany. Constructed as a satire, *Der Musterjude* touches on various aspects of Jewish self-identification and its difficult relationship to the German past. It develops a critical approach toward the impact of the Shoah on contemporary German-Jewish relations and its impact, not only on Jewish-German identity, but also on Jewish identity and German identity as separate concepts. The novel challenges the understanding of an inclusive identity concept—that there is such a thing as a Jewish-German identity. It also challenges the concept of exclusive identity concepts—that there is a particular Jewish identity incompatible with a particular German identity. The focus of my analysis lies on the dichotomy of the characters' essentialist understanding of "Jewishness" and

"Germanness." Using stereotypes and elements of caricature, Seligmann constructs two extreme positions that create a *Spannungsfeld* in which the main character Moische Bernstein has to fight for recognition. In this context his motives for why he wants to be recognized and as what he prefers to be recognized are crucial.

Finn-Ole Heinrich's novel *Räuberhände* was recently included in the curriculum of Hamburg high schools as part of the Abiturwissen (Richter / Widmann 11). In his novel, Heinrich contests the childhood and young adulthood experiences of two young men, Janik and Samuel, and their struggles with finding a place in society. Central to the novel is the search for recognition and identity construction. Told through a first-person perspective, the role of the narrator and his commentary on his friend reveal the descriptive and normative force underlining the recognition process. In Heinrich's novel, assumptions of an essentialist and "authentic" self are confronted with post-modern attempts of identity creation and self-determination.

Identity Construction and Recognition in Contemporary German Literature

A problem one faces when engaging with authors with a so-called migration background or a background constituted within a minority culture in Germany is the dilemma that the secondary literature essentially limits itself to this particular scope of national belonging, meaning that authors with Turkish heritage are usually discussed in this particular context and so are German-Jewish writers. Since this project tries to avoid this categorization, yet cannot ignore the vast body of secondary literature dealing with the chosen authors, I intend to give a short overview of the literary criticism developing around Biller, Seligmann, Tekinay, and Özdamar. Due to his relatively novel appearance

on the literary scene and lack of migration background, Heinrich will not be part of this discussion, but his work will be briefly contextualized in the beginning of the last chapter dedicated to his novel.

Jewish-German Literature and the Search for a Symbiosis

When talking about minority writing in the German context the writings of German-Jewish writers cannot be ignored. The volume of secondary literature concerning this topic is wide-ranging and mostly concerned with the question of whether or not we can speak of a "German-Jewish symbiosis." While the term "symbiosis" relates to a relationship where two parties mutually benefit from each other, scholars such as Dan Diner and Enzo Traverso have pointed out that in relation to intellectual history there was "no genuine, two-way, German-Jewish intellectual dialogue" (Kaplan 184). Diner argues that the term "symbiosis" only became applicable after Auschwitz:

> Seit Auschwitz—welch traurige List—kann tatsächlich von einer deutsch-jüdischen Symbiose gesprochen werden—freilich einer negativen: für beide, die Deutschen wie für Juden, ist das Ergebnis der Massenvernichtung zum Ausgangspunkt ihres Selbstverständnis geworden; eine Art gegensätzlicher Gemeinsamkeit—ob sie es wollen oder nicht. Denn Deutsche wie Juden sind durch dieses Ereignis neu aufeinander bezogen worden (Diner 185).[8]

[8] "Sadly since Auschwitz one can indeed speak of a German-Jewish symbiosis, of course a negative one: for both Germans and Jews, the result of the mass distruction became part of the general self-understanding; in away a contradictory similarity - whether they like it or not. As a result the Germans as well as the Jews were correlated through this incidence in a new way" (Diner 185).

Diner's remarks elucidate the dialectical relationship between Jewish and German identity, and its unfortunate coherence with the history of the Third Reich and the Shoah. He emphasizes the importance of this historical event for the "Selbstverständnis"—the self-conception—of both parties. In other words, German national and Jewish identity are linked to these past events and therefore to the questions of collective guilt and of remembrance and redemption, a problematic relationship that plays an important role in Seligmann's novel as well as in Biller's short story collection *Im Land der Väter und Verräter*.

An additional way how to look at this battery of questions is to analyze the impact and presence of Jewish writers in Germany. Sander L. Gilman and Karen Remmler claim that there is a desire for Jewish writers to redefine and create a new understanding of what is Jewish and how this identity can be manifested in a German society. Remmler and Gilman argue that, "(w)hereas some Germans struggle to lay a foundation for a positive, inclusive German identity, their Jewish neighbors and coworkers are speaking out publicly and debating what constitutes Jewish culture in Germany today" (2). This search for identity and the attempt to regain agency over the process of cultural ascription influences Jewish writers and thinkers in Germany. Gilman and Remmler point out that, "Jews are not like other minority (or "out") groups in Germany, who are all defined in terms of a static, homogenous German center. The reciprocal instability of Jewish and German identity is at the very heart of the literary self-representation of the Jewish writers in Germany" (5).

Maxim Biller and Rafael Seligmann are both well-known authors within the realm of German-Jewish scholarship and are often discussed together. Seligmann's and

Biller's style is often compared to that of the U.S. author Philip Roth, both representing "Jewish Wit" (Chase 42). Jefferson Chase understands Seligmann's style as a demonstration of "Jewish speech through laughter, asserting a specific minority voice within the mainstream and thereby making an implicit bid for social and cultural integration" (43). Approaching the troubled relationship among Jews and Germans through a satirical lens may open up the possibility for the "outsider" to claim a space in this environment. Chase points out, "(h)umor is one of the few discursive means for outsiders to establish their presence in an often hostile mainstream […]" (51).

Diana Teschler also compares Seligmann's and Biller's writings, identifying them as "new" Jewish writers. Here, Teschler points out that the problem of German-Jewish identity begins with the hyphen. Is it a German-Jewish writer or a Jewish-German writer? What exactly is the difference? She narrows down her analysis to literature dealing with "Jewish topics" and the representation of "Jewish characters and protagonists" (Teschler 5). Teschler does connect the heritage of the author to these thematic and stylistic characteristics, which for her marks the essence of Jewish writing. One could argue that Seligmann and Biller both mock this expectation, and it constitutes a key motif in Seligmann's *Der Musterjude*. By being a Jewish author in Germany, Seligmann picks up "Jewish topics," such as the search for Jewish identity and the Shoah, to exaggerate the complexity of this relationship. However, he is not able to move away from this topic, neither in his fictional writings nor in his critical writings.

The question of how to classify an author as Jewish or German is problematic, and one reason why Seligmann's and Biller's works are interesting in this context is that while Seligmann explicitly identifies "emotionally and territorially" with Germany

(Schruff 30), Biller in his autobiography *Der Gebrauchte Jude* (2009) refuses to describe himself as German. Biller states:

> Ich bin Jude und nichts als Jude, weil ich wie alle Juden nur an mich selbst glaube, und ich habe nicht einmal Gott auf den ich wütend sein könnte. Ich bin Jude, weil fast alle in meiner Familie vor mir Juden waren. Ich bin Jude, weil ich kein Russe, Tscheche oder Deutscher sein will. Ich bin Jude, weil ich schon als Zwanzigjähriger jüdische Witze erzählte, weil ich mehr Angst vor einer Erkältung habe als vor einem Krieg und Sex für wichtiger halte als Literatur. Ich bin Jude, weil ich eines Tages merkte, wie es mir gefällt, die anderen damit zu verwirren, dass ich Jude bin. (Biller 12)[9]

Since this project is concerned with self-identification, recognizing the self-determination of the protagonist's identity is important. As mentioned before, this project is not trying to read the author into the novel, but the author's positioning is used to contextualize the problem area the book relates to. In his writings, Seligmann promotes an understanding of Jewish culture in Germany in which he champions the understanding of "Jewish Germans" rather than "Jews living in Germany." Concerning contemporary Jewish writers and their oeuvre, Helene Schruff suggests talking about "deutschsprachiger jüdischer Gegenwartsliteratur" instead of "deutsch-jüdischer" (30).

[9] "I am Jewish and nothing else but Jewish, because just like all other Jews I only believe in myself, and I cannot even be angry at God. I am Jewish, because almost everyone else before me in my family was Jewish. I am Jewish because I do not want to be Russian, Czech, or German. I am Jewish because I already told Jewish jokes when I was twenty years old, because I am more afraid of a cold than I am of war and because I think sex is more important than literature. I am Jewish because one day I realized how much I enjoy confusing people with being Jewish" (Biller 12).

In the context of the question of Jewish German writing Seligmann asks "[…] why there are no novels about the contemporary German scene?" He continues to explain that "(t)he answer is obvious. Novels deal with the feelings of people and thus, indirectly, with the sore points of society. Using such tools as exaggeration and parody, it seeks to capture that which objective analysis often misses—the emotions of human beings" (176). Seligmann claims that Jewish writers in Germany are afraid to write about their feelings toward Germans and that therefore no honest communication can take place (178). In his novel, however, the Jewish characters are very outspoken about their feelings toward the Germans and so are the German characters. The "sore point" of society in this context is the Shoah and the inability to deal with these events in an open dialogue. In Seligmann's novel, the memory of the Shoah is clearly present and the positioning of the characters themselves. Nonetheless, the outspokenness of the characters is often reduced to their inner monologues. Jewish and German characters often do not confront each other directly, they rather engage in a passive-aggressive rhetoric.

Seligmann claims that the unification of Germany in 1990 "aroused fear in Jews around the world." He argues that no one could foresee the consequences this unification would have and the "amount of indifference, intolerance, and hate which unleashed itself against foreigners and minorities." He goes on to claim that criticism is seldom voiced in this new German society and "(t)imidity and cowardice reign triumphant." Seligmann points out: "In such a situation it is highly unrealistic to expect contributions to a renaissance of German Jewish culture from a small band of frightened survivors and their children—contributions which under different circumstances might indeed report on fears

and desires, aggression and love" (181). Seligmann believes that in such an intellectual climate, "a full-scale renaissance of Jewish culture in Germany is impossible" (182). His literary work as well as Biller's literary works attempt to contribute to this conversation and they both focus on the core issue of this problem: the recognition of Jewish-Germans within German society.

Migrant Literature and the Question of Recognition

Alev Tekinay and Emine Sevgi Özdamar are two prominent Turkish-German writers and are often discussed in the context of migrant literature and women writers with migration background.[10] While Özdamar is still very active in the literary scene and still is highly debated in literary criticism, Tekinay is rather disregarded in current literary debates, yet her writings provide a meaningful and artistic insight into the situation of being *different* within German society. Her literary works primarily deal with Turkish-German encounters and are characterized as focusing on everyday encounters and magical elements often evoking other literary traditions, such as fairy-tale elements or the German Romantic period, one of Tekinay's academic interests.[11]

Leslie A. Adelson describes in her article "Against Between: A Manifest" the situation of Turkish writers and migrant literature in Germany and its relation to German

[10] One scholar who demonstrates such an approach is Claire Horst and her discussion of Özdamar's work in her book *Der weibliche Raum in der Migrationsliteratur*. Here Claire Horst warns against an "ethnicizing" of the works of authors sharing a common cultural background. She points out that the literature produced by multilingual authors constitutes an important contribution to the experience of modern life, since wandering and mobility are constitutive elements of this experience. In this context concepts of exclusivity such as national identity lose more and more impact (Horst 9).

[11] Petra S. Fiero examines the use of "phantastic elements" and "intertextuality" within Tekinay's works: for example the Doppelgänger-motif. Fiero argues that Tekinay's use of "intertextual allusions to German Romanticism and Oriental mysticism stress the affinity between literary and philosophical trends coming from the Occident *and* Orient" (422).

culture as follows: “Between two worlds is the place customarily reserved for these authors and their texts on the cultural map of our time, but the trope of “betweenness” often functions literally like a reservation designed to contain, restrain, and impede new knowledge, not enable it” (266). In current migrant debates in German politics, the word “Anpassung”—one could translate it as assimilation or adaption—is central. This suggests that in such a situation one has to choose a side, German or Turkish, and that there are no alternatives. Adelson points out that the “imaginary bridge ‘between two worlds’ is designed to keep discrete worlds apart as much as it pretends to bring them together” (267). Adelson demonstrates that this position shows a lack of imagination. The ability to imagine that instead of having to cross a bridge from one culture to another, there is actually the possibility of “landing anywhere new” (267). This lack of fantasy is supported by the assumption that “Turks and Germans are separated by an absolute cultural divide” (Adelson 268). Adelson illustrates the dilemma of the Turkish minority in Germany when she points out that “Turkish immigrants in Germany occupy a precarious position in this rhetoric of dialogue and conflict. They have long been encoded as inarticulate foreigners in the public imaginary, while dialogue is nonetheless expected of them, albeit as representatives of an alien national culture they are mistakenly held to represent” (Turkish Turn 6).

Yasemin Dayioğlu-Yücel points out the dilemma of Turkish-German literary criticism when she warns of the attempts to test theory on text instead of the other way around. She points out that the identity debate still dominates this discourse surrounding so-called migrant literature:

> Egal, ob es sich um Selbst- oder Fremdbeschreibungen, -erzählungen oder -inszenierungen handelt, Identität ist immer noch ein Schlüßelbegriff, wenn es um die Beschäftigung mit deutscher Migrationsliteratur geht. Wurde dabei zunächst die problematisch gewordene Identität und die Identitätssuche in den Vordergrund gerückt, überwiegend nun Forschungsarbeiten, die Hybridität der literarischen Figuren hervorheben. (Essay Böll Stiftung)[12]

Dayioğlu-Yücel challenges the concept of hybridity arguing that in current analyses of migration texts scholars argue that hybrid characters negate clear identity ascription. According to Dayioğlu-Yücel, this argument neglects that hybridity not only designates cultural intersections, but also implies a tension between power dynamics. She points out that:

> Ein Blick auf Texte der Migrationsliteratur zeigt aber, dass gerade in Migrationstexten weniger die Identifizierung selbst als problematisch inszeniert wird, als die Anerkennung der Identität. Deswegen ist es höchst fraglich in Bezug auf die Migrationsliteratur von einer Identitätssuche zu sprechen. Vielmehr geht es um die Anerkennung der—wie auch immer inszenierten—Identität und damit um die Integrität. (Essay)[13]

[12] "It does not matter whether it deals with Self- or external -determination, -narration, or -staging, identity is still a key term when dealing with German analysis of migrant literature. While at first focusing on the problem of identity and the quest for identity, now the focus of research has shifted toward the hybridity of literary characters" (Böll Foundation Essay).

[13] "But just one look at the texts of migrant literature shows that it is often not identification that is depicted as problematic, but the recognition of identity. This is why it is questionable to speak about a search for identity within migrant literature. The texts are rather dealing with issues of recognition of the staged identity, and in this context are dealing with issues of integrity" (Dayioğlu-Yücel Essay).

The term “integrity,” which she defines as the physical and psychological intactness of a human being, is key to her analysis. I agree with her observation in regard to recognition as a key element in texts dealing with multicultural encounters, but I argue that it is closely tied to the narrative of identification and what is expected to constitute our human experience. Indeed there are post-colonial aspects embedded, but more traditional and conservative concepts of “authentic self,” “origin,” and designated cultural belonging are also embedded in these narratives, and are constitutive motifs the writers incorporate into their stories; some playfully, some rather serious. But what Dayioğlu-Yücel’s remarks show are the competing ideas of identity and the importance of recognition in this context.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Identity Discourse and Recognition

Dayioğlu-Yücel's remarks concerning the role of recognition in the context of multicultural literature emphasize how important recognition is in the context of identity formation. After all, what needs to be recognized is the identity of a particular person in a particular context. This strong connection between recognition and identity suggests the assumption that issues of identity construction may also influence the recognition process. The initial meaning of the term identity already poses certain issues since it implies sameness and unity.[14] Understanding identity as a "general form of self-definition," a more Romantic notion, the question of orientation becomes prominent and the question of how "organization" is actually organized. In this context, identity is understood as "the sum of our knowledge about order" (Grahler 36). Confronted with such a narrow-minded concept of identity, one can assume that this "knowledge of order" may also impact on how we come to terms with recognition; this order may influence what one perceives as recognizable.

Yet, the understanding of what identity is has changed over time. During the Enlightenment, the identity of a person was understood as determined by birth and in the 20th century the idea of identity development in context with society became prominent, but still the understanding of a unified identity infiltrates contemporary thought. Since the end of the 20th century, the concept of a unified and stable identity has been questioned

[14] The term identity, in German *Identität*, is a coinage, derived from Latin "idem;" the same. In this context, the historical unity of the "I" is based on the assumption of the possibility of "Erinnerung" and a continuity of "Gedächtnis." This concludes in the assumption that the "I" is able to develop (Gidion 12/13).

and, at least in the field of critical theory, more and more replaced by the concept of a "narrative of the self" (Dayioğlu-Yücel 32).

For more than two decades now, the understanding of identity as a unified and stable entity has been questioned and challenged; this debate reveals two issues: first, the term "identity" is used in an inflationary manner and therefore seems to be nothing more than a "plastic word" (Kilka 285). However, there seems to be no other useful concept to replace it and the term and all the issues attached to it still dominate the conversation about how humans come to terms with their understanding of self (Hall15). It is important to emphasize that in current psychological and philosophical debates about identity construction, the Romantic understanding of identity loses more and more influence while concepts of fragmentation, change, and transformation are emphasized (Hall 17). While the understanding of what constitutes identity is highly debated and assumptions have changed, at the core of the debate, recognition still plays an important role in the private sphere as well as in the public sphere. British anthropologist Stuart Hall brings the dilemma of identification to the point when he writes:

> Identification turns out to be one of the least well-understood concepts—almost as tricky as, though preferable to, 'identity' itself; and certainly not guarantee against the conceptual difficulties which have beset the latter. It is drawing meanings from both the discursive and the psychoanalytical repertoire, without being limited to either. […] In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or

> with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. (6)

This understanding of identification emphasizes the developmental character of an identity process as well as hints at the common framework necessary for this kind of development and for identification. It also reveals the influences of the discursive and the psychoanalytical realm and how these two spheres are inseparably intertwined. Hall argues, "identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse. We need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by enunciative strategies" (17). He further explains, "Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices, and positions" (17).

Particularly the idea of multiplicity of identity is an important aspect to consider and is indeed also used within the literary texts, for example in Seligmann's *Der Musterjude*, not only to challenge the notion of one "authentic self" but to emphasize that there is a multiplicity in perception of one person that can challenge how this character is recognized. Different aspects of different identities might influence the character's choices and opportunities.

Another important aspect Hall emphasizes in the context of how he assumes identity works is that identities are constructed through difference. He explains, "identities can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected" (18). This strategy of inclusion and exclusion, of determining the inside and outside of the self is an assumption

essential for our discourse of identity construction and it is also central, if not the main task of mechanisms of recognition.

Hall notes, "the question of identity—how it is constructed and maintained—is therefore the central issue through which psychoanalysis enters the political field" (19).[15] Hall's concept of identity and identification shows that identity does not come alive "naturally" but rather is constructed within a social and psychological realm; it is a product of a socio-dialectical relationship.

Yet, while Hall's understanding of identity and identification is useful in order to locate the social conditions in which the need or quest for identity emerges, it is important to examine developmental psychological approaches that connect the process of identity formation to recognition more closely, and focus mainly on identity formation within the family. This seems important since the depiction of family relationships and their impact on recognition is a constitutional aspect within the texts analyzed. Within the field of developmental psychology, Erik H. Erikson and his research on identity formation and childhood are crucial.

Three aspects need to be emphasized when talking about Erikson: First, Erikson believes that identity is a developmental process and secondly, he champions the opinion that this development can be successfully completed resulting in a stable and secure

[15] Two prominent positions can be identified in the realm of identity creation: On the one hand, the psychoanalytical approach of the formation of the self, most prominent in this context might be Jacques Lacan's concept of the mirror stage, where the infant for the first time discovers a self in distinction to its outer world. On the other hand, we have the interaction of the self within the political and social structure and its relation to ideology. A prominent example for such an approach would be Michel Foucault's understanding of how "discourses construct subject positions through their rules of formation and 'modalities of enunciation'" (Hall 23). According to Hall, it is in particular Judith Butler's works that open up a "critical and reflexive dialogue […] between Foucault and psychoanalysis […]" (28) and her work will be discussed in the next section in regard to the philosophical debates about recognition.

identity. Thirdly, he sees the adolescence as a crucial time for identity formation, an aspect that is also elaborated within Seligmann's *Der Musterjude* and Heinrich's *Räuberhände*.

Erikson is one of the first to develop Freud's theory of the psychosexual to the psychosocial, extending this concept to a more social concept, taking interactions with a larger social context into account, and focusing particularly on the period of adolescence. Erikson still assumes that there is an "end" to this process resulting (hopefully) in a stable identity. His concept champions the idea of "Laufbahn" [track] and "Rollen" [roles] offered to young subjects and their guiding, formative power.

Lothar Krappmann champions a slightly different approach, drifting away from the importance of adolescence and a concept of stable identity towards a more post-modern approach. He criticizes Erikson for, as he calls it, a "nostalgic notion" of unity (Krappmann 66), championing an interactivist approach. However, he also points out that Erikson is not naïve about this stability as well as the offered roles and tracks. Erikson insists that we neither define our identity privately and by ourselves nor does our environment dictate our identity. Every individual designs his or her identity by reacting and answering to the expectations of others—here designated as a "Bezugskreis"—a social circle of reference.

These social circles of reference—be it intermediate family as well as a larger social context—need to accept this designed identity [Identitätsentwurf]. This constitutes an issue, according to Erikson, because this form of integration of the individual needs to be acknowledged and recognized by the larger group. This form of recognition is easily achievable when the idea of one's identity aligns with generally accepted forms of

identification and social roles and norms (Krappmann 67). It becomes obvious that the problem starts if the idea of one's identity does not comply. Another issue is the limitation of these accepted concepts and their assumption of singularity and essentialism. It is also an issue what roles are offered in what context and whether they are desirable and available to everybody. In this context, recognition is understood as the goal of identity formation. In other words, one develops identity in order to be recognized.

Erikson emphasizes that there seems to be only a limited selection of meaningful social concepts to choose from. The problem of identity is a general problem but particularly for a "modern" person, since the modern person is not bound to traditions anymore but has to deal with constantly changing living conditions and a plurality of life choices. He or she often feels lost in a world full of secular and global crisis. Erikson sees this problem of identity as one of the fundamental problems of humans, which they have to deal with for their whole lives (Krappmann 67). Every psychosocial modality is supported by the relationship a child is experiencing itself. It also represents and teaches a social order or hierarchy in which the child is growing up.

This implies that one is actually heading toward an "achievable future" that one is developing into a particular person with particular characteristics within a social reality. Erikson thinks it is crucial that the environment is keeping a place[16] for juveniles (Krappmann 71). We can see that there is an expectation tied to this process and that

[16] What kind of spaces and places are reserved for juveniles? How does one's cultural background influence the availability of such spaces? What if the roles designed for me are marginal and unsatisfying? (For example: there is no space for you, because you're not supposed to be here.)

there is an understanding that there will be a certain place for me if I comply with the rules and if I "fit in,"

> Das Vertrauen darauf, daß diese Form erreichbar ist und als befriedigend erlebt werden kann, ermöglicht die Identität: Ich bin der, als den die anderen mich wahrnehmen: ich brauche mich dabei nicht zu verleugnen, denn ich bringe meine Lebenspläne und Vorstellungen unter, die ich mit meiner Umwelt teile; auch über Veränderungen hinweg werde ich zu meinen Plänen stehen und die Anerkennung anderer gewinnen können (Krappmann 71).[17]

Here the main expectation is clearly expressed: a successful identity creation equals one that enables the subject to be recognized.

In this context, recognition is understood as something a person can gain and has control or influence over his or her success. This assumption that recognition is desired and achievable is one that will also be perpetuated in some of the most prominent philosophical approaches toward recognition, for example in Axel Honneth's and Charles Taylor's theories. It is less important to me to argue in favor of such an understanding of identity formation but to show how important the role of recognition is for the concepts. It further demonstrates how much the expectation and anticipation of recognition informs and influences the efforts of creating an identity that will be successfully recognized.

[17] "Trusting that this form can be achieved and perceived as satisfying is what enables identity: I am the person other people perceive me as, because I achieve my plans in life and my ideas, which I share with my environment. Even beyond changes I will be able to win other people's recognition" (Krappmann 71).

The Concept of Recognition in Contemporary Philosophical Debates

While understanding of the importance of recognition within identity formation is helpful to know why one seeks recognition, it still leaves unanswered how one seeks recognition and what forms recognition takes. While Hall's concept of identification has shown that this process intersects the personal as well as the social sphere, the following discussion attempts to show how recognition is sought out and what kind of recognition(s) are available.

Recognition can come in various forms: within the realm of psychological development due to the love of our parents or the recognitions of others when a job is well done can influence a person's understanding of self and help them with self-esteem issues. Within the realm of justice and the legal system, recognition can determine whether or not someone gets to participate in a society, whether or not a person is granted the same rights as everyone else, and in extreme forms, constitutes a basic guarantee for security. In the philosophical and political debate surrounding the topic, recognition is understood as essential to a person's integrity, well-being, and his or her participation on society. The process of recognition is often described as a process of mutual agreement and of dialogical nature, often designated by the term "intersubjectivity."

The term "recognition" in English as well as the German term "Anerkennung," derives from the verb-form of the noun: "to recognize," and in German "anerkennen." Both terms are rooted in the Latin word "recognoscere," meaning "to know again" or "recall," connected to the Latin word "cognoscere," "to learn." This linguistic connection suggests that the process of recognition is based on a learning process and is connected to "pre-knowledge," in other words through recognition we perceive something we already

know and therefore need to tap into pre-knowledge we have gained prior. This emphasizes the importance of "knowing" something and being able to identify and remember things.

In his article "Annerkennung und moralische Verpflichtung," Honneth points out that the term "recognition" always played an important role for practical philosophy, yet is neither in everyday use nor in the context of philosophy clearly determined. In the context of feminist ethics the mother-child relationship, for example, is designated with this term, while in the context of discourse ethics the term is used to describe the process of reciprocal respect of difference and similarity between people (26). Honneth argues that "moral" is the system through which society decides over recognition or non-recognition (Horster 153). He claims that in "times of progressing individualization the reciprocal demand for recognition of one's identity within society includes a normative tension. In his attempt to grasp a better understanding of this term Honneth falls back on the distinctions as elaborated by the young Hegel and Hegel's trisection of the spheres of recognition" (Honneth, "Anerkennung" 27). Focusing on the three positive relationships of recognition Honneth identifies *Liebe* [love], *Recht* [law], and *Solidarität* [solidarity].

In this context, "love" is defined as emotional devotion, also including a physical dimension, embedded in primary social relationships, such as the family, partnership, and friendships. Those relationships are seen as crucial for the development of self-confidence. "Right" implies the status as a full-valued interactant of society. The acknowledgment through other people contributes to self-respect. "Solidarity" is based on the acceptance of individual peculiarities. All three of these relationships of recognition stand in close relation to each other and influence each other (Horster 154).

Honneth's trichotomy is interesting because on the one hand, it tries to dissect these spheres, yet shows how the personal and public sphere are interwoven. However, on the other hand, Honneth's concept seems to be very limiting and predominantly deals with a homogenous society and its differences within. It further supports the notion of normativity embedded in this recognition process and champions a particular intersubjectivity. Joel Anderson, introducing Honneth's work, summarizes Honneth's approach as follows:

> The possibility for sensing, interpreting, and realizing one's own needs and desires as a fully autonomous and individuated person—in short, the very possibility of identity formation—depends crucially on the development of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These three modes of relating practically to oneself can only be acquired and maintained intersubjectively, through being granted recognition by others whom one also recognizes. As a result, the conditions for self-realization turn out to be dependent on the establishment of relationships of mutual recognition (Honneth, *Struggle* xi).

Similar to Erikson's and Krappmann's understanding of recognition Honneth also describes recognition as part of the process of identity formation. Once more the dialogical character of recognition is emphasized; the recognition process is described as a "give-and-take" scenario. This also implies certain equality between the parties who recognize each other.

What happens if such equality is not granted or recognition is denied as one of the key issues for Charles Taylor's contribution to the recognition debate? In his essay

Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition (1994), Taylor examines the dynamics of recognition in a multicultural context. Taylor points out the importance of granted recognition, when he argues that "[…] misrecognition shows not just lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need" (26). Like Honneth, Taylor refers back to Hegel, emphasizing the concepts of honor and dignity and elaborating on the notion of authenticity, an aspect that has been particularly picked upon by Taylor's critics and will be elaborated more clearly later.

For Taylor, equal recognition has been essential to democratic culture. He argues that "(d)emocracy has ushered in a politics of equal recognition, which has taken various forms over the years, and has now returned in the form of demands for the equal status of cultures and genders" (Taylor 27). For Taylor the significance of a dialogical character of the development of personality is important. He distinguishes between "intimate sphere" and "public sphere." Taylor points out that out of the politics of universal dignity, "politics of difference" had been developed. These two modes of politics, according to Taylor, come into conflict (43). Neither one nor the other mode seems to be satisfying for Taylor. Taylor attempts to dismantle the universal notion of what he calls "blind" liberalism as fake. He demands more flexibility. He argues that different "schedules of rights […] apply differently in one cultural context than they do in another" (52). He claims that we have to acknowledge the "worth" of different cultures (64).

The problem that arises with Taylor's claims is that one could argue that he, very similar to Honneth, believes in a somewhat essential cultural self that is present and needs to be preserved. In direct response to Taylor, British philosopher Kwame Anthony

Appiah challenges the notion of "ethics of authenticity" (149). Appiah argues that in our liberal tradition, recognition is understood as largely a matter of acknowledging individuals and what we call their identities:

> As has often been pointed out, however, the way much discussion of recognition proceeds is strangely at odds with the individualist thrust of talk of authenticity and identity. If what matters about me is my individual authentic self, why is so much contemporary talk of identity about large categories—gender, ethnicity, nationality, "race," sexuality—that seem so far away from the individual? What is the relation between this collective language and the individual thrust of the modern notion of self? How has social life come to be so bound up with an idea of identity that has deep roots in Romanticism, with its celebration of the individual over society? (149/150)

One of the major issues with this claim of authenticity and identity formation is the limitation in its two dimensionality, which Appiah describes in relation to Taylor as, on the one hand, the collective dimension, here, the intersection of their collective identities, and, on the other hand, the "personal dimension, consisting of other socially or morally important features," and in this context, he names characteristics such as "intelligence, charm, wit, cupidity" (151). He further continues to challenge the notion of authenticity when he points out that Taylor's suggested concept may broaden the scope of acceptance in terms of group identities, yet it also enables normativity in regard to these group identities. According to Appiah, "[a]uthenticity speaks of the real self buried in there, the self one has to dig out and express," implying again a particular essence, an

origin, a certain truth to a certain culture. Appiah here ties this concept again to the romantic notion of self-creation, where "the idea develops that a self is something that one creates, makes up […]." The problem with this notion, as Appiah points out, is that "[w]e make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society. We do make choices, but we do not determine the options among which we choose" (155).

In her book *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), Judith Butler outlines "a post-Hegelian account of recognition" engaging in a dialogue with the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Theodor Adorno, and Michel Foucault (20). Butler aims at challenging the question of "why" we are urged to give an account of ourselves. Butler argues, "we start to give an account only because we are interpellated as beings who are rendered accountable by a system of justice and punishment. We only start to give an account of self because someone asked us to do so" (10/11). In other words, the "I" is not developed in an independent matter but in relation to others and their demands concerning a justification. This concern for justification forced us to become "self-narrating beings" (Butler 11). The aspect of "interpellation" challenges the assumption of a mutual dialogical process and introduces the notion of an unequal power dynamic in which one party holds the right or the position to demand such an "account."

Butler points out that, "[g]iving an account thus takes a narrative form, which not only depends upon the ability to relay a set of sequential events with plausible transitions but also draws upon narrative voice and authority, being directed toward an audience with the aim of persuasion" (12). She continues later:

> The singular body to which narrative refers cannot be captured by a full narration, not only because the body has a formative history that remains irrecoverable by reflection, but because primary relations are formative in ways that produce a necessary opacity in our understanding of ourselves. An account of oneself is always given to another, whether conjured or existing, and this other establishes the scene of address as a more primary ethical relation than a reflexive effort to give an account of oneself. Moreover, the very terms by which we give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and to others, are not of our making. They are social in character, and they establish social norms, a domain of unfreedom and substitutability within which our "singular" stories are told. (21)

In her observations, Butler connects narrative closely to the constitution of the body and self. Like other theories, Butler emphasizes the dialogical character of this process, yet emphasizes the imposition of this process and the social character of the presuppositions of this emergence. Here it seems crucial to emphasize that one enters an already established social sphere and is oriented within this realm. This also applies for how one recognizes other people. Butler states that "[t]he norms by which I recognize another or, indeed, myself are not mine alone" (24). Yet, Butler brings up an intriguing point of the normativity of this process and elements that can potentially rupture the normative recognition process when she argues that "[s]ometimes the very unrecognizability of the other brings about a crisis in the norms that govern recognition" (24). Butler links language and recognition as following: "We may think that to be

addressed one must first be recognized, but here the Althusserian reversal of Hegel seems appropriate: the address constitutes a being within the possible circuit of recognition and, accordingly, outside of it, in abjection." For Butler, "to be addressed is not merely to be recognized for what one already is, but to have the very term conferred by which the recognition of existence becomes possible" (Butler, IS 5).

In this context the aspect of "intelligibility" and "unrecognizability" stand out and move the concept of recognition and identity formation into a linguistic and symbolic sphere. In other words, giving an account of ourselves, as Butler calls it, comes with an aim: the aim of being understood and becoming readable. It is described as a process in which the subject attempts to position it within a larger, already established, narrative. Any form of deviation is immediately noticed and may challenge the individual's comprehensibility. "Unrecognizability" is an issue, can challenge the frame of reference, and is therefore not necessarily desirable. In this context, the notion of ambiguity and its relation to legibility seems important to investigate. Ambiguities as well as ambivalence seem to disturb the established order and challenge the recognition process in a way that not only the normative categories are threatened but the understanding and reading and therefore the classification of the subject is aggravated. Within the literary analysis of the texts these are the moments of special interest and are often developed on the level of the narrator. Butler's concept of recognition is particularly useful for my analysis since she emphasizes the importance of narration in regard to recognition.

