

Transgenerational Trauma in the Novels of Julia Franck and Tanja Dückers

BY

SANDRA KOHLER

B.A., Indiana University, Bloomington, 1998

M.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2001

THESIS

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Defense Committee:

Dagmar Lorenz, Chair and Advisor

Sara Hall

Elizabeth Loentz

Astrida Tantillo

Alfred Thomas, English

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SUMMARY

This study examines the interplay between history, memory and trauma in 21st-century German literature in novels, which thematize the Second World War and the Holocaust. Julia Franck and Tanja Dückers are members of the so-called third generation and write novels that highlight familial and generational issues of memory and trauma. Franck writes from a minority position whereas Dückers identifies herself as a member of the mainstream majority. Both authors critically examine the consequences of trauma and thematize the family's influential role in identity formation in the four novels I discuss in-depth, Franck's *Lagerfeuer* (2002), and *Die Mittagsfrau* (2007) and Dückers' *Himmelskörper* (2004) and *Der längste Tag des Jahres* (2006). In these novels, characters are consumed by their family's past and the way the past influences the present and the way the present (re)constructs the past. The manner in which Franck and Dückers present the effects of memory and trauma mirrors the way psychologists and others working in the field of memory and therapy describe transgenerational trauma. This dissertation highlights the way third generation writers draw attention to the potential of trauma to be transmitted to future generation and influence contemporary society. More importantly, Franck and Dückers do not write novels to remind Germans of their historical legacy, but rather point to the continuing presence of the past in German society.

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INTRODUCTION

Gespräch mit einem Überlebenden

Was hast du damals getan, was du nicht hättest tun sollen?
"Nichts".

Was hast du nicht getan, was du hättest tun sollen?
"Das und das - dieses und jenes: einiges".

Warum hast du es nicht getan?
"Weil ich Angst hatte".

Warum hattest du Angst?
"Weil ich nicht sterben wollte".

Sind andere gestorben, weil du nicht sterben wolltest?
"Ich glaube...ja".

Hast du noch etwas zu sagen zu dem, was du nicht getan hast?
"Ja - dich zu fragen: Was hättest du an meiner Stelle getan?"

Das weiß ich nicht und ich kann über dich nicht richten.
Nur eines weiß ich:
Morgen wird keiner von uns leben bleiben
wenn wir heute wieder nichts tun.
-- Poem by Erich Fried (1983)¹

In 2002, a literary review in *Die Welt* credited “die junge deutsche Literatur” for providing German readers with “Erlösung vom Terror des Tiefschürfenden.”² Similarly, Volker Hage’s 1999 article in *Der Spiegel* on “Die Enkelgeneration” and Petra Bagley’s 2006 literary analysis in *Pushing at boundaries* pointed to a decline of historical influences on German literature.³ By the end of the first decade in the 21st century, however, it was again apparent in the media and in scholarly publication that the Second World War and the Holocaust continue to play a major role in the texts by the contemporary young German writers Hage highlighted.⁴ Born in the mid to late 1960s and 1970s, these authors are members of the so-called *third*

¹ This poem is contained in Fried’s collection *Es ist was es ist: Liebesgedichte, Angstgedichte, Zorngedichte*, 50. For additional similar poetry, see also Erich Fried’s *Gegen das Vergessen* (1987).

² Förster, Jochen. “Kein Plan, keine Liebe, keine Idee. Karen Duve: *Dies ist kein Liebeslied.*”

³ See Hage (1999) and Bagley (2006).

⁴ I use the term young writers from Spiegel’s 1999 list of new “Junge Autoren” which includes the generation of authors such as Tanja Dücker (1968), Karen Duve (1961), Jenny Erpenbeck (1967), Julia Franck (1970), Martina Hefter (1965), and Juli Zeh (1974). These authors were first referred to by the term *Fräuleinwunder*. For more on this term, see Anke Biendarra’s 2004 article “Gen(d)eration Next: Prose by Julia Franck and Judith Hermann.”

generation, which explains Hage's use of the term *Enkelgeneration*. For the focus of this study, I have chosen texts by Julia Franck and Tanja Dückers, two third-generation authors of novels and essays published at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty first century.

In line with the historian Dan Diner, who developed theories that regard the Holocaust as a *Zivilisationsbruch*.⁵ I examine how contemporary literature addresses the contemporary implications of the Holocaust. This dissertation concentrates almost exclusively on literature that could easily be termed "tiefschürfend," addressing topics such as transgenerational trauma, guilt and shame, marginalization, traumatic memories, familial conflicts, Jewish persecution, and identity informed by trauma. I analyze contemporary German literary responses to historical trauma by combining close reading analyses with interpretations informed by socio-historical and psychology theories on memory, trauma and identity.

The debates about the historical representation and the literary treatment of the Holocaust and the Second World War have fueled a vast body of literature. The events in question have been represented from many different perspectives and in a variety of genres including personal memoirs, poetry, literature, films, and works of non-fiction. Beyond literature and history, scholars from other disciplines have also studied this period formulating theories from sociological, psychological, and psychoanalytical perspectives, for example.

⁵ Diner, *Zivilisationsbruch. Denken nach Auschwitz*. (1988). For an interesting study that refers to the Holocaust as a "break with civilization" and discusses contemporary issues in Germany, see *Alles in Butter : wie Walter Kempowski, Bernhard Schlink und Martin Walser den Zivilisationsbruch unter den Teppich kehren* (2009) by Klaus Köhler.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the debates about the collective and personal memory of The Second World War took on a new shape in Germany. The experience of the German mainstream wartime generations, such as the devastation of German cities, mandatory expulsion from Eastern European countries or territories and maltreatment at the hands of Allied soldiers in the immediate post war period became matters of national discussion in Germany.⁶ At the same time, memories of the atrocities Germans committed against Jews and Roma, which had entered German academic debates in the 1970s and 1980s, were kept alive through the building of memorials, such as Holocaust memorials in major cities, most notably Berlin and Vienna. Furthermore, new discussions were sparked by a call for normalization, i.e., efforts to make the relationship between non-Jewish Germans and Jews more *normal* and lifting some of the taboos limiting the way the Holocaust, the Second World War, the Nazi period and contemporary Israel had been discussed in the post war era.⁷ As Svetlana Boym explains, after 1999 “the way to deal with history now is more through a dramatized ‘experience’ and not a painful critical reflection on the unredeemable trauma of the past”⁸

My dissertation examines recent literary representations of events that occurred approximately seventy years ago in conjunction with major contemporary debates relevant to those events. What impact does this history have today? What continues to make it relevant to contemporary concerns? On the one hand, this history can be interpreted as affecting many aspects of contemporary German culture and society, while on the other hand, it can be

⁶ See also Ulrich Merten’s 2012 historical overview: *Forgotten voices : The expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe after World War II* and *Die Flucht : Über die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten* (2002) by Stefan Aust and Stephan Burgdorff. Graham Jackson also provides an excellent discussion in his 2004 article in *German Life and Letters*: “The End of a Taboo? The Experience of Bombing and Expulsion in Contemporary German ‘Gedächtniskultur.’”

⁷ See Ruth Starkman’s discussion in her chapter “Perpetual Impossibility? ...” in *Transformations of the New Germany* (233-250). Starkman outlines the varying uses of the term normalization and elaborates on the Walser-Bubis debate in Germany drawing attention to the public versus private discourses on the Holocaust and voicing the concern many feel over the way normalization may be interpreted as a way to act on feelings of anti-Semitism.

⁸ Boym, *The future of Nostalgia*, 217.

interpreted as having little impact on everyday life in Germany today. Around the turn of the 21st century, in a small publication entitled *Generation Berlin*, the leftist sociologist, Heinz Bude notes that in Germany “ist die gesellschaftliche Nullstellung von 1945 der entscheidende Bezugspunkt” but that members of Generation Berlin are less concerned with history and more focused on the business world.⁹ According to Bude, the term *Generation Berlin* encompasses “die erste Generation der vergrößerten Bundesrepublik, die aus Sicht der Berliner Republik die Bonner Republik als ein abgeschlossenes Stück Geschichte betrachten kann.”¹⁰ Bude is not necessarily referring to a specific age group, but rather to a frame of mind that looks into the future of a new Germany instead of looking back at the past. As Margit Sinka discusses in her article “Heinz Bude’s Generation Berlin,” by 2002, due to increased debates on his statements about how little history impacted current society, “Bude concede[d] that he underestimated the hold of history on the mentality of Berliners.”¹¹ The *Wende* did not decrease the debates about the past as Bude had assumed. Essentially, the fall of the iron curtain, which opened new avenues of research, and the necessity to streamline the very different ways East and West Germany had treated the past called for a reworking of historical issues. With greater temporal distance to the historical events in question, the examination of the transgenerational impact of history has also increased. In particular, scholars and authors are interested in what effects the memory of the Holocaust and National Socialism has had on the children and grandchildren of the wartime generations, who did not experience these events firsthand, but may nevertheless *remember* them.¹² A memory like this may stem from what scholars of varying disciplines, such

⁹ Bude, *Generation Berlin* 66.

¹⁰ Bude, “Was ist die Generation Berlin?”

¹¹ Sinka, 199.

¹² The term *wartime generation* refers to individuals who lived in the time period between 1938 to 1945 and were witness to this time period, regardless of their status as victims, bystanders, perpetrators etc.

as Marianne Hirsch, Saul Friedlander, Aleida Assmann and Jürgen Straub have termed postmemory or transgenerational memory.¹³

Thesis Statement

Julia Franck's novels, *Lagerfeuer* (2003), *Die Mittagsfrau* (2007) and *Rücken an Rücken* (2011), center on experiences and memories by characters traumatized through their identification by National Socialists as Jewish. Her contemporary, Tanja Dückers, focuses in her works, *Spielzone* (1999), *Himmelskörper* (2003), and *Der längste Tag des Jahres* (2006) on mainstream German protagonists affected by wartime memories and the Nazi past. Both authors thematize generational silence, the grandparent generation's obsession with the war, anti-Semitism and the transmission of memories from the older generation to their children and grandchildren. I shall argue that these texts examine the enduring (re)production and the long-term consequences of trauma, especially in connection with identity formation as opposed to historical events. Trauma memories stemming from the first generation's wartime experiences and the Holocaust indirectly affect the third generation's sense of personal and collective identity. My reading reveals the authors' emphasis on the transgenerational effects of trauma and the effect of trauma on identity (personal and collective) as well as family relationships.

Writers like Franck and Dückers infuse the debate about memory (*Erinnerung*) with new perspectives. I believe these writers aim to emphasize the effect of the Nazi Period in contemporary German culture by portraying the way memory and trauma may be "inherited" i.e., passed down to subsequent generations and how this may affect everyday life. My study

¹³ See Marianne Hirsch's use of the term postmemory in *Family frames : photography, narrative, and postmemory* (1997) as well as Saul Friedlander, and Aleida Assmann's numerous publications on transgenerational memory of the Nazi Past, including Assmann's most recent 2012 study, *Memory and political change*. An excellent study in social psychiatry and psychoanalysis is *The Third Reich in the unconscious : transgenerational transmission and its consequences* (2002) by Vamik Volkan et al.

emphasizes the way Franck and Dücker thematize the unknown, the limits of the ability to understand and evaluate another person's experiences, motivations, desires, fears and dreams as well as one's own motivations and culpabilities. The novels under discussion here abound with characters that behave inexplicably. At times the reader may be aware of the character's motivations and understand him or her better than the literary character's contemporaries and at other times the character's feelings remain a mystery even to the reader. The novels show how misunderstandings result from a character making assumptions about others. Silence, keeping secrets, maintaining social masks -- all these elements play a major role in these novels.

The current discourse about memory in Germany is marked by two phenomena: First, by the decade-long efforts in German society to remember, to forget, to atone, to keep silent, to compensate victims, to ignore victims, and to overcome or come to terms with the guilt and shame of the atrocities committed in the Holocaust; and second, by a continuing and exploding interest in the civilian trauma of mainstream Germans. Franck and Dücker are influenced by these discussions. Caroline Schaumann examines the literary portrayal of trauma and memory of the Nazi Past in her book-length study *Memory Matters* (2008). She juxtaposes six authors from Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds and authors from different generations and analyzes the transgenerational aspects of trauma. Her goal is to juxtapose the memories from these different perspectives to "illuminate the vexed relationships between these groups in contemporary Germany, relocating ties that Nazi politics destroyed." She concludes that her analysis opens up new avenues of understanding the past and the different ways different groups remember the same historical events. While Schaumann also examines transgenerational trauma in literature by third generation authors such as Tanja Dücker, including discussions of trauma transmission within the family and continuity of Nazi ideology, her focus is on Dücker's novel

Himmelskörper as an autobiographical text that functions as “a ‘historical storehouse’ in that it comprises chronicled, remembered, and imagined narratives historical facts and fictional representation.”¹⁴ I maintain that Franck and Dückers are paradigmatic in portraying the historical trauma of the Holocaust and the Second World War as infused with seemingly dangerous potentialities in the contemporary world. They point to different forms of discrimination in their society, including the interplay between racial, ethnic, class and gender oppression. The novels discussed in this dissertation raise concerns regarding a latent continuity in the way Germans differentiate between “Germans” and “others,” foreigners, Jews, Muslims, people of color, maintaining values and beliefs reminiscent of Nazi ideology. Traumatic historical events are remembered differently according to a person’s established view and transgenerational trauma influences the way the characters understand themselves and their surroundings.

Theoretical Framework: History, Memory and Trauma

In the following, I will explore the literary representation of history, memory and trauma, concepts that are inextricably linked in the works at hand. I shall explain how I define history, memory and trauma and present some of the foundational theories on history, memory and trauma that I refer to in the discussions in the main chapters. Within a particular chapter, in which I use a specific theory to illustrate an author’s portrayal, I will then elaborate on that theory and how it applies to the text. My textual analysis relies on the foundational concepts of key theorists of history, memory and trauma, including Pierre Nora, Henri Bergson, Maurice Halbwachs and Dominick LaCapra.

¹⁴ Schaumann, *Memory Matters ...*, 314.

The facts or details about the past (history) are related to the images of the past individuals have (memory) in the sense that memory is used to speak about historical events. Furthermore, in line with Henri Bergson, the 19th-century French philosopher best known for his work on memory, a distinction must be made between memory of an event in the past and perception of the past. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson analyzes the brain and discusses the relationship between memory, perception and the unconscious. His theories are similar to those of Sigmund Freud; who also studied the impact of the unconscious mind. However, unlike Freud, Bergson does not discuss desires or questions of “why” (what a person’s influences have been in childhood for example). He is concerned with questions of perception of the past versus memory of the past, how memory may influence perception of the present, and how the present may influence the memory (i.e. the perception) of the past. He also addresses the difficulties of psychologically distinguishing past from present. Bergson notes “There is no perception which is not full of memories.”¹⁵ He believes that perception of the present is always colored by an understanding of the past. Certain situations being experienced in the present are interpreted in response to images of the past they may conjure up. Most important for my study, Bergson argues that only memories of the past that the person believes are relevant to the present are stored and/or available to the conscious mind. Other details judged irrelevant may not be as easily accessed.¹⁶ In line with Bergson’s theory on memory, I argue that contemporary German fiction writers illustrate the impact this kind of “selective memory” has in shaping how historical events are viewed, including those on the familial level. They also show how a certain understanding of history can color the present, both for those that experienced the events and for later generations who learn of the events.