Language, Narration, and Recognition

Philipp Hammack elaborates on the importance of narration for identity development in his essay *Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity* (2008). Like Hall and Butler, Hammack emphasizes the importance of "the individual engagement with discourse," and how it manifests "in a personal narrative constructed and reconstructed across the life course and scripted in and through social interaction and social practice" (223). Hammack believes that "identity as a universal process of individual human development, the content of which is necessarily culturally and historically contingent, allows us to query larger processes of social reproduction by identifying the meaning with which individuals internalize collective narratives" (225).

In this context, one useful aspect Hammack's concept provides is the distinction between what he calls "master narrative" and "personal narratives." Hammack argues that these forms of narrative depend on each other and are informed by each other. Subsequent to this distinction the process of how the individual either engages with these forms of master narrative or derives from it, to me is not only fruitful on a psychological level, but also for literary analysis (Hammack 223). Analyzing this connection helps to "illuminate the relationship between self and society" (225).

Hammack defines "master narrative" as a "cultural script that is readily accessible to members of a particular axis of identity, whether that be a nation […], an ethnic group, or a gender" (235) and elucidates the significance of ideology for these narratives and identity construction as such. Hammack points out that:

> [t]he concept of ideology is not identical to the concept of a master narrative, for a master narrative assumes the form of a story. But ideology

> is an important part of this story, concerned with distinctively cognitive components, including a particular evaluative and attitudinal perspective. To the extent that life narratives are always constructed in some sociopolitical context of power relations and inequities among groups, they are inherently ideological. (230)

Based on Erikson, Hammack defines ideology as a "system of ideas that provides a convincing world image" and as a substantial aspect of the "social reproduction of a culture" (231). Hammack elaborates on the function of ideology as follows:

> Ideological identification allows individuals to organize and synthesize the shared representations of a group, a culture, or a nation, in such a way as to construct a sense of person-culture symbiosis. Ideology is hence inherently cognitive in that it involves an internalization of shared representations, be they in form of abstract beliefs or historical narratives that are imbued with imagery. The internalization of an ideological system and its supporting narrative thus serves both an individual and a cultural function: It creates coherence with an individual and his or her cultural location while simultaneously reproducing a given social order within its collective narrative. […] If the content of identity assumes an ideological quality—a cognition of self in relation to discourse—it is through the development of a personal narrative that such cognition is rendered comprehensible and meaningful to an individual and to the group or groups to which he or she belongs. If ideology provides the basic

> cognitive content of identity, it is in narrative that ideological identifications assume a coherent structure. (231-232)

This effect of internalized representation and its transmission of a particular cultural context shows how a certain ideology can be transferred into a short story and may influence the use of imagery that is charged with ideological content and aesthetics. In this context, language use itself becomes an important factor with the creation of narrative.

The writings of Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o are useful to further investigate the connection between language, narration and imagery. In his book *Decolonizing the Mind*, Wa Thiong'o unravels the connection between narrative, language, and ideology, further explaining the connection and political strategies implemented by the British government.[18] Wa Thiong'o explains that "[l]anguage, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (13). He describes what he calls "language as culture" and points out that one task of "language as culture" is to function as "an image-forming agent." Wa Thiong'o argues:

> Culture transmits or imparts those images of the world and reality through the spoken and written language, that is through a specific language. […] Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it

[18] The British government implement very strict rules in regard to language use in its colonies. In Kenya, Wa Thiong'o recalls the government's forceful attempts to control any African language. Wa Thiong'o writes: "[O]ne of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gĩkũyũ in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment - three to five strokes of the cane on the bare buttocks - or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY (11).

> carries. […] Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceives themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. (15-16)

It becomes obvious that within the texts the authors are constructing the dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion and the process of recognition plays an important part for this construction. The authors are doing so by referring to larger cultural context and using the language as well as the narrative structures. Since we are dealing with texts exclusively describing intercultural encounters, it is particularly intriguing to see how they include the tension between a German master narrative and alternative narratives, either personal or competing master narratives with different cultural heritages.[19]

[19] In his book *A Mighty Fortress: A New German History* historian Steven Ozment develops a very intriguing "master narrative" that is often repeated in conservative circles when debating the issue of "foreigners." He outlines the developments in post-world war II Germany during the 1960s, an area closely associated with the term "Wirtschaftswunder." Ozment creates a narrative of wealth and prosperity depicting Germany as a haven for economically weaker foreigners. He introduces the situation during that era as follows, "Another major problem whose seeds were sown in the early 1960s also stemmed from the rapidity of postwar reconstruction, and not least that of the physical separation of the two Germanies epitomized by the Berlin Wall. The booming Western economy created many largely menial jobs undesirable to West Germans, and the building of the Wall, the steady stream of cheap East German labor on which the West relied ceased to flow. In its place came foreign guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*) from the east and the south, mostly Turks and people of Mediterranean descent. Those who came took full advantage of Germany's postwar generosity and emotional need to show kindness to strangers. Given pay, benefits, and human right beyond those in their homelands, new immigrants arrived in ever-increasing numbers, and often with little desire ever to return to the unblessed life they had left behind. By 1990 the new work force had become a problem for a reuniting Germany. Some 4.8 million foreign workers and their ever-growing families, a third of them Muslim Turks, lived in Germany. For the most part they integrated themselves poorly into German society and culture, while successfully replicating their own on German soil. In 2000, 30 percent of Frankfurt's population were Muslim Turks, who worshiped in the city's twenty-seven mosques. In German history the hyphenated German and the predatory foreigner have often merged into one, and they have done so again in the person of these modern foreign workers. The workers coming in recent decades, however, cross German borders from the south and the east not as aggressors or invaders but as invited "guests" to help maintain the German economy and way of life--hence, more as federates than as allies. Yet, with the passage of time, their permanence, proliferation, and

According to Hammack,

> A narrative perspective on identity is thus descriptive of a certain historical reality that globalization, with its transmissions of new and sometimes contradictory discourses, secures for the development of an individual. It should be clear that problematizing identity as narrative elucidates its quality as a superordinate construct of human consciousness. The personal narrative provides meaning and purpose by creating continuity in time for the individual; life experience is given temporal structure with a beginning, middle, and end through the construction of the life story. (233)

By tapping into a "preexisting identity," narrative continues to create identity. This temporal tension is explicitly embodied by different tenses used in a narration. Ochs and Capp point out: "The narrated past matters because of its relation to the present and the future. Interlocutors tell personal narratives about the past primarily to understand and cope with their current concerns" (25). Since recognition, too, seems to submerge from the realm of pre-knowledge, the assumption that such narrative informs the process of recognition is an easy one to make. In the context of literary analysis the mechanisms become more transparent and the processes are made visible. These texts illustrate the mechanisms at play because they center around this issue and they not only show this

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nonassimilation have also burdened the economy and threatened German unity and cultural identity. With them have also come hundreds of thousands of economically motivated asylum seekers (*Asylanten*), who take advantage of postwar Germany's penitential need to be a refuge for the politically persecuted of the world (297-298)." Ozment's elaboration on the guest worker and asylum seeker situation in West-Germany in the 1960s elucidates some of the common prejudices and assumptions made about foreigners and their motivation for immigration that last up to current debates of Islam and refuges. His language use already reveals how he sees this situation. He describes the guest worker situation as a "major problem" and perpetuates the image of the beneficiary (Nutznießer) and describes these immigrants as "predators," taking advantage of the German welfare system.

process in its creation by creating characters who are presented in a certain manner, but also comment on the identity issue directly. Recognition, however, seems to just play a subordinate role in the commentary, but within the narrative strategy, it becomes undeniably dominant for the characters' identification process and especially for the way in which they are perceived by other characters. The narrator, as I will argue, influences our recognition process through perspective and description. He or she provides the framework for the characters' development and sets the limits of their agency. The narrator "reads" the characters as well as he or she describes them.[20] One example in this context is the use of names as a literary strategy: here the connection between pre-knowledge, identity ascription and recognition becomes obvious.

George Melnyk points out, "All naming is a metaphor of continuity. The naming of a baby *after* a relative. The naming of the book *after* it is written" (XXI). And as true as this statement is, naming is also a form of expressing expectation and an attempt to determine another person's personality. He continues to elaborate,

> In naming, whether everyday usage or idiosyncratic messaging, we express both the power of the past and the importance of our present

[20] How names retrieve their meaning is essential for an analysis grounded in analytical philosophy. Here the key name would be Saul Kripke and his lectures on "Naming and Necessity." Following Kripke's terminology, there is a distinction to be made between "names" and what he calls "definite descriptions." As a common term to cover names and descriptions, he suggests the term 'designator' (Kripke 24). For Kripke, one of the key questions is how names develop meaning and how reference is developed. While he points out that some argue for a "natural account" for this kind of reference, Kripke believes that "[o]rdinary names refer to all sorts of things, and our reference here seems to be determined by our knowledge of them. Whatever we know about them determines the referent of the name as a unique thing satisfying those properties (28)." This seems particularly interesting, because we can see an account of such a determining "pre"- knowledge of names within the texts. It also supports the notion that names carry and develop meaning within a pre-existing context. However, this knowledge and this presumable legibility of names are challenged when names are polysemous in one language or they translate into other languages differently, as we will see in the texts. In these stories the characters' relationships to names they champion over others will be determined by "pre"-knowledge or better "presupposition" of these names and their connection to cultural heritage and identity. They also will be influenced by how these names could potentially be perceived by others. It is safe to assume that this pre-knowledge is mainly informed by a larger cultural and social context.

> activity, of the collective inheritance of a culture or a desire to express ourselves both conventionally and radically. Language is our belonging with others and with ourselves. In naming, we are free to choose to be the same as others in our world or to be different. Through our language we blend and stick out, assert or become visible. (Melnyk 1)

Melnyk points out that there are attempts to reverse the naming process, to find one's own agency. He explains, "Often we name ourselves in ways that are opposed to the names others give us. A name is a description with historical connotations, personal meanings, and cultural resonances drawn from our conscious environment but reflective of our subconscious selves." "Nicknames," he points out, "result from a socially designated form of re-naming that breaks through inherited naming and formality. Self-generated nicknames represent another identity that we want or that we, or others, feel we have within us." (1) Within the novels and short stories the process of re-naming is a common theme that not only connects these texts but also shows the intentions of the characters, their attitudes towards each other and their limitation or expansion of agency. It reveals in what forms characters are actually recognizing each other.

Friedhelm Debus points out that "the world of literary names lives and functions only within the background of the contemporary, geographic and social circumstances of the current reality" (2), meaning that these realities may change and therefore names that have been read as "exotic" or "contradictory" no longer are recognized as such. Debus claims that authors primarily choose from a contemporary pool of names. These names might be in their etymology time-independent, but in their pragmatic determination time-specific (2/3). A further aspect of importance in the context of naming and the meaning

of names is the "magical" function of names; a notion that plays an important role for character creation within the novels, and is closely connected to the idea of identity creation through naming.[21] While generally we can argue that the main function of names is identification, in literature name giving through the author most certainly expresses intention (Debus 4). Often a name is supposed to provide a point of departure for the character's being. Names may support the characters' development and essence or they might be chosen as a direct contradiction—an ironic commentary.

Within the texts, names play an important role for character development as well as for the development of the story as such. The characters' names and their own attitude towards them reveal an insight in this challenging concept as well as show the issues of identity ascription. Here the term "identity ascription" is to be taken literally since the name as a linguistic entity is written into the text and onto the character, carefully chosen to pre-determine the character's fate as a point of departure. This ascription provides all sorts of interesting points of departure for analysis. The analysis will show two major aspects: First, the cultural implications of names and the question of intelligibility (*Verständlichkeit*) and the related question of recognition and second, the function of agency of naming in relation to questions of power and dominance and the struggle of re-naming.

[21] In medieval times people believed that names had healing powers and were capable of influencing the being of the name bearer. The name radiates power and connected to this power creates the unity of name and person (Debus 3). This power also works the other way around, described by Elias Canetti as "Rumpelstiltskin-effect"—by naming one's name we not only identify the name bearer but also gain power over him or her (Debus 3). This becomes particularly interesting when a character carries more than one name, as in Seligmann's novel for example the tension between the main protagonist's names "Moische Bernstein" and "Manfred Bern." One supposedly undeniably Jewish, the other essentially German. Here, calling out the "real" name functions as a weapon aiming to destroy the character's reputation.

The following analysis of the literary texts will focus on the use of mechanism of recognition: Namely, the construction of family dynamics, particularly the mother-child relationship, the names and references used to describe the characters, and the narrative descriptions developed by the narrator. The guiding questions for the following analysis are: How do these aspects challenge or reaffirm the assumptions that the recognition process is influenced by socio-psychological dynamics? And how closely is the recognition process tied to language use and stereotypical imagery?

CHAPTER III

ALEV TEKINAY'S *DAS FERNROHR*

Within the current literary debate about German-Turkish writers, Alev Tekinay seems to have been forgotten. While her work as a writer was acknowledged and awarded during the late 1980s and early 1990s, recent scholarship is not paying much attention to her, probably because her last literary publication dates back to 1993 and she recently retired from her job as assistant professor at the University of Augsburg.

Tekinay was born in Izmir, Turkey in 1951 and attended a German high school in Istanbul. She studied German language and literature in Munich, and she completed her dissertation 1979, *Materialien zum vergleichenden Studium von Erzählmotiven in der deutschen Dichtung des Mittelalters und den Literaturen des Ostens*. Her interest in the German literary movement of the Romantic period is also very prominent in her literary works (Wierschke 100), and her knowledge of German literature as well as her attempt to reference German literary traditions influence her creative writing. Her most prominent novels are *Engin im Englischen Garten* (1992) and *Der weinende Granatapfel* (1990), her collection of fairy tales *Das Rosenmädchen und die Schildkröte* (1991), and her collection of short stories *Über alle Grenzen* (1986).

In her texts Tekinay focuses mainly on moments of intercultural encounters and moments of identity construction. A ruptured understanding of self often marks her protagonists' challenges. Torn between two cultures, feeling like they do not belong to either properly, they seek alternatives or simply try to balance the feeling of not belonging. Annette Wierschke claims that in Tekinay's stories, "[o]ft ist der Schwerpunkt zugunsten eines Einzelschicksals und der involvierten psychologischen Prozesse so stark,

dass der sozialkritische Aspekt - der sozio-kulturelle Kontext der Arbeitsmigration in Deutschland - aus dem Blickfeld gerät" (101). As my analysis will show this is not the case in *Das Fernrohr*. I argue that her portrayal of an integrated guest worker actually illuminates the intersection of the psychological and the socio-cultural, making the damage of the demands of policies of integration visible. The story further emphasizes the psychological damages of lack of recognition. It is a story about a problematic concept of tolerance and cultural hegemony. The short story further elucidates the competing concepts of "authentic self" and the use of stereotypes as a literary device.

Wierschke further emphasizes that Tekinay's texts focus mainly on the second generation and "das Gefühl der Fremdheit" (101). She underlines in this context the dilemma of growing up in two different cultural systems with sometimes contradicting norms and systems of values and the inability of identifying with either culture (102).

Tekinay's mode of narration ranges from an observational realistic portrayal of (West)-German society to a fantastic approach including fairy-tale elements and motives from the Romantic period, such as the Doppelgänger-motif and magical instruments to escape reality. Tekinay has often been accused of producing "Kitsch" and her use of "irrational moments of identity construction" has been criticized (Wierschke 142). The same applies to her use and construction of stereotypes. Tekinay has been under attack for constructing and reaffirming German stereotypes as well as Turkish stereotypes dismantling power dynamics and contradictions (Wierschke 104), an aspect that I will investigate in the following analysis and I will tie into the recognition issue. In this context Wierschke elaborates,

> Sie (Tekinay) läßt Realität und das Irreale zusammenfließen und kreiert einen Protagonisten, der sich gegen ihre preskriptiven Charakterisierungen zur Wehr setzt. In dieser Geschichte[22] weist Tekinay auf ein in der MigrantInnenliteratur häufiges Verfahren hin: die Verfestigung derjenigen Bilder, die die deutschen LeserInnen über die jeweilige Fremdkultur besitzen. Offensichtlich ist es einfacher, an Vorerfahrung und Erwartungen des Lesepublikums, bereits etablierte selektive Wahrnehmungen und den etablierten Diskurs anzuknüpfen, als neue Identitäten zu entwerfen. (116)[23]

The question that emerges from Wierschke's observations is a question one must ask in regard to all the texts I am analyzing in this project: to what extent is there room for new identities and what would such identities potentially look like? Are the texts promoting a multicultural society, in which different cultures can peacefully co-exist or is the concept of tolerance as presented in the text one that favors the subordination to a more humanistic approach attempting to eradicate cultural differences under the umbrella of the tolerance discourse? How are the texts coping with the notion of the "authentic self" and are they still trapped in concepts of origin and heritage? How are the texts positing "ambiguous" and hybrid identities?

Tekinay's most productive period is situated in the mid 1980s, before German unification. I am emphasizing this fact because one of the major arguments in German

[22] Wierschke is here referring to Tekinay's short story *Achterbahn*. This method, however, can also be traced in other stories, for example in *Das Fernrohr*.

[23] "Tekinay merges reality and unreality and creates a protagonist fighting against prescriptive powers of the world. In her story, Tekinay exposes a common strategy within migrant literature: the stabilization of images preoccupying the German readers imagination about the foreign culture. Obviously it is easier to tie on to pre-experience and expectation of the audience, pre-established and selective perception, than to create new identities."

immigration politics is that with unification, xenophobia in Germany was rising and creating an unsafe space for foreigners in Germany, sometimes implying that prior to the unification, xenophobia was not necessarily a serious issue. Tekinay's texts, however, tell a different story. They do not necessarily focus on physical violence but on intolerance, marginalization and the psychological and social consequence of withheld recognition.

The center of the following analysis constitutes her short story *Das Fernrohr*, taken from her short-story collection *Über alle Grenzen* (1986). In her collection, Alev Tekinay presents eight short stories dealing with the question of German-Turkish relations and processes of integration and assimilation. All stories are written from a third-person point of view, an omniscient narrator taking on different perspectives throughout the stories. The stories seem to capture moments of conflict of identification. Each one of them deals with prejudice and multicultural encounters. The protagonists are often trapped between the expectations of their society and their need and wish for self-fulfillment.

In *Das Fernrohr* Tekinay provides an insight into the everyday life of Turkish guest worker Mr. Denker and his German family. The text provides a disillusioning insight into an intercultural marriage, a marriage between a German woman and a Turkish "Gastarbeiter." Apparently happily married for years, the relationship is mainly so successful because Mr. Denker is fully assimilated and is almost unrecognizable as a foreigner, a fact that is very important to his wife and their German environment. However, Mr. Denker is not able to fully let go of his heritage and with the help of a magic telescope he travels back "home" every night. His wife, unaware of the magical qualities of this telescope, throws it away, leaving Mr. Denker no choice but to return to

Turkey.

Tekinay's story provides an insight into the intimate relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Denker and reveals how Mrs. Denker's cultural ignorance dominates her perception of her husband's culture and how she tries to control and dominate all family affairs. This cultural domination pervades all areas of their lives: food, holidays and particularly the naming of their three children Lutz, Gitty, and Kurt. Mrs. Denker's main concern is to hide her husband's cultural heritage and to educate her children in a German tradition.

Lack of recognition as a result of cultural hegemony is a key issue in Alev Tekinay's short story *Das Fernrohr* and will be explored on multiple levels: First, how is the dynamic represented between German cultural hegemony and "The Other," in this case the culture of the former Turkish guest worker? Secondly, what are the mechanisms used to suppress the culture of the Turkish father? Further, is there the possibility of a compromise, an "in between," if so, how is it constituted and can it be successful? And lastly, how is Tekinay incorporating German literary traditions, establishing *Das Fernrohr* as a story of intolerance by referencing Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*?

Lack of Imagination

The story is told from an omniscient narrator's perspective and contrasts dialogical scenes with inner monologue. The story starts out as follows,

> „NICHT LÖWÄNBRÄU, sondern Löwenbräu," schrie Frau Denker aufgeregt, als sie die Aussprache ihres Mannes verbessert. Ihre Augenbrauen waren wieder in die Höhe geschnellt.

„Sprich's doch wenigstens richtig aus, wenn es sich schon um deine Lieblingsmarke handelt."

Herr Denker starrte traurig vor sich hin, ohne seiner Frau zu antworten. (Tekinay 39)[24]

Without hesitation the narrator leads us to a scene in the Denkers' household that foreshadows the general situation between Mrs. and Mr. Denker. The capitalization of the first words is a strategy that is used throughout the whole book; all short stories start out similarly, but in the context of this story, it holds a particularly dramatic effect, supported by the verb "schreien." Mrs. Denker is not just correcting her husband in this scene, but she is educating him with rather questionable methods, such as raising her voice against him. This encounter sets the tone for the whole story. Mrs. Denker is the one correcting her husband, she is the one executing authority, and she is the one making her husband feel inadequate.

Mr. Denker is depicted as defenseless and passive, and saddened by his wife's constant criticism. This notion is also supported by the times Mr. Denker is actually granted to speak within the story. The narrator constantly contextualizes past events and feelings of the protagonists and there are only a few moments Mr. Denker is speaking directly, foremost to his son Kurt. The silence expresses Mr. Denker's helplessness and subordination.

The only time Mr. Denker is allowed to speak freely within the story is when he explains to his son Kurt about his early years in Germany and how he came to possess the

[24] "'NOT LÖWÄNBRÄU, but Löwenbräu,' Mrs. Denker yelled flustered, while she was correcting her husband's pronunciation. Her eyebrows were raised. 'Try to pronounce it properly if it is your favorite brand.' Mr. Denker sadly stared into the space in front of him, without answering his wife."

telescope. This story within the story constitutes a moment of intimacy between father and son, it establishes and elaborates on the magical aspect of the story (holding the ability to travel to Turkey through the telescope), and also works by elaborating the personal commentary of the protagonist towards the feeling of "Heimweh." Mr. Denker explains to his son: "Ach, mein Junge, wie wäre es mir möglich gewesen, ohne Heimweh in diesem Land zu leben, all die Jahre, wenn es das Fernrohr nicht gegeben hätte…" (Tekinay 47).[25] In this moment of intimacy the reader finally is provided with a deeper insight into Mr. Denker's feelings as well as the function and the heritage of the telescope. It is the only a verbal expression of Mr. Denker's pain. Kurt is the only child identified as not German by the text, and it enables Mr. Denker to share his secret with his son, with whom he shares a very special bond, supported by Kurt's name and his external appearance.

Within the first paragraph, the text introduces this dichotomy and power imbalance that will be a common thread within the story. This division is primarily created by both characters' cultural heritages and further supported by Mrs. Denker's cultural hegemony. The rest of German society, as the text partly claims, majorly influences this claim for hegemony. One of Mrs. Denker's main concerns is "not to draw attention to her husband's heritage—not in the neighborhood and not at work" (Tekinay 39). The fear of being recognized as foreign implies that being recognized as foreign constitutes a disadvantage and potentially leads to trouble. The text further argues that one can modify and influence whether one is identifiable or not. The demand of suppressing Mr. Denker's culture and strangeness takes a toll on Mr. Denker's well-

[25] "My boy, how would it have been possible to live in this country without feeling homesick for all these years, if it was not for my telescope."

being. It results in Mrs. Denker's behavior, which is symptomatic of a larger issue within the non-Turkish German society. This dominance of one partner over the other partner is clearly expressed in this short passage. Mr. Denker does not even try to defend himself or counter his wife's behavior. Instead he retreats into a melancholy sadness that will be established as one of his main character traits within the story.

The juxtaposition of the unlike couple refers back to a very stereotypical portrayal of cultural differences between Turkish and German characters. While he is trapped in a cold and strictly organized German environment, his home village is contrastingly portrayed as rural and old-fashioned. While Mrs. Denker is presented as controlling and dominating, Mr. Denker is depicted as introverted and melancholic. In this context Michelle Mattson points out, "Herr Denker's Turkish home turns out to be as stereotypically lively as his German environment is stereotypically rigid and unimaginative" (73). The incapability of imagination will be further illustrated in regard to the naming of the three children and can be seen as one of the limiting forces that is challenging the recognition process. Because there is no room for imagination, there is no room for anything deviating from the norm.

Cultural Transformation

> „Ich werde aus ihm einen Deutschen machen", hatte sie ihren Eltern versprochen, die zuerst gegen diese Heirat gewesen waren. Sie hatte ihr Versprechen auch gehalten.
>
> Tiefschwarze Haare mit dunkelblauem Schimmer und dunkelblaue Augen, in denen eine wehmütige Sehnsucht leuchtete. Sogar ihre Eltern hatten

> gestehen müssen, daß der ausländlische Schwiegersohn ein prächtiger Kerl war. Schon seit 20 Jahren ein prächtiger deutscher Kerl. Ein Roboter mit chronischen Kopfschmerzen in Wirklichkeit, aber niemand kannte ihn so, weder die Familie noch die Nachbarschaft. Viele wußten nicht einmal, daß er ursprünglich ein Gastarbeiter war. Viele der Nachbarn, die sich nicht lange mit ihm unterhalten und dadurch nie seinen leichten Akzent bemerkt hatten, würden sogar behaupten, Herr Denker sei ein Deutscher. […] Er war nicht dunkler als mancher Bayer oder Schwabe. (Tekinay 41)[26]

This passage further illustrates the point that Mrs. Denker from the outset aimed at transforming her husband into a German and never intended to accept him and recognize him or his cultural heritage. Her promise "Ich werde aus ihm einen Deutschen machen" supports this transformation project. It is this promise of transformation that enables the relationship in the first place, because in no other way could her family accept her future husband. It implies a cultural concept that is rather performative and can be adapted if necessary. It leaves no room for compromise. Mr. Denker is only tolerable as a future husband if he assimilates and becomes German. What it means to become German is also illustrated in this passage, it means turning into a "Roboter mit chronischen Kopfschmerzen," further supporting the cultural stereotyping of German society as

[26] "I will turn him into a German," she had promised her parents who first opposed the marriage. And she had kept her promise. Dark black hair with a glance of blue, dark blue eyes driven with a melancholy longing. Even her parents had to admit that their son-in-law was a handsome fellow. Now already for 20 years a handsome German fellow. In reality a robot with chronic headaches but nobody knew him like this, not even his relatives or his neighbors. A lot of them did not even know that he was originally a guest worker. A lot of the neighbors who never really engaged in long conversations with him and who never noticed his accent even thought he was German. […] He was not darker than some Bavarians or Swabians (Tekinay 45).

mechanical and uncreative and again contrasted with the description of Mr. Denker's eyes as "wehmütig" [melancholic].

Further within this text passage aspects of cultural belonging are established. To claim a German identity seems to be formable, and achievable. It is a process, according to Mrs. Denker, that needs guidance, and she is willingly taking on the challenges. The factors established for recognition, such as his name, his language ability, and his external features are speaking in his favor. According to the text even his color of skin does not give away his foreignness. The attitude of Mrs. Denker's parents changes when they realize their son-in-law's potential to transform into being German. They only recognize him as a proper person once the daughter promises her attempts to mold him into a good German.

This further supports the master narrative developed in Tekinay's short story that a "good foreigner" is the one that cannot be identified as such, an attitude that is championed by the protagonist's wife and family and the German environment they are operating in. It is in Mr. Denker's responsibility to ensure he cannot be identified as foreign, through proper pronunciation, proper attire, and qualities that are marked as desirable within German society. The contrast established by the narrator boils down to a cold German society, which is suppressing the protagonist's need of identification with his cultural heritage.

In this context, the constant switch of the narrator between the protagonist's thoughts, Mrs. Denker's thoughts and commentary suggests first and foremost a communication problem, and secondly the denial for compromise and ambiguity. The communicative problem is clear. The couple is not talking to each other about any of the

decisions. Mrs. Denker is taking over the power to make important decisions within the household, for example by naming the children and then later also redecorating and renovating the house. Mrs. Denker does not share her spouse's feelings of homesickness, and he even keeps his magical telescope a secret from his family, especially his wife. This ignorance on Mrs. Denker's part and the secretiveness on Mr. Denker's part prevent an open dialogue and more importantly a compromise between the couple as well as the cultures.

Within the text there is a clear division in what is to be considered German and what is to be considered foreign, and in this context, Turkish. However, there are moments within the narrative that open up the possibility for cultural intersection and compromise through ambiguity, but only on the level of the narrator's explanations. The narrator in this context holds the role of a facilitator. He or she (it is really not determinable whether the narrative voice is female or male, and it does not seem to have an impact on the narration for that matter) is educating the reader about these cultural ambiguities, but not the characters. This becomes particularly clear when the reader learns about the names of the children.

Ambiguous Names

That the wrong name in the wrong context may cause problems is an issue that Tekinay's text introduces right from the start, and the coincidence that Mr. Denker's Turkish family name also happens to be a German name is valued as an advantage. Within the short story names are established as tools of identification. This *naming process* poignantly illustrates the lack of recognition and its consequences. The

omniscient narrator introduces the family situation as follows:

> Eigentlich hatte Frau Denker fast in keiner Hinsicht Schwierigkeiten mit ihrem Mann. Nicht einmal wegen des Familiennamens. Sie konnte vom Glück reden, daß er keinen langen und typischen ausländischen Namen hatte wie Kuzucuoglu oder Üzümcügil, sondern einen einfachen Namen, der zufällig auch ein deutscher Familienname hätte sein können. Deshalb fiel sie in der Nachbarschaft und im Büro nicht als die Frau eines Ausländers auf. Auch die Kleidung und das Verhalten ihres Mannes verrieten dessen ausländische Herkunft nicht. Er trug oft einen Lodenanzug und war nicht patriarchalisch eingestellt. Er war völlig in die deutsche Gesellschaft intergriert, er war die Integration in Person. Er sprach auch perfekt Deutsch. Nur selten produzierte er ein zu offen ausgesprochenes ‚e' einen etwas fremden Akzent, wie heute zum Beispiel beim Sonntagsessen. (39)[27]

Here, the narrator gives insight into Mrs. Denker's thought process and elaborates all the possibilities that have potential to cause problems for Mrs. Denker. The main problem in this context is defined as being identified as "foreign." A problem Mr. Denker successfully overcame, to the point that he even "became" "die Integration in Person." In other words, he embodies integration. According to the text, a foreigner can be identified by a foreign accent, clothing, a patriarchal mentality, and the family name. Adopting Mrs.

[27] "Generally Mrs. Denker had no difficulties with her husband. Not even because of his family name. She was lucky he did not have a complicated foreign name such a Kuzucuoglu or Üzümcügil, but a simple name that coincidently could have been a German name. Therefore she was not recognizable at work or in the neighborhood as the wife of a foreigner. Neither his clothing nor his behavior hinted at his foreign heritage. He often wore a loden-cloth suit and was not patriarchal. He was completely integrated into German society; he was the embodiment of integration. Even his German was flawless. Only rarely he produced a too open sounding 'e' in a rather strange accent, as for example today at Sunday dinner."

Denker's view of the world, it is particularly the name that could have caused potential issues, especially because the man's family name is also traditionally passed on to the children.

Foreign names are identified as "long" and "complicated." Mr. Denker's name, on the other hand, as the text points out, "luckily" could be easily taken for a German name and is in fact used as such. The text provides here the first account of a possibility of intersection. It is a linguistic intersection that despite its apparent randomness demonstrates the chance of "meeting in the middle" and also demonstrates the issue of ambiguity—or "lucidity" (Eindeutigkeit), which often determines the process of perception.

As the text points out, Mr. Denker's last name can be easily taken as a German family name, while the text emphasizes that Mr. Denker had been assimilated so successfully that he even "became" "die Integration in Person." We can argue that his name symbolizes this objectification. The person, as well as the name, is the embodiment of "integration." Further, on a literary level, the name supports the husband's calm and contemplative character. He never seems to contradict his wife or stand up for himself; he enjoys spending time alone in his attic. While the German name *Denker* is derived from the German verb "denken," "to think", the name could be read in two different ways and is used as a first name as well as last name. On the one hand "Denker" refers to an Ugyhursian soldier, and therefore serves as a historical reference. On the other hand, the Turkish word "denk" used as a noun, means counterpart.

On a structural level, Mr. Denker functions as a counterpart within the short story: he is first and foremost the counterpart to his German wife and her world. However, just

as the ambiguous meaning of his name is hidden to the German world, his "opposition" to the cultural oppression of his wife is hidden as well. The fact that there is an ambiguity concerning the family name is valued as a lucky coincidence, not as a ground for compromise. This becomes particularly clear when we look at the naming of Denker's children.

Power of Naming

It is left without question within the story that Mr. Denker is surrounded by a hegemonic German culture that does not leave any room for any alternative or additional cultural influences. Within the Denkers' household, the mother perpetuates this oppressive culture. This becomes prominent in the act of naming the children.

> Kurt war das einzige Kind, bei dessen Geburt Herr Denker den Namen hatte selber aussuchen dürfen. Als Frau Denker Lutz und Gitti auf die Welt gebracht hatte, hatte sie die Namen schon parat gehabt.
> „Mein seliger Großvater hat Ludwig geheißen, so soll mein erster Junge auch heißen", hatte sie bestimmt. […] So war's auch bei Gittis Geburt: „Meine selige Großmutter hieß Brigitte." […]
> Ich setze offenbar nur deutsche Kinder auf die Welt, hatte er gedacht. Bei Kurt war's aber anders gewesen. Erstens hatte Herr Denker seiner Frau verschwiegen, daß Kurt zufällig auch ein Wort in seiner Muttersprache war, das ‚Wolf' bedeutete. Zweitens hatte Kurt dieselben Haare und Augen wie sein Vater. (Tekinay 42)[28]

[28] The only child Mr. Denker had been allowed to pick out the name was Kurt. When Mrs. Denker gave birth to Gitti and Lutz she already had chosen the names.

This passage illustrates the dynamics of the naming process. Mrs. Denker occupies the right to name her children in a German tradition. Her name choices not only express a cultural tradition she follows, but a biological one as well. She is using her grandparents as a legitimation to occupy a naming right over her children by placing her cultural heritage above her husband's. Here it might be also interesting to note that the mother seems to have particular power tied to her biological function, since she is the "life giver," she also holds the power to name the children, a motif that is also introduced in Rafael Seligmann's text. Her dominance over her husband and her lack of recognizing his authority as a parent demonstrate a deeper-rooted issue: the issue of controlling not only the offspring's future outlook on themselves, but also their view of the world around them, and the way they are perceived by the world. The children's cultural identity is ascribed as German. They need to be unmistakably recognizable as Germans in order to avoid any cultural challenges.