¹⁵ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 25.

¹⁶ Ansell-Pearson, “Bergson on Memory,” 65-66.

According to Pierre Nora, the early 20th century French historian known best for coining the term *Lieux de memoire* (sites of memory), memory in today's modern times is dead while at the same it is a hotly debated topic all around us. He sees a cause and effect in this. Memory is on everyone's mind because of its absence. Unlike in pre-modern times, memory today is preserved via memory sites that function as a substitute for *living in memory*, which is how scholars have labeled the relationship people had with memory in pre-modern times. Seen from this perspective, the relationship between the past and the present has been severed and the "preserved" past actually portrays the concerns of the present.¹⁷ Jan Campbell, a literary analyst and clinical psychoanalyst explains how the past relates to the future and how memory is used to make sense of the present.

Re-encountering and remembering cultural myths of the past through the present projects us towards the future. Psychoanalysis as a practice of the bodily imaginary makes us competent not by retrieving the past but by reimagining and contesting history through its performance of popular and cultural memory.¹⁸

Campbell does not understand memory as a process by which the past is recollected, but rather a process by which the past is recreated. His discussion closely aligns with that of Mathias Berek in *Kollektives Gedächtnis und die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit: Eine Theorie der Erinnerungskulturen* (2009). Berek discusses collective memory as a necessary part of humans' constructed reality: "unverzichtbarer Bestandteil der gemeinsamen Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit."¹⁹ Berek does not mention Bergson; instead, he concentrates his analysis on texts by more modern theorists, such as Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Karl Mannheim and Maurice Halbwachs. He discusses the influence of memory on identity formation. Collective memory acts upon individuals to form and continue to form society. Halbwachs pointed to this in

¹⁷ Nora, *Realms of memory ...*, 1-20.

¹⁸ Campbell, 71. The quotations stems from the chapter "Maternal memoirs and cultural methodologies" 53-74.

¹⁹ Berek, *Kollektives Gedächtnis ...*, 24.

the family whereas Berger includes the broader structure of nation and state. Luckmann avoids the term “collective identity” and speaks about personal identity and identity types.²⁰ Berek discusses the way memory is constructed anew each time it is remembered or shared. He claims that there is no such thing as an authentic memory. The social context with which a past situation is understood in retrospect influences present day memory of the event.²¹ This argument is reminiscent of Bergson’s theories and is an essential component in understanding the way memory is portrayed in contemporary German literature.

The discussion of memory and trauma in German society and its literary representation invariably invokes the issue of memory contests. Scholars in the fields of literature and culture studies, such as Anne Fuchs, Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, Jay Winter and Laurel Cohen-Pfister to name a few, have examined such contests or struggles between history and the memory of that history in literature, film and theoretical writings on the relationship between history and memory, and memory and trauma as well as historical/cultural representations, such as memorials and documentaries. In their work on culture studies, *Contested Pasts*, Hodgkin and Radstone explain that

contests over the meaning of the past are also contests over the meaning of the present and over ways of taking the past forward.... The attempt to resolve meaning in the present is thus often a matter of conflicts over representation [of the past] ... How truth can best be conveyed, rather than what actually happened.²²

Hodgkin and Radstone clarify further that they do not seek to privilege memory over history, in other words, oral history of individual experiences over *facts* or documented history, but that studying the relationship between memory and historical representation allows for a better

²⁰ Berek, *Kollektives Gedächtnis* ..., 23.

²¹ Berek, *Kollektives Gedächtnis* ..., 114-115.

²² Hodgkins, “Introduction: Contested Pasts” 1.

understanding of the function and the power of memory in the understanding of the past and the present.

Trauma is closely linked to history and memory. The way that remembered pain and suffering (trauma) is depicted in literature and film is closely tied to the narrator's perspective on history and memory. Furthermore, in studies of survivors of major traumas, trauma can be interpreted as a major factor that leads to a differentiated memory of the past. That is to say, the past may be remembered differently and the memory may take different forms when it includes memories of traumatic events. Traumatic memories may be remembered in a number of ways. They may appear as a flashback, a vivid recall of events, or as physiological symptoms, such as trembling or sweating (in place of a memory of specific details).²³ Furthermore, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer point out that traumatic memories may include not only the recall of the events, but also subjective aspects, such as the survivor's "feelings, perceptions, apprehensions, [and] misapprehensions..." and specifically these features of traumatic memories, including *historical errors*, may convey the real "meaning of an event."²⁴ Rather than being concerned with what *actually* happened in the past, or with the idea of who may have the authority to speak about the *truths* of history, or with any opposition between memory and history, I am interested in the strategies employed by authors to depict the impact of trauma on the memory of the past and history's influence on the present. The discourse on memory, history and trauma provides readers not a window into the past, but a commentary on the present by the way authors and commentators choose to portray the past and its impact.

²³ McNally, *Remembering Trauma*, 113-118.

²⁴ Hirsch, "The Witness in the Archive," 400-401.

Structure

The main text of the dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter that follows the introduction discusses select works of literature and historical events from the end of the Second World War to today to contextualize my literary analyses in chapters two to five. This chapter also provides an overview of contemporary debates on history and memory in Germany. In chapter two, I discuss memory, specifically postmemory, in Julia Franck's novel *Lagerfeuer*. Set in the 1970s, the protagonist's Jewish identity contributes to her transgenerational memory of Jewish persecution and her focus on marginalization of the other in West German society. The focus of chapter three is the way ideological beliefs and traumatic wartime experiences are communicated in the family in Tanja Dückers' novel *Himmelskörper*. Chapter four examines the portrayal of persecution and trauma in Julia Franck's *Die Mittagsfrau*. In particular, I focus on the protagonist's silence, her inability or unwillingness to communicate due to trauma. In chapter five, I explore the idea of transgenerational ideology as presented in Tanja Dückers' novel *Der längste Tag des Jahres*. This chapter outlines the "prägende Bindungen" that Dückers attributes to family upbringing, which may lead to a (re)interpretation of history and continuing marginalization of the other in German society.

I. MEMORY DISCOURSE: MEMORY WORK IN POST-1945 GERMANY AND CONTEMPORARY DEBATES.

Memory is life, ... open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, ... vulnerable to manipulations and appropriation
-- Pierre Nora (1989)²⁵

From the once accepted notion of a *Stunde Null* to today's more differentiated views, the memory discourse of the Second World War as well as that of the Holocaust have taken different shape in different eras after the war.²⁶ A variety of turning points may be identified, but I will limit my discussion in this chapter to a few key events that were a matter of large public debates. Furthermore, there is a distinct difference in the representation of these topics after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 (so called post-Wende period). These events, including Germany's unification in 1990 and the turn-of-the-millennium ten years later, can be seen as turning points in the memory discourse of the Second World War and the Holocaust in Germany.²⁷ This chapter provides a brief survey of memory discourses between 1945 and today, highlighting authors, texts and events that reveal the changing perspectives through the decades. Additionally, I will provide a more in-depth discussion of the changing representation in post-Wende German literature and contemporary debates in Germany on memory, history, and trauma.

For my close reading in chapters two through five, I will focus almost exclusively on 21st-century texts. Therefore, in this chapter I explore the way memory and history of the Second World War and of the Holocaust have been represented in key literary texts prior to 2000.

²⁵ Nora, *Realms of memory* ..., 3.

²⁶ *Stunde Null* referred to a new beginning following the Holocaust.

²⁷ For more on Germany's unification as a turning point in the memory discourse see *Generational Shifts* (2010) by Susanne Vees-Gulani and Laurel Cohen-Pfister For a discussion of unification and the late 1990s (the turn-of-the-millennium) as a turning point see *German Literature in a New Century* (2008) by Katharina Gerstenberger and Patricia Herminhouse. See also Stuart Taberner's and Karina Berger's discussion in *Germans as Victims. In the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic* (2009).

Furthermore, I will discuss contemporary debates on history and memory that play a role in all of the novels I have examined for this study and draw some parallels between different periods in the German postwar decades. These debates are interrelated and ongoing. Julia Franck's and Tanja Dückers' novels can be interpreted as a response to the renewed public interest in Germans as victims, the contemporary supposedly apolitical third or fourth generation in Germany, the call for normalization, as well as questions surrounding the long silence of the wartime generation.

Postwar Memory: 1945 to 1989

The Third Reich has been the subject of countless literary and historical works after the end of the Second World War. In this section, I discuss key historical events, incidents, and developments between 1945 and 1989 that contributed to changes in the public perception of the Nazi period and the Holocaust. Changes in the literary portrayal of these topics correlate to these historical events as well as international reactions to them. For each era, the immediate post war years and the 1950s, the 1960s, and the 1980s, I present exemplary texts thematizing trauma stemming from the Holocaust and/or the Second World War to provide a framework in which to situate the 21st-century German novels analyzed in this study.

In this segment, texts produced and/or published in East and/or West Germany are introduced chronologically, although East and West Germany treated the Nazi past and the Holocaust differently. In *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, historian Jeffrey Herf explains that East Germany used the memory of the Nazi past and the Holocaust for political purposes to further their causes, gain legitimacy as a communist state and attack the West in the early days of the country and during the Cold War by identifying itself as an

antifascist state.²⁸ The East German government blamed the failings of Weimar and the subsequent development of National Socialism on Capitalism and Social Democrats (SPD party), i.e., to distinguish the East German government from the government in West Germany.²⁹ This approach resulted in a distinct way of assessing the Nazi past. East Germany viewed Nazis as capitalists and lower middle class social climbers that had instigated the war and the Holocaust, for which they [East Germany] had no blame. They viewed communists as always having opposed National Socialism. However, as Herf points out, the East German Communists did not therefore view Jews positively since they assumed “links between Jews, capitalism, [and] American imperialism ...”³⁰ The West German government, on the other hand, already under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, under the tutelage of the Western Allies adopted the doctrine that democracy was the way to prevent a renewed rise of fascism.³¹ Unlike East Germany, West Germany underwent denazification under Allied guidance and had a number of trials to convict Nazi perpetrators. However, accepting responsibility officially for the war and the Holocaust did not necessarily mean that the West German population was eager to engage in a discourse on the Nazi past. Furthermore, as West Germany became an ally in the Cold War, denazification efforts declined.

Michael Geyer aptly describes the politics of memory in Germany from 1945 to 1990 as “an unfinished and incomplete cultural and personal affair ... since it was from the beginning the story of a half-hearted, repeatedly interrupted, frequently timid, always circumlocutory approach to German mass murder and genocide.”³² Geyer contends that remembering was a slow and arduous process for the new German Republics and that when it finally became a widespread

²⁸ Herf, *Divided Memory* ..., 163.

²⁹ Herf, *Divided Memory* ..., 34.

³⁰ Herf, *Divided Memory* ..., 159.

³¹ Herf, *Divided Memory* ..., 201.

³² Geyer, “The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany,” 173.

phenomenon (with the building of memorials and films and literature about the Holocaust as well as projects to encourage Christian-Jewish dialogue) it was unfortunately not accompanied by what Geyer would consider actual remembering. Instead, he sees current memory culture as driven by mass media, relegating the Third Reich to history rather than being accompanied by a real “acknowledgement of its terror and genocidal politics.”³³ While Geyer believes that forgetting is not the answer, he presents the negative effects of a politics of memory, such as increased feelings of anger and anti-Semitism amongst the German public the more the past is remembered.³⁴ In chapter five, I will discuss these phenomenon, including current studies conducted on German sentiments about the past.

Memoirs such as Elie Wiesel’s *Night*³⁵ and Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl*,³⁶ are known world-wide as examples of Holocaust literature portraying atrocities committed by Nazi perpetrators. Authors thematizing the Holocaust, persecution, and anti-Semitism, such as Ilse Aichinger, and Nelly Sachs, often received a hesitant reception in West Germany and the new Republic of Austria. Aichinger, who was persecuted for racial reason as the daughter of a mother with Jewish descent and a non-Jewish father, wrote from the perspective of growing up classified as half-Aryan in Nazi occupied Austria in her novel *Die größere Hoffnung* (1948). She wrote about deportations and the exclusions of her friends from the dominant culture. Nelly Sachs, who narrowly escaped deportation by immigrating to Sweden in 1940 wrote about the horrors of the Holocaust in works of poetry and drama in the post war period.³⁷ These were at first only published in East Germany, such as the collection *In den Wohnungen des Todes und*

³³ Geyer, “The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany,” 170, 187.

³⁴ Geyer, “The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany,” 191.

³⁵ First published in Yiddish, it was translated into German in 1958 as *Die Nacht zu begraben Elisha*.

³⁶ After the initial Dutch publication, a German translation and filmic portrayal followed in 1959 movie. The 2001 film, *Anne Frank - Die Wahre Geschichte* is one of the most recent interpretations.

³⁷ Bower, Kathrin. Introduction to *Ethics and remembrance in the poetry of Nelly Sachs and Rose Ausländer* 5-6.

Sternverdunkelung (1949). In 1959, Sachs was *discovered* in Germany when her radio play, *Mysterienspiel Eli*, made its debut on the air.³⁸ The NS perpetrators depicted in these works are clearly shown in a negative light and Jewish oppression by the Nazis is made obvious. Yet the majority of texts in the first years after the end of the war emphasize the suffering of mainstream Germans or the rebuilding after the war.

Literature in the immediate post-war era in West Germany, termed Trümmerliteratur, by authors such as Wolfgang Borchert's *Draussen vor der Tür* (1947) and Heinrich Böll's *Wo warst du Adam* (1951) was concerned with the plight of returning soldiers. Specific references to the Holocaust were largely absent in these works. The film *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1946) by the East German director Wolfgang Staudte portrays a German war veteran, Dr. Hans Mertens, returning to his apartment amongst the ruins of Berlin. Although the film includes a concentration camp survivor, the photographer Susanne Wallner, who finds Mertens in her apartment and befriends him, the reasons for her imprisonment are unclear and the film does not discuss Jewish victims of the Holocaust specifically.³⁹ The emphasis of the film is on Mertens' suffering due to his war experiences. It also differentiates between *ordinary* Wehrmacht soldiers who followed orders and *real* perpetrators, which may be seen in Merten's push to have his superior officer prosecuted for war crimes. The film, produced by East German DEFA, was shown in 1946 in the Soviet occupied sector of Berlin and on television in East Germany in 1955; West Germans did not see the film until 1971. The film portrays NS perpetrators, notably a

³⁸ In this time period, Sachs was criticized for creating a lyrical drama that showcased Holocaust victims and trauma and accused of thereby trivializing the Shoah. For more on Nelly Sachs and *Eli*, see Lorenz, *Keepers of the Motherland*, 129-139.

³⁹ Prager, 87-88. Adopting Susanne's disposition as its model, the film does not look back. Its villain, an industrialist who was responsible for atrocities he ordered committed during the war, who is capitalizing on the reconstruction, meets with justice in the form of the laws of the new Germany. The film, however, sees no need to take up the details of his trial, nor does it concern itself with Susanna's own concentration camp experiences."

capitalist industrialist, living successful in postwar Germany. Its emphasis on prosecution and the correlation of Capitalism and Fascism is likely the reason for its late arrival in West Germany.