While the names of the first two children, Lutz and Gitti, are identified by the text as undeniably German and tied to Mrs. Denker's family heritage, the youngest son's name, Kurt, again conveys cultural ambiguity. In German, Kurt is known as a short form of "Konrad," relating to "kühn," and "tapfer" as well as a "Ratgeber"—a person providing advice. In Turkish, the noun "kurt" means "wolf." Here, similar to the family name "Denker" the possibility of an intercultural compromise opens up, but it is a secret compromise only Mr. Denker is aware of and he is not sharing with his wife. Just like his entire cultural heritage needs to be hidden from his "German" family. The "hiding" of his

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"My blessed grandfather's name was Ludwig, so my first son should be named after him," she determined. […] The same with Gitti's birth: "My blessed grandmother's name was Brigitte." […]
Apparently I'm only making German children, Mr. Denker thought. But with Kurt it was different. First of all, he had concealed that Kurt coincidently also was a word in his mother tongue that meant 'wolf'. Secondly, Kurt had the same eyes and hair as his father.

culture is not only expressed in this context but also in the title of the story *Das Fernrohr*. The telescope here stands for something bigger. It can be read as an expression of his *Fernweh* and in this case *Heimweh*. He keeps the telescope, the gateway to his *Heimat,* hidden in an attic, like he hides his longing for his culture, since every connection to his Turkish heritage has to be hidden.

Mrs. Denker does not entertain this idea of interculturality. Her ignorance is a common theme throughout the story and demonstrates a cultural arrogance towards "the Other"—in this case her own husband's cultural heritage. The naming of the children fully supports this notion within the story. It shows not only how Mr. Denker is supposed to be assimilated, but his children need to be univocally identifiable as German as well. Except for Kurt, the other two children are not aware of or interested in the father's heritage. The outside world is not supposed to know, since it could be potentially harmful to the family or make them stand out. For Mrs. Denker the main intention is not to draw attention to her husband's foreign heritage but to be perceived as "full-fledged" German. Through controlling the naming process Mrs. Denker tries to control the perception of the family to the outside world. Names, as she seems well aware and as is structurally and aesthetically demonstrated within the story, can cover or uncover cultural heritage.

The names Kurt / Wolf evoke an additional association—they reference Germany's most acknowledged play of "tolerance," Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (1779). *Nathan*, is today still taught in schools as the prime example of tolerance during the enlightenment among the three major monotheist religious groups during the period of the crusades: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The play is familiar to a majority of Germans and is often seen as Lessing's pledge for tolerance, while it actually promotes

secularization and assimilation. Within the play, however, there is one character, Assad, the brother of the sultan, who converted to Christianity out of love and changes his name to Wolf von Filneck. His son, whom he raises as a Christian and who later on becomes one of the crusaders, is named Curd von Staufen. Here a connection between Christianity and Islam based on a similar relationship of names is successfully constructed through the family circumstances. Based on kinship, the characters are able to overcome their own prejudices and while the names first disguise the characters' true heritage they also establish a cultural connection between them. Assad's change from Assad to Wolf, which can be also read as a short version of Wolfgang, transitions him into the German realm without totally disguising his Muslim heritage. By naming his son Curd, this cultural connection is kept alive.

However, while in Lessing's play this calculation seems to work in everybody's favor and the stylistic device of ambiguity is explored and exposed to everyone, Tekinay's story, on the other hand, has no happy ending. Acceptance for Mr. Denker's culture is not an option. The possibility of being united through ambiguity, intersection, and multiplicity is denied by an attitude of ignorance. It is not too far-fetched to argue that with this constellation Tekinay is referencing Lessing's claim for religious (and in this case cultural) tolerance. Even more than 200 years after Lessing's play the pledge for tolerance is still necessary. However, maybe *Nathan* and Mr. Denker share more common ground than at first visible. Just like Mr. Denker, Nathan is accepted by his society precisely because he is not hanging on to his culture but promotes an overcoming of religious division. Analyzing the depiction of Judaism in Lessing's plays *Die Juden* and *Nathan der Weise*, Ritchie Robertson points out that "Jews can be admitted to the

society of the Enlightenment only if they are not Jews" (111). He notes that Lessing's *Nathan* is not promoting cultural diversity: "Neither Judaism nor Islam is represented in any detail. Nathan is never shown as engaging in any specifically Jewish religious practice. He stands for a universal, humane benevolence, as do the Muslims Saladin and Sittah" (115). In this context Tekinay's short story can be understood as a commentary on this tolerance discourse that is not promoting cultural diversity but assimilation. Yet, unlike Nathan, who seems to have found his place in society, the lack of recognition and respect for Mr. Denker's culture leaves traces on him. He is denied his own culture, he is denied passing his culture and traditions on to his children and he is even denied a safe space to explore and maintain his own heritage that seems of utmost importance to him and key to his successful assimilation. The model of assimilation as presented in *Das Fernrohr* is ruthless. Being exposed as foreign is depicted as a threat and needs to be avoided at all costs. The only way to maintain a connection to his cultural heritage is through a magical device. Literary scholar Michelle Mattson reads the telescope as follows,

> The symbolic function of the telescope vis-à-vis the stereotype here is actually highly ambivalent, but as such also very telling. A telescope focuses our vision in on only one small area. It magnifies the object in sight to permit the viewer to discern it. Either one can see it as a visual *aid*, that is a tool to enhance perception, or one can decide that it offers rather a distortion of the image in question. (74)

While this reading of the telescope is surely interesting, I would like to suggest two alternative readings of its function. Yes, Mr. Denker uses the telescope as a device to

watch his home village. However, he primarily uses it as a travel device, physically relocating him from one place to another, connecting him inseparably to his home country, almost like an umbilical chord. Further, it can also be seen as a phallic object; the last symbol of his manhood. By removing his telescope from the attic his wife intrudes on the last space he has maintained for his personal agency and she not only (unknowingly) cuts him off from his homeland and family, but also undermines the last piece of his authority. As the text pointed out before, Mr. Denker does not engage in a patriarchal way of thinking, yet even the last piece of his manhood and connection to his homeland is taken away. The only way to become a useful member of German society in this story and to live in security and be recognized as German is to reject the foreign and to negate all factors that potentially could reveal the aberrant. Assimilation in this context means to dissolve into the hegemonic culture until one unrecognizably erases all foreign signifiers. An "in between," the creation of something new is not an option. Ambiguity and intersection are presented to the reader as possibility, but not to the characters as a solution. Once Mr. Denker cannot maintain his magical connection to his homeland, he cannot maintain the assimilation process. He no longer is capable of speaking proper German. He has no option but to leave Germany, and he takes his son Kurt, the one child that seemed to present an opportunity of reconciliation, with him. The story ends as follows:

> „Der Speicher ist bereits ausgeräumt", berichtete Frau Denker, „all das alte Gerümpel hat heute ein Trödler abgeholt."
>
> Traudl, Traudl, ich dich so lieben, ich dich nix lieben.

> Die eisige Anonymität der Bahnhöfe, die gellenden Pfiffe waren wie ein zauberhafter Ruf aus der Ferne.
>
> Nein, nicht der völlig integrierte Ausländer und sein deutscher Sohn warteten am Bahnsteig 21 auf den Orientexpreß, sondern ein gewöhnlicher Gastarbeiter und sein Sprößling. Beide dunkelhaarig, schüchtern, unsicher, voller Heimweh, die Rückreise in die Heimat kaum erwartend.[29]

With the loss of his magical device, Mr. Denker is left without stability. It takes his ability to stay integrated. It takes his language ability. "Das alte Gerümple," Mrs. Denker is referring to is not only his most valuable possession for self-preservation, but the last piece of and the last connection to his cultural heritage that seems to be essential to Mr. Denker's well being and his capability of assimilating into a hostile society by pushing the dichotomy and power imbalance between Mr. and Mrs. Denker to its limits and demonstrating what so many scholars have Tekinay criticized for: it places Germans and Turks in direct opposition, depicting the German side as rational, cold, inconsiderate, and intolerant, while the Turkish side is represented as melancholic, warm, emotional, and with a tendency to the magical.

Exploring clichés and stereotypes in Tekinay's writings on a deeper level Mattson argues that using these clichés and stereotypes is a form of expression of "minor literature," a prominent term she borrows from Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze (70). She points out that she is mainly interested in "the concept of deterritorialization and its

[29] "All things have been removed from the attic," Mrs. Denker reported, "the junk dealer picked up all the old rubbish today."
Traudl, Traudl, I love you so, I not love you.
The cold anonymity of the train station, the shrill whistles sounded like a magical call from a distance.
No, not the fully integrated foreigner and his German son were waiting at platform 21 for the orient-express, but a regular guest worker and his offspring. Both dark-haired, shy, insecure, full of homesickness; hardly anticipating the journey back home.

implications for Tekinay's use of both the more general and less rigidly formal stereotype, as well as the cliché, which can be seen as a subgroup of the stereotype functioning through stock phrases and comparison" (70/71). Mattson believes that within minor literature, "[t]he stereotype is deterritorialized: it no longer overlaps with the original trope" (71). She continues to argue that,

> To a certain extent, clichés and stereotypes in the context of collective language form a "desired" reality, and abstraction that allows a collective subject to grasp and/or localize the objects of its statement. The reality is "desired" in the sense that the abstraction makes the description of a collective object possible. (70/71)

In the Denkers' case, for example, the assumption that all Turkish is inferior and therefore needs to be negated is dominating Mrs. Denker's perception of her husband as well as her behavior towards him and her children. Hiding "the Other" and limiting their space to secrecy is the result of such prejudiced thinking. Mattson points out that *Das Fernrohr* suggests "that the integration of two distinct cultural identities can only function as long as one is performed and the other virtually repressed as stereotyped fiction" (73).

Tekinay's story paints a sad picture of the dynamics between a German cultural hegemony and "the Other," in this case Turkish culture. The power imbalance is clearly depicted as one culture being subordinate to the dominant culture. There is no exchange, there is no compromise and in order to succeed one must fully assimilate. Any chance of being recognized as foreign will be a disadvantage and jeopardize security.

Naming and names, accent, and external appearance as well as an anti-patriarchal

attitude are markers that are identified as tools of recognition. Names can hide and disguise someone's culture. Compromise and cultural intersection are only introduced on a narrative level, not as a reality for the characters. The compromise that is used by Mr. Denker is set outside reality and the "irreality of this magical telescope proves to be a commentary on its own impossibility" (Mattson 73), meaning that to accommodate two cultures successfully is only possible outside of reality. Foreignness must be hidden, and keeping some core elements of cultural heritage is Mr. Denker's own personal challenge.

Referencing Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, Tekinay provokingly reminds German readers of the promise of the enlightenment for religious tolerance and peaceful and respectful coexistence. Her story provides a commentary on the tolerance discourse and how it not only seems to negate any form of alternative cultural expression within her story. It also attempts to draw a parallel between the Jewish experience of the enlightenment and contemporary Germany and its treatment of the Turkish minority. Assimilation requires the full surrender to the hegemonic culture and leaves no room for a cultural co-existence. The world of Mr. and Mrs. Denker is dominated by cultural arrogance, ignorance, and lack of recognition. Lack of recognition and the demand of assimilation leave Mr. Denker no choice but to leave German society.

Through the contrasting depiction of the German world versus the Turkish world Tekinay exaggerates the portrayal of this cultural dilemma. She exemplifies the demands formulated in regard to the assimilation discourse and shows how these demands create the image of a clear cultural division. As Mattson points out the use of "large-scale generalizations" have an additional function, "the categories underlying such designations are not only descriptive, but also evaluative" implying a superiority of one

cultural group over another (76). This is a point Tekinay tries to push in *Das Fernrohr*. One culture not only dominates over the other, but also devalues the other culture. Being identified as Turkish is a disadvantage. It is unsafe. While she is trying to counterbalance these assumptions with unflattering German stereotypes to make these assumptions more transparent she shows how these fears are dominating the characters' lives and self-perception. Mr. Denker is so insecure about his cultural heritage that he has to hide it. Not even the children really know about it. The picture of German society Tekinay creates is a narrow-minded society that lacks any imagination for ambiguity and compromise. Recognition is divided into recognizing what is German and rejecting what is not. Foreigners can become a part of it, yet they have to give up any notion of heritage and cultural belonging and have to surrender to German society. Multiculturalism is not an option in this context. Therefore the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Denker and the communication issues depicted between the two become symbolic for the communication issues between German and Turkish culture. While the German culture appears to be too dominant and refuses to recognize any other influences, the Turkish culture seems to be fearful and only provided with marginalized space.

The text shows that transformation and assimilation indeed are possible, after all Mr. Denker manages to transform at least externally into "die Integration in Person," yet it comes at an expensive cost. It demands a rejection of past heritage, which in itself still has a present existence, after all Mr. Denker's family still lives in Turkey. Identity formation in this context is presented as an on-going development yet still tied to a sense of past life that still plays an important role in the present and is in this context also connected to kinship and belonging. Mr. Denker is not able to give up this part of his

former self. Since the text suggests that the in between does exist, for example through linguistic multiplicity and ambiguity, this attitude is not presented within the story as a solution. The world Mr. and Mrs. Denker live in, as presented by Tekinay, is influenced by an insurmountable dichotomy.

CHAPTER IV

EMINE SEVGI ÖZDAMAR'S *MUTTERZUNGE* AND *GROßVATERZUNGE*

Lack of Recognition and a Search for More

The Turkish-born author Emine Sevgi Özdamar first arrived in Germany in 1965, without knowing a single word of German, to work in a factory in West Berlin as a so-called "Gastarbeiter." In the late 1990s Özdamar settled in Berlin working as an actress and theater director; she further dedicated time to writing her own plays, which was her entrance to her literary work (Yildiz 145). Today, Özdamar is one of the most prominent and awarded German-Turkish writers in Germany. Her novels, such as *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (1998), *Das Leben ist eine Kawanserei* (1992), and her short story collection *Mutterzunge* (1990), have been translated into English and are internationally renowned. Özdamar was granted the prestigious *Albert-von-Chamisso award* (1999), the *Heinrich-von-Kleist award* (2004), the *Theodor-Fontane award* (2009), and in 2007 she was admitted to the *Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung*. Within her literary work Özdamar connects to the German literary traditions of surrealism and Brechtian aesthetics, combining German language and narrative styles with Turkish influences and even, as we will see in the analysis of her short stories *Mutterzunge* and *Großvaterzunge*, Arabic traditions and lexicality, qualifying her as what Yasemin Yildiz calls a "multilingual writer."

Finding herself located in a foreign world, Özdamar learned German in a very unconventional way. Instead of taking language classes, she absorbed the language in everyday life and started learning German by ear. Her environment became her language lesson as she memorized headlines from newspapers and tried to gain new language

knowledge through all the words and phrases she encountered. The more she accessed the language, the more she grasped in this new world (Löffler 2002). This anecdote from Özdamar's life prepares us for understanding the language in her 1990's work *Mutterzunge*, a collection of short stories and her first prose work.

Her linguistic and literary innovations are not only contributing to the quality of her literary writings but also make her an interesting subject for literary analysis. Özdamar is an essential part of the contemporary debates revolving around so-called migrant literature, and her works are part of German and US literary criticism. In the realm of US literary criticism Leslie Adelson's work *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* (2005) and Yildiz's recent book entitled *Beyond the Mother Tongue* (2012) are worth highlighting. While Adelson focuses on challenging the term "migration literature" and emphasizes the importance of German-Turkish writers in contemporary Germany, Yildiz focuses on the aspect of multilingualism in the writings of German-Turkish and German-Jewish writers. Both scholars emphasize Özdamar's significance for the German-Turkish dialogue as well as her artistic contribution to the literary expression of the Turkish-German experience.

Praising the "Kleinkünstlerpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalens" in 2001, literary critic Sigrid Löffler called Özdamar a "Grenzgänger." Here "Grenzgänger" does not only indicate a person crossing a physical and geographical border, but a person who is living in between borders, without necessarily choosing a side. Löffler points out that "through the dissolutions of boundaries the question of how to define one's identity becomes crucial. In a new area of linguistics and culture the 'Grenzgänger' needs to create a new identity" (Löffler 2001).

Wandering in undefined worlds is part of Özdamar's life as she points out that "Die Fremde ist die Heimat" (Interview). In this context her writings can be seen as a reflection of wandering and mobility—two constitutive elements of modern life. Literature revolving around migration as a main topic, as Claire Horst points out, can accommodate a deeper insight into this world and can be therefore seen as exemplary for contemporary literature (9). And this is one key task of Özdamar's writing. It provides an insight into cultural change and the integration of different traditions, as the process of getting "oriented" and the question of how to define one's identity outside of the common realm are important topics in her writing.

In *Mutterzunge* and *Großvaterzunge* the question of recognition or the lack of it plays a central role, as literary motif as well as a political practice and reality. Change of cultural personality is the point of departure of *Mutterzunge*, the lack of recognition and suppression of culture is essential for *Großvaterzunge*, and both stories address the issue of expectation and its relation to cultural predetermination. Two elements are remarkable within the stories: First, the closeness constructed through kinship, often tied to an essentialist understanding of identity and corporality. Here the role of the mother as the keeper and guardian of an essential cultural core is prominent. Second, within the short stories the role of narration and language is used to navigate change and the renegotiation of cultural identity. In this context the question of the body and the corporality of language becomes an important motif that is elaborated mainly in the second story *Großvaterzunge*. In this context language use is tied to a cultural and political concept of identity and the protagonist attempts to navigate between her mother tongue Turkish,

Arabic, here the forbidden and lost language of her grandfather, and German as the new infiltrating playground for re-discovery and recreation of identity.

The stories furthermore explore the political conditions of Turkey and the impact they had on the main protagonist's personal development. Particularly Yildiz's reading of *Mutterzunge* champions this text as one in which "literal translation enacts the link between trauma and survival, between acting out and working through, in the most condensed form" (163). In this context the connection between the physical and psychological impact of state regulation and political persecution as a matter for recognition becomes transparent and is closely tied to the attempt to work through trauma as part of an ongoing, constant developmental process. It relates well to Mishler's argument that identity is not constructed linearly but rather non-linearly, particularly in connection with re-living and re-evaluating trauma. Özdamar's stories therefore can be understand as an attempt to overcome this trauma and show how lack of recognition can function as a trigger to suppressed memory, since it is in itself a form of traumatic experience.

Family Ties as Point of Departure

In the eponymous first story of the collection, the reader is introduced to an unnamed first-person narrator who faces the challenge of an apparent language loss. Surrounded by a different culture and language, the protagonist feels as if she has lost her native tongue, here denoted as *Mutterzunge*—the mother's tongue. The title of the story connects the concept of native language to the concept of a cultural identity closely tied to family heritage. The first line of the first story *Mutterzunge,* illustrate the linguistic

experiment Özdamar conducts: "In meiner Sprache heißt Zunge: Sprache" ["In my language, tongue means language"] (Özdamar 7). Through the title and the very first line the author introduces the reader to her technique of language alienation. The reader is confronted with a difference of signification. In many languages, such as French or English, and, in Özdamar's case, Turkish, "tongue" has an ambiguous meaning and can be used to name a physical organ, or, in the context of "mother" or "native," relate to the first language a person learns. In German "Mother tongue" or "native tongue" is usually translated with the word language [Sprache], for the meaning of "tongue" is determined to relate to the organ [Zunge]. The term *Mutterzunge* is not incomprehensible but sounds strange and unfamiliar. Still, the implication of this double meaning seems to serve an alternative function: it relates the abstract concept of language to a physical one. The protagonist's language is manifested in a physical form and is objectified. It can even be twisted [mit gedrehter Zunge], which also implies flexibility. The reification [Verdinglichung] of language is preparation for what happens next: the loss of language. It appears as if the mother tongue becomes an item, an accessory one can easily misplace. In this context the loss of language is closely tied to political circumstances in Turkey and nationalist identity politics implemented by the government.

This reification will be essential in "Großvaterzunge." Language is reified and personified. Reification occurs in the sense that language becomes an object one can lose and personified because suddenly words do have agency. They become old acquaintances, people she once knew. They "drop in": "Noch ein Wort in meiner Mutterzunge kam mal im Traum vorbei" [Another word of my mother tongue came by in a dream] (Özdamar 10). It almost seems as if they have their own lives and memories.

The language loss and language ability in this context are inseparably linked to her memory of Turkey and her former cultural identity. It is not said that the protagonist is not Turkish anymore, but the influences she has to face in Germany are somehow infiltrating her own cultural memory and her former self, as identified by her mother and her mother's understanding of who her daughter is and how she narrates. The loss of her language influences her memory and her relation to her former homeland. The borders of language memory and historical memory fade. The words of her past emerge in unpredictable situations; they appear ghost-like, casting a shadow of her past, haunting her memory and her subconscious as she dreams of these familiar words associated with her past. Together with her mother language, she seems to have forgotten even the troublesome political developments in Turkey. The political reality of Turkey to which she used to be a first-hand witness is no longer present in her world. She only experiences these developments through media representations and "beim Vorbeigehen"—if she passes by a newsstand.

While the questions of how and when the protagonist has changed are crucial for the first story, in the second story of the collection, "Großvaterzunge," the quest for this lost cultural identity and the concomitant language ability are the center of the narrative. Here the question of how to establish an identity "beyond the borders" of culture and nationalism becomes crucial, and the motif of wandering is fundamental (Gerhard 19).

Understanding and entering a strange world through language and linguistic competence are therefore not only constitutive elements of Özdamar's own biography, but they mirror her writings thematically and stylistically. In her stories *Mutterzunge* and *Großvaterzunge,* she renegotiates the meaning of a "cultural identity" and its effect on

oneself. The protagonist of these stories is on a quest for an apparently lost identity. The very interesting aspect of her writing, though, is not only the thematic question of cultural change, but how the search for identity is connected to language and narration and in this context to family ties. It also raises the question whether we can really speak about a loss, rather than a temporary linguistic confusion that will be resolved by the text? The notion of loss will be replaced throughout the story with a notion of change and adaptation.

Özdamar's stories illustrate the situation of poets and writers who face displacement from familiar environments and languages. They revisit the understanding of what migrant literature is (Ezil 61). Connections among identity, narration as performative tool, and language as independent organism become crucial here. The protagonist of *Mutterzunge* experiences a loss of her former self, which seems to be manifested in her decreasing ability to express herself in Turkish, her native tongue. Borders separating languages—German dominating her everyday life, Turkish embodying her former life, and Arabic as the language of her heritage—blur and lead to what at first looks like an identity crisis. The interesting aspects in this context are how the notion of identity—in this context a cultural identity—is established and how different concepts of identity are confronted with each other.

It is further important to note that it is not the protagonist who noticed these changes of her self, but it is an outside part; her mother. The protagonist hears the remarks of her mother that lead her to her quest of identity and with the expectations of her Arabic teacher Ibni Abdullah, whom she meets on her search for identity. For the protagonist, her cultural heritage and her language ability seem to be inseparably linked with each other. And this connection is set up in the very first remark of her mother

noticing a change in her daughter's way of narrating. In other words, it is not the protagonist herself who first notices a change, but her mother. The mother functions as a benchmark for her identification. She functions as a reminder of a former self the protagonist used to inhabit. The story begins as follows:

> Wenn ich nur wüßte, wann ich meine Mutterzunge verloren habe. Ich und meine Mutter sprachen mal in unserer Mutterzunge. Meine Mutter sagte mir: „Weißt du, du sprichst so, du denkst, daß du alles erzählst, aber plötzlich springst du über nicht gesagte Wörter, dann erzählst du wieder ruhig, ich springe mit dir mit, dann atme ich ruhig." Sie sagte dann: „Du hast die Hälfte deiner Haare in Alamania gelassen." (Özdamar 7)[30]

In this very first scene of the story "Mutterzunge" the protagonist describes an encounter with her mother. The mother points out that the daughter's way of narrating and her flow of words has changed. It seems as if the protagonist's Turkish and her perception of the world are undermined by some sort of "Germanness" or at least has strongly changed through her life in Germany: "Ich fragte sie auch, warum Istanbul so dunkel geworden ist, sie sagte: 'Instanbul hatte immer diese Lichter, deine Augen sind an Alamanien-Lichter gewöhnt'" (Özdamar 7).[31] Her mother in this episode points out that the protagonist has changed, not the world. The protagonist herself seems to have not noticed the change at first but slowly understands that she has "lost" part of her former identity and that cultural change not only influenced the outlook on the world but also

[30] "If I only knew when I lost my mother tongue. I and my mother once spoke in our mother tongue. My mother said to me: You know, you speak as if you think, that you are saying everything, but suddenly you jump over unspoken words, then you are speaking calmly, I am jumping with you, then I am breathing calmly." Then she said: "You left half your hair in Alamania."

[31] "I also asked her why Istanbul has gotten so dark, she said: 'Istanbul always had these lights, your eyes are used to Allmania-lights.'"

had a physical impact that changed the way she perceived her old world. Identity in this context is manifested through language and memories while perception is tied to physicality. This apparent loss triggered through foreign cultural influences entertains the idea that the desired form of identity, at least in the beginning of the story, is "wholeness." The protagonist feels incomplete. The remarks of the protagonist's mother in regard to her state of "Turkishness" trigger restlessness and a need for a search. They constitute the trigger for the protagonist's linguistic journey.

The sentence "Wenn ich nur wüßte, wann ich meine Mutterzunge verloren habe" is repeated throughout both stories multiple times and varies only in the question word. It shifts between "why" and "how," and the protagonist cannot find a satisfying answer for herself. She recalls moments in the past that could have been crucial to this loss. She recalls situations in the train, in German cities and in natural environments, but none of these memories seems to help her to find an answer to the question. All these situations had an impact on her, mentally and physically, but the one moment, the moment that will explain all this change, is not traceable, probably because there is no such singular moment, but various events, some of them traumatic, throughout the protagonist's life that influence her self-perception and capability of expression.

The protagonist worries about how and when she lost her "mother tongue" and this worry leaves her with some sort of restlessness. She notices that with her language loss, memories are fading as well, and situations she used to be able to recall are now blurry. Her native language is connected to her mother and the memory of her mother language is connected to the memories of her mother and other Turkish women. A part of her seems to fade away, oppressed or maybe just changed by the German language. The

protagonist can remember these stories, which happened in Turkey, but only in German. German is dominating her memory and her everyday language use. Only a few words, such as “Hodscha” and “Görmek,” slip through into her German narration.

Language and narration serve as an indicator of her personal change. These episodes of her life and the dialogue between the protagonist and her mother already introduce an understanding of one particular concept of identity that the text introduces. It is an understanding of a self-contained identity related to one particular cultural context; in this context her former life in Turkey. It seems the mother’s understanding of her daughter’s personality operates in this realm. But her daughter’s changes also imply that identity is not stable, that it is vulnerable to external influences and that cultural as well as national identity is questionable and constructed rather than “natural” or “universal.”

At the beginning of the story the protagonist is not ready to face instability. She still believes there is an “origin”—a point of return. She is looking for this point of return in her personal past and in her family’s history. To her, the logical conclusion is to regain her language ability. While the first story *Mutterzunge* is concerned with why and where she lost her eloquence, in the end of the story the protagonist seems to have figured out how to get it back. Instead of hoping to improve her Turkish language, the protagonist remembers another loss of language in her family: the loss of her grandfather’s language, Arabic—here called “Großvaterzunge.” For her, the key seems to be to go beyond the familiar and to look for the “childhood” of her language: „Die Wörter, die ich die Liebe zu fassen gesucht habe, hatten alle ihre Kindheit” [“The words I tried to grasp with love all had their childhood”] (Özdamar 44). Here childhood relates, on the one hand, to the fact that there are plenty of loanwords in Turkish that originated from Arabic. On the

other hand, this childhood of language is directly related to her personal childhood and her relation to her grandfather, who spoke Arabic and experienced the impact of political change and cultural hegemony first-hand. It relates to the political process of secularization in Turkey through Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's attempt to outlaw the Arabic script in 1928 (Littler 223). This political decision influenced the lives and identities of Turkish people and created the discrepancy between the official state language and the holy script of the Koran.[32]

The protagonist compares the impact of the law as a physical loss: "Dieses Verbot ist so, wie wenn die Hälfte von meinem Kopf abgeschnitten ist. Alle Namen von meiner Familie sind arabisch: Fatma, Mustafa, Ali, Samra. Gottseidank ich gehöre noch zu einer Generation, die mit vielen arabischen Wörtern aufgewachsen ist" (Özdamar 27).[33] Here names carry cultural connotation surviving language cleansing and still work as reminders of a suppressed culture. They are traces of the past being forwarded from generation to generation.

In the course of the stories, it becomes clear that one's identity has a past, but, much like the memories of childhood, it is impossible to return to this somewhat "pure" origin. Personal development appears to be an undetermined process facing numerous influences, and heavily depending on outside recognition, on a personal as well as on a social and political level. The story elucidates these external influences and the internal impact they have on the protagonist's psyche. Throughout the story this development is

[32] Yildiz notes that during this time strict language politics were implemented, for example, developing a new national language that overcame the difference between Ottoman Turkish and folk Turkish. The attempts of creating language purism showed how "closely linguistic politics was tied to the larger political goal of 'Westernization' and 'De-Orientalization'" (151).

[33] "This prohibition is as if half of my head was cut off. All of my family's names are Arabic: Fatma, Mustafa, Ali, Samra. Thank God, I am belonging to a generation that grew up with a lot of Arabic words." (27)

compared to and experienced through language development. The protagonist's language "adventure" seems to be an analogy for her cultural experience and for her personal development. It leads to the conclusion of not focusing so much on the past as on the here and now, not thinking so much about who she has been, but who she is now and what her purpose is now. Confronted with her mother's observations and with her past experiences the protagonist attempts to pursue a path of self-determination beyond heteronomy.

Function of Narration

Discovering identity is the constituting motif of the experience described by the protagonist. It is her quest for a "lost cultural identity" that leads her to her adventures. It is her way of narrating that makes her mother aware of changes in her daughter's life. It appears as if the story presented in the two stories is a way of grasping this process of cultural and personal orientation in a world, where signifiers constantly change and the journey becomes more important than the past. Narration is a tool to make such processes more understandable. Ochs and Capps claim narrators provide for their listeners "an opportunity for fragmented self-understanding" (22). In other words, the listeners have the possibility to identify themselves with the story and to place their own story within the context. By tapping a "preexisting identity," narrative continues to create identity. Here the idea of a master narrative we are constantly exposed to is to be considered. Pre-existing narratives implement expectations and a point of "origin" for self-identification as well as heteronomy. During the course of the stories they are represented by the protagonist's mother and Ibni Adullah.

Within the story, the relationships among the past, present, and future play an important role. This temporal tension is explicitly embodied by different tenses used in a narration. Ochs and Capp point out: "The narrated past matters because of its relation to the present and the future. Interlocutors tell personal narratives about the past primarily to understand and cope with their current concerns" (25). In stories the tension between past, present, and future is omnipresent. The protagonist is trapped between her past and traumatic experiences in her former homeland, the present situation in Germany and her desire to overcome the rupture of cultural confusion.

Narrating works on two levels in these two short stories. On one hand, it is the overall process performed by Özdamar. On the other hand, it is also performed by Ibni Abdullah and the protagonist in the story. The tension between the frame story and the story within the story is a crucial narrative strategy in Özdamar's texts. Özdamar plays with different forms of representation. It is part of her unique writing technique to connect "objective observations with a magic-realist style" (Jankowsky 266). *Großvaterzunge* is full of fairytale elements, to the degree that fairytales are incorporated into the story. This fairytale world is also mirrored in the language and the strategy of narration. In some parts of the stories language itself becomes corporeal and becomes a performing character in the story.

Meeting Ibni Abdullah in this context signifies an encounter with a new cultural sphere. Ibni Abdullah represents in this context an embodiment of a particular view on Arabic culture. Even his apartment seems to be an "oriental" oasis in the middle of the German metropolis. It seems from the moment the protagonist enters Ibni Abdullah's apartment, she is entering an entirely different world. The expression "the other Berlin"

which has been used a couple of times before, in order to refer to the distinction between East- and West-Berlin, is now challenged. Although Abdullah's apartment is located in West Berlin the protagonist refers to it as the "other Berlin." This implies that there are more alternative Berlins than just the East and the West Berlins. There is a whole different world hidden in Abdullah's apartment, which is part of Germany, but also part of an Arabic-Islamic tradition. It is a space where she hopes to find the language of her grandfather.

In the way the different scripts would have separated the protagonist from her grandfather, Ibni Abdullah and the protagonist are separated through a language barrier—a fact he points out sadly: "Es ist eine Gemeinheit, mit einer Orientalin in Deutsch zu reden, aber momentan haben wir ja nur diese Sprache" (Özdamar 13).[34] The only common language they share is the imposed German language. German functions here as a stage where the protagonist can act out her different attempts to find or reconstruct her identity.

This quote further supports the notion that, by meeting Ibni Abdullah, the protagonist faces another "identity ascription." Ibni Abdullah identifies her as a woman from the orient, and he has certain expectations that go along with this identity.[35] This understanding of an "oriental" identity is supposed to connect them, but in fact the

[34] "It's a disgrace to speak German with an oriental woman, but at this time we only have this language in common" (13).

[35] In an episode on page 41 he confronts the protagonist with his understanding of sexual desire of Turkish women. "Ibni Abdullah lachte, sagte: 'Die türkischen Frauen wollen viel Sex.' 'Warum sagst du so?' 'Weil sie hungrig sind, ich meine alle Orientalinnen, sie könnten nicht wie Europäerinnen frei Sex machen, ist das nicht so?' And the protagonist answers: 'Ich werde deiner Mutter schreiben, sie soll dich schlagen, wenn du in Arabien bist.'"
"Ibni Abdullah laughed: 'Turkish women want a lot of sex.' 'Why are you saying this?' 'Because they are hungry, I mean all oriental women, they cannot just go out freely and have sex, isn't that how it is?' 'I am going to write your mother, she should beat you, when your back in Arabia'" (41).

protagonist does not match Ibni Abdullah's expectations and challenges his understanding of Turkish women, whenever she has the possibility to do so.

Soon their relationship goes beyond the usual student-teacher relationship. Although it seems as if the only common language they share is the imposed German language, they find alternative ways to communicate, ways beyond language: "[…] ich habe kein Wörterbuch gefunden für die Sprache meiner Liebe" (Özdamar 30).[36] She admits that her real language progress failed, as she used to talk to the physical Ibni Abdullah in other words, while she is not able to translate Arabic directly into Turkish. She constantly has to use the detour through German in order to communicate and comprehend the "new" language she is learning. In order to gain greater access, the protagonist develops a strategy to make this language accessible: She searches for similarities. Bettina Brandt points out that "the narrator searches for moments and spaces in which cultures, bodies, stories, and words collide" (Brandt 2004, 303).

Atatürk's politics might have managed to ban the Arabic script, but the interrelation between these two languages still exists. And this is the protagonist's approach. Instead of focusing on the differences between these two languages, she is searching for similarities and shared words. She lists the shared words and points out their meanings, which sometimes are similar and sometimes have slightly changed.

> Ich suchte arabische Wörter, die es noch in türkischer Sprache gibt. Ich fragte Ibni Abdullah: „Kennst du sie?"
>
> *Leb* – Mund
>
> *Ducar* – Befallen

[36] "I haven't yet found a dictionary for the language of my love."

Mazi – Vergangenheit

Medyun – verbunden

Meytap – Feuerwerkskörper

Yetim – Waise

„Ja“, sagte Ibni Abdullah, „es hört sich ein klein bißchen anders an.“ Ich sagte: „Bis diese Wörter aus deinem Land aufgestanden und zu meinem Land gelaufen sind, haben sie sich unterwegs etwas geändert.“ (Ödamar 27)[37]

In this context, the words themselves become „Grenzgänger“, crossing national borders and undermining other cultural environments. The personification of language can be seen as an analogy. Just like words, people cross borders and most certainly they change through this experience. They change, and they also can become part of a new culture. Integration is possible.

German in this context almost plays a subordinate role in her consciousness. It functions as a stage where the protagonist can act out her different attempts to find or reconstruct her identity. It makes it possible for her to access Arabic from a distance. This “staging” and “playing” with language is not only reflected on the narrative level of the story but also in style and language use itself. The linguistic variations are more frequent in the text. Modified syntax structures and the use of foreign words such as lexical

[37] “I looked for Arabic words that still existed in Turkish. I asked Ibni Abdullah: ‘Do you know them?’
Leb – Mouth
Ducar – afflict
Mazi – Past
Medyun – Connected
Meytap – Firecrackers
Yetim – Orphan
‘Yes,’ said Ibni Abdullah, ‘it sounds slightly different.’ I said: ‘While these words stood up and walked from your country to mine the changed a little bit’” (Ödamar 27).

insertions are strategies of narration that exist to emphasize the linguistic chaos the protagonist is confronted with. Besides facing a new language she also has to face an unfamiliar script. And the longer she deals with the to her unfamiliar Arabic characters they strongly infiltrate her fantasy, and the more real and alive they become. They take corporeal form and become personified characters:

> Ich trat ins Schriftzimmer ein. Über den Tüchern warten die Buchstaben auf mich. Heute manche haben würdevolle Gesichter, sie hören das Rauschen ihres Herzens, manche ihrer Augen sind ganz, manche halb geschlossen. (Özdamar 16)[38]

The letters possess the protagonist's mind so much that soon the letters not only have human traits but, in the other way around, Ibni Abdullah's face looks like an "angry letter" (17). Since the letters and the language separate the protagonist and her teacher from each other this can be also read as an attempt to read his face. It does not seem as if the protagonist is able to master this foreign language but as if the language, here incarnated and acting as an independent character of the story, is intimidating her.

The letters begin to exist separately and develop their own unattached meaning; they can express emotion. It is not a predetermined meaning through language tradition, which is expressed through these letters now, but the protagonist's very own personal interpretation that fills them with life. It is the protagonist's attempt to write meaning into signs she cannot read. Reading signs in this context becomes a matter of spontaneous interpretation rather than a matter of preexisting knowledge of interpretation. It is an

[38] "I entered the scripture room. Above the sheets the letters were waiting for me. Some of them have honorbale faces, they listen to the brawl of my heart, some of their eyes are fully, some half closed" (16).

attempt to apply meaning to a world that has been sealed. A world she is about to discover.

Her language-learning experience changes her perception, she starts to notice all the Arabic influences around her in Berlin and her language-learning experience becomes also a physical experience in two ways: On one hand, she begins to have an affair with Ibni Abdullah that transgresses the line between spiritual guidance and physical desire. On the other hand, Ibni Abdullah physically becomes a part of herself:

> Ich hatte Schmerzen in meinem Körper, ein Fieber kam und trennte mich von den Lebenden, ich legte mich hin, sah, wie der Schmerz meine Haut aufmachte und sich in meinen Körper einnähte, ich wußte, daß in diesem Moment Ibni Abdullah in meinen Körper reingekommen war, dann war Ruhe, Schmerz und Fieber gingen weg, ich stand auf. (Özdamar 19)[39]

The entering of Ibni Abdullah into her body can be read as a discovery of a new part of her cultural heritage. For the protagonist the sphere of the spiritual and the corporal are inseparable, and the painful process of "sewing" it into her body underlines the notion that there is not a natural discovery of self; it is a process in which one has to open up oneself to external, foreign influences, and one can or cannot accept these influences. Margaret Littler reads this transgression as a sign of the suggestion that for Özdamar not only language has a performative character, but so has identity (226). A new cultural identity in this context is literally embodied. It is for the protagonist not only enough to be surrounded by these new cultural aspects she has discovered, no, she needs to make them a part of herself physically.

[39] I felt pain in my body, a fever came and seperated me from the living, I laid down, saw how the pain opend my skin and sew into my body. In this moment I knew Ibni Abdullah had entered my body, I felt calm, pain and fever went away, I stood up (Özdamar 19).

When Ibni Adullah decides to end the physical relationship, the protagonist leaves him. But she also takes a part of him with her as she points out, "Und Ibni Abdullah, die Seele in meiner Seele" ["And Ibni Abdullah, the soul within my soul"]. Asked by a stranger on a park bench she identifies herself as "Wörtersammlerin" ["word collector"]. The story ends with yet another memory of her Mutterzunge: "[…] und erinnerte mich noch an ein Wort in meiner Mutterzunge: Ruh – 'Ruh heißt Seele', sagte ich zu dem Mädchen. ‚Seele heißt Ruh', sagte sie" (Özdamar 43).[40]

In this remark we find not a simple translation of the word „soul" but a meaning that is also connected to the ambiguity of the word "Ruh" since it can also be read as the German "Ruhe." She was looking for rest and silence, since her supposed loss of her cultural identity had left her restless. In the end the transformation she went through, physically and spiritually, lead her to accept the new parts of her soul and finally make her find her appeased soul. Through this word choice the circle between German and Turkish is closed. They do not seem to oppose each other any longer, but complement each other.

The concept of hybridity as identified in the language use and the concept of identity constitution is also transmitted through the narration as the narration shows signs of hybridity, since different elements of style are interwoven in the text. Brandt points out that the explicit anti-national character of the text, the supposedly autobiographical first-person narrator, who is often in a dreamlike state, the child-like point of view and the related "amazed gaze" [erstaunte Blick], the assembly process, the emphasis on the material aspect of language, language skepticism and sensitivity for language, are all part

[40] "[…] And I recalled another word in my mother tongue: Ruh – 'Ruh means soul', I said to the girl. ‚Soul means Ruh', she said."

of the literary theory and praxis of surrealism (75). According to Brandt, Özdamar uses surreal techniques as a possibility of aesthetic and cultural resistance (75). Brandt reads, for example, the passage in which a razor blade cuts the protagonist's body as a citation of Buñuel's and Dalí's movie "Un chien andalou," where a razor blade cuts a human eye. To connect the cathedral of Cologne with a razor blade frees the cathedral from its conventional meaning (Brandt 79). In this context, the noticing of the cathedral is seen as a moment that triggers pain in the protagonist. For her it is not a cultural monument; it becomes a symbol of a corporeal mutilation. The cathedral as a symbol for Catholic Christianity cuts into her body, and the protagonist suggests that this might be the moment when she loses her mother tongue, as if the "Turkishness" has been cut out of her with this razor blade. The episode and its shock effect are caused by this surrealistic aesthetic strategy, as we can find throughout the text. This strategy goes beyond conventional poetic adjustment mode but stays close enough to the symbolic sphere as to be readable and interpretable. But it also supports the idea that cultural experience is never purely spiritual; it always, even if expressed through a metaphor, has a physical impact. Maybe the protagonist's eye is not cut, but the pain she feels seems to be real. These images Özdamar uses to elucidate the immense impact cultural shifts can have.

Besides the surreal influences, the fairytale tradition is used in a similar way: to create closeness and strangeness at the same time. The use of this strategy blurs the line between the "real world" and an imaginative alternative (Todorow 28). Yet we can argue that these two worlds are not contradictory but in fact one world. In *Großvaterzunge*, this becomes essentially clear with the story embedded in the story. In the frame story, Ibni Abdullah narrates two fairytales that give some indication of how he depicts ideal

womanhood and manhood. In his first story, a girl has to wait next to a man's bed for forty days. Because she gets distracted on the fortieth day the girl gets tricked by another woman. The man wakes up later that day and marries the mischievous woman. Only after some time does the man find out the truth and marry the girl. While this story at first appears not to be related to the events in the actual story, they become relevant the moment the protagonist is about to leave Ibni Abdullah, after he announces he does not want to keep up their physical relationship any longer and wants to separate the two spheres of spiritual and corporal again.

After he leaves her in his room, she decides for the first time after forty days to leave the room: "Ich ging zum ersten Mal aus diesem Zimmer raus. […] Ich war genau vierzig Tage im Schriftzimmer" (42).[41] The reemergence of this magical number forty, which plays an important role, for example, in the fairytales of *Tausend und eine Nacht*, but also in the Christian and Judaic tradition, gives the whole story a magical touch. It furthermore shows that the protagonist is not willing to relive the gender role suggested by Ibni Abdullah. Instead of waiting to the end of the last day of the forty days to see if he might awaken and change his mind, she leaves the house. The choice to leave him also shows the general choice she has in what influences one accepts and what influences one prefers to avoid. It would seem that the protagonist used Ibni Abdullah to enter and discover a part of her own cultural history and that she is willing to accept some of these influences, but only on her terms. In the end, she is able to accept her surrounding world, and it almost seems as if she is ready to absorb every little bit of it, embracing the hybrid variety of life.

[41] "I left the room for the first time. […] I had been in the room for exactly 40 days" (Özdamar 46).

Intersection as Solution

The displacement of a person in the context of this story is understood as a crucial challenge to his or her identity and self-perception and in addition to it the past traumatic experiences the protagonist had to face in her youth in Turkey. This is the dilemma the protagonist of *Mutterzunge* and *Großvaterzunge* is facing. Her former Turkish identity and her life, her contemporary external influence of German and her discovered past of Arabic traces in her family challenge the notion of one "pure" national or ethnic identity and make such identification impossible. Özdamar's stories show that the quest for a universal answer, a "pure" cultural identity, has to fail. Her protagonist is constantly facing external influences she at first was not aware of. With her development, her language and her perception change. *Mutterzunge* and *Großvaterzunge* illustrate how such changes have an impact on a person's life. Instead of finding her original Turkish tongue in Ibni Abdullah's apartment, the protagonist takes on part of an Arabic identity, which makes it possible for her to discover a whole new world outside and inside herself.

The three moments of recognition, or more specifically the lack of recognition, through Ibni Abdullah and the protagonist's mother, as well as the nationalist dominance over language and culture force the protagonist to critically reevaluate the cultural and personal influences dominating her life and to search for alternative solutions. The essentialist and narrow-minded concepts of identity offered by claims of cultural heritage and gender roles seem unsatisfying to her. Instead of choosing between them she is attempting to unite them. In this context writing in German becomes a playground for testing new concepts and a possibility to mediate between diverse cultural influences.

Özdamar's style suggests the notion that different cultural and linguistic aspects are penetrating the language and perception of the first-person narrator. Sigrid Löffler writes in her article about Özdamar that she achieved what Adelson demanded: the creation of something fresh—a landing somewhere new. For Özdamar, Turkish, Arabic and German are no longer two separate spheres; they intersect and mingle and become something new—her personal form of expression. While Özdamar chose to write and publish in German, her vocabulary and especially her distinct use of metaphorical language shape her writings and help her to claim part of this strange language for herself.

Scholars often argue that Özdamar merely alienated the German language so average German readers could not understand their own mother language anymore and could feel the displacement a migrant experiences upon leaving the home country. While I can see a certain truth in such claims, especially because of Özdamar's proximity to Brecht, I think we cannot reduce her expressiveness to this simple desire for disorientation. Her intervention and variation of the standard language accommodates more than that. Özdamar conquers this unfamiliar language, and, by penetrating it with her own horizon of metaphor and expressiveness, she claims previously uncharted territory for herself, less to alienate and exclude than to feel at home, gain power over this forced-upon condition and to use it as a possibility to mediate the diverse cultural influences. The strategy of alienating language can also be understood as a process of familiarization. Almut Todorow argues that all people, not only those with a migration background, have to make language "inhabitable" (27). This is exactly what happens to the protagonist in the story. She tries to access this new language and make it part of her

own experience, an experience that transgresses the line between the spiritual and the corporal world.

Özdamar's writing can be used as a prime example of the experience of the impact of migration on identity. Her protagonist is looking for a solution to gain back her old memory and language ability, but her search for it and the new external influences seem to distance her farther from this "origin" then it brings her close. In a global context, the former concept of nationality is cancelled. Through her language lessons with Ibni Abdullah the protagonist learns how interwoven the Turkish and Arabic language are, and, despite the efforts of the Turkish government to ban Arabic from public life, the traces still exist. Words are still shared. Names still embody cultural traditions.

Özdamar's stories show that the quest for a universal answer, a "pure" cultural identity, has to fail. Her protagonist is constantly facing external influences she first was not aware of and prompts change in perception and language use. *Mutterzunge* and *Großvaterzunge* show how such changes have an impact on a person's life. Instead of finding her original Turkish tongue in Ibni Abdullah's apartment the protagonist takes on part of an Arabic identity, which makes it possible for her to discover a whole new world outside and inside herself. Within the story the corporal aspect of identity is intertwined with personal experiences, as well as political realities impacting the protagonist's well-being. Her limitation of political expression is linked to a limitation of her linguistic capability. In this context Yildiz points out that German does not necessarily take the place of an oppressive language, but a place of healing. Yildiz notes,

> German is the language in which a traumatic story can be told, rather than being a traumatized or traumatizing language. The translational exchange between the two tongues creates a constellation in which German offers the means to remember and rework a Turkish trauma—a trauma brought on by state violence, but brought to language in migration. (168)

However, Özdamar goes even further. Through translating and bending the syntactical rules she makes the German language her own. Instead of desperately trying to "perfect" her language use, she creates something new, an alternative mode of expression. She involves not only one, but three languages in a productive exchange. Her displacement, her political trauma, the lack of recognition and alienation inspire her protagonist to find new forms of expressions, forms of expression that will control the extreme situation of identity development. Özdamar demonstrates how moving into a new linguistic and cultural sphere does not necessarily need to lead to a negative, destructive identity crisis but can rather help to overcome enforced and acquired cultural and national identities, to renegotiate past experiences, and to create an environment in which one does not have to choose whether to be Turkish, German or Arabic but can embrace all aspects of these cultures in one.

CHAPTER V

MAXIM BILLER'S *ALS CRAMER ANSTÄNDIG WURDE*— THE CORRUPT NARRATOR

Maxim Biller's short story *Als Cramer anständig wurde* (in the following abbreviated as *Cramer*) provides an intriguing insight into the mechanisms of recognition and its close ties to our perception and the linguistic and literary expression of it. Maxim Biller, born in Prague in 1960, can be considered one of the more controversial writers on the contemporary German literary scene. Biller and his family migrated from Prague to Germany in 1970. He studied German literature in Munich and for his master thesis Biller analyzed the literary portrayal of Jewish characters in Thomas Mann's early works. Biller further attended the school for Journalism in Munich and worked for *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, and the magazine *Tempo*. In his work as a journalist he often writes polemically about German-Jewish relations and contemporary issues, themes that often also translate into his literary work. His literary work ranges from novels such as *Die Tochter* (2000) and *Im Kopf von Bruno Schulz* (2013) to short-story collections such as *Wenn ich einmal reich und tot bin* (1990), *Land der Väter und Verräter* (1994) and *Bernsteintage* (2004).

According to Jefferson Chase, Maxim Biller, as a writer, has the reputation of being an "enfant terrible," having been labeled as a "Talentpolemiker" (Chase 111). It is true; Biller's stories go to dark, difficult, and challenging places. Challenging for the characters in the story, but also challenging for the reader, the narrator in Biller's story is rarely one we can trust. The function of Biller's ideologically manipulative narrator will be the focal point for the following analysis. The narrator, as I will argue, transports a particular ideology in his descriptions that manipulates the reader's perception of the

characters. In the context of recognition Biller's method elucidates the intersection between description and perception and how this affects the ways the characters are being recognized within the text and by the reader.

Chase suggests that Biller's writing "is not so much about German and Jewish experiences in the usual direct way as about their construction in a mass-media-driven culture." Biller, according to Chase, "does not attempt to affirm or even articulate German-Jewish perspectives, but rather dissects the motivations of those who produce and consume identity products of post-Holocaust German society" (115). While I disagree with Chase's assumption that Biller's writing does not focus on the German-Jewish experience, Chase's focus on the "production" aspect is intriguing and fits with my reading of *Cramer*. Here the focus might not be so much on the production of a market value but the development and dismantling of a cultural value, the value of the writings of Thomas Mann.

Intertextual References – Recognizing Literary Tradition

Not only is Mann referenced in the text directly, as one of the main characters is reading Mann's epic novel *Die Buddenbrooks*, but, as I will argue, the short story imitates and attempts to transmit Mann's aesthetics as well as a *völkische* ideology. Homoeroticism, the complete lack of important female characters, pedophilia, as well as a certain bourgeois adoration of the *Bildungsbürgertum* are prominent in Biller's story and suggest a satirical commentary on Mann's work. This suspicion is not without

reason. Biller has announced his issues with Mann publically[42] and his novel *Im Kopf von Bruno Schulz* (2013) deals exclusively with his struggles with Mann.[43]

Cramer is part of Biller's second short-story collection *Land der Väter und Verräter* (1994). As the title of the collection already indicates "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" and German-Jewish relations are the main themes in this work, as well as Jewish experiences in Communist Eastern Europe (Chase 123). In her book review of Biller's collection Wilma A. Iggers notes,

> While reading Biller one realizes that if there is such a thing as a German-Jewish culture now, it is vastly different from what which we knew before the war, and that the two components, German and Jewish, live in an antagonistic relationship. The old symbiosis, which I believe existed, is gone. (182)

Concerning the composition of the characters in Biller's short story collection Iggers points out that

> […] a striking number of blond people are introduced, and they are always good-looking. Most of them had to change their identity, some of them several times, either because their parents moved with them to a different

[42] In 1983 Biller wrote his "Magister" thesis on the portrayal of Jewish characters in Thomas Mann's early works (Literaturportal Bayern). In an interview with Alan Posener Biller states that he wanted to destroy Mann's reputation. Biller argues that "Thomas Mann ist der neue Goethe, und den Deutschen ist egal, dass fast alle seine Bücher einen dunklen Hinterausgang haben, durch den man direkt in die schmutzige Fantasiewelt der Rassentheoretiker des 19. Jahrhunderts gelangt. Die Juden bei Mann sind schnell, schmierig, gewissenlos und Demokraten" (Posener).

[43] The real Schulz, a Jewish-Polish writer who was murdered in 1942 in the ghetto of Drohobycz, was rather unknown. Legend has it that he reached out to Thomas Mann by writing him a letter and sending him a short story in German asking Mann to support his writing career. Neither the letter nor the story is obtained, but they build the foundation of Biller's novella (Ijoma, Zeit.de).

country or just in order to survive. They have twisted personalities and feel at home nowhere. (181)

In *Cramer* the fetishizing of a young blond boy is one of the key elements of the story and elucidates the obsession of German society with this particular physical feature. "Blond" as a marker for being German is an element also addressed in Tekinay's story and the opposition between dark and light, blond and black is further elaborated in Tekinay's and Heinrich's stories.

Within the stories of Biller's volume *Cramer* is the only story explicitly set during the events of World War II. At first glance *Cramer* is a retrospective view on the journey of Jewish boys escaping Nazi Germany in the hope of finding their deported parents but it develops into a perfidious fight for survival when an SS soldier catches them. Based on their physical appearance both boys experience tremendously different treatment.

Biller's story demonstrates my argument that within contemporary narratives about minorities and immigrants in Germany the agency of creating a sense of self is rather limited, since identity formation is presented as a dialogical process and primarily based on recognition by an outside party. In *Cramer* not only the notion of a dialogical character of this process is demonstrated but further shows a power imbalance imbedded in this process: People are rarely recognizing each other, but someone holds power to recognize and classify the person. Further Biller's story shows how an ideological understanding of the external features of the perceived person influences this process. As we will see in the story, the power of identity ascription, and tied to it recognition, often lies outside the characters' range of influence. They are helplessly at the mercy of the soldier's judgment, a judgment that under these extreme circumstances, the historical

backdrop of the Third Reich and the persecution of the Jewish minority, will decide upon life and death. The story additionally supports the notion that claiming or occupying a particular identity can either protect you or endanger you.

Biller's story elucidates such an extreme situation. At the mercy of an SS soldier the life and fate of two young Jewish boys is based upon the soldier's reaction and how he recognizes the young boys. In the story, the soldier's actions are primarily motivated by his perception of the boy's physical aspects. The text sets up the boys as a dichotomy: While Max is described by the omniscient narrator as a blond and green-eyed boy of a particular kind of beauty, Ali is depicted as his racist "stereotypical" Jewish-looking counterpart. The story emphasizes how these superficial markers decide upon the treatment both receive and the choices they are able to make.

Biller's short story provides an intriguing insight into the forces at play when referring to "recognition." The soldier's thought process illuminates that the "imaginary" might triumph over the "real" circumstance. His thinking is determined by a racial ideology that can only be overcome by his satisfaction of aesthetic desire. The boy's looks keep the soldier from killing him. They entertain the idea that appearance in some cases may trump cultural ascription. The role of appearance supports the notion that attached to external appearance are markers that potentially identify (or also mislead) others about what a person is representing (culturally speaking). In this context the story also suggests that under certain circumstances people are capable of manipulating someone's perception of them. However, a manipulation of this judgment is possible by appealing to, for example, similar values or fantasies. Max's transgression can only be successful because of his personal appearance. Ali is not granted the same chance.

Biller's story underlines that recognition is a dialogical process and that one needs to be recognized in order to be safe. It also supports the notion that recognition is tied to "familiarity" and "value," as transmitted by society, in this context the fascist society the boys are trying to escape. Yet the most important aspect within this story is the arbitrariness of recognition and its strong ties to superficial perception. What does this say about the way one perceives the world and is perceived by society? It suggests a world in which stability cannot be guaranteed. A world in which one accepts imposed concepts about others and oneself. This imposition not only determines the understanding of oneself but also guarantees or jeopardizes one's safety and wellbeing, therefore intertwining recognition and ideology. In this context the question of how the mechanisms of recognition are infiltrating these narratives and how literary accounts transport and support this aestheticized process becomes crucial.

Perspective and Aesthetics

Biller's short story *Cramer* has not received much notice, and only little has been written about it. This may be connected to the special position the story takes in comparison to his other writings. While Biller's stories usually tend to be taking place post-World War II this narrative is set during World War II and focuses on the fate of children. The story is told by an omniscient narrator who switches mainly between the perspective of Max and the soldier, whose name we can assume to be Cramer, referring to the title of the story. The title also suggests that a person named Cramer has been going through a transition, a transition to become a better person, a decent person. The word "anständig" can be translated with the terms "ethical" or "civil." The title further implies

that there has been a time when Cramer was lacking this quality and that his personal point of departure was improper behavior (Schenke 180).

And indeed we find out that the SS soldier is on a rather horrific mission. He is searching for young, blond boys for the eccentric sex parties of the "exzentrischen SS-Fürsten von Litzmannstadt" ["excentric SS-prince of Litzmannstadt"] (Biller 99). Through the inner monologue we find out that the SS soldier is not pleased with this task and he condemns the actions of his superior. The moral dilemma with which he is confronted when he meets the two boys boils down to whether or not he should turn them over to his boss, or whether he should kill them immediately to save them from sexual abuse.

Besides contributing to the arc of suspense within the story and additionally to the homoeroticism and disturbed sexuality this secondary plot line serves an additional purpose: It establishes the SS soldier as a good person, or at least a better, non children-abusing, Nazi. This notion, however, is not lasting. He will, as the story shows, abuse children, not sexually but physically. What the text tries to do is set up Cramer as the "better" Nazi. His brutal behavior towards the children is also partly "explained" by the text. One of the boys, the one who gets the worst treatment, is undeniably Jewish, as established by the racist text: "Der kleinere, der mit dem lustigen Gesicht und den riesigen Ohren, sah sehr jüdisch aus. Wenn er ihn gleich auf der Stelle erschießen würde, hätte er die wenigsten Unannehmlichkeiten mit ihm" (Biller 100).[44] In this context the perception of the soldier and how he recognizes Ali is immediately connected to his

[44] "The smaller one with the funny face and the giant ears looked very Jewish. If he shot him right now he would have less inconvincences with him" (Biller 100).

decision to how Ali will be treated. The soldier recognizing Ali as Jewish determines life and death.

In his attempt to analyze Biller's story, literary scholar Frank Schenke focuses primarily on the composition of the literary imagery within the text, but fails to note the ideological implications tied to it and also misses the point of who is narrating the story, namely the racist SS soldier. Schenke argues that,

> Wenn Cramer Schriftsteller würde, gehörte er zu denen, die die Shoah als Fundus für die Verwirklichung ästhetischer Modelle und Theorien benutzen. Und dabei ist Cramer anständig geworden: Körperlich muß er sich nicht mehr an dem schmutzigen Judenmord beteiligen, seine Version findet—natürlich ästhetisch geglättet—auf dem Papier statt. Er hat sich in ein vollkommenes Monster verwandelt. Erschreckend dabei ist nur, daß der Soldat in den gleichen Kategorien denkt wie der Leser oder der Interpret. (185)[45]

This passage is rather problematic: as mentioned before, it misses the point of who is narrating the story and further ignores the ideological implications of the story. There is a reason why the story is composed the way it is, to dismantle racist attitudes and what I would call "völkische Ästhetik."[46] Schenke finds it "alarming" that the soldier is

[45] "If Cramer turned out to be a writer he'd belong to a group of writers who use the Shoah as a fund for the realization of aesthetic models and theories. And despite the fact that Cramer has become a decent person: physically he does not have to participate in the dirty massmurdering of the Jews any longer, his version will take place aesthetically smoothened on paper. He transformed into a complete monster. The only terrifiying thing is that the solider thinks in the same categories as the reader or the interpreter" (185).

[46] In his book *Die Völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich*, historian Uwe Putschner describes the relationship between what he calls the "völkische Bewegung" and the NSDAP and the national-socialist understanding of the world. He points out that despite the fact that the Nazis tried to exploit and coopt the symbolism and rites of the "völkische Bewegung" such as the swastika and the Hitler salute for example, the movement and its strange approach to the German past influenced by mysticism and ancestor

thinking in the same categories as the reader, ignoring the fact that it is the soldier's perspective we as the reader are following since the beginning of the story. It is not the soldier who thinks in the same categories as the reader, but the soldier's descriptions that influence the reader's perception. In order to defend this claim, let us take a closer look at how the dichotomy between the two young boys is constructed, what kind of aesthetics are presented and how these relate to the overall composition of a certain ideology the text transmits.

The text introduces a dichotomy between light and dark right at the beginning of the story and it primarily manifests itself in the description of the two young boys. Between the two, Max is the active one. He gives orders and makes the decisions. He is represented at the "Lichtgestalt"—the Meschiach. Despite his Jewish heritage he is even denoted as "Traumarier" (Biller 94). The image of the boy that is developed in this context is an absurd combination of an embodiment of the hannseatisches Bürgerbildungstum, a völkish beauty ideal, and a Zionist, rejecting his German cultural heritage, but still schlepping a copy of the *Buddenbrooks* through Poland. While the contradictions of Max's identification will become more prominent during the course of the novel the exposition creates a mood and setting that undeniably draws from a völkisch yet bourgeois aesthetics, particularly how the main protagonist Max is introduced:

> Der Junge war ein goldblondes, smaragdäugiges Wunderding, im Zwielicht des Waggons schien es fast so, als leuchte seine ganze Gestalt,

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worshiping existed prior to the Third Reich (9). The term "völkisch" evolved around 1900 and refers to particular anti-Semitic nationalism (27) and evolved to a weltanschauung informed by anti-Semitism, racism, and esoteric. The völkische aesthetics mainly forces on the health of the "Volkskörper" and eugenics (Rassenhygiene) (171).

> und auch seine strenge Körperhaltung sowie seine sich ständig wie von selbst verlangsamenden Bewegungen verliehen ihm etwas Außergewöhnliches und zogen die Blicke seiner Mitreisenden an. Die meisten von ihnen stammten aus Hamburg, es waren Familien dabei und junge Liebespaare, und einige waren, so wie er, allein unterwegs, weil die Verwandten und Freunde entweder emigriert, untergetaucht oder bereits weggebracht worden waren. Die Menschen im Zug dachten an ihre Zukunft und sahen stumm dem kleinen blonden Meschiach beim Lesen zu. (93)[47]

The narrator's description of Max paired with his exposition of the boy reading this epic German novel creates a particular atmosphere. Max is introduced as almost out of this world, as a "Wunderding." Embedded in this description is already a form of völkischer aesthetic that will become more prominent the more the story progresses. The contrast between the description of Ali and Max is established from the beginning of the novel by the narrator and carried forward by the soldier and is reflected particularly in how the boys are described and referred to. The perception and aesthetics of the soldier and the omniscient narrator merge as soon as Cramer enters the story line.

In this way the language use as perpetuated by the narrator carries a particular distinction between the boys into: blond / dark, strong /weak, leading / following, being active / being passive. And following the logic of the soldier: One that deserves to be treated well

[47] "The boy was a golden-blonde, emerald-eyed miracle. In the light of the train it appeared as if his whole being was beaming. Even his controlled body posture and his slow movements gave him something extrodinary that caught the attention of his fellow travellers. Most of them came from Hamburg, there were families and young couples, and some of them, just like him, were travelling by themselves, because their relatives had migrated, were in hiding, or already deported. The people in the train thought about their future and watched silently the young Messias who was reading (Biller 93).

and one that deserves to be abused. Max is described in the beginning of the novel as "goldblondes, smaragdäugiges Wunderding," "blonden Meschiach" (Biller 93), "Traumarier," "Blondschöpfchen" (94).[48] The contrast is established the moment Max meets Ali. Ali is immediately described as "winziges jüdisches Würmchen mit düsteren Pflaumenaugen" (94). While Max is compared to precious gold and described basically as an out-of-this-world figure, Ali is compared to an animal, a worm. He further is referred to as "der Fremde" establishing a distance between Max and Ali and the reader.

While we are familiar with Max and his descriptions are more elaborate Ali is established as "the Other" within the text. Ali is further referred to as "schwarzhaariges Jüdlein" [black-haired little Jew] (Biller 95), just as with the term "Würmchen" [little worm] here the diminutive form is used to make him appear small and weak. While talking about their hometown it is further established that Ali attends services at the synagogue while Max does not, connecting Ali more strongly to the Judaic traditions than Max. This is further supported by the fact that Max's father fought in World War I receiving a medal while Ali's father did not. In this context Max's family is depicted as an assimilated Jewish-German family, basically secularized Jewish German citizens. While Max is fearless, Ali is afraid of the future and worries they might not make it. The narrator further describes Max as "hübscher blonder Junge" (Biller 98). All these descriptions used in the beginning of the short story by the nameless omniscient narrator will be brought up again by the vocabulary used by the soldier following his appearance in section 3. A description of the two boys follows and the narration takes on the soldier's perspective

[48] Particularly the word "Blondschöpfchen" is a term the soldier uses in his inner monologue to describe Max. The perspective of the soldier and the narrator is clearly the same.

> Der kleinere, der mit dem lustigen Gesicht und den riesigen Ohren, sah sehr jüdisch aus. Wenn er ihn gleich auf der Stelle erschießen würde, hätte er die wenigsten Unannehmlichkeiten mit ihm. Der andere bewegte sich wie eine Primaballerina, sein Haar leuchtete märchenhaft blond, und obwohl ihn der Hunger offenbar sehr geschwächt hatte, war sein Blick fest und gesund. (Biller 100)[49]

This passage elucidates the anti-Semitic aesthetics transmitted by the narrator prior in the text and now this perspective is transferred onto a SS-soldier. Here the contrast between the two boys is further emphasized and the contrast between "looking Jewish" and the fairytale-like appearance of Max further elaborated. It also prepares the reader for the different treatment of the two boys that will follow this distinction and picks up Ali's fears. There is a difference in treatment based on the boys' looks and it will decide between life and death. The use of the exact same terminology and the support of the same fascist aesthetics supports the notion that the narrator and the soldier are eventually the same person or at least support the same ideology in their description. This leads us not only to seriously question the aesthetics introduced in the text but also the dichotomy between the two boys. It illustrates clearly how the recognition process is established and informed in this story, namely through ideology, and how it is tied to superficial features, in this case mirroring a particular fascist ideal of beauty.

The treatment of the boys and how they are described is manifested in their physical appearance. The contrast between weak and strong, between a decent treatment

[49] "The smaller one with the funny face and the giant ears looked very Jewish. If he shot him right now he would have less inconviencences with him. The other one was moving like a ballerina. His hair was glowing magically, and although the hunger had weakend him his gaze was strong and healthy" (Biller 100).

and an inhumane treatment is based on these markers. The agency of the boys is undermined by these aesthetics, and the readers' perception seems to be manipulated and set up by these questionable descriptions right from the start. Despite the fact that the language is intriguing and creates a captivating atmosphere the tension of the overall story line is captivating too. The Holocaust in this context is the backdrop for a travel adventure of two young boys escaping Nazi Germany. Because the main protagonist is introduced as Jewish the reader might expect to follow a Jewish perspective, not the perspective of an SS-soldier. In this way Biller tricks the reader into buying into this perspective even though the linguistic warning signals of an anti-Semitic "völkische" aesthetic are established right from the start.