The theme of Nazi officials and criminals returning to their old lives and livelihoods was also explored literary works in this time period, such as Borchert's *Draussen vor der Tür*, and is reflected in West Germany's postwar laws. In 1951, a law went into effect that granted officials (*Beamte*) and university professors that were employed before the end of the war in 1945, permission to return to their posts as long as they were not deemed major offenders (*Hauptschuldige*) or incriminated Persons (*Belastete*) in the Western Allies' denazification process.⁴⁰ About 90% of the officials in Germany were able to take advantage of this offer. Furthermore, while Allied officials considered all Germans collectively guilty for the war and atrocities committed in 1945,⁴¹ efforts of denazification had already slowed considerably by 1948 and only 1.4% of the German population was deemed Hauptschuldige und Belastete.⁴² According to historian Eric Johnson, West German courts in the 1950s handed out a number of mild sentences and accepted the notion that most of the German population could not be held accountable for grave offenses since they were "following orders."⁴³ The East German government used Nazi documents and trials of Nazi criminals mainly as propaganda tools to discredit West Germany, rather than to prosecute atrocities committed during the Holocaust.⁴⁴

While today the extent of the German civilians' wartime suffering is of popular interest, in the 1950s, a work exploring this perspective, the anonymously published diary *Eine Frau in*

⁴⁰ "Gesetz zur Regelung der Rechtsverhältnisse der unter Artikel 131 des Grundgesetzes fallenden Personen"

⁴¹ In 1945, Germans were forced to visit concentration camps and posters were distributed, showing gruesome death camp images entitled: "Diese Schandtaten: Eure Schuld" and Germans were forced to view a number of films showing what happened in extermination camps.

⁴² Düwell, Kurt. "War Criminals..." (194-195). Western Allies allowed Germans to take over the punishing of perpetrators and as Düwell points out, Germans believed that punishing only high officials was sufficient. For more on this subject, see Giles MacDonogh's book, *After the Reich* (2007), Part III Crime and Punishment, especially the discussion of denazification in chapter 12.

⁴³ Johnson, *Nazi Terror ...*, 6-7.

⁴⁴ Hindenburg, *Demonstrating Reconciliation ...*, 79-80.

Berlin (1959), was not well received. This diary provided a vivid account of German women raped by Russian Allied soldiers and surviving in the rubble of occupied post war Berlin by engaging in sexual relationships for protection and material advantage. The text first appeared in English in 1954 and debuted in German in 1959, published by a small Swiss publisher. According to Hans Magnus Enzensberger responding in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 2003, the diary received strong negative reactions in the German press and the author was accused of having diminished “die Ehre der deutschen Frau.”⁴⁵ By contrast, the 2003 reprint of the text and 2008 feature film based on the diary were an enormous success in Germany.⁴⁶ Later in this chapter, in the section on the contemporary public discourse on *Germans as Victims*, I will discuss the reprint and the film further. Rubble literatures’ emphasis on women’s suffering at the home front or men's experiences returning from the battlefield in some ways mirrors the contemporary debate on German as victims. In this sense, 21st-century novels on victimized Germans do not necessarily constitute a break with tradition.

The climate of the 1960s in West Germany corresponds with the title of Adorno's famous speech “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit” on November 6, 1959 at a conference of educators organized by the German Coordinating Council of Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Wiesbaden (1959). In this text, Adorno warns against concentrating efforts solely against obvious acts of right-extremism, arguing that it is important to recognize underlying National Socialist values that may still be a part of German society. February 1960, the German Kultusministerkonferenz decided to add “Behandlung der jüngsten Vergangenheit im

⁴⁵ “Verdeckte Ermittlungen von Schnüfflern.” Enzensberger was opposed to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who “outed” the author of *Eine Frau in Berlin* as Marta Hiller.

⁴⁶ Fischer, *Lexikon der Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ... , 351. The contemporary popularity of this topic may also be seen in the number of television documentaries on history, such as the 2010 ZDF Zeitgeschichte television film, “*Frauen von Berlin*” erinnern sich. Die Wahrheit hinter dem Spielfilm “*Anonyma*.”

Geschichts- und gemeinschaftskundlichen Unterricht“ to the curriculum in German schools.⁴⁷

The same year as Adorno’s text, Günter Grass’ acclaimed novel *Die Blechtrommel* (1959), criticized the Nazi past but safely by way of an unrealistic dwarf hero. The miniature protagonist, Oskar, is able to conjure up memories of National Socialism during his childhood as well as of his birth and his grandparents’ lives in the 19th century. Thus, Grass presents memory as a retrievable and accurate representation of past reality. Oskar uses his drum obtained from the Jewish shopkeeper, Sigismund Markus, as the tool with which he remembers. The novel also introduces the rather problematic character of Mariusz Fajngold and his trauma as a Holocaust survivor - his family was murdered in Treblinka while he worked on a Sonderkommando disposing of the remains of murdered Jews. Grass’ novel *Hundejahre*, published 1963, includes specific imagery of the Stutthof concentration camp and provides more information on the Holocaust and the complicity of those allowing the camp to exist.⁴⁸

The changes in the usage of the term *Auschwitz* in the 1960s highlights the public discourse on the Holocaust in this period. *Auschwitz* began to be used as a term to refer to the Holocaust and all atrocities committed under National Socialism. In other words, the word *Auschwitz* came to represent the Shoah in its entirety, rather than refer to a particular concentration / death camp. In 1960, the German newspaper *Die Zeit* warned “Von hier führt die Strasse nach Auschwitz” after a synagogue in Köln was vandalized.⁴⁹ Deemed the “swastika

⁴⁷ Heyl, 203. Matthias Heyl discusses the way the Holocaust has met with “Verdrängung“ from the first post war years to the present. Particularly, the way that history is taught, leaves atrocities without perpetrators as the atrocities of the Holocaust are remembered but the perpetrators (including witnesses who did not act) are marginalized or not recognized as perpetrators as such.

⁴⁸ Hall, *Günter Grass's 'Danzig Quintet ...'*, 200. Hall outlines the changing climate between Grass’ two works and details how *Hundejahre* portrays the memory of the Holocaust.

⁴⁹ Benz, “Auschwitz und die Deutschen ...“ 333. The newspaper article appeared on Jan 1., 1960. Wolfgang Benz has written extensively on the history of the Holocaust and the Third Reich between the 1980s to today. For more, see Norbert Frei’s *Beschweigen und Bekennen: Die deutsche Nachkriegsgesellschaft und der Holocaust* (2001).

epidemic,” it consisted mainly of acts of vandalism against synagogues and Jewish sites.⁵⁰ This wave of anti-Semitism garnered world-wide attention and may have led to changes in public perception and increased interest in examining the Nazi period and the Holocaust in the 1960s and 1970s. A number of Adorno’s writings in the 1960s and the West German government initiatives were in large part a response to these and other public acts of anti-Semitism that originated in Cologne and spread to other parts of Europe and the United States. However, Adorno’s writings stress that “National Socialism lives on ...” whereby the Adenauer era concentrated its efforts on keeping German reputation abroad from being tarnished and repeatedly made the point that most Germans were National Socialists only “under the hardest force of dictatorship.”⁵¹ In East Germany, the period may best be represented by two dedications: the 1958 Buchenwald memorial by Otto Grotewohl and the 1961 antifascist memorial at Sachsenhausen by Walter Ulbricht. Although the official purpose of both memorials was to remember past suffering, the events were used to reiterate East Germany’s antifascist stance in contrast to West Germany and to further the hope in East German’s communist endeavors. In neither speech given at the dedication was remorse or guilt mentioned and the death of communist resistance fighters was emphasized over the death of Jewish victims.⁵² The return of several Weimar Socialist exiles to East Germany also marks this period. Authors such as Anna Seghers and Bertolt Brecht had been known in the Weimar Republic, forced into exile by the Nazis and returned to the GDR to foster “anti-fascist” literature. Despite the strict cultural policies of the Socialist Union Party (SED), Seghers famously claimed that she moved to the

⁵⁰ Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love ...*, 211. Hesia Diner outlines the development of the American Nazi movement and describes the vandalism in Cologne on Christmas Eve of 1959 as an impetus for further violence against Jews.

⁵¹ Olick, Jeffrey and Andrew Perrin, “Introduction” *Guilt and Defense ...*, 6-7. The American sociologists, Olick and Perrin also quote Adorno and Adenauer and provide an excellent contextualized introduction to Adorno’s study of German opinions regarding their Nazi heritage, which he undertook as part of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research.

⁵² Herf, *Divided Memory ...*, 175-178.

GDR because it offered her more freedom to write about the subject she felt most passionate about. Many of her short stories, such as “Die Toten bleiben jung” emphasize the memory of National Socialist atrocities and (West) German compliance in Nazi crimes. However, with Stalinism in East Germany many of the returning exile authors eventually struggled with the Socialist regime’s rejection of cosmopolitanism.⁵³

The Eichmann trial in 1961 and the 1963 Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt confronted the public again with the memory of the Holocaust in the media.⁵⁴ The Eichmann trial seemingly confirmed the literary portrayals of Nazi perpetrators living normal lives amongst the German population after the war. Hannah Arendt reveals in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, that Eichmann, a fanatic Nazi, nonetheless led a seemingly normal family life and in his civilian life in Argentina appeared not as a crazy psychopath, but rather as an ordinary citizen. The Frankfurt trials of Auschwitz officials lasted many years and received extensive press coverage.⁵⁵ Unlike at the Nuremberg trial in 1949, none of the defendants were sentenced to death. In 1958, the Central Office of the State Justice Administrations for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes was formed in Germany to investigate crimes committed during the Third Reich. In the late 1950s it had become apparent that many perpetrators who were guilty of crimes committed outside of Germany or against non-Germans had not been apprehended. However, although the commission brought hundreds of perpetrators to trial and investigated countless crimes, the office’s efforts were not viewed positively by many Germans, and for the most part, the

⁵³ Wolfgram, “*Getting History Right*” ..., 54-55. Wolfgram outlines the way anti-cosmopolitan views influenced the lack of discussion of anti-Semitism and Nazi atrocities in literature and film. Whereas a few immediate postwar movies directly addressed the issue of Jewish persecution, this quickly changed in the 1950s.

⁵⁴ For more on the changing public perceptions in the 1960s see Konrad Jarausch’s article “Critical Memory and Civil Society: The Impact of the 1960s on German Debates about the Past” in *Coping with the Nazi past*, 11-30.

⁵⁵ Wittmann, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial*, 3. This was the first major trial of concentration camp workers conducted by the German court system using present-day German laws to convict criminals of murder and abetting murder, including Robert Mulka and camp Gestapo members. It lasted for two years and 22 individuals were tried. The popular Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung and the Frankfurter Rundschau followed the trial for which 254 witnesses (Auschwitz survivors and former SS officers) provided testimony.

convicted criminals received mild sentences or were acquitted.⁵⁶ Along these lines, Edgar Hilsenrath's satirical novel, *Der Nazi und der Friseur* (1977) portrayed a former Nazi thriving in Israel under the guise of a Holocaust survivor. In the novel, the protagonist's shockingly "easy" transformation from Nazi perpetrator to ordinary law-abiding Jewish citizen hones in on the idea of the difficulty in recognizing National Socialist perpetrators or values in post war German society. This issue is also a concern in Franck's and Dücker's novels which are the subject of the following chapters. For example, Franck's *Lagerfeuer* takes place in the 1970s and Franck portrays her protagonist noting the ethnocentrism in her contemporary German society and references a wealthy family that may consist of former Nazi perpetrators now practicing philo-Semitism by attempting to help the Jewish protagonist of the novel. *Lagerfeuer* also portrays a number of East German characters that make a correlation between the capitalistic West German society and Fascism. In the chapter on this novel, I further discuss the differences in how East Germany versus West Germany dealt with the Nazi legacy. Moreover, in Tanja Dücker's novel, *Himmelskörper*, the subject of chapter three, a grandchild discovers only after her grandparent's death that her grandparents believed in National Socialism and continued to adhere to its ideology. In these works, written from the perspective of the second and third generation, it is never quite clear who is a perpetrator and who is a victim and the same individuals frequently seem to be both a victim and a perpetrator to varying degrees at the same time.

Revelations about Germans as guilty *and* suffering were already made in the 1970s in Walter Kempowski's writings. His survey books, such as *Haben Sie Hitler gesehen?* (1973) and *Haben Sie davon gewußt? Deutsche Antworten* (1979) attempted to convey what Germans may have known about the Holocaust, their thoughts about Nazism and their memories of the time period in general. The collection of statements from first generation everyday citizens is

⁵⁶ Kohl, "Strafverfolgung mit Hindernissen."

presented with minimal information about the respondents such as age, gender or occupation, but without any analysis. The remarks are mostly brief and reveal overall sentiments about a topic rather than delve into a particular perspective. Kempowski's book, which has been republished to the present day 2012 edition, is interesting in two ways – it expresses the ordinariness of living under the Nazi regime, the respondents' contradictory statements and feelings about the past as well as the way people mirror the attitudes of their present day (1970s). For example, responding to a question asking whether he had seen Hitler in person, a "Rentner" born 1903 answers: "Nee, der war nicht hier. ... Ich war net für ihn. Aber Ordnung war."⁵⁷ Another respondent compares Hitler to the current West German regime remarking that "Magdeburg war rot" and that neither Hitler nor "die heutigen Machthaber, drüben" liked Magdeburg.⁵⁸ A teacher born in 1936 remarks "Nein, ich hab Hitler nicht gesehen. Aber es tut mir leid. Ich hätte ihn gern gesehen. Es hat doch was für sich, berühmte Leute zu sehen."⁵⁹ Margarete Dörr points out in her study, *Wer die Zeit nicht miterlebt hat ...* that Kempowski does not explain who the respondents of the surveys were or in what capacity they answered his questions. She adds that undoubtedly very few provided straightforward and truthful answers to his inquisition and instead gave cliché-filled responses.⁶⁰ I agree that many respondents had similar comments that could be interpreted as attempts at being politically correct; however, these are secondary to the majority of surprisingly candid remarks on positive images of Hitler, linking Hitler to Capitalism and concern for German mainstream victims coupled with a virtual silence regarding the Holocaust. Overwhelmingly, the participants responding with negative views of Hitler blame him for the war and Germany's economy after the war without expressing any personal or collective German

⁵⁷ Kempowski, *Haben Sie Hitler Gesehen ...*, 9.

⁵⁸ Kempowski, *Haben Sie Hitler Gesehen ...*, 14.

⁵⁹ Kempowski, *Haben Sie Hitler Gesehen ...*, 11.