Attempts of Self-Determination

Besides opposing Max and Ali as Jewish and German-Jewish through aesthetics Max's description serves an additional purpose. Within the text he is described as a "Lichtgestalt," a term deriving from an aesthetic ideal of the *Völkische Bewegung*. This notion is further supported by the name *Siegfried*, Max had originally received from his father. Names in this context play an important role as an identification tool and are ideologically charged. "Naming" and "reference"—the active process of verbally assigning a term to a person or object—play a crucial role within these texts, for the character's understanding of self as well as for revealing other characters' perspectives. A playful interaction between two young boys on a challenging journey through war-ridden Poland illustrates the question of how "final" and "determining" receiving a name from a

parent really is. After traveling for hours the young boys finally have time to properly introduce each other.

> „Wie heißt du überhaupt?“ sagte der kleine Meschiach.
>
> „Ali.“
>
> „Und weiter?“
>
> „Kantor.“
>
> „Ich bin Max Rosentreter. Mein Vater nannte mich früher Siegfried. Und später Amnon. Aber ich selbst finde Max am besten.“
>
> „Gut, Max,“ (Biller 95/96)[50]

Max's statement shows how names are also not necessarily an "absolute term" but can change and that he, as an individual, has some influence over this change. His father already named him twice, implying a strong cultural association with either name: First, a very Germanic name associated with the medieval *Nibelungenlied* and most certainly the Wagnerian interpretation of it - *Siegfried*[51] - and later the father changes his son's name to *Amnon*, after the oldest son of King David.

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[50] "By the way, what's your name?" asked the little Messiah.
"Ali."
"And your last name?"
"Kantor."
"I am Max Rosentreter. My father used to call me Siegfried. Later Amnon.
But I personally like Max best."
"Okay, Max" (Biller 95/96).

[51] As mentioned in the introduction Friedhelm Debus identifies various functions of literary names. One of these name categories is what he calls "verkörperte Namen" ["embodied names"]. Debus argues that this category designates authentic-realistic names or literary names that already have been established in a cultural context. Interestingly enough, one example Debus chooses in this context is *Siegfried*, referring to Richard Wagner's *Ring der Nibelungen*. The name *Siegfried*, according to Debus, is in this context charged with new characteristics and additionally mystified. Mystification of a name or better a mystified name can bear a certain foreshadowing of the character's fate. In such cases, Debus speaks of *Schicksalsnamen* (4). The name *Siegfried* also supports the notion of "Lichtgestalt" that is created within Biller's text and can be tied to the visual portrayal of Fritz Lang's staging of the *Nibelungen* story and the embodiment of *Siegfried* by Paul Richter in Lang's silent movie *Siegfried* (1924). When we are taking these cultural artifacts into account, the name has a strong ideological imprint Biller alludes to.

This change of name introduces major aspects of naming and names that will be explored more thoroughly in the following analysis: this is the instability of naming and the ideological burden or ideological signifier. In this example it is put to an extreme: the father first names his son after a traditional German folk hero, only to revoke his choice later and change it to a Hebrew name. This change in name most certainly shows a change in the father's attitude that is not further elaborated by the boys, but expressed through these obvious name choices, one representing German culture and tradition and the Hebrew Judaic tradition on the other side. The change of name illustrating a change of attitude caused by political change for the German name seems no longer desirable for the father. As this example shows, names carry cultural connotations, they have their own etymology and history, and therefore can tell a story by themselves; they feed into the character's history. Ironically, Max seems to reject either choice by deciding to name himself. This act of re-naming tells us more about Max's father than it tells us about Max and it functions at the same time as a clear comment on the political and cultural changes of the time the story is set to play in.

This passage further elaborates on the dilemma of being named versus naming yourself. The names the father picks for the son are not satisfying the child. He is ready to choose his own name. It is left open whether his parents have recognized Max as "Max." However, he is certainly recognized as such by Ali and by the narrator of the story, who, on a different level, provides another interesting insight in to the "naming question." As the reader will discover throughout the story, the narrator has a particular kind of aesthetic understanding that is determined by an almost fascist, yet definitely *völkisch* ideology. This particularly is revealed in the names and terms the narrator uses

to refer to Max. One may speculate that the personal names (Max, Ali, Siegfried, Amnon) have been chosen in order to accentuate the narrator's ideology.

This episode also supports another important character trait that is connected to Max's character. It is his eagerness to take control and attempt to create his own fate. This is further illustrated when he invents his own language. Language in this context serves as an additional aspect that plays into the playful creation of identity as well as it influences the process of recognition. Language works on two levels within the story. First as a conceptual part of what determines and reveals identity, and secondly on a meta-narrative level, here referring to the style of the narrative, influencing the reader's perception of the characters and mimicking a narrative style close to Thomas Mann's stories.

In order to adopt a Polish identity Max decides to invent his own version of Polish:

> Ali stellte sich neben ihn. „Was ist das überhaupt für eine verrückte Sprache?" sagte er.
>
> „Polnisch", antwortete Max.
>
> „Du kannst Polnisch?"
>
> „Naja, ich finde es könnte so klingen" (Biller 98)[52].

Once more the playfulness of how the boys approach the identity game is emphasized and the dichotomy between Max and Ali is further elaborated. While Ali is depicted as the passive, scared follower, Max is inventive and creative and tries to master

[52] Ali stood right next to him. „By the way, what kind of crazy language are you speaking?" he asked.
„Polish", replied Max.
„You speak Polish?"
„Well, I think it could sound like this" (Biller 98).

and control his fate as well as he can. This becomes even more obvious in the following passage:

> In der ganzen Zeit waren sie niemandem begegnet, es war, als seien sie auf Robinsons Insel verschlagen worden, und am schrecklichsten fand Ali, daß Max sich geweigert hatte, mit ihm deutsch zu sprechen. Er hatte so lange in seiner verrückten Phantasiesprache vor sich hingeplappert, bis auch Ali dieselben Worte wie er zu benutzen begann, Worte, die aus all diesen fremden Lauten bestanden und doch so deutsch klangen. (Biller 102)[53]

In this scenario Ali is now learning this new language from Max and in order to communicate with Max Ali has to obey his rules and adapt to this newly created language. Max is determined and when they finally encounter the SS soldier he is not giving up on this charade either, but it is Ali who gives away his Germanness. The text implies that Max's attempt at first is successful and the soldier indeed is recognizing him as a Polish boy by referring to Max in his inner monologue as "Blondschöpfchen" and asking himself "[…] was wohl ein polnischer Junge mit einem deutschen Buch anfangen mochte […]" (Biller 103).[54] The situation becomes even more bizarre when Ali has to function as a translator between Max and the soldier. The soldier yells at Ali:

> „Ich will von dir die Wahrheit wissen, Judenjunge!"

[53]"During the whole time they did not meet a single soul. It was as if they had been cast away on Robinson's island. For Ali the worst part about this was Max's refusal to speak German with him. He had been talking vigorously in his crazy fantasy language until Ali started using the same words, words that consisted of strange sounds yet still sounded very German" (Biller 102).

[54]"What a Polish boy was doing with this book?" (Biller 103).

> Max stieß Ali in die Seite und flüsterte ihm zu, er soll ab jetzt bloß kein Wort mehr deutsch sprechen. „Wenn schtonsch tu niechto, nix sprechlou“, zischte er.
>
> „Och“, erwiederte Ali. „Niechto kraftlou.“
>
> „Was hat er gesagt, Judenjunge?“ fragte der Soldat.
>
> „Daß er ihnen großen Dank schuldig ist, Herr Offizier“, log Ali (Biller 103).[55]

In this moment Ali holds some sort of agency and authority that enables him to partly control the situation by changing the words his friend utters. However, this skill does not protect him from the brutality of the soldier who sadistically takes out his aggressions on the smaller and weaker boy. The language aspect also only partly protects the boys. More than once the text emphasizes that it is Max's appearance and his possession of *Die Buddenbrooks* that secure him the sympathy of the soldier.

The intertextual reference of *Die Buddenbrooks*, one of the great German novels, functions within the story on several levels: It creates the before-mentioned atmosphere, introducing Max as educated and literate. *Die Buddenbrooks* will be used further in the story as a connection between the soldier and Max. On another level it explicitly introduces Thomas Mann to the story and foreshadows and contextualizes the aesthetics as perpetuated by the narrator.

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[55] "I want to know the truth, Jew boy!"
Max bumped into Ali's side and whispered that from now on he should not speak any German any more.
"Wenn schtonsch tu niechto, nix sprechlou", he hissed.
"Oh", replied Ali. "Niechto kraftlou."
"What did he say, Jew boy?" the soldier asked.
"That he owes you graditute," Ali lied (Biller 103).

Last but not least *Die Buddenbrooks* serves as a tableau of identification for Max. Based on the characters of the story Max comes to his own understanding of desirable qualities and his Jewish identity. He associates with the Jewish characters, the family Hagenström, who are within Mann's novel designed as opponents and eventually financially supersede the Buddenbrooks. Max identifies himself with this family, because he experiences them as "hart und forsch und furchtlos," a direct quote from the book (94).

These adjectives "hart," "forsch," and "furchtlos" become more and more meaningful to Max and his decision-making process the more the boys' story progresses. Like a mantra, Max repeats these words to his friend: "Wir müssen hart und forsch und furchtlos sein!"[56] Here, in the boys perspective "hart, forsch und furchtlos" is suggested as a description of German attributes. However, the German identity is no longer a desirable one for the boys, and they do not see it as available or useful in this situation. The situation the two boys are in is a dangerous one. Both are fugitives. Both experienced that being identified as Jewish will jeopardize their safety, their parents already have been deported, and the German identity that was based on their Jewish heritage had been denied, did not save them from persecution either. These circumstances force the boys to become inventive and to attempt to create an alternative identity that will protect them and guarantee survival.

In order to further underline this transformation, Max tells Ali that from now on they will just deny being Jewish. This decision is a clear contradiction to his association with the Hagenströms, however, demonstrating an internalized anti-Semitism that will become prominent in Ali's behavior as well. It will become clear later that this anti-

[56] "We have to be hard, brisk, and without fear!"

Semitism by no means just internalized anti-Semitism but the narrator of the story perpetuates actual anti-Semitism. The difference in this context is that the reader will not be able to distinguish whether the boys truly believe the NS-propaganda about Jewish character traits or whether it is the narrator inscribing these believes onto the characters. However, both ways are plausible. Yet the anti-Semitism as woven into the story is not just manifested within the characters' thoughts, but in the overall structure of the story itself. The supposedly internalized anti-Semitism of both characters is particularly elucidated in the following scene:

> „Wir müssen…", sagte Max langsam, und Ali blickte ihn erwartungsvoll an. „Wir müssen…", wiederholte er noch zögerlicher, aber dann, froh darüber, daß ihm endlich die richtigen Worte eingefallen waren, stieß er schnell und ungestüm aus: „Wir müssen hart und forsch und furchtlos sein!"
>
> „Wie denn das?"
>
> „Wir könnten", sagte Max, „zum Beispiel…ab jetzt so tun, als wären wir gar keine Juden."
>
> „Was denn sonst?"
>
> „Deutsche…"
>
> „Aber das sind wir doch sowieso."
>
> „Gut - dann eben Polen. Ja, Polen!"
>
> „Du hast gut reden, so wie du aussiehst. Aber schau mich an!"
>
> „Es ist egal, wie wir aussehen. Hauptsache, wir haben keine Angst. Wir dürfen nicht schwächlich sein, und auch nicht ungeschickt. Wir dürfen

nicht im Dreck herumkriechen und zittern. Nur Juden haben die Hose voll.“ (98)[57]

The text demonstrates the potential of how these two young boys have internalized NS-propaganda and how this internalization not only affects their understanding of self but also determines their following actions. The text connects Jewishness to “weakness” and “fear,” repeating the mantras of NS racial theory. The challenge and absurdity of the German-Jewish question is particularly prominent when Ali points out that they already are German, a fact that has not protected them and their families from the Nazis.

The only way for the boys to achieve a certain level of security seems to be to give up their old identity and from now on to pretend to be Polish. The border crossing, first a physical act, now becomes a conceptual one. Changing identities becomes a game, and the playfulness of Max’s attempt to change from German-Jewish to Polish is emphasized through his attempt at creating a new language. This passage further illustrates that in order to claim an identity one not only has to *act* the part but *look* the part as well. In this context Ali understands the situation slightly better than Max. He points out to his friend that in contrast to him, Max actually looks the part. Within this

[57] “We have to be…”, Max said slowly, Ali looked at him eagerly. “We have to be…”, he repeated even more hesitantly but then happy that he finally found the right words, he said fast and impetiously: “We have to be hard, brisk, and without fear!”
“How?”
“We could,” Max said, “pretend we are not Jewish, for example.”
“But what else?”
“German…”
“But that’s what we are anyways.”
“Okay, maybe Polish. Yes, that’s it, Polish!”
“Well, that’s easy for you to say, the way you look. But look at me!”
“It doesn’t matter how we look like. The main thing is that we have no fear. We can’t be weak, and we can’t be clumsy. We can’t crawl around in the dirt and tremble. Only Jews have the jitters” (98).

racist society appearance is inseparably linked to the recognition process and is key to a successful transformation.

Ali realizes that this transformation might for him not be successful because his appearance will give him away as Jewish, demonstrating severe internalized anti-Semitism and a awareness of how he is recognized by others, on the other hand foreshadowing the treatment they will receive by the SS soldier, or in other words, a realistic assessment of the racist world they are subjected to. Over the course of the story it becomes clear that appearance probably plays the most important role in the "identity game" the boys are about to enter.

This similarity is further supported when in chapter 3 "the soldier" is introduced. First depicted as a humanitarian—he shared his food with the starving children—it becomes obvious that he is also a sadist and his sadism is motivated by his anti-Semitism, which he is taking out on Ali. In the soldier's perception things are very clearly distinguished. He perceives Ali as a Jewish stereotype, not recognizing him as a "full-fledged" human being. This behavior dismantles a double-standard: while it is okay for him to physically abuse Ali, he is shocked and disgusted about the SS commandant's longings. This supports the notion that in the soldier's world apparently some children deserve better treatment than others, that some can be recognized as worthy of protection while others can be seen as prey.

However, the text does not set the soldier up as a barbarian, actually trying to establish him as an intellectual figure. "Der Soldat hatte früher einmal Schriftsteller werden wollen," the narrator tells us[58]. So when he notices the Buddenbrooks book under Max's coat, his sympathy grows stronger. In additional to his appearance, Max's

[58] "In former times the soldier had wanted to become a writer."

ostensible interest in German culture contributes to the soldier's decision not to hurt Max. The true function of the soldier becomes most prominent towards the end of the story. The last two chapters of the story are solely dedicated to the thoughts of the soldier and his fantasies about becoming a great writer. He gets so caught up in his thought that the boys manage to escape. The narrator's perspective and the soldier's perspective seem to more and more merge. It becomes clear when he fantasizes about the story he plans on writing: "Ja, jetzt wußte er alles ganz genau. Auch in seiner Geschichte sollten beide Jungen auf jeden Fall Juden sein. Der Blonde würde einen stolzen Charakter haben, der Dunkelhaarige wäre hilflos und feig" (115).[59] The story ends like this: "Er dachte an das Ende des Krieges, an den Beginn des Friedens. Und er war glücklich. Ja, glücklich. Denn er wußte nun entgültig und ganz genau, daß der Krieg ihn zum Schriftsteller gemacht hatte (116).[60]

The suggestion that the story we just read is actually written out of an SS-soldier's perspective is transmitted not only by these indicators in the plot, but by the language use and ideology transported and by the structural set up of the story. Mimicking Mann's chapter division in *Buddenbrooks*, Biller presents the reader with ten chapters. *Buddenbrooks*, on the other hand has eleven chapters. I suggest that through the last chapter and its intense occupation with the soldier's future plans, we are led to believe that the missing eleventh chapter is the story itself. It is the story about "How Cramer became a decent person." This discovery forces us to go back to the beginning of the

[59] "Yes, now he knew. In his story, too, both boys would be Jewish. The blonde one would have a courageous character and the dark-haired would be helpless and a coward" (115).

[60] "He thought about the end of the war and about the beginning of peace. And he was happy. Yes, happy. Because now he finally knew that the war had made him a writer" (116).

story. To re-read the whole story, keeping in mind that the perspective we are supposed to follow is the perspective of a racist, an anti-Semite, a Nazi. The soldier's thought process illuminates that the "imaginary" might triumph over the "real" circumstance. His thinking is determined by a racial ideology that can only be overcome by his satisfaction of aesthetic desire.

While, as mentioned before, the mentioning of *Die Buddenbrooks* is functioning as a reference to establish Max within a particular cultural context we can also assume that this story is attempting to allege the same strategy to the writings of Thomas Mann. Biller consciously manufactures a connection between this particular kind of aestheticization, the transmission of a particular ideology, and the writings of Thomas Mann. The whole story is also evocative of *Der Tod in Venedig*, from the fetishizing of the blond young boy to the pedophilic nature of this story. Biller picks up on several elemts of Mann's story, such as the travelling motif in the beginning of the novel, the detail that Tadzio is a young Polish boy, and Max is transforming himself into a Polish boy and Polish boys apparently are sexual obsessions of German men. However, the similarities in the style of the short story and Mann's novel are particularly obvious in the description of the young blonde boys and the comparison to their appearance as God-like creatures. Mann describes Tadzio in his novel as "wahrhaft göttliche Schönheit," and "schön wie ein Gott" ["a truly God-like beauty" / "beautiful like a God"] (Mann 29, 33). Biller, for example, describes Max as "blonden Meschiach" ["blond Messiah"] (93). The story *Cramer* in its pomposity and charged with homoeroticism could have been told by Gustav Aschenbach himself, a Gustav Aschebach who did not die in Venedig but years later had to serve as SS-soldier in Poland.

Biller is recognizing in this context a German cultural tradition, but dismantling it to its core and emphasizing the morally and ideologically questionable aspects of it. The story can be seen as a sarcastic attempt to dethrone Thomas Mann's stake within the German literary tradition and to dismantle the problematic aesthetics that are buried within his literary eloquence. In other words, just because a story is told in a sophisticated manner it still may contain questionable aesthetics that need to be revealed and analyzed critically.[61]

Biller's short story is a prime example for a multiplicity of aspects that are important to mention in the context of recognition and narrative. It sets a great example of how the perspective of a novel as well as the vocabulary used to describe characters is used to manipulate the reader to perceive the characters in a particular way and how our perception and therefore our recognition process is heavily influenced by ideology. The narrator of *Cramer* is transmitting a "völkisches Schönheitsideal" ["völkish ideal of beauty"] that is embedded in the dichotomy of the two young Jewish boys established in the story. Recognition in the context of the story is put to an extreme. It decides between humanity and abuse.

While the text ties identity to performativity and symbolism, for example, through experimenting with language and the yellow stars the protagonists are wearing, the text also shows the limits of this performativity and how beyond performativity lies a racist ideology tied to appearance. It is the first look that the solider takes at the boys to categorize them in his racist understanding of the world. The playful understanding of the

[61] In an interview with Christine Käppeler, Biller notes that: "It bores me to live in a country in which Thoman Mann is a figure of a saint. The thing he stands for bothers me, yet it also electrifies me. He stands for the classic German *Bildungsbürgerheuchelei* [hypocrisis of the educated bourgeoisie] and *Zivilisationsverachtung* [condemnation of civilization]. Internally reactionary, externally pseudo-liberal" (Käppler Interview).

identity of a child is contrasted with an anti-Semitic point of view. Within this point of view stereotypes are pushed to an extreme. The whole story is based on contrasting the bizarre fascist Aryan values “strength and health” with the Otherness and “weakness” of what the text claims is an undeniably identifiable Jewish character. By positioning the narrator as an SS-soldier, or at least someone who shares these aesthetics, Biller makes a strong statement in regard to how text and description can transmit ideology without necessarily stating these intentions clearly. It shows how this latent racism is transmitted in storytelling and how aesthetics can potentially disguise such ideology and informs our process of recognition subliminally.

CHAPTER VI

RAFAEL SELIGMANN'S *DER MUSTERJUDE*

Rafael Seligmann understands and describes himself as a German-Jewish writer. His father and his family left Germany during the terror of the Third Reich but returned to Germany, after World War II, in the 1950s. Today, Seligmann is a prominent figure in German newspapers and is well known for his work as a journalist and writer. In 2012, he started a new publication called "Jewish Voices from Germany," a newspaper about Jewish life in Germany in English and meant for international distribution. Besides his work as a journalist, Seligmann is also the author of numerous political books and novels; often the political intersects with the fictional in his works. His most prominent fictional works are *Rubensteins Versteigerung* (1989), *Die jiddische Mamme* (1990), and *Der Musterjude* (1997). His books focus on Jewish characters living in Germany and their encounters with anti-Semitism, life in a Jewish community, and the tension between being Jewish and living in Germany. Seligmann's books are popular and rank well in the German bestseller lists. Seligmann can be best described as a contemporary critic of German society as well as a critic of the Jewish community in Germany and Israel, one of the reasons Seligmann can be considered a provocative writer who is less concerned with the trope of political correctness, since he often attacks the notions of guilt and shame and creates characters often lacking any sense of morality or political correctness.

For the canon of German-Jewish literature Seligmann plays an important role and is often classified as one of the few "new" Jewish writers. He is often compared to Maxim Biller and to Philip Roth and is labeled an author representing "Jewish Wit" (Chase 42). According to Jefferson Chase we can understand Seligmann's style as a

demonstration of "Jewish speech through laughter, asserting a specific minority voice within the mainstream and thereby making an implicit bid for social and cultural integration" (43). Approaching the troubled relationship among Jews and Germans through a satirical lens may open up the possibility for the "outsider" to claim a space in this environment. As Chase points out, "(h)umor is one of the few discursive means for outsiders to establish their presence in an often hostile mainstream […]" (51). It also enables Seligmann to conceptualize a complex image of the understanding of German and Jewish identity without championing one "side" over the other. As his novel shows, the relationship among Jews and Germans is troubling for both sides for various reasons. Humor opens up the possibility to criticize these forms of self-identification. Frederick A. Lubich describes Seligmann's *Der Musterjude* as "arguably [his] most complex synthesis of post-Holocaust German-Jewish relations" (229). In satirical form Seligmann dissects the German-Jewish relationship in order to make prejudice and stereotypes visible that influence the characters' perception and how they recognize others, mainly the protagonist.

This complex situation shows that the question of Jewish-German identity goes far beyond the question of whether or not there was or is a symbiosis. It creates a whole array of questions concerning identity ascription between those two groups but also within them. It poses the question whether Jewish and German identities are excluding towards one another? When talking about Jewish culture, are we assuming a religious difference or a cultural one? What role do the questions of assimilation and Diaspora play in this context? To what extent does the diasporic culture of Judaism influence the understanding of who is Jewish and are all Jews treated and recognized in the same way

within the Jewish community? These are questions that play an important role in Seligmann's writing. *Der Musterjude* is challenging the non-Jewish German assumption that the Jewish community as such is a homogenous group. Seligmann creates complex characters showing that the Jewish community is less united than the outside world assumes.

Seligmann suggests a difference between the writings of Jewish writers living in Germany and Jewish writers outside of Germany. He claims that Jewish writers in Germany write "hate-sterile," meaning their writings lack any negative resentment against the Germans. In contrast Jewish authors outside of Germany are far more critical and skeptical of Germany and its population. Seligmann explains that the reluctance of Jewish writers in Germany to be critical of Germans is rooted in "fear and shame" (174). In the context of the question of Jewish-German writing Seligmann asks "[…] why there are no novels about the contemporary German scene." He continues to explain that "(t)he answer is obvious. Novels deal with the feelings of people and thus, indirectly, with the sore points of society. Using such tools as exaggeration and parody, it seeks to capture that which objective analysis often misses–the emotions of human beings" (176).

He argues that this silencing of Jewish voices led to a neglect of honest communication on both sides, a transfigured understanding of Jews and Germans. Because of their guilty conscience, Germans tend to glorify German Jews by attributing a moral superiority to the survivors of the Holocaust and following generations of Jewish Germans. Seligmann criticizes this ascription, thinking it leads to a predetermined Jewish identity. In his novels Jewish-German encounters and the question of a possibility of a Jewish-German identity beyond the hyphenated identity often constitute the point of

departure for the plot and the quest for an inclusive identity beyond stereotypes motivated by his protagonists.

The Role-Model Jew

In his novel *Der Musterjude* (1997) Seligmann challenges a predetermined Jewish-German identity. Constructed as a satire *Der Musterjude* touches on various aspects of Jewish self-identification and its difficult relationship to the German past. It develops a critical approach toward the impact of the Shoah on contemporary German-Jewish relations and its impact, not only on Jewish-German identity but also on Jewish identity and German identity as separate concepts. The novel challenges the understanding of an inclusive identity concept—that there is such a thing as a Jewish-German identity—as well as the concept of exclusive identity concepts—that there is a particular Jewish identity incompatible with a particular German identity. All these different understandings of the Jewish-German identity are developed in the novel through different characters and serve as a core element of the following analysis.

Seligmann portrays his protagonist Moische Bernstein as neither flawless nor a victim, but rather as a "fool" who makes a career as a journalist based on his Jewish heritage rather than his talent as a writer and who will not accept his mediocrity. While the secondary literature regards Seligmann as a bright new contribution to Jewish writing in Germany, and the German media embraces his works, the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland has been less pleased with his works, even calling him a "Nestbeschmutzer" (Schmitz 384). However, each of these accounts fails to read Seligmann's novel for what it is: A satire. A satire of a German society trapped in a questionable moral code of

taboos and political correctness, but also a satire of a Jewish community unwilling to emancipate itself from the shadow of the Shoah, a central motif for the novel.

In his critical writings Seligmann points out the relation between Jewish-German identity and the role of the Holocaust in this context. In this context Alain Finkielkraut's understanding of *le juif imaginaire* is interesting to explore since Finkielkraut is criticizing what Moische Bernstein is doing: exploiting the Shoah to his own advantage and self-determination (Schruff 47). Finkielkraut, like Seligmann, is opposed to the idea of defining Jewish identity exclusively through the victims of the Shoah and he claims that no one has the right to identify with the experience of the victims (Schruff 123). Finkielkraut argues that creating an identity based on other people's experience are "borrowed identities." He criticizes the second generation of Holocaust survivors when he points out that "(t)he Judaism they invoke enraptures and transports them magically to a setting in which they are exalted and sanctified. For these habitués of unreality, more numerous than one might suppose, I propose the name 'imaginary Jews'" (Finkielkraut 15).

While the characters of Moische, Hanna, and Judith represent the novel's main perspective on a uniquely "Jewish" self-identity, the characters of both the journalists and editors Moische works with represent the right-wing Christian-German perspective of Jews in Germany. The question of how these Germans establish themselves and their narrative towards Nazi Germany and the Shoah becomes important and is often revealed in their inner monologues as presented by a rather challenging narrative strategy. Central to the anti-Semitic characters' behavior is the topoi in right-wing rhetoric that there are "things" a German cannot say, even though they are supposedly "true" is pushed to the

extreme. In a very polemic and sarcastic way, Seligmann tackles the legendary question in the German feuilleton: “Who is allowed to say what?”

Another important issue in this context is “victimhood.” According to Robertson, Seligmann is “alarmed by the development of a Jewish identity based less on religion and tradition than on the Holocaust and hence on the consciousness of victimhood” (3). “Victimhood” is crucial for Moische behavior. He is torn between feeling like a victim and empowering himself. Again, it seems as if he is able to switch roles whenever it fits his own personal narrative and agenda. If he is unable to achieve his goals, he blames it on his “Jewishness” and the discrimination he supposedly has to face because he is Jewish.

Through the tools of exaggeration and irony Seligmann comes closer to a topic that seems still to be considered a taboo. He addresses the question of whether there is a Jewish-German identity, a Jewish-German relationship that will be able to overcome a cultural and religious divide in order to start an honest dialogue with each other. The novel illustrates a moral dilemma that not only massively influences the protagonist’s personal development, but also prevents an open dialogue and therefore conveniently covers the latent anti-Semitism embedded in German society. Through the use of irony and exaggeration Seligmann explores and dismantles stereotypes and clichés that still seem to determine the perception of Jewish people in Germany today. This notion is already established in the title of the novel *Der Musterjude*. Metaphorically, “Muster-“ used in a compound word can be understood as role model, for example as in “Musterschüler”—an exemplary student. A more literal interpretation of “Muster” would introduce the idea of a pattern or a template that can be applied to a certain person from a

certain culture. In this case the connotation is not necessarily positive; it implies that there is a conventional understanding of what a Jewish person is. This pattern (Muster) develops even further to a grid (Raster) of fixed categories, restricting Moische's personal development, allowing him to be nothing more than a stencil of a heteronomous identity.

How important the ascription of identity through a third party is, is described both in Seligmann's critical essays and his literary work. In his book *Mit beschränkter Hoffnung* he describes his first experience with anti-Jewish confrontations as a student at a public German high school and his first encounter with anti- Jewish resentments. These encounters changed his perception of himself. For the first time he understood that he is Jewish and therefore in a German environment different, or even an "outcast" (14). For the first time he was experiencing challenges to his cultural and religious identity in this new environment. For the first time he understood that there is a distinction between Jews and "non"-Jews. Seligmann describes this discovery as follows: "Damals lernte ich ein Phänomen kennen, das mich fortan wie ein Buckel begleiten sollte – mein Judentum. Dadurch war ich in Deutschland von vornherein ein Außenseiter" (*Hoffnung* 14).[62]

Seligmann points out what is or who is Jewish often is mainly determined and designated by the "anti-Semite." While in his book Seligmann focuses on anti-Semites worldwide, the following analysis will particularly focus on the German context and on comments Seligmann makes about German anti-Semitism. Here a dialectical understanding of identity ascription and identity formation is developed. His personal story illustrates the relevance of recognition and its relation to identity formation. It is

[62] "During this time I learned about a phenomenon that was from now on should acompany me like a hunchback– my Judaism. Because of it I was an outsider by default" (*Hoffnung* 14).

"the Other" who defines him and designates his place in society, or better outside society. This is a central aspect in *Der Musterjude*, and the protagonist is facing this form of identity ascription mainly though the non-Jewish German community.

Referring to his personal experience in Germany, Seligmann was no longer recognized as member of the dominant mainstream culture but was instead identified as outsider based on his religious affiliation. It is important to note that in this context it is not up to him whether he would like to be part of this group or not, rather the decision has been made for him. Lack of recognition withholds the possibility for him to be a fully acknowledged member of this group. In this context Seligmann discusses the need of the anti-Semite for the Jew, but this argument also works in the opposite direction. The Jewish community needs the non-Jewish community in order to establish an understating of who is part of this community and who is not included. Here the question of assimilation and orthodoxy becomes crucial, a question that will be elaborated in *Der Musterjude* and is particularly important for the protagonist's development. At a certain point in the course of the novel Moisch's image in the public eye is out of his control.

Point of Departure

In his novel Seligmann explores the relationship between Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans and how they perceive each other. The question whether there can be an inclusive identity for Jewish-German citizens beyond the hyphen is one of the central issues and is during the course of the novel negated not only by the German characters but also by some of the Jewish characters, mainly Moische's mother. Through exaggeration the tools of recognition become visible and constitute some of the main

structural devices of the narrative. For example, the process of naming illustrates the protagonist's identity crisis. The different names challenge Moische's understanding of self, and at the same time reveal his environment's understanding of Judaism in Germany. The transformation of Moische Bernstein to Manfred Bern, and to Moische Israel Berstein demonstrates the preoccupation with the process of naming. Names have intentions. They are rarely chosen carelessly, and as we will see in the case of Moische Bernstein, they can be culturally and politically charged. In the context of *Der Musterjude* they demonstrate the multiplicity of possibilities of identification for Moische, but my analysis will show they also demonstrate that describing his "self" is not necessarily possible for Moische.

Throughout the book Seligmann establishes a satirical and exaggerated understanding of what is uniquely Jewish and what is German. In different ways, but with nearly the same result, the characters draw clear distinctions between what is Jewish behavior and what is German behavior. Seligmann establishes and plays with stereotypical assumptions and expectations. This humor leaves his characters in confusing situations. The whole notion of ascription of identity (*Identitätszuschreibung*) is parodied in the end of the book when Heiner Keller claims that Moische is not "fully" Jewish. The question of Moische's "Jewishness" is finally proven an absurdity.

Throughout the novel identity ascription is established in various ways. First and foremost it is determined by the characters of the book. Each one has an understanding of what he or she expects from Moische. His "Jewishness" is determined through his name, his heritage and the positioning towards historical circumstances. These positions create a tension (Spannungsfeld) between the understanding of religious heritage and identity:

essentially a historicization of this identity mixed with the permanent pressure of outside expectations and recognition.

Moische's various name changes illustrate the challenge of determining his identity and show how the other characters of the story feel about Moische and his Jewishness. This is most clearly exemplified through their speech and references to him. The narrative structure of the novel is complex and tangled. Throughout the novel, there is a distinction between direct dialogue and inner monologue. Often the characters' true feelings are only revealed in their thought processes. The inner monologue also reveals the characters' anti-Semitism or their resentments against Germany. In this context, Seligmann plays with stereotypes and clichés, showing that none of the characters are free from prejudice and resentment.

In this context the "name calling" reveals Moische's character to be an archetypal "fool," a topos that the development of the novel explores further. Nevertheless, the center of the analysis is Moische Bernstein and his understanding of the world. Lubich points out that as the plot of the novel unfolds the story takes on the characteristics of a "verkehrte Welt," a literary trope of the German Baroque and Romanticism (230). And indeed, Moische bears character traits as we can find them in Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus,* for example. Moische is characterized as naïve, not too intelligent, and overall an antihero who fails in the real world. If anything, the successes he achieves are based on chance and the fact that he sells out his Jewishness. Seligmann creates in his conception of the overall story a mockery of the Bildungsroman as well as drawing from a tradition of the Schelmenroman, focusing on the life of an unintelligent character who

only achieves fame and fortune through a range of lucky events. And this luck leaves him as quickly as it came to him.