⁶⁰ Dörr, *Wer die Zeit nicht miterlebt hat ...*, 253.

guilt or shame. For my investigation of transgenerational transmission of trauma and ideology, Kempowski's collection of responses is interesting regardless of its limitations, because it provides some evidence that even in the 1970s, many mainstream Germans had not changed their views on Hitler and the Nazi Party in spite of their knowledge of the horrors committed during the Holocaust. More recent novels by Kempowski, including *Alles Umsonst* (2006), continue to elaborate on the notion that people are simply a product of their time. As a book review in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* declares: Kempowski portrays the "historisch beschränkten Bewusstseinszustände" of his characters without judgment or emotion.⁶¹

In the GDR, in the 1970s, Christa Wolf became a symbol of second generation authors searching for answers. Her novel *Kindheitsmuster* is a semi-autobiographical text with distinctive literary techniques and themes. The first person narrator tells the story of a young girl growing up between 1929 and 1945 marked by indoctrination in Nazi ideology and family secrecy. The text includes the adult narrator's perspective and account of a 1971 trip *back* to locations of her childhood in Landsberg an der Warthe in present day Poland near Frankfurt an der Oder.⁶² The novel switches between the past and the present and the past is commented upon by the adult narrator. The concept of memory and the past's influence on the present permeates the novel. One of the foremost topics in this novel is the need to remember in order not to repeat the mistakes of the past. The narrator states: "Dieser fatale Hang der Geschichte zu Wiederholungen gegen den man sich wappnen muss."⁶³ This sentiment can be seen as integral to many narratives about the Nazi period or the Holocaust in the 1970s and 80s.

⁶¹ Seibt, "Mit vor Entsetzen geweiteten Augen ..." The novel portrays a group fleeing westward from the Russians in 1945. The reviewer Gustav Seibt praises Kempowski thus: "Der große Walter Kempowski hat ein weiteres Mal das fast Unmögliche, das fast nie Gelingende geleistet: einen vollkommen überzeugenden historischen Roman."

⁶² The name of the town was changed in 1946 to Gorzów Wielkopolski.

⁶³ Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster*, 159.

The televised American mini-series *Holocaust* on West-German television in 1979 broadcast on ARD over the course of five consecutive days initiated a new debate on the atrocities committed by Germans in the Third Reich. In *Konfrontation mit der Vergangenheit. Das Medienereignis Holocaust und die Politische Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (2008), Raul Jordan explains that the broadcasting of *Holocaust* on national television created a stir and impacted Germany's and Austria's memory discourse. Although everyone knew of the Holocaust, Jordan argues that many Germans did not or refused to precisely understand the details and implications of the atrocities committed and that the series served as a reminder for the general public. He bases his argument on the many letters received by the television station airing the film. Jordan does not discuss why the public needed to be reminded. Although the trials in the early 1960s, discussed earlier, had inundated the public with gruesome details of the atrocities committed during the Third Reich, the German historian Detlev Clausen argues that until the TV series was shown, the topic of *Auschwitz* was effectively "verdrängt" and "erledigt."⁶⁴ As these events show, throughout the history of the postwar period, there have been periodic calls for *normalization* and calls for *remembering* long before the contemporary debates began.

The 1980s may best be understood by juxtaposing two films, *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter* (1980) by Helga Sanders-Brahms and *Das schreckliche Mädchen* (1989) by Michael Verhoeven, which thematize the Nazi past albeit very differently. The first film depicts German suffering emphasizing a woman's survival during the war and her rape by American soldiers, but with a critical eye towards past Nazis and their success after the war. *Das schreckliche Mädchen* centers on a young girl's effort to uncover Nazis in her town in contemporary German society and determining historical facts in retrospect. The *Historikerstreit* of 1986-89 is a central event

⁶⁴ Claussen, *Grenzen der Aufklärung* ... 8. These terms are also used in the press after 1979 to criticize this period.

of this period, which brought about changes in the public treatment of the past. The debates between historians consisted of two perspectives as to how to interpret Germany's Nazi past. Some historians, such as Jürgen Habermas, accused others, such as Ernst Nolte, of attempting to *normalize* the past and *rewrite* Germany's history. Habermas felt that Nolte sought to relativize the Holocaust by comparing it to atrocities committed by other regimes, such as Stalin's dictatorship. Nolte and others, in turn, accused Habermas of continuing to dwell on German guilt and thereby stifle Germany's sense of national pride.

The television film, *Heimat* (1984), by writer and director Edgar Reitz, represented a contrast to these highly charged political debates about guilt and identity. The over 15 hour film series tells the story of a family from the end of World War I to the 1980s in a small town in the Hunsrück, a German mountain range. The film aimed to be a response to the way Germans were represented in the US documentary *Holocaust*. As Alon Confino points out, the film centers on a (re)presentation of a German identity through symbolic usages of the 19th-century concept of *Heimat*.⁶⁵ As is typical for the genre of "Heimatfilm," this production portrayed Germans in a quiet, small town milieu with their identity connected to their local region rather than to the more abstract concept of a German nation. This film enjoyed immense success amongst the German viewing public. For the characters in *Heimat*, history, including the Third Reich, the war and post-war American occupation, unfolds in the background with only limited interference in their daily lives and without much critique. The structure of the film is almost documentary as regional oral testimonies were used to write the script. Creating an almost idyllic myth, the film

⁶⁵ Confino, "Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* and German Nationhood ...," 185.

constitutes an attempt at historical revisionism and provides an entertaining counterpoint to ongoing political and cultural debates on how the past should be viewed.⁶⁶

Austria also televised a Heimatfilm series, *Die Alpensaga*, filmed from 1976 to 1980. The television drama portrayed the problems a rural population in a small town in Austria encountered between 1900 and 1945. For most of the post-war period until the 1980s, Austria's official stance had been the claim of being Nazi Germany's first victim. The *Waldheim Affair* in Austria in 1986 marked a turning point in this period. The debate that ensued after the revelation that Kurt Waldheim, the conservative Austrian presidential candidate, was a war criminal brought to the forefront a variety of topics, such as Austria's compliance and guilt during the Holocaust and the pervasive anti-Semitism in contemporary Austria.⁶⁷

Post-Wende Memory: The first decade after unification

The literary representation of history, memory, and trauma in Germany changed after the fall of the wall and the attendant events, German unification, and Austria's changing political shift to the right and rise of the Freedom Party. One of the many changes in Germany after the opening of the Eastern Bloc countries and unification has been an increasingly multicultural society, including growing Jewish communities in Germany and Austria through Eastern European, notably Russian, Jewish immigrants. This migration trend continues today.⁶⁸ Coupled with the increasing multiculturalism is right wing extremism. In the 1990s the right wing party

⁶⁶ For more on the film *Heimat*, see Michael Kaiser's 2001 Dissertation *Filmische Geschichts-Chroniken im Neuen Deutschen Film: Die Heimat-Reihen von Edgar Reitz und ihre Bedeutung für das deutsche Fernsehen*. For more on the debate that ensued over Reitz's revisionism, see Christopher Wickham's article "Representation and Mediation in Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*" in *The German Quarterly* (1991), Gertrud Koch's article "How Much Naivete can we Afford? The New Heimat Feeling" in *New German Critique* (Fall 1985) and Anton Kaes' book, *From Hitler to Heimat. The Return of History as Film* (1989).

⁶⁷ Beilein, *86 und die Folgen*, 37-40.

⁶⁸ European Commission, and Statistical Office of the European Communities, *Demography report 2010*, 45, 49. Germany had the highest number of residence permits as of December 2009 of all the EU countries – 3,695,144 and Germany also had the highest number of foreigners – 7,185,921. However, foreigners still only comprise 8.8% of the population.

FPÖ in Austria under the leadership of J. Haider cast foreigners as scapegoats on their political platform and employed racial and prejudicial terms and rhetoric in public discourse.⁶⁹ Literature reflects these changes in the way memory and identity is portrayed.

In the collection of essays, *A European Memory* (2010), editors Malgorzata Pakier and Bo Strath, explain in their introduction that after 1989 “the old points of orientation in time and space no longer functioned” due to the end of the Cold War in Europe resulting in “political appeals for a new history and truth.”⁷⁰ The authors point to the civil wars in Yugoslavia as another impetus for discourse on topics analogous to those about the Second World War and the Holocaust. Carsten Würmann also explains in his article “Ausgerechnet Bosnien-Herzegowina. Gründe fürs Reisen in Juli Zehs Bericht über eine Fahrt durch Bosnien“ that Zeh’s travel novel about Bosnia, *Die Stille ist ein Geräusch: Eine Fahrt durch Bosnien* (2002), brought painful memories of war and destruction back into the minds of Germans. He provides a number of reasons for this, including the geographical proximity of the war to Germany, the similarity of the people and culture, the incoming refugees, and the implications of civilian suffering as well as the charges of ethnic cleansing. Memory is also a central point in this text. Würmann quotes the beginning of Zeh’s novel: “Reisen ist, wenn man Dinge erlebt, an die man sich ein Lebtage zu erinnern glaubt und die man, kaum zu Hause, sofort wieder vergisst.”⁷¹ In his extensive study, *Deutsche Geschichte in Deutschen Geschichten der Neunziger Jahre*, Joachim Garbe investigates to what extent novels and autobiographies contribute to the interpretation or re-interpretation of history in Germany in the 1990s. He points to a change in the 1990s noting: "ein

⁶⁹ Bailer-Galanda, *Incorrigibly Right ...*, 19-21.

⁷⁰ Pakier, *A European Memory?...*, 3.

⁷¹ Würmann, “Ausgerechnet Bosnien-Herzegowina ...,” 172.

verändertes Herangehen an das Thema deutet sich an. Dazu gehört, dass mit der deutschen Geschichte in der Literatur nun manchmal in eher spielerischer Weise umgegangen wird ..."⁷²

The influence of traumatic memory and the obsession with memory is also the topic of Robert Schindel's 1992 novel *Gebürtig*. Schindel was born in 1944. His parents, Jewish Socialists, had been deported to concentration camps. Reflecting on their own memory of the Holocaust proves to be debilitating and disorienting for Schindel's characters. Set in New York, Vienna and Germany in the 1980s, his Jewish characters seem unable to succeed in their interpersonal relationships because of their memories of the Holocaust, which influences their Jewish identity.⁷³ Furthermore, the narrative structure of the novel is deliberately disorienting with its numerous changes in perspective, time and space. Similar to a number of texts I have discussed, *Gebürtig* also thematizes the uncovering of former Nazi perpetrators living comfortably in the post-Holocaust Republics while a Jewish survivor, the songwriter Hermann Gebürtig, leads a tormented life in New York.

During the 1990s, the role of the German Wehrmacht during WWII drew renewed attention. The ensuing debates are reminiscent of literary portrayals of perpetrators whose war crimes go unpunished. The exhibition, *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944* (1995), by the German historians, Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann, and the accompanying publications changed the way the Wehrmacht was viewed. The events aimed at showing the atrocities committed by *ordinary* Wehrmacht soldiers, challenging the myth that the regular German military had been "clean."⁷⁴ In contrast, the members of special units, such as

⁷² Garbe, *Deutsche Geschichte In Deutschen Geschichten Der Neunziger Jahre* , 265.

⁷³ Freeman, "Jewish Identity and the Holocaust in Robert Schindel's *Gebürtig*," 117.

⁷⁴ The *Wehrmachtsausstellung* focused on crimes committed by the German Wehrmacht during the Second World War on the Eastern Front between 1941 and 1944. The exhibit opened with the title "War of Annihilation. Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941 to 1944" from 1995 until 1999. The exhibit was revised and shown again from 2001 to 2004 under the title "Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944." For more, see Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann, *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944*.

the SS, Gestapo and others had been under scrutiny and denied compensation and acknowledgement after the war. In 2006, Friedemann Weidauer argued in the article "Sollen Wir Ihn Reinlassen? Wolfgang Borcherts *Draussen vor der Tür* in Neuen Kontexten," that with the changing assessment of the Wehrmacht, Borchert's literary texts on returning soldiers should be re-examined. She questions Borchert's established identity as a pacifist and anti-fascist.⁷⁵

Another aspect of memory and history that emerged after the fall of the wall was the revelation of the considerable extent to which East German citizens had worked as informants for the Stasi, including prominent figures, such as Christa Wolf. Wolf was particularly affected by the report that she had been an informant from 1959 to 1962. This was due to her critical stance against the oppression she experienced in the GDR and her general standing in German society as a moral voice. She revealed her status as a former informant in 1993, three years after her novel *Was bleibt* was published.⁷⁶ Written in 1979, the novel details the life of an author in the GDR under daily surveillance by the Stasi. Written in the first person, the novel was understood to be an autobiographical representation of Christa Wolf, who was watched closely after voicing her opposition to Wolf Biermann's expatriation by the East German government in 1976. The controversy and public outrage focused on the fact that she had omitted her own participation in the Stasi, her silence, while at the same time representing herself as a victim. However, it should be noted, that Christa Wolf's work as a *Gesellschaftlicher Informant* and *Informeller Mitarbeiter* from 1959 to 1962 was minimal.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Weidauer, 124. In this article, she points to the dangers associated with teaching Borchert's text to youngsters as an example of pacifist thinking, rather than as a text by a Wehrmacht soldier indoctrinated to view others, such as the Russians, as inferior.

⁷⁶ Stamp, *The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic ...*, 117. Stamp's book is an historical inquiry that explains the impact of East German policies on the authors, Wolf and Müller and the authors' or literature's influence on the regime.

⁷⁷ Stamp, *The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic ...*, 118-120. For more details of Wolf's activity as an informant, see "Die ängstliche Margarete" in *Der Spiegel*, 1993, 158-165.

Silence is one of the recurring topics that I explore in this study on the representation of historical trauma and trauma transmission in contemporary German literature. Another way to understand collective or individual *silence* is the lack of open communication, both public and familial, regarding certain aspects of a narrative of historical truths. Such an unoccupied space where a discussion of the past or an understanding of events that have transpired is absent may be found in each of the major novels that I discuss. In Julia Franck's *Lagerfeuer*, the reader learns limited information of a woman's mysterious past and the novel thematizes silence and secrets at every turn, in CIA interrogations, in East German society, in a West German refugee camp and in the family. Tanja Dückers' novel, *Himmelskörper*, secrets are purposely kept from the younger generations in order to detract from the family's involvement in the Nazi regime. In novels such as Franck's *Die Mittagsfrau* and Dückers' *Der längste Tag des Jahres*, second generation characters have a distorted understanding of their parent's or grandparent's identity and past, because the wartime generation characters portrayed in the novel have been essentially silenced by trauma or unwittingly pass on false impressions. Transgenerational trauma due to silence, as I define it, is also the topic of numerous works of Holocaust fiction in the United States. One of these novels, Joyce Hackett's *The Disturbance of the Inner Ear*, specifically deals with silence, which is the red thread that runs through the novel, in which a daughter of a Holocaust survivor is traumatized by the past. After her parents' accidental death, her trauma manifests itself in her numbness and her silent playing of her Cello. Hackett explains that her novel addresses "the task of living after trauma, ... accepting that there is no mastery of the past, or another's experience, ... [and the need] to extricate ourselves from the warped narratives we inherit in order to avoid doing damage to others in the present."⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Hackett, "The Territories of Trauma."