The story itself is a linear story with frequent flashbacks and explanations of past events. It starts out on Moische's fortieth birthday and ends exactly a year later, creating a circular movement, mocking the experience of the change of a person. This circularity is supported by the fact that the story starts out in Moische's parents' jeans shop and it ends there one year later after all the success and failures Moische is experimenting. One outstanding aspect of the novel is the complexity of the narrative structure and the variety of characters crossing the main protagonist's way. This shift of perspective is the focal point of the following analysis. Another outstanding stylistic aspect is the use of irony and satire within the novel. Here the contrasting of the characters' different opinions and prejudices as well as the narrator's direct commentary play an important role.

Matters of Recognition and Identity Ascription

The beginning of the novel marks Moische's fortieth birthday, and he is experiencing a midlife crisis. Disappointed with his miserable existence as an employee in his mother's shop, Moische asks himself the fundamental question of why life refused him success:

> Warum war gerade ihm der Erfolg versagt geblieben? An seinem Äußeren konnte es nicht liegen. Oder? [...] War seine Judennase der Grund, daß er im Mittelmaß versackte? Unsinn! Viele Deutsche hatten schärfer gekrümmte Nasen als er. Moisches hellgrüne Augen, um die sich schon in seiner Kindheit Lachfältchengespinste gebildet hatten, stempelten ihn

> jedenfalls nicht zum Hebräer – eher zum „Witzbold“. So hatten ihn seine Mitschüler genannt. Die Lehrer dagegen hatten ihn „Hanswurst“ oder, noch schlimmer, „Quatschkopf“ geschimpft. Sein Name allein ließ ihn jedenfalls nicht als Israeliten identifizieren. Um ihrem Kind unnötigen Ärger zu ersparen, hatten Moisches Eltern ihn in den amtlichen Papieren zu Manfred verdeutscht. Als er das Bekleidungsgeschäft des Vaters zu einem Jeans-Laden umfummelte, nutzte Moische die Gelegenheit, seinen Namen weiter zu entlasten. Aus *Bernsteins Textilien* wurde *Bernis Jeans-Shop*. Fortan nannte er sich Manfred Bern. (9)[63]

Moische's inner monologue reveals his personal insecurities as well as his struggle with the outside world. It also reveals Moische's personal desire for recognition—not necessarily a recognition that will enable him to become a part of German society, he already is a part of a larger society, but a desire to be recognized as a "genius," a prominent writer whose voice will be heard. This passage from chapter 1 exemplifies Moische's understanding of his failed success through a stream of consciousness. Despite the fact that he is working for his mother, Moische is convinced that he is talented and thinks highly of himself, "Dennoch glaubte Moische fest an seine außergewöhnliche Begabung. Er war ein Künstler, ein genialer Schreiber. Doch seine

[63] "Why did life deny him success? It could not be blamed on his appearance. Right? [...] Was his Jewish nose the reason why he was stuck in mediocrity? Nonsense! Many Germans had more crooked noses than he, Moische's light green eyes, wrinkly since his childhood, did not make him look like a Hebrew – more like a 'prankster.' That's what his classmates called him. His teachers on the other hand called him a 'Hanswurst' or even worse, a buffoon. However, his name alone did not identify him as Israeli. To avoid unnecessary trouble, his parents legally Germanized his name to Manfred. Once he had taken over his father's jeans-shop, he took the opportunity to further unburden his name. Bernstein's Textiles became Berni's Jeans-Shop. From this time on he referred to himself as Manfred Bern."

Größe wurde verkannt!“ (8).[64] Not only does he believe himself to be talented, he even considers himself a “genius writer” with an “extraordinary talent.” His talents are misjudged by the world around him and have not yet been recognized. Social recognition is one of Moische’s strongest motivating forces.

Right from the start the omniscient narrator lets the reader into the inner world of Moische’s thoughts. Moische’s thoughts are the point of departure for the novel’s development. The inner monologue dismantles Moische’s insecurities as well as his personal struggle with the outside world. In this context, a tension between his own expectations, his family’s influence and how the outside world sees Moische are established. Moische focuses on two major aspects in his process of self-identification: his looks and his name and their relationship to his Jewish heritage, which he suspects to be a disadvantage.

But the narrator goes further. The text directly establishes a tension between Moische’s own expectations, his family’s influence, and how the outside [German] world sees Moische. This tension is further conveyed by the narrative structure of the novel pitting characters’ thoughts against each other and revealing the true motives behind their actions. The text further establishes right away tools of recognition such as “appearance,” “name,” and heritage. All these factors could potentially “give away” Moische’s Jewish identity, an identity he as well as his parents have tried to carefully hide.

As we will see in the process of the narration in regard to recognition, “naming” and “names” play the most prominent role. Born as Moische Bernstein, his parents change his first name from Moische to Manfred in order to avoid “unnecessary trouble”

[64] “Yet, Moische believed in his extraordinary talent. He was an artist, a genius writer. But his genius was fairly misjudged!“ (8).

for their child. They change his name in all official documents, however Hanna, Moische's mother, mostly refers to him as Moische, never as Manfred. This "name change" in official papers supports the notion of a difference between a public and private persona, a split between how he presents himself to the non-Jewish German society and how he represents himself within the Jewish community in Munich.

His parents' attempt to disguise the Jewish identity implies that it is dangerous to be recognized as Jewish, even years after the Shoah. As the narrator points out, Moische's name alone will not identify him as Jewish. It could potentially endanger him and create a disadvantage. In order to avoid this kind of disadvantage Moische makes sure his name won't "hold him back." He changes his family name from Bernstein to Bern. Moische's parents as well as Moische himself seem to believe that having a Jewish name could be disadvantageous for Moische and the use of the word "entlasten" conveys the idea that he sees his Jewish name as baggage. The text establishes a sense of agency for Moische, allowing him to change his name to gain an advantage. This agency at a later point will be revoked. Names in this context have the power to either reveal or hide someone's cultural belonging, a point that will be elaborated further once Moische launches his carrier as journalist.

Conversely, the people who surrounded him socially as a child in school did not seem to recognize Moische primarily as Jewish. Pointing out that his classmates preferably called him "Witzbold" (wisecrack) while his teachers called him "Hanswurst" or "Quatschkopf" (buffoon), it becomes clear that it was not Moische's Jewishness that denied his success but ultimately a lack of intelligence or seriousness.

The very first passage of the novel develops the idea of an instable identity ascription.[65] Moische and his parents try to influence the environment in which they are operating by influencing their perception of Moische. Moische's decision to change his name into a German version originates out of a desire for safety and acceptance as well as the urge to assimilate. Moische seems trapped between a Jewish heritage, passed on by his parents—both Holocaust survivors—and by a desire to be successful and accepted in German society. Simultaneously embracing his Jewishness, and being fully accepted as part of this German society, seem out of question. It seems to be a question of either or.

Seligmann chose an omniscient narrator to tell the story of Moische Bernstein and the narration benefits from this decision on multiple levels: It engages the reader in a supposedly outside look into the development; through change of narrative perspective within the novel the reader gains insight into Moische's way of thinking, and into the characters' deeper motivations.

While one of the narrator's main functions seems to be to juggle the various characters' opinions, the narrator further provides a separate commentary on the events, often revealing the true motivation and insights and often correcting or challenging the main protagonists' perspective. Additionally, the narrator provides his own commentary on the identity debate and the political circumstances surrounding the story's events.

Within the story different modes of narration are competing with each other. Mainly two modes: the first mode could be described as a stream of consciousness. The character's inner monologues come to life and provide an understanding of what

[65] Identity Ascription—as a translation for the German word "Identitätszuschreibung"—understood as a process where an outside party assigns or ascribes an understanding of one's personality / character.

motivates the characters. The second mode is the narrator's own voice, providing additional context and valuation of the events happening within the story.

Within Seligmann's novel the discourse around assimilation demonstrates that successful assimilation means not being identifiable as "the Other," in this case as Jewish. One of the determining key moments in Moische's development marks his teenage years. This is when for the first time he is not only confronted with being Jewish in Germany, and therefore being an outsider but he also starts questioning the position of his parents and their own identity as Holocaust survivors still living in Germany. After his Bar Mitzvah, his parents send him to attend meetings of the "Zionistische Jugend" [the Zionist youth] (35). During this time Moische develops a strong connection to Judaism and Israel. He changes his name back from Manfred to "Moshe," the Hebrew name for Moses (35). With this conscious name change Moische develops an awareness of the historical circumstances and the relationship between German Jews and the Shoah. Suddenly aware of the political implications, he attacks his parents for living in the country of perpetrators calling them "Diasporajuden" and "ehrloses Pack" (36). His fanaticism even causes him to wear Israeli military clothing, which worries his parents. They fear he might get attacked by anti-Semites, and he actually is attack by a gang of young Turks.

As a teenager, confused about his own identity, Moische discovers that the question of what group or even groups he belongs to is more complex than what he had previously thought. For his mother it is clear that he is not at all German and even the Turkish attackers, according to the narrator, identify him as Jewish. Alternatively, Moische understands their attack targeted against him as a German and he claims they

identified him as German based on his looks. And it becomes clear in his answer that Moische himself, despite wearing Israeli military clothing, partly identifies as German. Moische is unwilling to make a clear initial distinction between whether he is Jewish, German, or both. This episode shows that recognition is unpredictable and Moische's desire to be German as well as Jewish is challenged. Moische's choice to identify as Israeli comes with consequences, which endanger him, but on the other hand the decision of how he will be identified is not always in his control. In this context, matters of recognition and ascription are dominated by others, and they will decide whether to perceive him as Jewish or German. In this particular instance both seem to be dangerous and it further complicates the notion of a group identity. Not only does he have to deal with the Jewish community in Germany and the non-Jewish German society, but also with the other "Other," mainly the Turkish-German community establishing an additional form of anti-Semitism and source for danger, an aspect that will later in the novel be further elaborated when Moische is confronted with challenges towards his involvement in Israel by a supposedly Muslim woman.

Further this passage shows two formative aspects of recognition: First, how defining the period of adolescence and his teenage years are. This passage shows how Moische develops a consciousness towards how he is perceived and how he wants to be perceived or believes he is perceived. Secondly, it introduces the fact that even within the Jewish community there is a distinction. In other words, not all Jewish people are seen equal. This might be one of the most subsidiary aspects of the novel that however contributes a lot to the dynamic process of recognition. While the non-Jewish German community perceives the Jewish community as homogenous, the Jewish community

distinguishes between Jewish people living in Germany, living in Israel, living in the US, coming from Russia and other countries. Seligmann tries to paint a more diverse picture of the Jewish community to challenge the homogenous perception of Jewish people in Germany, but also to show the distinction Jewish people make amongst themselves.

The Jewish Mamme

While for Moische his "in between" situation is confusing, for his mother it is without question that her son is Jewish. The first person to name him is his mother Hanna, who tries to raise Moische in accordance with her own upbringing and cultural identity. She chose no other name but the name of one of the most important prophets of Judaism. This choice reflects Hanna's high expectations, yet also connects Moische to the family's history, because it was also the name of Hanna's father, who was killed in the Holocaust. As a survivor, Moische's birth fulfills Hanna's greatest dream. He is the key to her Jewish legacy and through him Hanna's family will continue living. All her struggles aim at the continuity of her family lineage. Her intention is motivated by a sense of biology and tradition, since she hopes that Moische will continue her family's tradition by marrying a Jewish woman, thus perpetuating Jewish lineage. The narrator leaves no doubt that Hanna chose the name, not Moische's father: "Endlich gebar Hanna einen gesunden Knaben, dem sie den Namen ihres ermordeten, über alles geliebten Vaters gab: Moische" (34). The word "endlich" emphasizes that Moische's birth was long awaited and finally came true. The naming of her child after her father and therewith continuing the family tradition and keeping the memory of her late father alive, seems to be more strongly embedded in a historical context. "Moses" as one of the most important

prophets in Judaism reflects Hanna's high expectations for her son. Given that he fails to fulfill anyone's expectations, particularly his own, we can read this name as an ironic commentary on the role of the protagonist as *Der Musterjude*. After first naming him Moische Bernstein, his parents were also the first to change his first name Moische to Manfred, a name that has its roots in the old high German language of the middle ages and represents "manfulness."

Hanna is Moische's greatest supporter as well as his greatest critic. She has a clear understanding what she considers appropriate behavior and what she expects from her son. Besides giving her Jewish grandchildren, she wants him to continue the family's business. Further she is constantly worried about her reputation within the Jewish community in Munich. What other people say plays an important role to her, showing that within the minority community there are expectations and rules to follow in order to be considered a proper member. However, Moische's behavior often is unacceptable and causes griefe to his mother.

Besides Moische, Hanna refers to her son as "Moischale" and "Jingale" (10). While "Moischale," similar to "Mannilein," is a diminutive form of "Moische," "Jingale" is Yiddish for young boy. The suffix "-ale" also represents the diminutive form in this context, emphasizing the strong emotional bond to her son, but also showing that for her he is not a grown man, but still a little boy. These terms of endearment are also introduced in the way the German women Brigitte and Cordula refer to Moische. However, instead of "Moischale" the call him "Mannilein," a diminutive form of Manfred, creating closeness and intimacy.

The course of the plot conveys that Hanna is calculatingly trying to determine her son's path through life. The overall dominant presence of the mother figure in *Der Musterjude* relates to the concept of the "Jewish mamme," a strong dominant mother, that tries to control her children's life and constantly reminds them what sacrifices she made for them. In historical Jewish story telling this maternal figure is a prominent topos (Teschler 54). Scholars such as Diana Teschler and Helene Schruff argue that Seligmann's mother figures are constructed in reference to Philip Roth's "Portnoy's-Complaint-Mother" – the kind of mother who tries to influence and manipulate her children whenever possible (Schruff 57). As Teschler points out, the mother figure functions in Seligmann's novel as "erzähltechischer Schwerpunkt" (45). She can be seen as one of Moische's antagonists, trying to manipulate and control him, yet at the same time she is his strongest supporter.

Besides constant pressure, Hanna also embodies Moische's religious identity and his connection to the Jewish community in Munich. Disappointed by the lack of attention and support reciprocated by her son now that he is famous, Hanna confides to Heiner Keller, Moische's childhood friend, that Aaron Bernstein was not Moische's biological father. Driven by a need for revenge, Keller wants to use this information in order to pay Moische back for all the times he had been humiliated by him for being German: "Seit der Schulzeit hatte Moische Heiner als 'Mörderkind' beschimpft. Dabei war sein Vater lediglich ein Wehrmachtssoldat gewesen. Moisches, nein, Manfreds leiblicher Vater war womöglich sogar ein SS-Killer" (355). For Keller, this new information changes Moische into a generic German and opens up the possibility of Moische even being related to a Nazi criminal. In cooperation with Wimmer, another one of Moische's victims, Keller

plots an expose about Moische's "wrong Judaism." Moische's non-Jewish German rivals use the knowledge about Moische's biological father to discredit Moische publicly as "Halbjuden," exposing their own anti-Semetic sentiments.

Keller and Georg Wimmer do not care about Judaic traditions. They fall back on the racist Nazi categorization in order to determine Moische's Jewishness. They no longer recognize his Jewish identity but label him as "falschen Juden" (360). Wimmer goes so far as to qualify Moische as "Halbjuden." Wimmer comes to an interesting conclusion, "Moische war ja kein Jude! Und kein Deutscher! Er war ein falscher Fuffziger und sonst gar nichts" (365). This quote underlines the notion that identity ascription is not only depending on tradition, but whether or not this tradition is recognized by others. Wimmer not only negates Moische's Jewish identity, he also denies him a German identity. He simply sees him as a liar and a hypocrite. In his vengeful exposé, Wimmer refers to Moische as "Heuchler." The irony strikes when he claims that Moische had changed his name: "Wenn sich einer wie Manfred Bern anmaßt, Jude zu sein, sich Moische Bernstein nennt und uns moralische Lektionen erteilen will, dann macht er sich über Juden und Deutsche gleichermaßen lustig" (365). Not only does Wimmer claim that Moische is a liar and basically an impostor, but he also accuses him of changing his name. Wimmer clearly attempts to define Moische's identity and reveal that he is not Jewish, but Wimmer fails.

"Halbjude," as Seligmann also references in his book *Mit beschränkter Hoffnung*, was a "category" introduced by the Nazis and their racist system of classifying races. Seligmann argues that in Judaism there is no such thing as a "Halbjude," since the "Jewishness" of a person is only determined by their mother (14). As Frederick Lubich

points out in his article: “Only the mother counts in establishing Jewish identity, according to the Halakhah–and it is Moses’ Law!” (244).

This episode illustrates that even in a post-Holocaust society, prejudice and anti-Semitic thinking still dominate a distorted assumption of what Judaism is. Ignorant and insensitive, his rivals want to bring Moische down, disrespecting his family, their matters, and his cultural heritage. They create their own understanding of who is Jewish and who is not, and fall back on Nazi methods of racial classification. This satirical depiction of cultural belonging and the attribution to a particular culture contrasts the German and the Jewish approach and marks it as one of the key issues between these two cultures. For Moische it creates the issue of recognition not on one but on two different levels. He has to please his parents and the Jewish community in order to be accepted as a member of the Jewish community in good standing. Here, on a biological level only the maternal lineage matters, and further his personal behavior. Within the non-Jewish German community the assignment is pushed further and is infiltrated by the understanding of a “blood-and-soil” mentality. The notion of someone being “half” and therefore incomplete or not “real” can be traced back to the understanding of how one can claim “Germanness.”

While Moische is relatively impartial towards Germans and only seems to refer to the Holocaust in order to make his friend Keller feel bad, Hanna is very skeptical towards Germans and the German nation as such. Hanna is one of the few characters who make a strict and clear distinction between Jewish people and the “Gojim”—the non-Jews. She clearly distinguishes between the two and there seems to be no intersection for her. Having survived the Shoah she has a clear opinion of how she views Germans: “Hanna

verstand die Deutschen—wenn sie wollte. Die Deutschen waren Mörder" (33).[66] For Hanna, there is no question as to whether Moische is German or Jewish or both. For her he is Jewish and she keeps on reminding him about this identity. She is convinced that there is no such thing as a German-Jewish symbiosis and that intercultural relationships are bound to fail. Hanna refuses to recognize Moische's attempt to identify with Germans. When he tells her that he is German, she contradicts him, pointing out, "Du bist doch kein Deutscher, du Idiot!" (Musterjude 36).[67]

This becomes particularly clear when she talks about Moische's non-Jewish girlfriends, or as she likes to call them, "Schicksen" (11). Hanna does not have a good opinion about Brigitte: "Die Schickse!" schrie Hanna auf. "Dieses Frauenzimmer wird dich noch vollständig zugrunde richten!" (11).[68] Hanna sees Moische's involvement with Brigitte and other German women as one reason for his permanent failure. She attacks her son claiming that all his friends who married Jewish women achieved success in life, "All deine Freunde haben jüdische Frauen geheiratet, aus allen ist etwas geworden" (12).[69]

Hanna believes a betrayal of tradition and heritage automatically leads to catastrophe. She manifests Moische's changes of being successful to the choices he makes in his love life, arguing that non-Jewish women will bring him down, while marrying a Jewish woman is the key to success. She is less concerned with Moische's lack of spirituality than his taste in women. It does not seem to matter for Hanna if he

[66] "Hannah understood the Germans—if she wanted to. The Germans were murders" (33).

[67] "You are not German, you idiot!" (36).

[68] "This shikse," Hannah screamed, "this woman is going to ruin you!" (11).

[69] "All of your friends married Jewish women, and all of the achieved something" (12).

attends religious services or not, but it matters what kind of woman he is going to marry, since she wishes for proper Jewish grandchildren. This underlines her wish to continue the family tradition and to hold on to the matriarchal line that determines the Jewishness of her grandchildren. It shows a clash of the traditionalist attitude of the older generation towards the future of their children. Post-modern concepts of a fluid self are tossed aside for the clinging to structuralized tradition and heritage.

The strength of Hanna is also elaborated in contrast with the weakness of Moische and Aaron. Aaron's role is more or less insignificant (Teschler 47). However, his lack of strength makes Hanna appear even more powerful. When Moische as a teenager starts rebelling against his parents and acts out violently against his mother, Aaron is unable to discipline his son. Hanna comes to the conclusion that she is married to a "Schlappschwanz." "Die jüdischen Männer waren Feiglinge – allesamt. Jedenfalls die Diasporajuden. Da waren die Israelis aus anderem Holz geschnitzt" (Musterjude 37).[70] In this context, Hanna not only distinguishes between Germans and Jews, but also distinguishes between Jews and their heritage, such as the Diaspora-Jews and the true Israelites, she considers heroes (37).

How strong the bond between Moische, Hanna, and the Jewish community in Munich is, is demonstrated when Moische embarrasses himself in the most popular Jewish restaurant in Munich, not only making a fool of himself but disgracing the whole family,

> Hannas einziges Kind hatte sich beschickert. Ihr Moische hatte sich in der Gegenwart anderer Juden wie ein Goj betrunken und die eigenen Leute

[70] "The Jewish men were cowards, at least the ones living in diaspora. The Israeli men were cut from a different cloth" (37).

> angepöbelt. Damit hatte er auch seine Mamme aus der Gemeinschaft der Juden gestoβen. Siebzig Jahre war Hanna Bernstein eine vorbildliche, stolze Jüdin gewesen – sie hatte sich nichts zuschulden kommen lassen, auβer der regelmäβigen Steuerhinterziehungen, die heutzutage jeder Goj als Sport ansah. Und jetzt hatte ihre eigenes Kind rücksichtslos ihre Existenz zerstört (Musterjude 30).[71]

In this passage Hanna's disappointment with her son becomes particularly clear and it develops an understanding of what Hanna considers appropriate behavior. Getting drunk in public is something she considers only a "Goj" would do. Not only is Moische drunk, but he insults "his own people." Hanna clearly sees this as one of the worst misbehaviors, leading to her exclusion of the Jewish community. This emphasizes the strong connection between an individual and its support system, in this case between Hanna and the Jewish community. It also underlines the notion that through our family circumstances we reach access to a particular community that would be inaccessible otherwise. This incident also shows that the reputation of children seems to matter for the parents' identity as well. How her son behaves reflects on Hanna. It endangers her status within this community.

While Moische seems to care less about the consequences, it destroys Hanna's reputation as a "proud, role-model Jew." All her life, as it turns out, Hanna worked hard to do the right things, and her son destroys all the efforts in one night. This elucidates the circumstances Hanna and Moische live in. Everything Moische does reflects on Hanna

[71] "Hanna's only child had gotten drunk. Her Moische behaved like a goi in front of other Jews and insultet his own people. With this behavior he expelled his mother from the Jewish community. For seventy years Hanna Bernstein had been an exemplary and proud Jew – she did nothing wrong except for the ususal tax fraude every goi practiced as sports. And now her own child had destroyed her existence ruthlessly" (30).

and vice versa. Under these circumstances Moische cannot develop independently. His cultural and religious identity formation is limited by the moral values of his mother and a larger Jewish community.

The Anti-Semite and the Question of Taboo

This ignorant and stigmatized understanding of Judaism is pushed to an extreme when Moische publishes his first article in the political magazine "LOGO." Editor-in-chief Kurt Reydt is looking for a new writer in order to contribute to a story about the Shoah. To him it is clear that this story has to be written by a Jewish person, as opposed to a German, in order to avoid what Reydt calls "false political correctness."

"Diese Story muß ein Jud schreiben. Rotzfrech. Voller Chapuse – kein zaghafter Goj wie du. Aus deiner Feder fließt nur die Kamille politischer Korrektheit" (61). When Keller brings up his friend Moische, Reydt is delighted, "[…] Bernstein, köstlich." Reydt hob die Arme. "Ein Juden-Name, wie von'ner PR-Agentur kreirt"(62).

> [...] „Manfred Bern? Das ist doch kein jüdischer Name! Der Bursche heißt doch anders." [...] „Unsere Leser wollen einen Juden! Also geben wir ihnen einen! Der Bursche heißt bei uns Bernstein. Moritz Bernstein!" [...] „Moritz Bernstein?"
>
> Reydt hielt inne. „Wer weiß heutzutage, daß Moritz ein jüdischer Name ist? [...]"
>
> Der Chefredakteur setzte seinen Marsch fort. „...und gibt seinen Kindern biblische Namen: David, Miriam, Sara. Jeder Nazi-Enkel heißt heutzutage Moritz. Nein! Wir brauchen einen eindeutigen Markennamen. Moische Bernstein?"
>
> Keller sah seinen Chefredakteur an. „Ist das nicht denunzierend?"

„Denunzierend ist allein deine Dummheit, Keller!“ Reydt dachte kurz nach. Seine Miene hellte sich auf. „Es kann gar nicht denunzierend genug sein, du Laumann. Wir werden deinen Juden so markieren, daß ihn jeder erkennt. Wir werden ihn Moische Israel Bernstein nennen.“ (75)[72]

Reydt ascribes to Moische a new cultural identity, an identity he believes to be unmistakably Jewish, an identity that makes Moische recognizable as Jewish for the larger non-Jewish German community. Here, the “de-Jewification” Moische has established in the beginning of the book by changing his name to Manfred Bern is revised by the editor-in-chief and even taken a step further. The editor adds the middle name “Israel,” which as Keller points out, had been a strategy of the Nazi regime during the Third Reich to stigmatize Jewish citizens.

Reydt targets this strategy for the exact same reason. He wants Moische’s name to be a label; a label that makes him unequivocally identifiable as Jew. Reydt’s choice of name elucidates his “understanding” of Moische’s cultural heritage, which is based on stereotypes and prejudice. For Reydt it is clear that his writer needs a “Jewish” name, implying that there are names uniquely designated for Jewish people and assuming that Jewish people need to be identified with those names. But according to Reydt, it is not just he who has certain expectations of a writer; it is also “the readers” who want “a Jew.”

[72] “This story needs to be written by a Jew. Sassy. With chapuse – not a cautious goijm like you. Only political correctness comes from your pen” (61).
“Manfred Bern? That’s no Jewish name! The chap has a different name.” […] “Our readers want a Jew! So we will present them with one. We’ll call him Bernstein. Moritz Bernstein!” […] “Moritz Bernstein?” Reydt paused “Who knows nowadays that Moritz is a Jewish name?” (62).
The editor in chief continued his rampage “…and give their children Jewish names: David, Miriam, Sara. Every Nazi grandchild is named Moritz these days. No! We need a distinct brand name. Moische Bernstein?”
Keller looked at his editor-in-chief. “Isn’t that denouncing?”
“Your stupidity is denouncing, Keller!” Reydt briefly thought about it. “It can’t be denouncing enough, you fool. We’ll label your Jew in such a way that everybody will be able to recognize him. We’ll call him Moische Israel Bernstein” (75).

This statement underlines the notion that besides Reydt's own prejudiced understanding of Judaism, the general non-Jewish German public craves Jewish writers, and these writers, according to Reydt, need to be easily identifiable. This episode illustrates the idea of naming as a form of identity ascription and also shows that this ascription might not always be in control of a subject, but rather transforming the subject through this process into an object, into a product that has to be sold with a "brand name," an exaggerated commodification of Moische's Jewish heritage. Moische's heritage becomes a template for Reydt's fantasies about Judaism, pressing Moische into his understanding of what he believes to be a "Musterjude." And Reydt even pushes Moische's "Jewification" one step further, from a linguistic to a visual level. He orders a "make over" for Moische's picture, modifying Moische's picture to what he believes to be the public expectations of Jewish appearance: dark eyes, dark eyelids, big lips and so forth. The saddest part is that Moische is willingly agreeing to this transformation, because one of the most important things for him is to be recognized by his environment and to become a famous journalist.

Moische is worried that in another country no one would care about his opinion, but in Germany, he assumes, people have to listen because he is Jewish and in his opinion, and as portrayed throughout the novel, the "Jewish voice" occupies a particular significance, Moische tries to take advantage of. Being heard is of utmost importantce to him, and he is willing to compromise his opinion for fame. His craving for recognition puts him in a position where he has to produce what is controversial. Where he is supposed to say, "what only a Jew can say." This understanding that some things can only be said by Jews for example and the "addiction" of Germans towards Jewish topics

make it possible in the first place for Moische to start his second attempt at becoming a journalist.

> Die deutschen Mörderseelen sind süchtig nach jüdischen Themen. Ihre Zeitschriften quellen über mit Artikeln von jüdischen Autoren. Jacobson, Schneeweiss, Broder, Wolffsohn, Brumlik, Biller, Seligmann und die anderen Idioten können schmieren, was sie wollen, die Deutschen sind darauf versessen, den Tinnef zu lesen. (45)[73]

In this context Moische can be seen as "le juif imaginaire" par excellence, using the suffering of the victims of the Shoah for his own intention. By creating such a complex and ruthless character Seligmann also is exploring a taboo. He is creating an unlikable, selfish, and morally questionable protagonist.

In connection with this negative depiction the question of a linguistic "taboo" should be explored. The narrative perspective of *Der Musterjude* shifts between the commentary of an omniscient narrator and a stream of consciousness of multiple characters. The questions of what one can *say* and what one *thinks* are dismantled in various passages. Here the obvious connection between language usage and thought are explored. Edna Andrews argues in regard to Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf's hypothesis that "each language creates a grid of reality that impresses some restrictions on the speaker's perception of external (or extralinguistic) reality" (392). According to Andrews, taboo refers to situations in which words can only be used in certain circumstances or by certain people (394). One can continue to argue that some words are charged with a particular meaning and when used in certain contexts reveal a political or

[73] The German's murderous souls are addicted to Jewish topics. All of their newspapers are crowded with articles written by Jewish authors. Jacobson, Schneeweiss, Broder, Wolffsohn, Brumlik, Biller, Seligmann and all the other idiots can write whatever they want. The Germans are obsessed with reading their trash.

personal agenda. In this context Reydt's assumptions reveal not only his personal anti-Semitic sentiment, but also his expectation for the audience of his magazine. He wants his new writer to be unmistakably identifiable as Jewish. But as he points out, the knowledge of the non-Jewish German audience of what is Jewish is very limited and probably only related to the Holocaust and Nazi regime. Reydt consciously decides to allude to this problematic understanding of Judaism rather than challenging it, neither does Moshe question this repugnant repetition of anti-Semitic stereotypes.

This episode combines the aspects of political correctness, the notion of taboo, as well as anti-Semitic prejudice. Moische as regular German would be of no value to the editor-in-chief who wants to publish provocative stories in order to sell more copies of his magazine. Ironically that is where his and Moische's desire meet: they both seek popularity and success at all costs. Moische is willing to take on another form of being a "Musterjude." Instead of being a faithful member of the Jewish community he plays along with the non-Jewish German understanding of how Jewish people are identifiable. Recognition in this context comes with a price: In order to be recognized as a critical writer Moische sacrifices his integrity and yields to the anti-Semitic fantasies of a sensationalist German society that seems to accept Jewish writers only when they play a particular stereotyped role and propagate questionable opinions.

The German obsession with topics related to the Shoah somehow overshadows other xenophobic attacks and racist rhetoric targeted against other minority groups in Germany, a problem that Seligmann skillfully incorporates in his novel. The figure of Fatima Örsel-Obermayr not only embodies the perspective of the Muslim minority groups in Germany but also presents a rhetoric used by pro-Palestinian left-wing activists

used to criticize the state of Israel. In the light of growing xenophobia in Germany after unification, Jeffery M. Peck asks if one should, "differentiate among the groups that are the object of hostility because they are viewed as *fremd*, and if so, what the difference means?" He further points out that, "(t)hese questions are not merely semantic but address the differing roles, statuses, and histories that these groups have in Germany" (Peck 131). One could argue that since color of skin or other obviously remarkable superficial features are crucial for recognition and identification, non-orthodox European Jews are more difficult to identify as the "Other" than, for example, an immigrant from Namibia. Furthermore, the history of Jewish-German intellectual exchange and the Christian-Jewish connection supposedly brings these cultures closer together.

For example Hans-Peter Friedrich, Germany's Secretary of the Interior, argues that Germany is based on a Jewish-Christian tradition claiming that there is, "no proof that Islam is part of the German tradition" (*Sueddeutsche Zeitung*). The question that emerges out of this statement is: "Who is the real 'Other" in German society?"

This question also plays an important role in Seligmann's novel when the protagonist Moische Bernstein is confronted in a TV interview with journalist Fatima Örsel-Obermayr. She asks him provocatively: "Sie wollen uns also weis machen, daß die Juden ein Monopol aufs Leiden besitzen, während wir Ausländer in Deutschland das Paradies auf Erden haben?" (81).

Here the character Örsel-Obermayr makes a clear distinction between the Jews in Germany and the foreigners; for her they do not occupy the same position. She confronts Moische with the Israel-Palestine conflict and accuses him of having killed innocent

Palestinian children, not leaving him a chance to clarify or justify his actions (84/85). She attacks him and the state of Israel:

> Herr Bernstein, versuchen Sie nicht, unsere Zuschauer für dumm zu verkaufen! Verbiegen Sie nicht die Tatsachen. Sie wissen genau, daß es gegenwärtig nur einen Völkermord gibt. Er ereignet sich seit einem halben Jahrhundert in Palästina. Seine Opfer sind unschuldige arabische Frauen, Kinder, Greise und Männer. Die Täter sind Juden. Juden wie Sie! (85)[74]

Here Örsel-Obermayr tries to twist Moische's claim that another Holocaust is possible and reduces the world's ongoing struggles to a Jewish-Palestinian problem, when in fact there are other genocides happening in the world. She tries to generalize Jewish crimes, just as Moische tried to generalize German crimes and German anti-Semitism. Here the importance of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism is clearly challenged through Örsel-Obermayr's statements. On the other side, this dialogue reveals a latent anti-Semitism often performed by left-wing activists and politicians and even by the extreme right. The Israel-Palestine situation is often used to make general assumptions about Judaism and to additionally negate the importance of the Shoah in a political discourse. The argument of genocide in this context is also a matter of political correctness and to compare Israel and the NS regime is a faux pas in German society. It goes along with the notion of Jewish victimhood and the German promise to support Israel post-World War II. Here Seligmann also elaborates on the idea that there are topics and rhetorical strategies that are "taboo." In this context German-Jewish identity is positioned against other minority groups as well as the German-Jewish past. The status of victimhood is contrasted with the

[74] Mr. Bernstein, please don't try to fool the audience! Don't bend the facts. You know that currently there is only one genocide. For half a century it takes place in Palestine. It's victims are innocent Arabic women, children, elderly people and men. The perpetrators are Jews. Jews like you!

role of the perpetrator. Jewish suffering is pitted against the misery of the Palestinians in Israel, consolidating the Jewish community into one homogenous group, rather than looking at these instances separately.