Recently, in the 21st century, another historical processing of the past, a kind of *Aufarbeitung* reminiscent of the decades long *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* discourse in Germany is emerging. In 2009, Herta Müller won the Nobel Peace Prize in Literature. Her novel, *Atemschaukel*, thematizes the oppression of Rumanians of German descent under the Stalin Regime by discussing the trauma endured by a seventeen-year-old Rumanian boy deported to a labor camp in the Soviet Union. Müller interviewed victims, such as Oskar Pastior, for her portrayal of their traumatic experiences in her novel. She has also been an outspoken critic of former informants of the Romanian Securitate, who kept silent about their activities as collaborators of the regime. Public debates that have arisen from this discourse call to mind the accusations heaped against Stasi informants accused mainly of their silence.

Peter Grosz, a German speaking Romanian author, is one of the former Romanian Securitate informants whom Herta Müller has accused of assuming a victim stance when in actuality his collaboration endangered others. On February 27, 2010 the German television show “Landesart” on SWR covered “Verleihung Deutscher Kleinkunstpreis 2010” and reported on Peter Grosz and his recent admission of being an informant in Rumania before his 1978 emigration to West Germany.⁷⁹ He had been working in Germany as a Gymnasium teacher and a theater director and was dismissed from his job after his admission. In the show, Landesart, the cameras surround Peter Grosz and a voice over reports that he is asked “... warum er sich in den vergangenen zwanzig Jahren nie bei seinem Opfer William Totok entschuldigt hat.” The shot switches to a close up of Grosz as he is leaving the event and he responds to the reporter’s questions “Ich hätte mich gefreut wenn er sich einmal bei mir gemeldet hätte.” Indignantly, an invisible voice over accompanies Grosz’ exit down the stairs “Hier erwartet offenbar ein Täter,

⁷⁹ This segment showed only one side of the story, interviewing his victim, William Totok, as well as Herta Müller, who was also watched by the Securitate. Peter Grosz has now retired.

dass sein Opfer auf ihn zukommt.” As Peter Grosz is shown walking in midst his young student supporters who have come to demonstrate in his favor, the show concludes: “Die Aufarbeitung der Securitate Vergangenheit hat in Deutschland gerade erst begonnen”⁸⁰ Interestingly, what the press demands from Grosz throughout the segment are apologies. They are outraged at his claims of being a victim of the regime under which he had worked. Grosz claims he was a victim of the regime as much as the people he reported under. The major of Oppenheim, Marcus Held, responding to Grosz being let go as the manager of the Oppenheimer Festspiele, reasons that it is not Grosz’ actual involvement in the Securitate that has led to his dismissal, but his silence regarding his activities, due to the fact “dass er nie das Thema offensive angegangen ist.”⁸¹ Even more interesting is the report that Oskar Pastior, Müller’s friend and source for her novel *Atemschaukel*, was also an informant in the Securitate while at the same time was closely followed and watched by other members of the Securitate.⁸² This is reminiscent of the decade long silence on the part of many Germans who were concealing their involvement in the Nazi regime. Many perpetrators returned to their *normal* lives after the war and literature thematizes the difficulty in assessing a person’s status as a victim, opponent, bystander, collaborator, and/or perpetrator.

These cultural processes I have outlined are important to contextualize the contemporary novels I shall discuss in the following chapters. Considering the novels by Julia Franck and Tanja Dückers within their intellectual, historical and cultural context helps in seeing the novels’ complex issues of trauma, memory, identity, and history.

⁸⁰This scene also shows Herta Müller as she explains that it does not surprise her that Grosz takes on a victim stance. She believes that people like him brought “Gefahr” unto those they watched and reported on.

⁸¹ “Stadtratsitzung mit Peter Grosz in Oppenheim Nachrichten”

⁸² “Büchnerpreisträger war IM der Securitate”

Contemporary Debates on *Germans as Victims* and Normalization

Increasingly, contemporary literary authors are writing about issues of memory and the representation and perception of history in their works. They question how memories are retained, remembered, (re)constructed, shaped by historical discourse, shared, and perceived by future generations. As part of the so-called second or third generations, these authors have encountered the Holocaust and Nazi period only through historical documentation and the memory of others. Whereas most German Holocaust representation from the 1960s to the 1980s took a critical stance toward Nazi perpetrators and explored German's collective guilt, the 1990s brought a renewed interest in Germans as victims as well as calling the perpetrator/victim dichotomy into question.⁸³ History is also portrayed from different viewpoints and questions of ethics, legitimacy, right and wrong are explored. More authors are publishing their memoirs and autobiographies detailing witness accounts of this period.

The public discourse on Germans as victims during the Second World War is often traced back to Sebald's 1997 *Luftkrieg und Literatur*. In his text, Sebald articulated the lack of literary representation of the bombings of German cities. Soon thereafter, a trend emerged in Germany that included more and more discussions on mainstream German suffering during the war and in the postwar period resulting from bombings, expulsion, displacement, hunger, rape etc. Documentaries and historical and literary treatments of Germans as victims became ensconced in the public discourse. However, there were earlier examples of texts on German wartime suffering. Helke Sanders documentary, *Befreier und Befreite* (1992), centers on the mass rape of German women by Soviet soldiers, and how raped women were judged negatively by German men. Along the lines of scholars such as Claudia Koontz, Kaplan and Bridenthal, who examined

⁸³ In the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial in the early 1960s this dilemma was already evident as prisoners committing acts of atrocity were tried alongside doctors and SS personnel who had been in charge. See also Devin Pendas' *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963-1965: Genocide, History, and the Limits of the Law*.

the role of women under National Socialism, Sanders depicts women as helpless victims of a society ruled by men. Additionally, many of the pre-1989 texts I discussed, such as Sanders film *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter* and *Eine Frau in Berlin* thematized German suffering. The difference between publications prior to unification in the 1970s and 1980s is that in many cases the representation of the suffering was accompanied by a discussion of shame or guilt, albeit limited. In *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter*, two young teenage girls witness a Jewish friend being deported and quickly pull their curtains shut and ignore the situation. After the female protagonist in the film is shown being raped, she explains to her young daughter that that is the right of the victor. In the 1950s book *Eine Frau in Berlin*, the narrator includes brief discussions of her own culpability in working for and with the Nazi government. However, the post-Wende film *Befreier und Befreite* as well as the filmic remake of *Eine Frau in Berlin* (2008) does not represent the characters as guilty of Nazi atrocities. Both works were fairly well received although they discussed a sensitive subject.⁸⁴

Many 21st-century works, such as the films *Dresden* (2006) and *Eine Frau in Berlin*, combine fictional stories with historical events, and focus on German suffering and mainstream Germans as victims of the war and the Allied occupation.⁸⁵ Both films use imagery of wartime suffering to guide a particular perception of history. In her research on the power of images, Silke Horstkotte argues that photographic representation may change history as they influence the public to understand events in a particular way. She discusses that “im öffentlichen Diskurs dienen fotografische Bilder als Gedächtnisikonen, die eine bestimmte Version der Vergangenheit

⁸⁴ *Befreier und Befreite* stirred some limited controversy, mainly in academic circles as Sander claims in an interview with Sabine Smith in *Triangulated Visions: Women in Recent German Cinema*. Eds. Majer O'Sickey, Ingeborg, and Ingeborg von Zadow. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, 251-260.

⁸⁵ In *Dresden*, a young German woman and a young English soldier meet, fall in love, and experience a tragic event during which they are separated. It shows the German and the English side of the city's Allied bombings during the Second World War. The imagery in this TV movie is impressive, but the storyline appears contrived.

fixieren.” She points to the power of imagery to change perception of history, but also to “erase” certain memories.⁸⁶

Germany’s contemporary memory culture focus can also be seen in films thematizing deportation and concentration camps, such as the 2004 movie *The Ninth Day*, directed by Volker Schlöndorff, who was born in Germany in 1939 and is known as the director of *Die Blechtrommel* and co-director of *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* with his former wife Margarethe von Trotta. The film follows a Catholic priest from Luxembourg, interned in Dachau, who faces a decision whether to save himself and his brethren from the Pfarrerblock by formally denouncing the church or to stick to his beliefs and remain imprisoned. The movie highlights the victimization of those individuals in Luxembourg that opposed the Third Reich, in this case the clergy, with emotional close-ups and slowed camera movements in the camp scenes. The film is another example of the media drawing attention to the past and the shifting memory culture. Schlöndorff discusses in an interview that while he believes in Germany the movie was popular “for a specific audience,” in Luxembourg it became a symbol for the suffering endured by the people of Luxembourg and a way for them to “discover how brave they had been after all” during the German occupation. He explains that with this movie people in Luxembourg “re-experienced the trauma and conflict that every family in Luxembourg apparently was split between those who wanted to cooperate with the Germans and the others who resisted ...”⁸⁷ The film emphasizes a view of Luxembourg as a victim of National Socialism. On the one hand, Luxembourg had virtually no military to speak of and was easily and quickly occupied by the

⁸⁶ Horstkotte, 9. See also, the collection of articles in *NachBilder des Holocausts* (2007) edited by Inge Stephan and Alexandra Tacke. Books presenting “before” and “after” photos of devastated German towns have been published for a number of decades now. For more on controversial portrayals of Allied bombings, see Friedrich Jörg’s *Brand* (2002) and Hannes Heer’s examination of Jörg’s text in *Vom Verschwinden der Täter: der Vernichtungskrieg fand statt, aber keiner war dabei* (2004).

⁸⁷ Schlöndorff. The interview is part of the English release of the film on DVD by Kino International .

Third Reich along with Belgium and the Netherlands. On the other hand, “Germanization policies” were implemented by the Nazis with extensive collaboration from the Luxembourg administration.⁸⁸ Amongst the Nazi occupied Benelux countries, Luxembourg has been the last country to publicly question its collaboration with the Nazis, including mass deportation of Jews.⁸⁹ The victims chosen in the film *The Ninth Day* are those that the public could easily identify with.

Another example of the renewed interest at the turn of the century in examining German wartime suffering is the 2001 book *Zwischen Heimat und Zuhause. Deutsche Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in (West-) Deutschland 1945-2000* edited by Rainer Schulze. He discusses this renewed interest and points to a recent project in 1999 by the German organization Der Bund der Vertriebenen which hoped to construct “ein Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen ... um das Schicksal der deutschen Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen wieder ins öffentliche Bewusstsein zu rücken ...”⁹⁰ Opponents to this proposal argued that the center’s planned exhibitions were revisionist in nature and aimed to highlight German suffering and downplay the atrocities committed. On the other hand, supporters of the project pointed to the inclusion of exhibitions on 20th century expulsions of groups other than Germans.

Numerous successful German 21st-century films directed by post-war generation directors thematize suffering during The Second World War, in the Allied occupation or at the hands of the Nazis. Many of these feature films attempt to gain legitimacy as a kind of documentary purporting that they are “based on a true story.”⁹¹ Amongst these films are

⁸⁸ Majerus, “Conceptualizing the Occupations of Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands (1933-1944),” 17.

⁸⁹ Kesteloot, “The Role of the War in National Societies ...,” 34. Exhibitions in 2002 and 2005 sought to (re)examine the policies in Luxembourg on collaboration, deportations and expropriation.

⁹⁰ Schulze, “Instrumentalisation – Marginalisation – Re-Evaluation ...,” 11. The *Bund der Vertriebenen* has existed since 1957. The *Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen* was built and first shown in Berlin as a traveling exhibition in 2006.

⁹¹ For additional literary examples, see Jörg Bernig’s (born 1964) *Niemandszeit* and Herta Müller’s *Atemschaudel*.

Nirgendwo in Africa (2001) directed by Caroline Link (1964), *Sophie Scholl – Die letzten Tage* (2005) by writer Fred Breinersdorfer (1948) and director, Marc Rothemund (1968), *Dresden* (2006) directed by Roland Suso Richter (1961), and *Anonyma – Eine Frau in Berlin* (2008) directed by Max Färberböck (1950).

Less successful was the remake of a 1959 television production, *So weit die Füße tragen* (2001). Both films are based on a 1955 novel by Josef Martin Bauer which was believed to be a real account of Wehrmacht officer Cornelius Rost's escape and return from a Siberian labor camp, but this was later disproven. The 2001 film is clearly a depiction of German mainstream suffering at the hands of Russian soldiers with few indications of why the soldiers have been sentenced to hard labor. However, the first few minutes contain a brief reference to German guilt. As the film shows a long shot of a train racing through frozen tundra, a harsh sounding voice can be heard from within the freight cars: "Wir werden da nie ankommen. Die lassen uns verhungern und erfrieren." A calmer, more resigned sounding voice responds: "Vielleicht haben wir's auch nicht anders verdient." The camera switches to a close up of the first soldier who responds indignantly: "Wir haben nur unsere Pflicht getan, Kamerad" Another soldier replies "Du warst schon bei der SA dabei," which starts a brawl in the train car presumably between "good" and "bad" Germans.⁹² This exchange addresses the idea of German guilt, but also makes a differentiation between patriotic believers in Nazism, depicted negatively, and ordinary German soldiers depicted as victims of fate. The image of the soldiers being transported in a freight car also reminds of the iconic depiction of victims of the Holocaust deportations. Juxtaposing well-known Holocaust imagery with images of German suffering is a tactic that may serve to further illustrate the character's trauma and invoke sympathy on the part of the viewer.

⁹² Martin, Hardy, *So weit die Füße tragen*, beginning of chapter 2

By the mid-nineties, Germany also saw an increase in the publications of memoirs narrating experiences by mainstream Germans during and immediately after World War II.⁹³ These autobiographies flooding the market include many texts by previously unknown or lesser known authors and were often published in lesser known presses, such as Herbig Verlag and List Taschenbuch, or through self-publication presses, such as Books on Demand GmbH. Many memoirs portray expulsion, such as *Und tief in der Seele das Ferne: Die Geschichte einer Vertreibung aus Schlesien* (2004) by Katharina Elliger, *Heimat aus dem Koffer: Vom Leben nach Flucht und Vertreibung* (2011) by Hilke Lorenz, *Überleben war schwerer als Sterben: Ostpreußen 1944-1948* (2004) by Erika Morgenstern. Other memoirs depict the experiences in the aftermath of Allied bombing including hunger and homelessness, such as *An der Hand meiner Schwester; Zwei Mädchen im Kriegszerstörten Deutschland* (2006) by Bärbel Probert-Wright, *So war's* (2007) by Marieluise Schatten and *Wie ich das Kriegsende erlebte* (2001) by Erich Schmalenberg. There are numerous titles like these published after 2000. For almost all of these authors, the account of their personal experiences remains their only published text. Furthermore, these texts seldom address the atrocities committed by Germans in Nazi Germany. Instead, they focus on dramatic emotional narratives written in everyday language. For example, Morgenstern's memoir does not mention Nazi concentration camps and instead elaborates on the harsh treatment Germans received at the hands of Russian authorities in Russian camps. In a particularly iconic episode, the author illustrates the characters' experiences being transported in train cars, interned in a camp and enduring group delousing in the nude. The author laments not only the cruelty of Russian authorities, but also the fact that she and other Germans were not treated with dignity. She writes,

⁹³ For a good overview on this see Bernd Seiler's chapter "Keine Kunst? Um so besser! Über die Erinnerungsliteratur zum Dritten Reich" in *Vergangene Gegenwart – Gegenwärtige Vergangenheit* (1994).