Identity Politics

Seligmann's novel equally challenges the stereotypical understanding of what is Jewish and what is German. In this story, one cannot be identified without the other. Interestingly enough, Jewish identity is not a common denominator, at least not for the Jewish characters in the book. They distinguish among Jewish people living in Germany, the Jewish community who migrated to the United States, Holocaust survivors, and Israelis. This division additionally challenges Moische's understanding of his self and his self-determination shifts throughout the book.

The question of how Moische sees his own identity and the identity of the Jewish community is partly explored in chapter 11. Moische positions himself on the question of Jewish identity when he gives a talk about "Juden in Deutschland oder deutsche Juden? Jüdische Identität nach Auschwitz" ["Jews in Germany or German Jews? Jewish identity after Auschwitz"] (215). Through his stream of consciousness it is apparent that Moische is tired of this debate and only agrees to this talk because he is bored in his hotel room.

> Das Thema langweilte ihn. Die ewige Identitätsdebatte langweilte ihn. Und der Selbstbetrug! Die hiesigen Juden redeten sich ein, sie seien nur auf der Durchreise. Sie säßen auf gepackten Koffern. „Nach mehr als einem halben Jahrhundert sind unsere Koffer durchgesessen", rief Moische. „Uns geht's hier gut. Wir denken nicht daran nach Israel

auszuwandern. Wir leben und sterben in Deutschland, Deutsch ist unsere Sprache. Also sind wir deutsche Juden. Alles andere ist Schwindel!“ (215)[75]

The question of how to live as a Jew in the land of perpetrators (Mörderland) is included in a later scene when Moische's inner monologue reveals his own uncertainty:

> Warum hocke ich hier im Mörderland? Eisner, Luxemburg, Rathenau hatten vor Auschwitz gelebt. Aber nach Hitler als Jude in Deutschland zu vegetieren, ist selbstdestruktiv. [...] Wohin soll ich gehen? Wer nimmt mich in Amerika oder Israel wahr? In Deutschland werde ich wenigstens gehört. Deutschland ist meine Heimat – wenigstens die deutsche Sprache! (228).[76]

The question of how to live in Germany after Auschwitz becomes a question that challenges the understanding of his self. It becomes clear in both episodes that this question is a difficult one. On the one hand, there is a relation to Germany through language and culture, but at the same time there is an uncertainty and mistrust resulting from the Shoah. Mentioning the possibility of a German-Jewish identity, including both cultures equally, seems to be a rhetorical mistake in this more conservative Jewish setting. And it does not necessarily reflect Moische's behavior, which often shifts

[75] “The topic bored him. The everlasting debate about identity bored him. And this self-deception! The local Jews were telling themselves that they were only traveling through. They'd be stitting on packed bags. “After more than half a century our bags are sat through,” Moische yelled. “We are doing well here. We are not thinking about migrating to Israel. We live and die in Germany. German is our language. Therefore we are German Jews. Everything else is a lie!“ (215).

[76] Why was he sitting in the land of murderers? Eisner, Luxemburg, Rathenau lived prior to Auschwitz. But after Hitler to live in Germany was self-destructive. [...] Where should I go? Who recognizies me in America or in Israel? In Germany, at least I'm heard. Germany is my home – at least the German language! (228).

between identifying as Jewish or German, as the latter episode shows. This becomes obvious when Moische tries to turn away from the journalistic debates about the German-Jewish past and he thinks that he can get rid of the "Judenballast" (233). The narrator makes clear that this is not an option.

> Wie seine deutschen und jüdischen Landleute wollte Moische nicht wahrhaben, daß die eigene Herkunft sich nicht wie Sperrmüll abladen läßt. Sie kehrt von der Deponie der Ängste, Vorurteile und Gewohnheiten stets auf neue zurück. (234)[77]

In this context heritage is closely linked to identity and this quote also converys the idea that we can neither choose our heritage nor can we get rid of it. We cannot escape the shadows of our past. We cannot determine ourselves how we want to be perceived.

One reason why Moische does not leave Germany is his desire to be recognized by his society and to become a famous journalist. He is worried that in another country no one would care about his opinion, but in Germany, he assumes, people have to listen because he is Jewish and in his opinion, and as portrayed throughout the novel, the "Jewish voice" occupies a particular significance Moische tries to take advantage of.

Language and its use which were supposed to make him heard, become a tool, a tool that turn him more and more into what his editor wants him to be, the "Musterjude." Moische knows what he is doing is unethical and will cause trouble in the Jewish community, but he is willing to risk it, in order to become famous. However, it is not Moische's creativity or his investigative journalism that make him famous, it is his

[77] "Just like his German and Jewish compatriots he did not want to accept that one cannot get rid of one's heritage like old furniture. It will always return from the landfill of fear, prejudice, and habits" (234).

fulfilling a public role. His performance of what the German media understand or expect of a controversial Jewish writer, who will increase the circulation of the magazine and will get as many new readers as possible. His search for recognition determines his writing and his work as a journalist to the point where he is nothing more than a cliché.

Moische embodies the complexity of German-Jewish identity, and at the same time the process of defining oneself. Throughout the novel, he establishes more than just one identity, switching back and forth between his Jewish heritage and the concomitant expectations of his mother, the identity assigned by his German environment and its prejudiced understanding of Judaism, and his personal desire for fame driven by his megalomaniac ideas of his personal genius.

However, during the course of the novel it becomes even more clear that his identity is determined mainly through the identity ascription of others and that he can only operate within these limits. In other words, Moische is not his own agent; his identity is determined by his environment, namely by his mother and his colleagues. They assign him multiple identities. It becomes clear that they all have their own understanding of what a Musterjude is. The narrator introduces the protagonist as Moische Bernstein. This creates a tension and opposition between the Germanized "Manfred" on the one side and the Jewish heritage transmitted by his name "Moische," the Hebrew form of Moses. In this context, both names support the essence of the culture that they are purporting to represent. The narrator's commentary puts most inner monologues of the characters in perspective.

Throughout the course of the novel it becomes clear that there are two diffenet kinds of characters: Some of them, Moische for example, are conflicted with the question

of Jewish-German identity, wondering whether they are able to find a compromise that is based on inclusion. Other, such as Hanna and Reydt, clearly separate the two identities and see them biologically and traditionally determined and incompatible. Within these parameters Moische's attempts at of self-determination fail. He is reduced to what people recognize him as. Hanna's expectation as well as Reydt's understanding of Moische's Jewishness convey the idea that there is such a thing as a "Musterjude." Moische even complains towards the end of the book that his mother tried to raise him as such. In this context the ambiguity of the term "Musterjude" becomes clear.

Within the novel through the tool of exaggeration the characters become stereotypes themselves, partly based on anti-Semitic stereotypes. Hanna can be read as the overbearing mother, Moische the ambitious pseudo-journalist, but also the non-Jewish German characters are stereotypes. Heiner Keller embodies the spirit of the philo-semite, until his friend wrongs him and his unconscious anti-Semitism, which Seligmann assumes to be embedded in German society, surfaces. Kurt Reydt embodies the spirit of right-wing conservatives and their rhetoric about the taboos that cannot be voiced by Germans. It becomes clear that Moische is among these formative forces and he tries to balance these expectations and attempts to align them with and use them for his own desires. Recognition in this context is a dynamic process that is difficult to balance and that revokes to be controllable. After all, this is what Moische embodies: an object to his mother's and Kurt Reydt's fantasies. Recognition manifests itself as undeniably important. It determines not only Moische's security, but also his own personal success. Despite the fact that this novel approaches the topic of identity formation and construction in a satirical manner, this approach amplifies the tools of recognition such as

names and family heritage and takes a strong stance on the question of whether there is an inclusive German-Jewish identity beyond the hyphen. There is none, at least according to the characters in Seligmann's novel. The novel presents the understanding of most characters as an "either-or" attitude. You are either German or you are Jewish, but what exactly constitutes a German-Jewish person is questioned. Moische, maybe the only character who tries to embody both, fails to be recognized as such and is often reduced to his Jewish heritage, despite the fact that he is not very religious and seems to care little about his status within the Jewish community in Germany. Self-determination is beyond reach.

CHAPTER VII

FINN-OLE HEINRICH'S *RÄUBERHÄNDE*

Among the selected authors, Finn-Ole Heinrich stands out for several reasons: Compared to the other authors, Heinrich is relatively young and just recently began his career as author.[78] Further, Heinrich was born and raised in Northern Germany and therefore has no "migration background." Heinrich's novel *Räuberhände* is taught in schools in Hamburg as an example of a young adolescence novel dealing with issues of identity and migration (Tscherniak 1). His novel provides an interesting alternative perspective on this topic, revealing issues within the narrative in relation to matters of recognition. The novel provides an exemplary case for an appropriation of a supposedly foreign perspective and the silencing of marginalized voices. However, within the story the aspect of migration background often seems forced and almost as an attempt to make the overall story more interesting.[79]

Recognition within his novel is solely in the hands of the first-person narrator who provides an intriguing, yet extremely problematic outlook on the world surrounding him. The narrator's perspective reveals a tension between challenging a latent colonial attitude yet in some instances reaffirming it and a tension between questioning classism

[78] Heinrich entered the literary stage in 2005 with the publication of his first short story collection *Die Taschen voll Wasser*. http://www.finnoleheinrich.de/finn/

[79] In an interview with Peter Reichenbach, Heinrich admits that the question of "Migration und Heimat" was added later to the plot and was influenced by his interactions with a Turkish fellow student. Heinrich points out that: "Mich haben ihre Fragen und ihre Wirren fasziniert, das Hin- und Hergerissensein zwischen zwei Kulturen, die Unklarheit, ob man woanders ein anderer geworden wäre. Fragen, die man sich mit einer relative eindeutigen Herkunft (wie meiner) wohl nicht oder wenigstens nicht mit dieser Intensität stellt" (Reichenbach Interview).

yet perpetuating "Sozialromantik."[80] The narrator's perspective is closely tied to a very traditional understanding of the core family, and the exotization of "the Other," yet there are moments within the text where the narrator tries to escape such paradigms. Because of this problematic tension and the issue of reproducing clichés rather than dismantling them, Heinrich's novel shows how important the narrator's perspective is within the context of recognition, and how ideological and aesthetical aspects influence such a narrative.

Born in 1982, Heinrich works as a free-lance writer and in his short period of literary work he has become an acknowledged and prestigious writer, receiving multiple prizes, such as the "Niedersächsischer Förderpreis für Literatur" (2008). Only little has been written about Heinrich, and the secondary literature on his work consists only of teacher's manuals for German classes. One can assume that this is mainly due to the fact that his writing career just recently started, and it further relates to the genre of his work, as he mainly writes young adult fiction. *Räuberhände* is described as "einfühlsames Psychogramm" on Heinrich's official webpage.[81] Unfortunately, this relates only to the main protagonist, the first-person narrator Janik. His development is central to the plot and is contrasted with his observations in regard to his "Erzählobjekten." Besides the perspective of the first-person narrator, the novel fails to provide space for marginalized voices, such as the voices of Bubu, an alcoholic who lives off of welfare, Irene, the alcoholic mother of the narrator's best friend, and Samuel, the narrator's best friend.

[80] The accusation of drifting off into clichés and romanticizing of social problems are aspects emphasized by some literary critics reviewing Heinrich's novel (Wirag, Der mit den Räuberhänden). Confronted with such accusations Heinrich states: "Natürlich besteht die Gefahr, in Sozialromantik abzudriften, aber das Risiko muss man eingehen: Dafür bekommt man auch die Chance, das alles zu umschiffen und mit neuen Ansichten zu überraschen" (Wirag, Keine Angst vor Klischees).

[81] http://www.finnoleheinrich.de/finn/

The center of the plot focuses on the friendship of two young men: Janik, coming from a well-educated, German middle-class family, and Samuel, coming from a lower-class background. Because of Samuel's mother's issues, mainly her alcoholism, Samuel spends most of his time at Janik's house. Janik's parents provide him with a second home and stability. This contrasting nature between the two characters is the crucial constitutive element of the story. Samuel and Janik serve as antagonists—the difference in how these two young men approach the world around them and how they are dealing with very different childhood experiences serves as the main plot thread throughout the story. Both characters are constructed as opposites, yet they share a common problem: they are both trying to emancipate themselves from the shadow cast by their parental home (Richter / Widmann 53).

The book is divided into twenty chapters of different lengths preceded by short parenthesized descriptions. These brief descriptions refer to the situation of Samuel and in the narrator's present, in which Janik clears out Samuel's old apartment. Within the chronological structure of the story these insertions have a greater presence. While the main story is told in flashbacks and does not necessarily follow a clear chronological order, these snapshots provide an insight into the outcome of the main story; they foreshadow the final outcome. Overall there are four timelines embedded in the narrative: the childhood and youth of the characters, Janik's 20th birthday, the young men's journey to Istanbul, and the clearing out of Irene's apartment (Richter / Widmann 39).

Heinrich's novel can be classified as an "Adoleszenzroman." The center of the novel focuses on the personal development and moral growth of the characters, here mainly Janik's growth or more likely, the lack of it, but also Samuel's journey. The story

starts right after Janik's 20th birthday and his and Samuel's high-school graduation. Finally free from any obligations, both go on a trip to Istanbul together to search for Samuel's father. Within the novel, Janik's 20th birthday represents a "turning point" for two reasons: first, it marks Janik's transition from his teenage years to young adulthood. Secondly, it marks the day Janik takes sexual advantage of Samuel's drunken mother. This incident will cause a serious rupture in their friendship. This fact is revealed only toward the middle of the story and which functions within the narrative structure to build up suspense.

Adolescence and Recognition

Erikson's research has shown that the adolescence period, the transition from puberty to young adulthood, is crucial in the identity formation process (yet it does not, as Erikson suggests, conclude this process). The term adolescence describes the end of childhood and the becoming of adulthood and is used in various disciplines, such as medicine, anthropology, psychology, education and others. Closely connected to this term is the development of sexual and physical maturity (Gansel 131).

German literary scholar Carsten Gansel describes the development and importance of the term adolescence literature in detail, working out the main features of the contemporary young adult novel. While the concept is closely tied to the *Bildungsroman* and other developmental forms of narrative, the adolescence novel focuses primarily on this particular transition period, the youth's process of emancipation from their parents?, and questions traditional values and experiences. Typical themes of this genre include the transgression from childhood to adulthood and the first sexual

encounters, the emancipation process and questioning of the family heritage and its values and norms, and the development of social relationships (Gansel 141), all of these themes can be observed in Heinrich's novel.

Within the literary scholarship, Gansel marks three different periods that seem to reflect a certain sense of historicism. He locates the first phase within the 1980s in relation to the tradition of the adolescence novel in the 18th century (for example Goethe's *Werther* and Karl Phillip Moritz' *Anton Reiser*). Within this scholarship, the focus lies on the 'young (male) hero' who is faced with an existential crisis. One of the changes Gansel notes within the modern adolescence novel is the shift towards a psychoanalytical approach within the second period in the 1990s (Gansel 134). This second period is further characterized by its focus and shift towards female protagonists and new constructions of femininity. The end of the 1990, according to Gansel, marks a further shift toward a (post)modern adolescence novel. Here, a new "Erzählgeneration" emerges that is returning to epic forms of narrating.[82]

In regard to Mario Erdheim's ethno-psychoanalytical study concerning adolescence and culture, Gansel works out the importance of the adolescence period for the understanding of culture. In this context the adolescence period is seen as a "second chance." Experiences made in early childhood now can be corrected; the individual receives the chance to try new ways of life and choose their own way (Gansel 138). This aspect of a "second chance" becomes crucial in Heinrich's novel and corresponds with Samuel's attempts to create a new, alternative identity. Erdheim argues that during the

[82] Gansel further notes that this period also marks a return to the analysis of *Kunstmärchen* and other romantic texts within literary scholarship, focusing particularly on Novalis and E.T.A. Hoffmann. In this context the awakening of male sexuality and the question of moral are investigated (136)—a connection that is also very important for Heinrich's novel.

period of adolescence, the individual transgresses from "the order of the family" to the "order of culture:"

> Es geht darum, die Herkunftsfamilie mit ihren Mythen, Werten und Einstellungen zu relativieren, sie als sinngebende Instanz zu überwinden und sich im fremden System der Kultur zu orientieren und neu zu definieren. (Erdheim zitiert nach Gansel 138)[83]

In Heinrich's novel, this process is embedded and pushed further in Samuel's behavior. Not only is he attempting to define himself outside the realm of his family heritage, but also outside of the realm of German culture. Living in a more and more cosmopolitan society, Samuel explores other choices offered to him, such as the potential cultural heritage of his absent father.

Since Samuel is denied a social recognition beyond his mother's stigma, he is exploring other alternatives, here provided in the form of his absent father's cultural identity. Finally at an age where he can more or less make his own decisions, Samuel is capable of trying out new forms of identification. In the novel, as well as in Gansel's theory, the adolescence period is a phase in which alternative concepts are tested out and eventually values and modes of behavior are re-evaluated.

Erdheim points out that in the context of the industrial society, the process of adolescence is marked by its potential to be extended (Gansel 139), and this aspect can be seen in compliance with Lenzen's critique of "plastic identities." In this context, the discovery of culture and the experimenting on one's own creativity becomes more important than complying with normativity and the limitations of it. In how far Samuel's

[83] "It is about relativizing the values, myths, and mindset of the family of origin. It is an attempt to overcome the family as meaning-producing institution and to align oneself with the system of culture and to redefine oneself."

testing out of an alternative culture is tied to normative concepts will be crucial for the analysis of Samuel's attempts of self-determination and Janik's judgment of it.

Attempting to locate the adolescence novel between modernity and post-modernity, Gansel refers to Heinrich Kaulen's argument that in these texts "the family as operational framework and point of reference loses meaning for the development of the protagonist" (Gansel 140). This can only be partially argued for Heinrich's novel. The novel provides a challenging tension between the family as one of the most important point of references and its determination of how the characters understand themselves. Additionally the family and its reputation are also established as a recognition factor for how the surrounding society perceives the main characters. Taking into account the importance of the family as a point of reference, the lack of a feminine perspective within the novel, and the revival of the male protagonist and his struggle for establishing manhood, Heinrich's novel shows how post-modern notions of self-determination and affluent identity concepts are competing with a more traditional understanding of the world. After all, the first-person narrator's perspective is a particular male perspective, including the objectification of the female characters. Further the choices the characters are granted in regard to self-determination are rather limited and influenced by an essentialist understanding of culture. *Räuberhände* therefore promotes a rather old-fashioned and romantic understanding of identity. It further establishes a disillusioning outlook on the recognition issue perpetuating a very limited scope of action in which the first-person narrator is the established authority and other protagonists are exposed to his perception of the world. Therefore the analysis of the narrator's perspective and the connection to the recognition process are crucial, namely his positioning towards the

construction of social status, the construction of femininity and motherhood, and the exotization of his friend Samuel.

Perspective Matters

In regard to recognition, the most challenging aspect of Heinrich's novel starts with the narrative perspective. In their educational material serving as an instruction for teachers covering *Räuberhände* in school, Till Richter and Stefanie Widmann describe this issue as follows:

> Bezieht man inhaltlich mit ein, dass es sich bei diesem Ich-Erzähler um einen jungen Mann nach dem Abitur handelt, der noch keine Berufspläne hat, dessen beste Freundschaft gerade zerbrochen ist, der sich emotional und sexuell noch ausprobiert, der ein äußerst ambivalentes Verhältnis zu seinen Eltern hat und somit keinesfalls—wenn dies überhaupt möglich ist—auf festen Füßen im Leben steht, ist die Konsequenz für die Erzählung klar. Janik kann über seine Freundschaft zu Samuel und die entscheidenden Erlebnisse der Haupthandlung gar nicht so berichten, wie sie tatsächlich waren, weil er—ob bewusst oder unbewusst—durch ihre Folgen beeinflusst ist. Der Text bildet eine Erklärung dieser Ereignisse, vielleicht eine Entschuldigung. Janik versucht, Gründe zu finden und zu erklären, was passiert ist. Dieser apologetische Zug des Textes bedeutet für die Behandlung des Werkes vor allem eines: Jede Aussage über den Roman *Räuberhände* muss unter dem Vorbehalt stehen: "wie Janik es darstellt." Wie Samuel wirklich ist, was tatsächlich geschehen und wer

letztendlich verantwortlich ist, kann der Leser nicht klären. Dies liegt auch nicht in der Intention des Romans. (13-14)[84]

Widmann and Richter position the narrator of the novel as a young man in a transition period who experiences instability and therefore lacks orientation. His perception is driven by his sexual maturing and the objectification of the female body, and in this context, the questioning of moral norms. Widmann and Richter further emphasize the "apologetic tone" of the novel and the narrator's constant attempts to justify his questionable behavior. Widmann and Richter see these as indicators to label the first-person narrator as an unreliable narrator. This conclusion seems consequential; the narrator is aware of his wrongdoings and partially seeks to take responsibility. In a fight with his friend he admits "Ich hab Scheiße gebaut" (110). Whether this matters in the context of the protagonists' friendship or not, is beside the point, but it clearly demonstrates the narrator's admission of guilt. This is important to note because the text is dominated by the narrator's understanding of morale. He is established as the descriptive authority of the text that is particularly supported through the mode of his descriptions.

Rather than directly engaging with people, Janik likes to observe his environment, particularly people in socially lower classes, like Samuel's mother, Irene: "Ich will nicht

[84] "Taking it into account in regard to the context that the first-person narrator is a young man, right after high-school graduation who has no job prospective, whose friendship with his best friend was just shattered, who still experiments emotionally and sexually, and who has a very ambivalent relationship to his parents, and therefore—if this is even possible—is not grounded, the consequence for the narrative becomes clear. Janik cannot account for the friendship and the most important aspects of the main plot as they really happened, because they influence him, either consciously or subconsciously. The text provides an explanation of the events, maybe an apology. Janik tries to find reasons to explain what happens. The apologetic gesture of the text means particularly one thing for the narration: every statement in regard to *Räuberhände* must be made with the following reservation: 'It's how Janik depicts it.' The true nature of Samuel, what really happened, and who is responsible cannot be explained by the reader. This is by no means the intention of the novel" (13-14).

mit ihr sprechen, sie vor allem nicht berühren, ich will sie nur sehen" (Heinrich 148).[85] On multiple occasions, Janik observes people, mainly people he considers fascinating. His preferred "objects" are people who move on the margins of society, such as Bubu, an older man who lives on welfare and spends his day drunk. In this context, visualization becomes crucial. Janik frequently takes on the role of a spectator, not being an active part of the events, but narrating from a safe distance. The verbs he uses, such as *sehen* [to see] and *beobachten* [to observe] are mainly verbs referring to vision and they transmit a perceptive mode in which the characters are reduced to objects of Janik's fantasies:

> Ich sitze im Café und sehe Irene von weitem zu. Samuel hat mich schon einmal erwischt, wie ich seine Mutter beobachte, ich will nicht, dass er mich noch mal dabei sieht. Er würde es nur wieder falsch verstehen. „Du bist nicht im Zoo und sie ist kein Tier," hat er damals gesagt und war scheißwütend. Das muss nicht noch mal sein. Ich trinke Kaffee und sehe ihr ins Gesicht, sehe sie lächeln, wenn man ihr Geld in die Hand legt, ein geschäftiges Lächeln, das sie sich zugelegt hat. (21-22)[86]

This scene introduces Janik as spectator, holding the position of an observer. Both he and Irene are in the same area, but instead of approaching her, he is watching her "von weitem," while she is begging on the street. The fact that Samuel has caught him before implies that this is not an untypical situation. Janik feels guilty for his behavior, but not because of his objectifications, but because he is worried that Samuel will catch him

[85] "I do not want to talk to her, especially not touch her; I just want to see her" (Heinrich 148).

[86] "I am sitting in a coffee shop and observing Irene from a distance. Samuel once caught me in how I was observing his mother, I do not want him to catch me again. He'd only misunderstand it again. "You're not in the zoo and she is not an animal," he said and was really angry. I don't need this situation to happen again. I am drinking coffee and I look into her face, I see her smile, when people put money in her hands, a busy smile she acquired" (Heinrich 21-22).

again. Irene, as Samuel points out, becomes an object of interest, almost like an animal in a zoo. It might be this objectification on Janik's part that enables him to later take advantage of her. In his world, she is not the mother of his friend, but a social case study. Janik's objectification of Irene also hints at the difference in social status of Irene and Janik. While he is privileged enough to actually sit in a coffee shop, she has to sit on the street and ask people for money. While she struggles for her survival, he is able to observe her from a safe distance and within a safe space. Janik cannot perceive Irene as a human being, but only as an object and through her status as classless subhuman, as "Pennermutter meines besten Freundes" (Heinrich 107).

Social Stigma and Recognition

The aspect of difference in social class is mainly elaborated in juxtaposition between Janik and Samuel and is closely tied the different experiences both have with their larger social context. While Janik is perceived as "Lehrersohn" Samuel is regularly referred to as "Pennersohn." It is Janik himself who claims social superiority over his friend disguising it in a joking way. Throughout the course of the novel, Janik refers to Samuel as "Adoptivkind," as "Pennersohn" and "Gastarbeiterkind," connecting Samuel's social status to Samuel's family status. As the narrator points out, these references are Samuel's "wunder Punkt," a place where he is easily hurt. These references remind him of circumstances he is not responsible for, but that are dominating his life and determining how he is perceived and what he is capable of achieving (Heinrich 5). This social stigma, as the narrator points out, is indeed Samuel's "sore spot." It speaks to the problematic relationship he has with his mother and how being recognized in this context

limits Samuel's agency. According to the narrator Samuel lives in constant fear that people see him as an extension of his alcoholic mother. The narrator comments, "Sein wunder Punkt, die ständige Angst, man würde ihn als Verlängerung seiner Mutter betrachten. Manchmal denkt er es sogar bei mir" (Heinrich 67).[87] And the novel shows: Samuel's fear is justified, not only refers the narrator to him with these derogative terms, but Samuel is frequently judged based on his social heritage. It makes him an easy target for attacks as the following episode illustrates:

> Zwei Mädchen haben einem anderen Mädchen ein paar Sachen geklaut und sie in Samuels Schulranzen gesteckt. Dann haben sie erst das Mädchen auf die fehlenden Sachen aufmerksam gemacht und danach dem Lehrer erzählt, wie sie Samuel vorhin an der Tasche des Mädchens gesehen hätten. Samuel musste zum Direktor und unser Lehrer hat ihn vor der ganzen Klasse fertig gemacht. […] Heute denke ich, unser Lehrer wollte ihn erziehen. Ich glaube, er sah sich in der pädagogischen Pflicht, dem Pennersohnmal deutlich aufzuzeigen, was Recht und Unrecht war. (Heinrich 22-23)[88]

He is recognized as a criminal based on his mother's social condition and is directly exposed to his teacher's judgment. This episode supports the notion that children's heritage is closely tied to how they are perceived in the larger community and

[87] "It's his sore spot. The constant fear people see him as extension of his mother. Sometimes he assumes I also am looking at him this way."

[88] "Two girls stole items from another girl and put them into Samuel's backpack. Afterwards they made the girl aware that her things were missing and they told the teacher that they saw how Samuel had approached the girl's bag. Samuel had to talk to the principal and our teacher yelled at him in front of the entire class. […] Today I think our teacher wanted to teach him a lesson. He saw it as his pedagogical duty to tell the "Pennersohn" what was right and wrong" (Heinrich 22-23).

that others believe they can treat them accordingly. It shows that within the novel, family, in addition to socialization, also functions as protection. Children without a proper home become an easy prey and are exposed to different kinds of dangers from those of well-protected children. Based on his social upbringing, Samuel becomes an easy target for his teacher's judgment as well as for his peers. They choose him as target because of his social background. What becomes clear, though, is that based on the fact that his mother is "asozial" and is seen as a social outcast, Samuel is looking for other opportunities to create his own understanding of himself. Due to his mother's social status, Samuel knows he is an outsider. He is not part of the larger well-acknowledged German middle-class and therefore has to prove himself even more and is deprived of the same opportunities.

This episode is further contrasted with the opportunities Janik receives based on his upbringing. Perceived by his community as "aus gutem Hause," Janik has access to places and opportunities Samuel does not, for example, dating his girlfriend Lina, who has particularly protective parents, yet they accept Janik as her boyfriend. The narrator points out:

> Eigentlich dürfte ich niemals mit Lina zusammen sein. Aber weil mein großartiger Vater zufällig Linas Lehrer ist und ich nun mal der Sohn meines großartigen Vaters, geht das schon. Schon wieder dankbar sein. Ich komme aus gutem Haus, bin anständig und gebildet, ich darf kommen, wann ich will und sogar abends mit Abendbrot essen. […] Nur der Lehrersohn darf Lina küssen. Kein anderer dürfte das. (Heinrich 12)[89]

[89] "Technically I am not allowed to date Lina. But because my amazing father is coincidentally her teacher and I happen to be the son of my amazing father, that's okay. Again, I have to be grateful. I'm from a good family, I am proper and educated, I can enter the house whenever I want, even at nighttime during dinner

What is here described with the use of sarcasm, signalized by the repetitive use of the term "großartig," is the social status of Janik's father that seems to transfer unquestioned to his son. Because of his father's status, Janik is perceived as "educated" and "respectable." Because of his status, he is allowed to enter her house whenever he likes, eat dinner with the family, and even kiss the daughter of the house. Throughout the novel's course, it will become clear that Janik is nothing like a proper young man, eventually taking advantage of Lina's naiveté, exploiting her trust to convince her to engage in intercourse with him. Yet on a superficial level, he gains advantages based on a social heritage he inherited and to which he has contributed nothing.

This contrasting depiction of social recognition based on family heritage and social status supports the notion that recognition as presented within the novel limits and enables agency. The status of family plays an important role in this context and upbringing seems to be evaluated based on material aspects rather than behavior. Because Janik's father is a teacher, Janik is granted access to other middle-class families, an access that is not granted to his friend. In order to be recognized as a useful and proper member of society, Samuel has to try harder, but even despite his efforts to behave well and to demonstrate good manners, his environment recognizes him as "Pennersohn;" an identity ascription he cannot shake off, no matter how hard he tries. Since this identity is not desirable to Samuel and marks him as a social outcast, he attempts to create his own identity, mainly trying to ignore his mother and focusing on his absent father. Being aware of his outsider status he tries to manage his life as a social misfit. He tries to find

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with the family. Only the son of the teacher is allowed to kiss Lina. No other would be allowed to do this" (Heinrich 12).

an alternative explanation for his exclusion, an explanation that also offers a solution and a possibility of acceptance.

In this context, being recognized through family heritage is closely tied to the aspect of class affiliation. It dominates how people within the larger social context, friends of the family, the larger community, even educators at school, deal with the characters. It reveals unrighteousness connected to the recognition process: the process of assumption. Based on the social affiliation of the two young men assumptions are made: while the assumptions made about Janik work in his favor, the assumptions made about Samuel are hurtful and threaten his well-being. As the text reveals, the assumptions are wrong and say nothing about the "true" character of the boys.

Constructing Motherhood

An additional aspect closely tied to Samuel's family situation and marked by the use of the term "Adoptivkind," is the challenging situation of the absent father in addition to his unfit mother. Describing Samuel's family situation in comparison to his own family situation, the narrator further reveals a very heteronormative perspective on what constitutes a family and emphasizes the importance of the mother figure in his friend's identification process. In this context the narrator defines motherhood and introduces the concept of a "good mother" versus the concept of a "bad mother." In regard to Irene, Janik points out,

> Vielleicht ist sie keine gute Mutter, aber sie ist auch keine schlechte. Sie würde ihrem Kind niemals etwas antun, sie würde es immer schützen, so

gut sie könnte. Ich habe einmal erlebt, wie sie gekämpft hat. Für Samuel. Wie eine Löwenmutter. (Heinrich 22)[90]

Janik's comment attempts to show that Irene is not exclusively a bad mother, but sometimes cares for her son. On various occasions the narrator tries to create sympathy for her, depicting her as a fun-loving person. This also works hand in hand with the character for Irene the narrator is attempting to create. She is depicted as an irresponsible, but loveable alcoholic. This positive depiction is harshly contrasted with episodes in which Samuel has to save his mother from alcohol poisoning or in which Irene is depicted as clearly emotionally abusive. However, one category of being a good mother, according to the narrator, is that she would never harm her child. Apparently harm in this context is only related to physical pain, not emotional trauma.

However, within the text, all the responsibility for Samuel's situation is solely put onto the mother. This becomes particularly clear in the contrast established between the mother figure and the father figure. The dynamic between motherhood and fatherhood and the expectations connected to these roles expose a double-standard: While Irene's behavior as a mother is clearly depicted as failure, Samuel's father and his wrongful behavior are never morally challenged. Rather the opposite is the case—the father is manifested as exotic hero. There is no question within the text, when the boys speculate about Samuel's father, that the father had any choice but to leave the family. The circumstances that he was apparently married before meeting Irene and his leaving without a proper explanation or as much as a good-bye are not discussed between the

[90] "Maybe she is not a good mother, but she is also not a bad mother. She'd never hurt her child, always protect it, as well as she would be capable. I once saw her fighting for Samuel. Like a lioness."

two. It seems easier for the narrator and Samuel to blame Irene. She has demonstrated her inability as a mother.

Yet, the absent father had no chance to make mistakes. His big mistake—walking out on the family—is excused by Samuel and Janik and contributes to his idealization. Instead of blaming the father for his absence and Samuel's difficult childhood, the father figure seems to represent an alternative explanation for Samuel's social marginalization; Samuel is eventually marginalized because of his father's migration background. In order to overcompensate for his social austerity, Samuel attempts to create an alternative Turkish identity. For him, it seems easier to accept being different and ostracized based on a supposedly Turkish heritage than dealing with the fact that the social stigma of his mother keeps him from being fully accepted by a larger German milieu. His foreign identity seems to be manageable and eventually will allow him to be included in another cultural context, while being accepted into German society seems unachievable and out of his control; associating with Turkish culture seems to enable him to gain back agency and control over how he is recognized.