Wir wurden wie Stückgut verfrachtet, ohne Essen und Trinken ... Wir kamen in ein Lager ... Dann ging es immer in Gruppen in einen Raum zur Entlausung ... Es war eine wirklich beschämende Angelegenheit, die man auch anders hätte regeln können. Aber wir wurden immer noch behandelt wie Menschen ohne Würde mit denen man alles machen konnte.⁹⁴

Despite the questionable literary value of many of these texts, most have gained popular readership and some have been included on various Bestseller lists.

Schweigen oder Sprechen, published in 2002, is an autobiographical text by a better known author, Dieter Forte. In this memoir, he relays his childhood experiences after the Second World War. His work is basically an account of his memories of this difficult time period:

In der Erinnerung blieb das Gefühl von Hunger und Kälte, das sich mit dem unaufhaltsamen Wechsel von Hell und Dunkel zu einer ohnmächtigen Hilflosigkeit verband ... War die Nacht überstanden, galt es den Tag zu besiegen.⁹⁵

It becomes clear in the text that Forte's memories are both inefficient to describe his experiences and cannot be completely trusted to represent what happened. He uses general references and avoids specific detailed accounts relying on an overall expression of emotions instead. It is a subjective account that thematizes how memories are formed, retained, how they influence outlook on life and how they may be successfully or not so successfully shared with others.

Another important aspect of an examination of memory and trauma is the phenomenon of pseudo-memories and the debates surrounding contemporary "victim culture." In 1995, Benjamin Wilkomirski (later revealed to be Bruno Dösseker) published an allegedly autobiographical account of his childhood memories as a Shoah victim. Two years later it was proven that the Swiss author was neither Jewish nor was he or his family a victim of National Socialism. In his examination of the case, Stefan Mächler, attributes Bruno's actions partially to a psychological condition and/or perhaps formation of false memories but mostly to a contemporary victim

⁹⁴ Morgenstern, *Überleben war schwerer als Sterben* ..., 299-301. Morgenstern does make one reference to German guilt at the end of her text, explaining that she has forgiven the Russian soldiers and understands that they mistreated Germans because the German army murdered Russian civilians during their attack on Russia in 1941 (302).

⁹⁵ Forte, *Schweigen oder Sprechen*, 59.

culture that encourages or rewards self-identification of victimhood, in particular being a victim of National Socialism or right wing extremism.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the readers' expectations in an autobiography is that the author truly is a victim and that the experiences the writer remembers have occurred. As mentioned previously, autobiographical accounts have garnered wide popularity in Germany. Such a combination of memory and victim culture can account for cases like Wilkomirski's, but also for the multitude of autobiographies, films and oral history projects in which individuals seek to share their traumatic experiences and logically leads to more stories of Germans as victims of war and victims of their own regime.

As I examine and analyze more closely in chapter five, the popular interest in mainstream German suffering and Germany's collective memory culture forms the backdrop to the problematic second and third generation characters whose present is influenced, if not formed, by the past in fictional novels by authors such as Julia Franck and Tanja Dückers.

Franziska Meyer examines the portrayal of the metropolis of Berlin in contemporary German literature and concludes that many texts depict empty spaces void of real people, i.e., *citizens*. Furthermore, she argues in line with the sociologist Heinz Bude, that these texts are also void of history and were written by a generation that is not constrained by Germany's past. She agrees with Bude when he asserts "Geschichtsvergessenheit als neues Gattungsmerkmal" in German literature.⁹⁷ Bude believes that the events of 1989 represent "das Ende einer Geschichte" and therefore creates "eine zivilisatorische Distanz zur nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit" for a post-1960 generation, what he terms "Generation Berlin."⁹⁸ However, other scholars point

⁹⁶ Mächler, "Das Opfer Wilkomirski...", 29. In the same volume, *Das Wilkomirski-Syndrom ...*, Hans Stoffels provides a number of examples of individuals in Germany that have claimed to be victims of right wing extremists – all of which are eventually proven to be false (173).

⁹⁷ Meyer, "und dabei heißt es immer aufbruchstimmung'...", 169.

⁹⁸ Bude, *Generation Berlin*, 27, 29.

to a virtual memory boom and the apparent obsession with history in literary texts after 1989, as I also address in the introduction to this dissertation.

Volker Hage provides a condensed quick history of German post war literature in his article entitled “Die Enkel kommen” in *Der Spiegel* (1999). He compares this group of “new” contemporary German authors, such as Erpenbeck, Duve and Franck, to older authors, such as Günter Grass and Christa Wolf, claiming, “Die Enkel der Nachkriegsliteratur treten an, befreit von mancher Beschwernis der vom Zweiten Weltkrieg geprägten Vorgänger-Generation.”⁹⁹ He is essentially happy to report that this new generation of grandchildren has come to terms with their German past and writes without political agendas.¹⁰⁰ However, Hage also includes Jenny Erpenbeck’s new novel *Geschichte vom alten Kinde* in his list of new texts. Erpenbeck’s story presents a narrator critical of contemporary German society’s way of interpreting the past and themselves as victims of The Second World War. Furthermore, the child and the home she lives in may be understood metaphorically as a representation of East Germany.¹⁰¹

Similarly, Petra Bagley argues that 21st-century “Grossmütterliteratur” represents “the advent of a generation more at ease with itself” in her article “Granny Knows Best: The Voice of the Granddaughter in ‘Grossmütterliteratur’” examining third generation authors such as Jenny Erpenbeck and Maike Wetzel. She claims that contemporary German family narratives appear to be less burdened by the guilt with which earlier writers of literature examining the lives of their fathers and mothers during the Nazi era, the Väterliteratur or Mütterliteratur, struggle.¹⁰² She attributes this to the growing historical distance from the Third Reich and the changing

⁹⁹ Hage, “Die Enkel kommen,” 245.

¹⁰⁰ Hage writes: “Die neue Autorengeneration hat zwar keinerlei Ambitionen, als Gewissen der Nation in Erscheinung zu treten oder gar in die politische Arena zu steigen, öffentlichkeitsscheu allerdings sind nur die wenigsten.“ This statement is in reference to Schlink who stays out of the limelight.

¹⁰¹ See my discussion of Erpenbeck’s novel later in this chapter in the section on Transgenerational Memory.

¹⁰² Bagley, “Granny Knows Best ...,” 152, 157. Bagley does not write about either Julia Franck or Tanja Dückers.

generational relations between grandchildren and grandparents. She believes that the grandchildren are less critical of their grandparents' actions during the Nazi era than the second generation children were of their parents. While neither Franck's *Die Mittagsfrau* nor Dückers *Himmelskörper* can strictly speaking be termed "Grossmütterliteratur," the grandparent generation plays a vital role in the novels. Franck and Dückers, as well as a number of other contemporary German and Austrian authors, cannot be labeled apolitical writers. I agree with Caroline Schaumann's findings in her study *Memory Matters*. In this extensive analysis of memory in contemporary German literature and culture, Schaumann is also critical of voices such as Hage and Bagley claiming that the grandchildren generation of authors are less influenced by or concerned with Germany's Nazi past. As Schaumann concludes: "Bagley's ... analysis deliberately excludes texts with a political agenda."¹⁰³ Bagley particularly fails to examine (or mention) *Himmelskörper* and the granddaughter/grandmother relationship. I believe *Himmelskörper* would serve as a counterpoint to her thesis that new novels in Germany point to the fact that "the majority of Germans today are not directly influenced by National Socialism."¹⁰⁴

In her study on memories from The Second World War portrayed in contemporary German literature, *Phantoms of War in Contemporary German Literature, Films, and Discourse*, Anne Fuchs attributes the growing interest in representation to Germany's inability to "put to rest the agitated nature of a haunted past." The new millennium also saw a turning point in Germany's self-identification and treatment or interpretation of its National Socialist Past. Often referred to as a kind of "normalization" notably in recent literary scholarship in Great Britain,

¹⁰³ Schaumann, *Memory Matters* ..., 231.

¹⁰⁴ Bagley, "Granny Knows Best ..." 160. She argues that it is the more recent events of the Wende that have influenced Germans.

this change can be seen as a long and unfolding series of events from the end of The Second World War to today.

Discussions abound regarding the contemporary trend of “normalization” in Germany. Scholars and historians consider how history can and should be remembered, and how atrocities may be atoned for in a time when a considerable number of voices in Germany are calling for the need to remember German mainstream suffering and believe that the past has been sufficiently *bewältigt*. In a 2006 article in *Die Welt*, Eckhard Fuhr writes:

Im Fach Vergangenheitsbewältigung gelten die Deutschen heute als Musterschüler man gewinnt den Eindruck, daß 61 Jahre nach Kriegsende eine Balance zwischen Gedenken und Erinnern gefunden worden ist. Die Geschichte des Dritten Reiches wird nicht verdrängt und bietet doch kaum Stoff für gesellschaftliche Kontroversen.”¹⁰⁵

This article goes on to discuss the lack of recognition of the victims of the East German dictatorship praising the government’s decision to put together a commission “zur weiteren Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur.” A conflation of the Nazi dictatorship with other totalitarian regimes may be understood as another form of normalization.

As Christoph Schaub points out in his paper “Authenticity, Victimhood and doppelte deutsche Diktaturgeschichte: The Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen,” comparisons between the Third Reich and the East German regime are occurring at an alarming rate in Germany today and in a variety of contexts, such as a number of Gedenkstätte and advertisements for city tours in Berlin.¹⁰⁶ Schaub argues that these comparisons essentially “equalize” the evils of the GDR and the Nazi government, which he argues is a reinterpretation of National Socialist history. Hannah Arendt already equated Hitlerism and Stalinism in her text,

¹⁰⁵ Fuhr, “Schwieriges Erbe.” Fuhr also praised the 2002 book, *Die geglü ckte Demokratie* by historian Edgar Wolfrum whom Dagmar Pöpping in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, on March 16, 2006, described as a “Vertreter einer neuen Generation von Historikern, die sich nach einer langen Phase des ‘post-nationalen Geschichtsbewusstseins’ (Schwarz) wieder durch ein hohes Maß an Identifikation mit ihrer Nation auszeichnen”

¹⁰⁶ Christoph Schaub. Conference Paper given at the MLA convention 12/28/2009 in the panel entitled “Habitual and Ritual Acts of Commemoration and Beyond”

The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951), in which she claims that both regimes used tactics of terror and ideology to an unprecedented extent. I propose to go one step further and posit that if the two regimes are equated as Schaub claims, then this serves to lessen the overwhelming evilness of the Nazis, especially since being more recent, the guilt experienced for allowing the GDR Stasi activities may replace some of the guilt for allowing the Holocaust.¹⁰⁷

In 2006, a media debate ensued when it became known that similar to Walter Jens and other postwar intellectuals, Günter Grass and Jürgen Habermas had not divulged the extent of their involvement in the Nazi regime, in this case the SS and the Hitler Youth respectively. Although the public outrage at the disclosure of the facts seems to point to a continued dedication to history, I believe it is actually a sign of Germany's normalization. Grass and Habermas assumed leading roles of public German intellectuals of a social conscience. Grass' experience with the SS and his silence about it could be seen as similar to the way most Germans dealt with their National Socialist past. The same is true for Habermas, especially since membership in the Hitler Youth was a commonplace occurrence for many Germans at the time. However, Grass' and Habermas' reputations were anchored in their moral claims and their insistence on openness and honesty. Although they invoked some discussion, their revelations came at a time in which it had become socially acceptable to publicly discuss *Germans as victims* including the Nazi exploitation of youth. The public outcry was more a reaction to Grass' and Habermas' concealment than to their actions in the Third Reich.

Despite instances of debate since the end the war, such as the *Historikerstreit* in the 1980s, and the Waldheim scandal in the mid-eighties, arguments over how to remember took a new direction after the fall of the wall. The heated *Walser-Bubis Debatte* in 1998 illustrates how

¹⁰⁷ In conversation with Schaub, he expressed that he did not intend to make this point, but that logically it may follow from his research.

the discourse of memory had changed and how ongoing it is at the same time. The impetus for this debate was the Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels acceptance speech by Martin Walser, a prolific and prominent German author and intellectual commentator, born 1927. In his speech, Walser referred to Auschwitz as a “Moralkeule” and he essentially criticized the public emphasis on German guilt and the Holocaust. Ignatz Bubis, Head of the Jewish council in Germany, was in the audience at the time of the speech. He reacted to Walser’s statements publicly, accusing him of revisionism and of preferring to look away. A debate ensued between the two prominent figures and others. Once an intellectual of note, Martin Walser, is now praised by some, condemned by others for his call for normalization. Critics and members of the media, such as the editor of the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Frank Schirrmacher, accused Walser of using anti-Semitic references in his 2002 novel, *Tod eines Kritikers*.¹⁰⁸ As Dagmar Lorenz points out, the novel “operates with Jewish stereotypes from Nazi ideology and calls into question the persecution of the Jewish protagonist, who is portrayed as lecherous, corrupt and ridiculous.”¹⁰⁹

Robert Menasse, born in Austria in 1954, of Jewish descent, illustrates such contemporary reactions to the Holocaust in his short story “Lange nicht gesehen.” Here, the narrator meets an old classmate who is now a judge and she tells him about an interesting case she presided over. In the case, a Jewish Holocaust survivor is brought before court to explain why he runs into pedestrians on the street and behaves like a blind person although he has no medical problems with his eyesight. The survivor testifies that he closes his eyes because he cannot bear to see “was man sieht, wenn man offenen Auges durch die Straßen geht.” The judge

¹⁰⁸ Schaumann, *Memory Matters* ..., 61.

¹⁰⁹ Personal communication. Lorenz explains that earlier works such as Gerhard Zwerenz’ text *Die Erde ist unbewohnbar wie der Mond* in 1973 and Fassbinder’s adaption of this text, the play *Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod*, were also accused of containing Anti-Semitic references.

inquires what could be so “schrecklich” and if these are “Bilder der Vergangenheit” that continue to plague him. He responds, ”Nein ... Bilder der Gegenwart... sehen Sie es denn nicht, Frau Rat?” The judge does not understand what he means and calls him “ein kleiner Spinner.” After relaying the story of the case to the narrator, she remarks to him, “ich halte eben diese alten Männer nicht mehr aus, die heute noch so gern from Krieg erzählen ...”¹¹⁰ Menasse’s short story presents contemporary Austrian characters as frustrated by the continuing Holocaust discourse. Menasse’s narrator is portrayed as critical of this attitude. The narrator is initially attracted to the judge until she begins to lament her experiences with Jewish survivors.

The way the judge’s reaction to the Jewish survivor is portrayed, resonates with the views Martin Walser expressed in his speech in 1998:

Kein ernstzunehmender Mensch leugnet Auschwitz ...; wenn mir aber jeden Tag in den Medien diese Vergangenheit vorgehalten wird, merke ich, daß sich in mir etwas gegen diese Dauerpräsentation unserer Schande wehrt. Anstatt dankbar zu sein für die unaufhörliche Präsentation unserer Schande, fange ich an wegzuschauen. Wenn ich merke, daß sich in mir etwas dagegen wehrt, versuche ich, die Vorhaltung unserer Schande auf Motive hin abzuhören und bin fast froh, wenn ich glaube, entdecken zu können, daß öfter nicht mehr das Gedenken, das Nichtvergessendürfen das Motiv ist, sondern die Instrumentalisierung unserer Schande zu gegenwärtigen Zwecken.¹¹¹

Walser’s statements can be interpreted as a call for normalization, a call to spend less time dwelling on the atrocities committed during the Third Reich. As he also imputes in his novel *Tod eines Kritikers*, Walser believes this emphasis is a way to use the Holocaust and Germany’s guilt for ulterior gains, referencing specifically the building of the Holocaust Mahnmahl in Berlin.