The Absent Father and The Exotic Other

In this context the role of the absent father becomes particularly interesting. Both young men are equally fascinated with the absent father. This father functions as a blank screen that can provide the material for exotic fantasies and for an alternative answer to the question of who Samuel really is. Samuel completely romanticizes his father's heritage, identifying with being Turkish, rather than being German. Here the notion of testing out culture as a part of adolescence behavior is played out as alternative

identification, yet still tied to an essentialist understanding of culture. The absent father provides a possibility of alternative identification, an identification beyond the social stigma of his mother. Even the first-person narrator fantasizes about this absent father:

> Manchmal habe ich Samuel um seinen Vater, den keiner kennt, beneidet. Ich wollte rumspinnen, wie der mit den Räuberhänden. Sein Vater ist wie eine riesige Leinwand, auf der jeder Film laufen kann. Egal, was Samuel an sich entdeckt, er kann es glauben und ernst nehmen, er kann alles werden, weil sein Vater alles sein kann. (20)[91]

The absent father presents a possibility. The not-knowing, the not-experiencing leads to fantasizing. For the narrator this seems to have a liberating effect. He believes that Samuel can be anything because his father could be anything, therefore entertaining the notion that our parents and in this case particularly the father determine our outcome, our paths in life. Since Samuel does not know his father, it presents him with the possibility of designing his own destiny without restriction, unlike Janik who feels trapped by his bourgeois upbringing. It provides Samuel with the possibility of developing his own narrative, a counter narrative to being the "Pennersohn." Now he develops into the son of a stranger, who had to go back to Turkey to serve in the military. This overtly romantic notion of Samuel's father is an ongoing motif within the story. Absent his whole life, all Samuel can think of are the possibilities tied to a life with his father, or, more precisely, he is envisioning his father's character. Within the novel,

[91] "Sometimes I was jealous of Samuel's unknown father. I wanted to fantasize about it, just like the one with the robber's hands. His father is like a blank screen that can project any type of movie. It does not matter what Samuel discovers about himself, he can believe in it and take it seriously, he can become anything, because his father can be anything" (20).

Samuel's father is presented as "Der große Unbekannte," the strange variable, the missing puzzle piece.

In regard to the father figure, it is noticeable that no one is criticizing the absent father for his leaving. On the contrary, his leaving is not dealt with in a critical way, but as a transfigured and distorted romanticism.[92] He is not held accountable for having had an affair. Neither the narrator nor Samuel is questioning his leaving. The responsibility for Samuel's distorted childhood is solely blamed on Irene. In Samuel's fantasy his father was a genuine and strong man.

> „Ich frage mich ja", meinte Samuel mal, da waren wir noch in Deutschland, „ob er da drüben eine neue Familie gegründet hat. Ich meine: er hatte ja schon zwei hier in Deutschland. Glaubst du, dass er immer noch hofft, wieder hier herzukommen? Ich glaube, die haben ihn fertig gemacht. Die haben ihm sein Gesicht zerschlagen, mindestens, und lassen ihn nicht mehr raus. Wahrscheinlich ist mein Vater so einer. Einer, den man brechen muss." (Heinrich 151)[93]

Samuel envisions his father as someone with a strong character, someone who did not want to leave but had to leave, and someone who wants to return but cannot. "They"—here referring to the Turkish military—are to blame for his absence. They had

[92] "Was Irene ihm einmal erzählt haben muss: Dass dieser Mann, der sein Vater sein soll, Türke ist, natürlich, dass er die große Liebe ihres Lebens gewesen sei, und dass sie sich nur selten sehen konnten, weil er, als sie sich kennenlernten, schon verheiratet war mit einer anderen" (Heinrich 31).

[93] "'I sometimes ask myself,' Samuel said a while ago while we were still in Germany, 'if he started a new family over there. I mean, he already had two families here. Do you think he is still hoping to return? I think they really messed him up. They broke his face, or at least they won't let him out. Probably my father is one of those. One of those you have to break'" (Heinrich 151).

to "break" him, implying that his father had a strong-willed character, a character trait Samuel thinks he inherited from him.

Besides enabling him to create a counter narrative of his father, this unequal allocation of responsibility for Samuel's upbringing also reaffirms a heteronormative image of what constitutes a healthy and stable family. This becomes even clearer when we learn about a potential stepfather Samuel encounters during his early childhood years. This potential for a "normal" childhood is embodied by Joachim, a more conservative, older German man who offers himself as the "savior." Entering the difficult family circumstances, Joachim enables some sort of stability, at least for a short period of time.

> Ging ihr richtig gut, ne ganze Zeit lang. Hat wenig getrunken, hat gearbeitet und so. War wirklich ein bisschen wie normale Familie: so geregelt, Frühstück, Abendbrot, Joachim hat mich in den Kindergarten gebracht, dann sind sie zur Arbeit. (Heinrich 62)[94]

This episode in which Samuel and Irene are living a decent, almost bourgeois life, depicts how "real" family life is supposed to be. Irene is involved with her boss, Joachim, who functions not only as a stepfather to Samuel, but also tries to establish a family relationship with them and cares deeply about Samuel. Within the text, Irene is exclusively blamed for the failure of this relationship. Her unwillingness to conform to this lifestyle is depicted as the main reason for the failing relationship. Samuel sums up the possibilities that this relationship had offered. He points out that "Wenn sie sich nicht getrennt hätten, dann hätten wir jetzt vielleicht einen Passat, 'n kleines Haus. Was weiß

[94] "For some time she was really doing well. She drank very little, she worked and so on. We really were like a normal family: very regulated, breakfast, dinner, Joachim took me to the kindergarten, and then they went to work" (Heinrich 62).

ich. Echt nicht spannend, aber jetzt weißt du's" (Heinrich 63).[95] In this context, Irene's failure as a mother is tied to her misbehavior in regard to men. Not only is she incapable of providing for her son but also she is incapable of leading a good family life and behaving as a traditional partner. The emphasis further lies on the adjective "normal," implying that there are family conditions that are desirable and less desirable. The desirable family is depicted as a regulated, heteronormative partnership providing stability and a regulated daily routine. Albeit this normality only lasted for a short period of time and was mainly withheld from Samuel. The reason for this lack of stability that the narrator provides is identified as the problematic behavior of Samuel's mother, not the absence of his biological father.

Escaping Recognition

As mentioned before, the character Samuel is marked by a double stigma: He is coming from a socially low class and what is considered an unfit family home—no father and a mother who is an emotionally abusive alcoholic. His father seems to have a migration background, at least according to the accounts of his mother. Samuel therefore does not seem to fit in, or feels the need to constantly prove to his environment that he indeed deserves to be part of this society, but is constantly exposed to prejudice and fake pity. Throughout the novel, there seem to be several attempts to escape judgment and to influence people's perception of him: Samuel attempts to influence people's perception

[95] "If they hadn't split up, maybe we had a station wagon now, a small house. I don't know. It's really not that exciting, but now you know" (Heinrich 63).

through his remarkable behavior and his work ethics,[96] he tries to create a safe space[97] he can claim for himself, and he tries to explore and embrace Turkish culture as an alternative to the German milieu that is so reluctant to accept him.

Discovering and claiming Stambul, a small cabin within a plot garden community, is Samuel's first attempt at creating a new home for himself, a safe space in which he can test out an alternative identity: being Turkish. How the narrator feels about his friend's attempt is revealed in his sarcastic reference to it as "deutsch-türkische Begegnungsstätte" (Heinrich 7). Samuel's attempts are described as follows:

> Er bastelt seit Jahren an der kleinen Laube, inzwischen sieht sie wie eine deutsch-türkische Begegnungsstätte aus, eine Mischung aus islamischem Kulturverein und Wurstbude. Wir sitzen also hier, wie jeden Tag nach der Schule, und rauchen. Samuel kramt in seinem Rucksack, er wirft seinen Türkischlernkurs für sieben Euro neunundneunzig zwischen uns. Er legt sich zurück, die Arme hinter den Kopf und stößt langsam Ringe aus Rauch in die Luft. Sieht aus wie Kinowerbung. Samuel singt, die Augen geschlossen: "Haberin yok ölüyorum." Als würde er verstehen, was er da singt. Seit ein paar Monaten lernt er schon Türkisch und hört nur noch türkische Musik, türkisches Radio, was albern ist, er versteht ja kaum was.

[96] "Sie [Janiks Eltern] lieben ihn dafür, dass er nach dem Essen mit den Händen die Krumen vom Tisch fegt. 'Das macht sonst keiner', sagen sie, wenn die Freunden von Samuel erzählen, und sie mögen auch, wie Samuel seine Schuhe, diese scheißteuren Sneakers, die sie ihm geschenkt haben, vor der Tür abklopft und ganz gerade und exakt in den aufgeräumten, aber nicht zu aufgeräumten Flur meiner ordentlichen, aber nicht zu ordentlichen Eltern stellt" (Heinrich 5).
"They love him because he cleans up the breadcrumbs with his hands after dinner. 'No one else does that,' they tell their friends when they talk about Samuel. They also like that he brushed off the dirt from his shoes, these very expensive shoes they bought him, and then he aligns them very orderly in the well-organized, but not too organized hallway, of my tidy, yet not too tidy parents."

[97] The spaces created within the novel are: Janik's house, Irene's apartment, Stambul (the garden house Samuel and Janik own together) and later in the novel Istanbul in Turkey.

> Wenn wir Dönner essen, bestellt er auf Türkisch. Er singt und tanzt, wie er denkt, dass man als Türke oder halber tanzt und singt, sein Gesicht ist verzogen, das soll bedeuten: Ich bin im Einklang mit diesem Gefühl, endlich verstehe ich die Sehnsucht in meiner Brust. Er meint das tatsächlich ernst, dieser Lump mit der immerbraunen Haut, den Rehaugen und dem fast schwarzen Haar. Samuel, der diese ganze Show gar nicht nötig hat, die Frauen fliegen auch so auf ihn, diesen melancholischen Halbtürken. Samuel tut, als interessiere er sich nicht mehr für Frauen. Seit er Türke ist, sucht er die eine große Liebe—als ob das typisch türkisch wäre. Es macht ihn noch interessanter fürchte ich (Heinrich 7-8).[98]

This passage emphasizes three aspects: first, the performative aspect tied to claiming a foreign identity, secondly, the *Sehnsucht* [longing] that is connected to this attempt and third, the narrator's position towards his friend's new found identification.

For Samuel, adopting the language and music are the first steps to make this foreign culture his own. Here the concept of "biological heritage" and the "accessibility of identity" are contrasted. While Samuel seems to believe that he can achieve being Turkish by learning the language, Janik does not buy into this possibility and constantly

[98] "For years now he is working on a small cot. By now it looks like a Turkish-German community center. A mix between an Islamic cultural center and a food cart. We are sitting here like every day after school and are smoking. Samuel is looking for something in his bagpack. He throws his beginner Turkish tape, worth seven Euro and ninetynine cent, between us. He sits back, his Arms behind his head and lowly blows rings of smoke in the air. Samuel sings with his eyes closed half: 'Haberin yok ölüyorum.' As if he understood what he was singing. For a couple of month now he is learning Turkish and is listening exclusively to Turkish muic, Turkish radio. It's silly because he barly undertand anything. When we eat Dönner he orders in Turkish. He sings and dance, how he think one dancess a Turk or a 'half.' His face is torn. That's supposed to mean: I am one with my feelings, finally I understand the longing in my heart. He really is serious about this. This rascal, with his everlasting brown skin, his eyes like a deer, and his almost black hair. Samuel who does not need this, the women are already into him, into this melancholy half-Turk. Samuel pretends he is not interested in women anymore. Since he is Turkish, he is looking for his one big love, as if this was typically Turkish. But I worry this will just make him even more interesting" (Heinrich 7-8).

reminds his friend of his German heritage. But Samuel seems rather unimpressed with his friend's criticism by focusing on what he identifies as cultural markers. He narrows down the factors for adopting a new identity to the language, music and dance, but also to his relationship to women. Cultural belonging, at least from Samuel's understanding, can be learned. He starts by learning the language. Learning Turkish becomes Samuel's gateway to entering this new self-identification and to getting closer to his father. This attempt, as the narrator points out, not only serves to create this closeness to the unknown stranger, but also to ease the longing (*Sehnsucht*) Samuel seems to be feeling. Here, the emphasis on *Sehnsucht* can have two functions: first, it ties the figure Samuel to the stereotypical portrayal of Turkish figures in contemporary literature. Similarly, as in Tekinay's story, melancholy and sensitivity are emphasized as such particular cultural trades. The narrator points out that Samuel "thinks" that this is how Turkish people act, basing his own behavior on general and essentialist assumptions of the foreign culture, approaching "Turkishness" through a lens of stereotyping.

Secondly, this *Sehnsucht* also embodies a need and a search for completeness. This aspect of completeness becomes particularly interesting in connection to the narrator's opinion about Samuel's attempts of identification. Samuel's attempts to escape his German heritage anger the narrator and he undermines his friend's desire for an alternative identification with mockery, he calls his friend's attempts of self-identification derogatorily "Identitätsquatsch" (Heinrich 153) and constantly reminds him that he might just be "half" Turkish, if at all. The following paragraph illustrates Janik's skepticism towards his friend's attempt to re-define himself as Turkish, and it clarifies, even when disguised as speculation, Samuel's desire for a new identity.

> Stambul, weil Samuel sich für einen Türken hält, seit er von seiner Mutter gehört hat, sein Vater sei angeblich Türke. Seitdem ist Samuel mindestens ein halber Türke, von einem Tag auf den anderen. Mich wundert, dass er es nicht selbst etwas albern findet. Samuel zelebriert diese Türkennummer ganz schön, ich kann darüber lachen. (Heinrich 6-7)[99]

The notion of being "half" implies that something is not complete, not of the same value as something complete. The narrator frequently reminds his friend of this incompleteness and points out to the reader that he is surprised that Samuel does not see the ludicrousness in his attempts to gain access to Turkish culture. The narrator fails to recognize culture as something performative, reaffirming an essentialist understanding of culture tied biology.

In this context, a bizarre contradiction seems to be revealed. One the one hand, biology as a determining factor of cultural heritage is present. It is through the father that Samuel is connected in some ways to the Turkish culture. The narrator picks up on these supposedly biological features mainly when describing his friend's appearance, "[…] dieser Lump mit der immerbraunen Haut, den Rehaugen und dem fast schwarzen Haar" (Heinrich 8).[100] Here, color of skin, color of hair, and even the color of his friend's eyes contribute to his exotic appearance. Yet, when it comes to his friend's attempt to truly adopt the foreign culture, the narrator questions the possibility by claiming that they are

[99] Stambul, because Samuel thinks he is Turkish since he heard from his mother that his father supposedly was Turkish. Ever since Samule is at least half-Turkish, just from one day to the other. I am surprised he does not think that's silly. Samuel is celebrating this Turkish thing. I can only laugh about it. (Heinrich 6-7).

[100] "This rascal, with his everlasting brown skin, his eyes like a deer, and his almost black hair" (Heinrich 8).

just Germans, "Wir sind einfach zwei kleine deutsche Jungs […]" (Heinrich 91)[101] to the point where he refuses to acknowledge Samuel's Turkish identity, constantly reminding Samuel that he is not Turkish but just German and therefore negating his friend's attempts at self-determination. He tells his friend, "Du bist kein Türke […] Samuel ist nicht mal ein türkischer Name" (Heinrich 203).[102]

By arguing that both of them are just two Germans, he is avoiding a distinction between the two. The narrator denies his friend an identity Samuel can be "proud" of and that will determine the perception of his character in a positive, or maybe less socially marginalized way. Samuel's foreignness makes his exclusion from society explainable, and bearable, and leaves hope for finding a place of acceptance, Turkey. Interestingly enough, in the way the novel depicts the dichotomy between being poor and "asozial" versus being a foreigner, being foreign seems to be more desirable. The narrator's insensitive mockery reveals that he does not acknowledge his friend's attempts and does not understand Samuel's need for creating an alternative to his traumatic childhood experiences.

However, for Samuel, this attempt to gain agency seems to be an outlet for his need to create an identity away from social stigma, to a cultural one. It creates an exit from his hopeless situation with his mother. It also serves as a preparation for what happens next: the journey to Istanbul. Richter and Widmann point out the problematic relationship of Samuel to Turkey. They emphasize "[…] his longing for Turkey is not because of a positive bond to Turkey, but because of a negative relationship in his life up to now" (58). The search for his father in Turkey seems to be his secondary motivation;

[101] "We are just two German boys" (Heinrich 91).

[102] "You are not Turkish […]. Samuel is not even a Turkish name" (Heinrich 203).

the primary one seems to be leaving Germany, its moral and social limitations and the withholding of recognition. Yet, how exactly Samuel feels about this new identity and what he actually hopes to gain out of this re-identification can only be speculation, since the reader does not get to hear Samuel's thoughts or feelings.

Annette Tscherniak who designed a manual for teachers approaching the novel *Räuberhände* as a way to access the topics "*Heimat und Identität*"[103] points out in her description of an in-class experiment the issues of perspective and inaccessibility of Samuel's thoughts. Tscherniak comes to the conclusion that the conception of an identity profile in regard to Samuel is challenging, if not impossible.

> Zwar hat sich gezeigt, dass die Figur durch ihre nicht unproblematische Situierung hinsichtlich Familie und Kultur interpretationswürdig ist, Interesse bei den SuS hervorruft und grundsätzlich in ihrer Anlage für die Erarbeitung eines aussagekräftigen Rollenprofils geeignet ist. Gleichzeitig muss jedoch gesagt werden, das seine Einbettung der Figur im Roman dieser entgegenwirkt. Samuel wird stets aus der Perspektive Janiks beschrieben. […] Die Aufgabe der SuS, die Selbstwahrnehmung der Figur zu erfassen, stellte durch die Erzählperspektive des Romans, die keinen direkten Zugriff auf eigene Gedanken, Einschätzungen und Wertungen der Figur zulässt, somit eine kaum lösbare Herausforderung dar (26).[104]

[103] Tscherniak points out that, "[a]s the title of the book shows, 'Heimat' [home] and identity are seen as part of finding oneself. Yet the relationship between the two needs to be explained. Both do not, as the conjunction 'and' suggests, stand next to each other equally. Rather Heimat is an apect of identity contruction and has to be subsumed in identity" (1).

[104] "While it showed that the character because of his problematic situation in regard to family and culture is worth interpreting, sparked interest by the students, and can be used for a strong character profile, yet the embedding of the character within the novel works in opposition to it. Samuel is always described through Janik's perspective. […] The students' task to describe the character's self-perception was challenging. The

The problem of perspective Tscherniak is addressing reveals the biggest shortcomings of the text: because of the limited first-person perspective, the text does not give Samuel a chance to elaborate on his feelings or thoughts. The text does not provide an insight into the deep-rooted issues of children living with addicted parents. The text does not enable the reader to understand or access the issues of alcoholism and social stigma through the eyes of the parties directly concerned. The narration is also unable or unwilling to penetrate the cause of Samuel's action, and further, it keeps Irene's addiction on a superficial level. The narrator even childishly tries to excuse her addiction through a lost love. The text misses the opportunity to elaborate on any deeper psychological level cause and effect of Irene's illness, silencing and marginalizing Irene's as well as Samuel's voice.

This problem of perspective further supports the suspicion that the topic of multicultural identity and migration are not treated with an insightful manner, yet serving mainly to make the overall narrative of the novel more interesting. In other words, this novel does not focus on the dilemma of being stigmatized and marginalized but with how such a fate becomes the frame of reference for the narrator, who holds a particular privilege, and his bourgeoisie upbringing. It raises suspicion that the whole novel might transport a questionable perspective influenced by a cultural superiority, *Sozialromantik* and *Sensationsgeilheit* [lust for sensation]. In this context, it is puzzling that neither Tscherniak nor Widmann and Richter, who all three point out issues with the unreliable narrator and his perspective, nor the literary critics reviewing Heinrich's novel, challenge the ideological and social implications of Heinrich's novel, the appropriation and

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narrative perspective of the novel does not provide an access to his thoughts, assessment, or valuation" (26).

exotization of a marginalized perspective, nor the use of it in the classroom as a tool to access the topics of migration, identity, and *Heimat*.

But let us take a closer look at the narrative mode and perspective of the novel again. The observing mode the narrator occupies is brought up once more when Janik criticizes his parents' behavior. While Janik seems to be incapable of dealing with his own behavior critically, it shows in the fact that he judges his parents harshly for the same behavior, revealing his own hypocrisy:

> Live Doku: Sie können sich Samuel ein bisschen angucken, wie ein wildes Tier, wie die neuste Folge ihrer Lieblingsserie. Und sie bereiten sich sogar vor auf jede neue Episode. Ich kann mir vorstellen, wie sie dasitzen oder in der Küche stehen und sein Verhalten lesen und analysieren und speichern, es liebevoll einsammeln und fein säuberlich in ihrer Erinnerung ablegen. (Heinrich 69)[105]

Further, the comparison to a wild animal is brought up again and it plays into the most questionable narrative strategies within the novel, the constant exoticizing of Samuel through the narrator's description. Undoubtedly, the narrative perspective takes the point of view of a privileged male gaze and a fascination with the "lower class" and his "exotic" friend. This is further mirrored in the title of the novel that is revealed as one of the references of Janik in regard to Samuel as "[d]er mit den Räuberhänden" (Heinrich 36).[106] This reference further supports the notion of mystification, otherness and

[105] "Live-documentary: They can observe Samuel like a wild animal. The newest episode of their favorite TV-show. And they always prepare for each episode. I imagine how they sit together or stand in the kitchen and read and analyze his behavior; collecting it thoughtfully and saving it in their memory" (69).

[106] His "Räuberhände" are described as follows: "Samuel was very concerned with his looks. Only his fingers were gnawed. It I the only place were his composure visibly crumbles: The chaos at the tip of his

exotization. It transmits a certain ideology, and in connection with that, an attitude that is embedded in Janik's world view that becomes even more transparent in a seemingly harmless comparison that is supposed to reveal the protagonist's parents' attitude: "Ein Schrebergarten für den Pennersohn kam ihnen vor wie ein Beutel Murmeln für ein Negerkind im Urwald" (Heinrich 143).[107]

This racist commentary dismantles the colonial attitude that has been transported by the parents as well as by Janik. Despite the fact that he is trying to mock his parents' attitude, he is also reaffirming it. The comment "Negerkind im Urwald" here is not used to serve to challenge the reader but is used as a stylistic advice. It further supports the notion of cultural and social arrogance and superiority. In some ways, Janik is trying to make clear that his parents look at Samuel as an underdeveloped child while at the same time supporting this notion and reaffirming it on the same level. This section shows that there is an attitude embedded in the narration that fosters the belief that there are "Negerkinder" and that they need the Western world's help. It relates to Western materialism: a trivial object such as glass marbles is of great value for the "savage." While the narrator criticizes his parents for treating his friend with such a special status, in his descriptions he reaffirms this attitude and likewise exoticizes his friend. Samuel's attempt to distance himself from his upbringing fails because he cannot escape the vocabulary and cultural perception of describing "the Other" as foreign and exotic. Janik fails to recognize his friend truly as a peer, but marks the social distance between them constantly in his commentary.

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fingers. The chewed on finger nails, the bloody skin, the little skin scraps surrounding the exposed nervendings. He barly has skin on the side of his fingers. His robber's hands is what exposes him" (8).

[107] "A garden plot for the 'Pennersohn' appeared to them like a sac of marbles for negro children in the jungle" (Heinrich 143).

Privilege and Perspective

Within the novel *Räuberhände*, three main aspects of recognition are identifiable: First, the family as a constitutive element of identification, and, connected to it, social stigmatization, second, the attempt to create an alternative identity in order to influence recognition, and third, the narrator's perspective and description of "the Other." As an adolescent novel, *Räuberhände* clearly emphasizes this period in the personal development of its main characters. It underlines the notion that at this age, young people start questioning their upbringing and are looking for alternative possibilities of identification. This might have various reasons: during the early adolescent years the infallibility of one's parents is questioned, the vocabulary for describing oneself expands and the general need to find identification and recognition outside the parental home seems to increase. For both characters the family home provides a point of departure. Both try to escape the supposedly predetermined path as designed by their parents. Both characters try not to be defined through their parents. While Samuel seems to be successfully freeing himself from his mother and in the end of the novel is freed from her—she dies after she relapses—Janik, who voices strong negative feelings towards his parents, prepares for the return to their sacred home. The last line of the novel states that he will now be going back home to "Mutti," connecting his home to a safe space of belonging and support, a space that had been withheld from his friend Samuel.

The story provides an intriguing insight into the dynamics of family ties, the connection through this family into a larger social context, and how these factors influence the character's attempt at self-determination. It becomes obvious that the family home in this narrative determines not only how one is raised, but also how our

surrounding society perceives us. The family home becomes the benchmark for personal development. Parents' expectations are guidelines for young people to either follow or live against. While for Janik rebelling against his parents seems to be born out of boredom, for Samuel this process is determined by how he is recognized by his social milieu and his attempt to escape it. Heinrich's novel provides a prime example of a perspective that is informed by social and cultural privilege. It provides a strong commentary on the difference of social status and how this difference influences people's perception of others.

The most intriguing aspect of the novel is not how it deals with the migration issue, but the recognition of social stigma. The story demonstrates the power imbalance between the two friends—this imbalance is reflected in the narrative perspectives of the text. The marginalized voices are silenced, the marginalized characters are exposed and objectified through a perspective of privilege and judged from this standpoint. In some instances the text successfully dismantles this attitude, but in its weaker moments the text fails to recognize and challenge this position critically. In these moments, for example, the protagonist's interaction with women or his commentary on the identity issue, the white male gaze is neither challenged nor dismantled. Recognition is mainly in the hands of Janik.

And another aspect is emphasized: withholding recognition can serves as a form of control. Throughout the text it seems Janik's desire to dominate his friend and control his social status through marginalizing him linguistically. The references Janik uses to describe his friend and to tease him reveal how Janik tries to limit Samuel's persona to his social circumstances: "Adoptivkind" referring to his challenging family situation,

"Gastarbeiterkind" referring his father's migration background, and "Pennersohn" referring the social status of his mother. Through these supposedly jokingly references Janik creates a distance between the two boys, that elevates his self-worth above Samuel's. Not only mocking Samuel's attempts to identify with his biological father's cultural heritage but also refusing to recognize this part of Samuel's personality further shows how Janik does not want his friend to emancipate from the shadow of his social stigma, mainly out of fear of losing him. The social marginalization was what made this friendship possible in the first place. Because of Samuel's problematic family circumstances Janik's parents took him into the house. Because of these circumstances Samuel was depended on them. Now, leaving his childhood period and exploring new forms of identification this dependency relationship is changing and while Samuel seems to find his own way, Janik is left without direction. Without his "Other" he is disoriented.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the selected works has shown the importance of the concept of recognition and its role in the intercultural process of identity construction. Being at home in multiple disciplines such as moral philosophy, developmental psychology and political science, the term recognition closely relates to the debates about identity politics and identity construction. Examining this relationship the texts demonstrate the intersection of psychological development and understanding of self for the characters as well as a strong connection to a system of legality. In other words, recognition determines whether or not and how a character is perceived as a part of the constructed society depicted in the novel.

Within the philosophical and political debates recognition is often described as a process of mutual agreement and of dialogical nature, often designated by the term "intersubjectivity." Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Judith Butler's theories, as well as developmental psychological concepts and post-colonial criticism, focus on this relationship between the subject and the object and emphasize the issue of power, normativity, and essentialist assumptions of cultural belonging. They provide useful vocabulary to describe the situations within the novels; yet, the literary encounters provide an interesting addition and challenge to the selected theoretical ideas. The texts show what is at play at the core of the recognition process is a strong power relationship between the character who is recognized and the character who holds the power to recognize. They emphasize how recognition influences the social as well as the public sphere the characters exist in. Within this sphere, recognition is used as a

mechanism to either include one in or exclude one from a larger social context. It is closely tied to the characters' cultural identity and the perception of this identity.

The word recognition etymologically implies a combination of knowing and perceiving. It implies a pre-knowledge about the recognizable object. This informative pre-knowledge ties the recognition process closely to narrative. Within the texts narrative plays a crucial role for whether the characters are considered recognizable or not. This connection further fosters the connection between linguistic expression and recognition. The texts show how the recognition process is implemented and how it is expressed in the symbolic dimension of language and narrative. All of the texts develop a dichotomy between the insider and the outsider, the familiar and the strange. Language and narration both demonstrate normative and descriptive powers. These "powers" are picked up upon, challenged, yet sometimes also, consciously or subconsciously, reaffirmed.

In this context the use of stereotypes and stereotypical description of the characters is an outstanding feature of the texts. Stereotypes were either portrayed through the construction of an essentialist understanding of culture and normative roles connected to it, through the description of appearance, or as racist clichés. This focus on the depiction and use of stereotypes shows that recognition seems to be guided by superficial criteria such as the appearance of characters. In this context color of skin and hair color are factors for whether or not a character is perceived as German or as foreign. And the narrator plays a crucial role in the transmission of these superficial criteria.

These literary encounters magnify this particular human experience on an aesthetic level and show formal, structural, as well as thematic connections to the recognition issue. Here the narrative voice plays a crucial role and reveals how it

influences the character construction through naming and reference, for example, as well as establishing a dichotomy between "The German" and "The Other" or "The Exotic" and how the difference transmits value. This brings up the questions of how recognition influences all groups that deviate from the German norm and how narrative is used in order to establish or challenge this norm. To what extent is recognition influenced by descriptiveness and therefore tied to a linguistic level?

In this context the texts show how, for example, the physical description of the characters is tied to a cultural belonging. In Tekinay's *Das Fernrohr* as well as in Heinrich's *Räuberhände*, the characters designated with Turkish heritage are labeled with dark-hair and dark eyes, in contrast to the German characters who are depicted as blond and light-skinned. Biller's *Als Cramer anständig wurde* takes this problematic dichotomy and exaggerates its meaning by using this contrast to describe the two Jewish boys. The main protagonist Max and his attempt to switch his identity is only successful because he "looks the part" and is therefore recognized by the soldier as worthy of being treated humanely. Here his physical appearance and the way this influences how Max is recognized determine his physical integrity. While it seems Heinrich and Tekinay are only reaffirming the dichotomy between German and "exotic" foreigner, Biller challenges the perception of physical appearance and shows how deviating from what is considered the "norm" is problematic; it jeopardizes recognition and therefore the safety and well-being of the characters. This stereotypical split and focus on external appearance is also picked up on in Seligmann's *Der Musterjude*, and is particularly elucidated in the creation of the image of the "Musterjude" for the news magazine.

Seligmann, as well as Biller, relate this kind of perception and recognition to fascist aesthetics.

Another interesting finding is that all authors in one way or another reference existing German literary traditions and genres and incorporate them into their own recognition process: for example, Maxim Biller aims to dismantle the racist undertones of Thomas Mann's early works, Alev Tekinay tackles the tolerance debate with a reference to Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, Emine Sevgi Özdamar aligns herself with the tradition of surrealism and Brechtian alienation strategies, Rafael Seligmann uses satire, and Finn-Ole Heinrich holds on to the tradition of the adolescence novel. These forms of literary reference can be understood as a cultural as well as ideological statement supporting the authors' own recognition claims within the German literary tradition.

Within this complex entanglement of intertextuality, reference, and engagement in literary traditions, one question seems to be particularly intriguing: does the aesthetic dimension inform the recognition process, or does the recognition process inform the aesthetic dimension of the text? In other words what narrative of recognition is developed and how do the authors come to terms with this demanding concept? How do they tackle the notion of "authenticity" that seems crucially to inform this process?

What all of the texts have in common is an attempt by the characters to manipulate the recognition process. However, they differ in the motivation of the characters: some of them simply want to belong, others want to hide difference in order to survive. In this context the notion based on "mutual agreement" is questioned and most texts emphasize a power imbalance embedded in the recognition process. The analysis has shown the linguistic nature of this process and its descriptive force. Within the novels

and short stories the decisional power is closely tied to narrative voice and concepts of an essentialist understanding of identity that seem to guide whether or not the characters are accepted as equal or not. The texts reveal that recognition in its function as a decision principle seems to be rather limiting than liberating.

This kind of superficial and stereotypical description is also imposed on the "hybrid" characters, as introduced in Heinrich's and Tekinay's texts, and amplifies the aspect of limitation. These characters are not introduced as culturally compromised but as problematic. Instead of being capable to move between worlds easily, they have to decide with which side they want to align and are forced through social circumstances to do so. A compromise between cultures is introduced only in Özdamar's short story *Großvaterzunge*, and only on a personal and literary level.

The most interesting find within my analysis is the problematic notion of "halfness" and its connection to a particular cultural essentialism used in all of the texts. Instead of being able to exist "in between," the characters are challenged with essentialist assumptions of how they see themselves and how they are perceived. This dilemma finds its expression particularly on a linguistic level and is expressed through how the other characters refer to the "hybrid" characters. For Seligmann's protagonist, Moische Bernstein, for example, this dilemma is expressed through the notion of *Musterjude*, which throughout the novel develops a double meaning: on the one hand, the "role-model Jew," that is, the protagonist's mother, Hannah's, longing for a perfect Jewish son who will continue the family tradition, and on the other hand, the stereotypical and Nazi-esque understanding of Judaism perpetuated by the sensationalist German media. Neither side is willing to accept the idea of an inclusive German-Jewish identity. The hyphenated

identity seems to serve separation purposes only, not to bring these cultural spheres together.

This illustrates one of the major issues of the recognition concept: its problematic relationship to language. Not only do the stories tackle the problem of belonging and being an outsider and how this dilemma is interwoven in the dynamic of master narrative and personal narrative; they also reveal how language fails to describe those who live supposedly "in between." The hyphenated identity seems to be closely tied to the concept of "halfness" and incompleteness. It seems to perpetuate the idea of not being a full human being. Instead of, for example, perceiving someone who embodies two cultures as a "doubled person," the character is described as divided between cultures. Here the contradiction between external ascription and self-determination is prominent and amplified and should be further investigated.

A future research project, with anthropological and linguistic dimensions, could focus on interviews and surveys with "mixed" Germans and what terms they would prefer to describe them. In this context the question of cultural belonging and cultural essentialism could be renegotiated and new forms of expression could be developed by those who are concerned with rather than imposed upon by a hegemonic society. Germany, as is shown in the literary texts and by contemporary popular culture, is changing. It is developing into a multicultural society. Rather than holding onto traditional forms of describing and identifying the other, new forms of cultural belonging need to be acquired.

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