Silence of the Wartime Generation

The silence of the generations who witnessed the Third Reich has been a topic for some time. Dieter Forte blames literature’s silence about the suffering endured by Germans during the

¹¹⁰ Menasse, *Ich kann jeder sagen*, 20-23.

¹¹¹ Walser, “Dank ...”

war, when later generations create texts and films that depict this time period as less devastating than he remembers it. Furthermore, Forte explains how silence may have taken hold, suggesting the situation after the war was so obvious to everyday Germans, that discussing it seemed pointless.¹¹² He warns: “Da kann später jeder sagen, das wäre ein schönes Thema.... Aber nur, weil wir [witnesses] versagt haben, in aller Breite zu erzählen, was geschah.”¹¹³ In statements like these, I believe Forte points indirectly to a potential to normalize the past or make it seem more harmless, a kind of *Verharmlosung*. In an interview with Volker Hage, Forte describes the silence as inevitable:

Die es erlebt hatten, mußten nicht mehr darüber reden. Die wußten was geschehen war. Die es nicht erlebt hatten, glaubten einem nicht. ... Man mußte ja schon während des Krieges darüber schweigen. ...¹¹⁴

Moreover, in her book, *The War in the Empty Air* (2005), Dagmar Barnouw names another result stemming from an imposed silence about the past. She claims the “Tätergeneration” in its entirety was associated with “Nazi evil” in general, precisely because their memories were not shared.¹¹⁵ Barnouw’s main thesis is that German suffering during the war has been ignored, while memories of the Holocaust abound, causing “a serious loss of historical reality.”¹¹⁶ However, her claim that “Holocaust remembrance has contributed to the enduring anonymity of the other war dead” in Germany and in particular in the United States is not accurate. As I have outlined previously in this chapter, by 2006, the date of Barnouw’s publication, there were numerous literary and historical as well as autobiographical descriptions of Germans as victims and the actions of the Allied forces. Moreover, there were continuing debates about the way the Second World War and the Holocaust should be remembered. As I have discussed earlier, the

¹¹² Forte, *Schweigen oder Sprechen*, 34.

¹¹³ Forte, *Schweigen oder Sprechen*, 68.

¹¹⁴ Forte, *Schweigen oder Sprechen*, 49-50.

¹¹⁵ Barnouw, *The War in the Empty Air ...*, 23-24.

¹¹⁶ Barnouw, Preface, *The War in the Empty Air ...*, xii.

focus in the immediate postwar era was already on mainstream German suffering. Thus Barnouw's study represents a call for normalization similar to Martin Walser's assertions.¹¹⁷

Transgenerational Features of Memory and Trauma

Julia Franck's and Tanja Dückers' novels call attention to the way trauma of the war and the Holocaust has been absorbed by second and third generation Germans. However, these novels also contextualize the problems associated with the interpretation of German history at different points in time. In *Lagerfeuer* and *Himmelskörper*, members of the post-war generations are affected by traumatic memories stemming from trauma experienced by members of their family in the past. Sociologists and psychologists in Germany and Israel study the effects of the Holocaust in contemporary German Jewish and non-Jewish society pointing to "Spätfolgen des Nationalsozialismus bei Nachkommen von Opfern und Tätern."¹¹⁸ Dr. Med. Rainer Rehberger refers to children of Holocaust survivors as "die zweite Generation als Opfer der Verfolgung."¹¹⁹ In chapter two, I will elaborate on the way these psychosocial studies help to understand the portrayal of the protagonist in *Lagerfeuer*.

Some studies in Germany also point to a transgenerational impact in the contemporary German mainstream society. In Jenny Erpenbeck's 1999 short novel *Die Geschichte vom alten Kind*, one scene illustrates a psychological effect on a member of the second or third generation stemming from the way the trauma of the Second World War is remembered in her contemporary society. In the beginning of the novel, a girl is found in the

¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Barnouw claims that Nazi evil has been used as a "political commodity" referencing the political statements by Toni Blair and George Bush Jr. during the Iraq war. She uses surprisingly non-academic sarcastic language as may be gleaned from the following passage: "There was no problem with the enormous damage done to the German civilian population by Allied firebombing in WWII since all Germans were evil Nazis, down to the babies, and in desperate need for purification – done most thoroughly by fire" (9).

¹¹⁸ partial title of a 2002 study edited by Kurt Grünberg and Jürgen Straub: *Unverlierbare Zeit: Psychosoziale Spätfolgen des Nationalsozialismus bei Nachkommen von Opfern und Tätern*.

¹¹⁹ Rehberger, "Die zweite Generation als Opfer der Verfolgung . . .," 155. See also Branik, "Identitätsprobleme jüdischer Jugendlicher in Deutschland," 143.

street and placed in a children's home by the police who cannot find her family. She purports to be 14 years old. Her large body mass makes her age indiscernible. After living in the home for some time, she becomes ill and is taken to a city hospital where it turns out that she is thirty years old. While at school, at the children's home, there is a celebration or commemoration of the 13th of February, which the narrator recounts is the day of the first bombing of the town. The girl is greatly affected during this celebration.

Es [das Mädchen] lauscht genau auf das, was der Direktor sagt, um das Ende der Rede nicht zu verpassen und es hat das größte Stück Torte fest im Blick. Aber dann geschieht etwas, das noch nie vorgekommen ist: Das Mädchen verliert den Appetit, und zwar an der Stelle der Rede, als der Direktor von dem kochendem Fluß erzählt, und daß diejenigen, die sich in den Fluß hineinflüchten wollten um dem Feuer zu entgehen, gekocht worden seien. ... Es geht in die Küche. Es fragt in den Rücken der Köchin hinein: Warum wird eine Geburtstagsfeier veranstaltet, wenn die Menschen gekocht worden sind? ... Die Köchin ... sagt: Man muß es feiern, wenn man es nicht vergessen kann.¹²⁰

The girl is moved by the director's speech about the incident. However, it is not solely the memory of the horror of the bombing and the lives lost, but rather the way she is affected by what she considers the paradox between death and celebrating it as a birthday with candles and cake. She does not understand how this memory can be "celebrated." Furthermore, as Katie Jones explains in her article "'Ganz gewöhnlicher Ekel' ...," the child or more specifically the child's body may also be seen as a metaphor for East Germany and the home the child lives in includes many additional allusions to East Germany as well.¹²¹ The home is surrounded by a wall and has an authoritative social structure. The children are discouraged from having private possessions and are expected to work together as a collective. While her classmates rebel against the home's structure, the girl remains loyal and feels secure in the home. She uses her large body

¹²⁰ Erpenbeck, *Geschichte vom alten Kind*, 86.

¹²¹ Jones, "'Ganz gewöhnlicher Ekel'? ...," 120-121.

to appear helpless, yet manipulates her teachers.¹²² Although Jones does not make a reference to the memory or the history of the past, the passage I have quoted above may be interpreted as an illustration of the way East Germany remembered as compared to the way West Germany remembered the Holocaust and the Second World War. The novels I analyze in the following chapters, Tanja Dückers' *Himmelskörper*, and *Der längste Tag des Jahres*, and Julia Franck's *Lagerfeuer*, *Die Mittagsfrau*, and *Rücken an Rücken* are also literary texts that mirror the contemporary cultural politics of remembrance in early 21st-century Germany. They address the formation of memory, the way memories inform identity, the impact of trauma, both personal and collective, on memory and the victim/perpetrator dichotomy discourse.

¹²² Jones, "Ganz gewöhnlicher Ekel"? ..., 126, 130.

II. TRAUMA OF THE HOLOCAUST IN JULIA FRANCK'S *LAGERFEUER*

It is painful to be consciously of two worlds. The Wandering Jew in me seeks forgetfulness. I am not afraid to live on and on, if only I do not have to remember too much... A long past vividly remembered is like a heavy garment that clings to your limbs when you would run¹²³

The third generation author, Julia Franck, has addressed both Germany's Nazi past and the East German dictatorship in her writing and public statements. In an interview, she explained that in her literature, she wanted to highlight the Berlin wall, the border, as a "plausible Konsequenz des Zweiten Weltkriegs" and points to the "tiefe Spuren" that the wall and the GDR have left in Germany to the present day.¹²⁴ She implicitly posits a causal link between the Third Reich, the war and the creation of East Germany, including its oppressive regime. In her 2003 novel, *Lagerfeuer*, she depicts characters traumatized by both regimes. However, fleeing to West Germany by no means ends these characters' negative circumstances. In some cases, it continues under different circumstances and in other cases, the move westward exacerbates their suffering.¹²⁵ In particular, Franck portrays the trauma of being of Jewish descent as more pronounced in West Germany.

Lagerfeuer introduces four narrators, each speaking in the first person from his or her own perspective. The characters' lives are intertwined and there is some overlap as people and events are described from multiple viewpoints. The first section is narrated by Nelly Senff, the protagonist, who crosses from East into West Berlin during the mid-1970s with her two children,

¹²³ Antin, *The Promised Land*, 4. Mary Antin writes her story, the story of her past "in order to be rid of it." The book was originally published in 1912 and based on the author's emigration from Russia to the United States when she was thirteen and her experiences as an immigrant in America.

¹²⁴ Heimann, "Die DDR hat tiefe Spuren hinterlassen."

¹²⁵ In the context of the portrayal of characters in this novel, I define suffering in both a mental and physical sense as consisting of mental anguish, the perception of impending harm (whether real or imagined), and to a limited degree physical discomfort and pain associated with their living conditions and interpersonal relationships.

Katja and Aleksej. They are subsequently housed in a *Notaufnahmeflager*, where most of the action in the novel takes place. The other three voices are a CIA agent John Bird, who interrogates Nelly and with whom she later has a brief affair, and two fellow camp residents, Hans Pischke from East Germany and Krystyna Jablonowska from Poland. Although details of the other characters' lives are depicted, Nelly is the most developed and the change in narrator often serves the purpose of seeing her from a different viewpoint. Each character is in one way or another depicted as an outsider in West German society. Nelly's family turns out to be Jewish, she is a single mother, and she is interrogated repeatedly by CIA agents searching for information about her former lover, a Russian journalist, who purportedly committed suicide. John Bird, one of the CIA agents interrogating Nelly, is an African American, whose wife Eugene laments their life in Germany as minorities. Hans Pischke was held in East Germany as a political prisoner and in West Germany. He is later erroneously identified and ostracized as a Stasi agent among the camp residents. Krystyna Jablonowska is marginalized and treated poorly because she is Polish. At the end of the novel, she is the only character that succeeds in moving on and is able to leave the camp.

The only specific reference to the Holocaust or National Socialism is the protagonist's statement that her mother was not allowed to marry because she was Jewish and that her Jewish grandmother was a victim of Nazi persecution. In many of her novels, Julia Franck highlights personal tragedies while relegating historical events to the background, even when these events prove to have a traumatic or debilitating effect on her characters. In her prize winning novel *Die Mittagsfrau* she also emphasizes personal trauma and uses historical tropes to signify the war and the Holocaust. In *Lagerfeuer*, the tropes referencing the Holocaust are less obvious and require close detailed reading analysis. Nelly endures many hardships including the suicide of her lover,

her children's father, CIA interrogations and a long stay in a cramped camp. Nevertheless, as I will illustrate, Nelly's character structure reveals a causal link between her personality, behavior and actions and her memories of her family's persecution, internalized *knowledge* or *memory* of history, and her Jewish identity. Furthermore, I argue that throughout the novel the narrator portrays Nelly as traumatized by these factors. Her trauma manifests itself in physical symptoms, her decisions and in her perception of events. Additionally the novel thematizes East and West Germany's different approaches to history as Nelly interprets West German society on the basis of GDR's ideology. Franck shows the way transgenerational memory may affect identity, perspective and psychological well-being. Memory of the oppression in Nazi Germany colors the protagonist's perceptions of the past and the present allowing her to see contemporary society in a particular way. This helps the narrator highlight certain negative aspects in society, such as discrimination, xenophobia and silence about the Holocaust.

Although Franck has stated that *Lagerfeuer* is not an autobiography, several aspects of the author's biography are incorporated in the work. In 1978, at the age of 8, Julia Franck left East Germany with her mother and siblings and spent nine months at the Notaufnahmelager Marienfelde in West Berlin. Living in this camp after fleeing to West Germany comprises the central episode in the novel *Lagerfeuer*.¹²⁶ There are similarities between Franck's background and the protagonist, Nelly Senff's family, who refers to her mother and grandmother as Jewish. Franck, like Nelly Senff, has Jewish ancestry. Franck's grandmother, the artist Ingeborg Hunzinger, was prohibited from marrying the father of her children under National Socialist racial law, because her mother was Jewish. Franck shared with Rory Maclean at the London Goethe Institut that "her maternal Jewish grandmother ... was protected from prosecution during

¹²⁶ Geu, "Schreiben zum Überleben ..." During this time she started keeping a diary and describes her writing as an "Art Überlebensmittel."

the Nazi era on Hitler's order" although the interview does not include specifics on why or when this occurred.¹²⁷ Sources on Ingeborg Hunzinger do not indicate how she was classified under National Socialism; Hunzinger's mother is simply referred to as "Jewish." Nathan Stoltzfus, author of the 1996 study *Resistance of the Heart: Inter-marriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany*, explains that intermarried Jews were often exempt from deportation.¹²⁸ In 1997, an article on Stoltzfus in *Research in Review* quotes Ingeborg Hunzinger, who created a sculpture commemorating the women in the Rosenstrasse protest, stating that Hunzinger credits Stoltzfus with shedding light on this event, which in the 1980s Germans were not willing to openly discuss. In the article, Hunzinger is described as an "82-year-old sculptor, who is half Jewish"¹²⁹ In interviews, Franck refers to her grandmother as Jewish, but she does not identify her mother or herself as such. At the end of the war Ingeborg Hunzinger, like many leftist Jewish intellectuals including Anna Seghers and Stephan Heym, returned to the Eastern Zone in Germany together with her mother and sister, while her youngest brother (Julia Franck's great uncle) stayed in the West.¹³⁰ In the novel, Nelly also has an uncle in Paris and neither she nor her mother married the fathers of their children. Franck has stated that she grew up in "matriarchal" households with absentee or deceased fathers and grandfathers. However, as one would expect from a work of literature. Nelly is not simply Franck's mother, nor is Nelly's daughter simply Franck herself. While there are biographical similarities, the focus of the novel, the way Nelly and other characters behave, perceive life and are treated in West Germany in the 1970s, are constructed to portray specific aspects of German society.

¹²⁷ MacLean, "Julia Franck interviewed by Rory MacLean."

¹²⁸ Ilse Aichinger's mother was also exempted due to her status as caregiver to a child classified as "Half-Aryan."

¹²⁹ Ash, Barbara. "The Day Hitler Blinked."

¹³⁰ Hirschman, *A Propensity to Self-Subversion*, 106-107. Albert Hirschman includes in his book of fragmented autobiographical stories, an account of Julia Franck's grandmother with whom he went to school in Berlin.

Portrayal of Jewishness

To examine Nelly's trauma it is important to consider the role Jewish identity plays in *Lagerfeuer*. The first mention of Nelly's Jewish heritage is when East German border guards are surprised to discover that her grandmother is Jewish, because they are surprised that they encounter a Jewish person in Germany at all. While Nelly identifies herself as having a Jewish family background, she does not call herself Jewish, since she is not religious nor does she belong to a Jewish community. The author, Franck, believes "the collective German memory is so short, they pretend that there were never any Jews in our everyday life. There's a big blank space where the Jews used to be. But nobody really sees it."¹³¹ Franck's criticism of her contemporaries' blindness toward German Jews may be illustrated by the experience of a young German theologian named Björn Krondorfer who in the 1990s wrote an account of how he discovered Judaism first in the United States.¹³² I join Sander Gilman in his response to Krondorfer's book: "it is the assumption of an absence of Jews in Germany that frightens me ... Krondorfer's attitude is that real Jews living real lives ... exist only outside of Germany ... Jews in Germany exist only in the past." Gilman concludes that such sentiments allow non-Jewish Germans to avoid facing Jews in their midst while instead focusing on "memorialization" i.e., relegating them to history.¹³³

Barbara Honigmann, a second generation German Jewish writer, who grew up and began her career as a dramaturg in the GDR was also critical of the West-Germany Holocaust discourse with its emphasis on Auschwitz and the limited knowledge of Judaism, as Elke Segelcke points out in her literary analysis of Honigmann's writings.¹³⁴ Honigmann expressed her criticism in *Damals, Dann und Danach* (1999). She envisions that her parents were caught between two

¹³¹ Knecht, "Interview Julia Franck."

¹³² Krondorfer, *Remembrance and Reconciliation:*

¹³³ Gilman, "Review," 393.

¹³⁴ Segelcke, 162. "Breaking the Taboo: Barbara Honigmann's Narrative Quest ..."

worlds, who “nicht mehr zu den Juden gehörten und keine Deutsche geworden sind.”¹³⁵ This motivates her own choices to move to Strasbourg’s vibrant Jewish community and to take up a formal course of study of Judaism. Honigmann considers it difficult to be Jewish (not just of Jewish heritage) in Germany, because she finds the “Konflikt zwischen den Deutschen und den Juden ... als unerträglich.” She states that “Die Deutschen wissen gar nicht mehr, was Juden sind, wissen nur, daß da eine schreckliche Geschichte zwischen ihnen liegt, und jeder Jude ... erinnert sie an diese Geschichte ...”¹³⁶ In other works by contemporary authors, Jewish absence is associated with the trauma of survivor’s guilt. For example, in Doron Rabinovici’s novels, where second generation sons suffer mental illness induced by their parent’s silence interspersed with vague references to episodes of immense suffering as well as their survivor guilt. Later in this chapter, I explore Rabinovici’s literary portrayal of trauma in more detail.

Franck wonders what she is to think when “an entire society rewrites the past”¹³⁷ as she believes mainstream Germans have done. There has been an increase in Holocaust memorials and remembrances on the one hand, and the Holocaust has certainly not been forgotten in Germany, but her statements refer to something else. I believe that Franck criticizes Germany’s recently renewed interest in the “other” side of Nazi and war history in conjunction with “forgetting” or not seeing that there are German Jews in Germany. Furthermore, she is critical of weighing one form of suffering against another with the underlying agenda of minimalizing the horrors of the Holocaust.

In *Lagerfeuer*, Nelly terms her grandmother, but not herself, Jewish. Other characters in the novel apply this label to her based on her Jewish heritage in line with the way Jews were classified in Nazi ideology based on their ancestor’s religious affiliations. They define Judaism

¹³⁵ Honigmann, *Damals ...*, 14.

¹³⁶ Honigmann *Damals ...*, 15.

¹³⁷ Knecht, “Interview Julia Franck.”

not as a religion or culture, but rather in terms of race. Nelly speaks of having “a Jewish family.” On one occasion, in reference to her daughter not being able to take flute lessons at a local church, she comments that her daughter has neither a flute nor a God (L 171).¹³⁸ She is clearly not religious, nor does she adhere to any Jewish customs. Her Jewish identity stems from a secular Jewishness, her family heritage as well as the identity others impose on her.

Interestingly, both in Franck’s personal statements and in the novel, being Jewish is presented in association with the past. The narrator repeatedly thematizes the absence of Jews in Germany. For example, in the novel, Nelly remarks to herself that the Jewish cemetery “wurde kaum begangen” reasoning “Wer starb heute schon in Ost-Berlin als Jude” (L 191). Jewish cemeteries in East Germany were neglected between the 1950s to the 1990s. The largest Jewish cemetery in Germany, Weißensee in former East Berlin, was sparsely used and overgrown with weeds in this period. Restoration of the deterioration just began in 2009 and lacks funding to complete the work.¹³⁹ Even newer and occasionally used Jewish cemeteries tend to be neglected due to the small size of Jewish communities. While the discussion of the absence of Jews in a novel situated in the 1970s East Berlin may be understandable, the assumption of a Jewish absence in 21st-century Germany is questionable. There is a vibrant and growing Jewish community in Berlin as well as in other cities in Germany. According to a 2010 Goethe Institut article on the 60 year anniversary of the creation of the “Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland,” the number of Jews in Germany has grown from approximately 25000 in 1989 in West Germany to over 110,000 in more than 100 thriving communities.¹⁴⁰ However, these communities are a recent addition to Germany stemming from Eastern European immigration, particularly Jews

¹³⁸ Nelly comments that her daughter, Katja, claims she has no friends because her clothing is different and “sie nicht wie mehrere Mädchen der Klasse zum Flötenunterricht in die nahegelegene evangelische Kirche gehe, wo sie doch nicht einmal eine Flöte hatte, von Gott ganz zu schweigen” (L 171).

¹³⁹ Karacs, “Renovations Begin at Europe’s Largest Jewish Graveyard.”

¹⁴⁰ Taxacher, “60 Jahre Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland.”

from Russia. There is little historical and cultural continuity between these communities and the former German Jewish community in Berlin destroyed in the Nazi period.

Jewish identity continually arises in Franck's novel in association with negative phenomena and occurrences. Being Jewish means discrimination or persecution, it serves as a reminder of the Holocaust, and if there are any positive connotations, they are due to German guilt as Nelly's grandmother was privileged in East Germany as a member of a group persecuted by the Nazis as an "Opfer des Faschismus."¹⁴¹ In other words being Jewish provided certain advantages in postwar Germany but only because of the anti-Fascist principles in the "Arbeiter und Bauernstaat." This helps to understand the construction of Nelly's trauma as she links contemporary violence unrelated to German history back to the Holocaust or she connects reminders of her Jewish identity to contemporary society's indifference toward historical Jewish suffering.

The Power of Memory: Transgenerational Trauma and Trauma as Nelly's Life Theme

One of the main themes of *Lagerfeuer* is the power of memories and the inability to escape them. Nelly's impetus to immigrate to West Germany is her desire to escape the memories of her lover, who committed suicide. During a CIA interrogation, she tries to explain that all the spaces in her former life in East Germany are occupied by his memory that weighs her down: "Die Orte sind alle von ihm besetzt, sie lassen sich für mich nicht neu sehen. Ein anderes Land, mit derselben Sprache, aber ohne diese Orte – das ist es, warum ich hier bin" (L 70). After the agents fail to understand what she really means, she adds: "Verstehen Sie nicht, ich war umzingelt, es gibt hier, ich meine, drüben, nur Orte, die mich erinnern lassen. ... Das

¹⁴¹ *Hauptausschuss "Opfer des Faschismus"* ... The term originated in the immediate post war period in Germany and was subsequently used in the GDR. "Als 'Verfolgte des Naziregimes' galten demnach Personen, die wegen ihres Glaubens, ihrer Rasse, ihrer früheren politischen Betätigung, wegen Widerstandes gegen das Naziregime oder wegen politischer Unzuverlässigkeit im In- und Ausland verfolgt worden sind. Hinterbliebene dieser Personen."

wiegt schwer. ... Erinnerungen wiegen wie ein Kind” (L 76). In this section and in most of the novel the narrator emphasizes how memories may lead to symptoms of trauma. In essence, Nelly’s attempt to escape one set of memories associated with one space is replaced by a space filled with another set of powerful memories that serve as a trigger of trauma as well. Already during the “exit interview” and while being forced to strip and endure an invasive physical examinations at the border by East German guards, Nelly begins to compare her experiences to her grandmother’s plight in East Germany as a Holocaust survivor. The narrator does not show Nelly thinking about any specific incidences of Nazi persecution, but instead about a time when the grandmother crossed the East/West German border and all her dental crowns were forcibly removed for “inspection” (L 33).

In her studies on memory in the 1990s, Marianne Hirsch defined her concept of postmemory as the memory “of the child of survivors” which involves a temporal gap between the generations. This memory is not connected to the persons’ own experiences, but rather involves events before their time. Hirsch further explains that children become influenced by tales of “traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated.”¹⁴² In a discussion of the photograph *Past Lives* by Lorie Novak, Hirsch further explains that postmemory “describe[s] the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents ... that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right.”¹⁴³ Emil Branik, head physician of the child and youth psychiatry department of a hospital near Hamburg, studied contemporary Jewish young adults living in West Germany in the late 1980s and concluded:

¹⁴² Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 21-22.

¹⁴³ Hirsch, “Projected Memory,” 8. Hirsch also discusses Dominick LaCapra’s work on memory in his book 1994 book *Representing the Holocaust*. Later in this chapter, I use his theories from his 2004 work on memory, *History in Transit*.

Eine große Sensibilität und Verletzlichkeit haben wir gegenüber kleinsten Anspielungen auf das Dritte Reich und antisemitischen Äußerungen festgestellt. ... auch bei den jüngeren, selbst nicht betroffenen Generationen, ja sogar bei den jüdischen Jugendlichen, deren Familie nicht direct vom Holocaust betroffen war. ... Das Gefühl, beschädigt, verletzbar und bedroht zu sein, führte zu heftigen Wutaffekten mit Haß und Racheimpulsen.¹⁴⁴

Branik elaborates further that hatred towards Germans in general and guilt about living in Germany made it difficult if not impossible for the affected individuals to continue living in Germany.¹⁴⁵ Lea Fleischmann addressed this problem in her account, *Dies ist nicht mein Land. Eine Jüdin verlässt die Bundesrepublik*. In 1947, Fleischmann was born to Holocaust survivors in a camp for displaced persons in Ulm. However, unlike Branik's pathologizing of his patients' attitudes, Fleischmann does not simply blame all Germans for National Socialism and express the need for revenge in her book. Rather, she describes her daily challenges in Germany in the 1970s as a teacher in a system that valued conformity and orderliness.¹⁴⁶ The issues described in such accounts closely correlate to the way Nelly is portrayed struggling with her Jewish identity and her life in West Germany.

The main allegory for the way Nelly is affected by her Jewishness is a recurring pop-song playing on West-German radio stations that runs through the novel like a red thread. Hearing the song seems to drain her as she often responds by becoming listless, tired, or lethargic. The first time she hears the song is at the beginning of the novel, the moment she drives over the bridge constituting the border between East and West Germany (L 40). It is the 1970s pop song "By the Rivers of Babylon"¹⁴⁷ the most popular song of the disco group Boney M, which consisted of

¹⁴⁴ Branik, "Identitätsprobleme jüdischer Jugendlicher in Deutschland," 147, 148.

¹⁴⁵ Dan Diner expresses similar concerns in his writings.

¹⁴⁶ Schultz-Gerstein, "Schultz-Gerstein über Lea Fleischmann ...," 240-242.

¹⁴⁷ See the March 1978 German television broadcast featuring Boney M. (incidentally, 1978 is the year Julia Franck also emigrated to West-Berlin).

four Jamaican singers, singing in English, put together by a German producer in 1976.¹⁴⁸ The song stems from Psalm 137 and tells the story of the forcibly exiled Jews in Babylon yearning for liberation and return and their oppression. It also relates specifically to memory. As James Limburg explains:

Psalm 137 falls into three sections, each driven by the verb *remember*. In the first a singer *remembers* Zion ... then, the writer **vows** to *remember* Jerusalem ... finally the writer asks the Lord to *remember* the crimes of Jerusalem's enemies¹⁴⁹

The song repeats constantly at every turn in the novel and includes lyrics in italics to indicate the words Nelly is hearing. Although the other characters note that “the song” is playing again, only Nelly is portrayed adversely affected by it. Valerie Heffernan presented a paper on *Lagerfeuer* at the 2010 German Studies Association and suggested that Nelly is affected by the repetition of the song, rather than its lyrics, i.e., haunted by the repeated exposure to it.¹⁵⁰ While the song’s repetition could be affecting her or the references to exile and captivity remind her of what she is experiencing in the camp, I argue that she is troubled by the song because it serves as a memory of Jewish persecution. The way the lyrics are juxtaposed to moments in Nelly’s life when she either refers to her Jewish identity or has encountered German ethnocentrism and the poignant lyric excerpts provided by the narrator illustrate the way in which the violence of oppression implied in the song becomes a powerful trigger for Nelly’s memories. In her article on *Lagerfeuer*, Beret Norman discusses Franck’s portrayal of Nelly’s “social alienation, ... pain of the German past [and the Holocaust as] a “wound, turned into a scar.”¹⁵¹ In other words, it is forever present, etched into her and unforgettable. The narrator constructs Nelly as an outsider in every way possible. These scenes resonate with the way Heinrich Heine, a 19th century German

¹⁴⁸ Bogdanov, *All Music Guide to Rock*, 125.

¹⁴⁹ Limburg, *Psalms*, 466.

¹⁵⁰ Heffernan, “Perspectives on the Borderline: Julia Franck’s *Lagerfeuer* (2003).”

¹⁵¹ Norman, “Social Alienation and Gendered Surveillance,” 249.

Jewish author, who decided to be baptized to acquire the entrance ticket into European society, a step he later regretted, characterized his marginal position in German society.

In John Bird's apartment, in a section narrated from his perspective, Nelly hears the song again and in frustration silences the radio by slamming her fist down on it (L 229). When John asks her why she is upset, she replies: "Ich rege mich nicht auf. Wer von **denen** hat schon um Zion geweint. So ein Lied verspottet **uns** (L 229). The narrator constructs a clear reference to the Holocaust as Nelly is disgusted by her contemporary society, just a few decades after the war, singing about weeping for Jewish people in exile. Significantly, she identifies with her Jewish heritage, Jewish suffering and makes a distinction between *us* and *them*, between herself and mainstream German society. I believe that the portrayal of the song causing physical symptoms of trauma is a depiction of transgenerational trauma, shaping the sensitivities of Nelly as the child of a Holocaust survivor.

My examination of the depiction of trauma effects in recent German literature may be better understood in conjunction with a review of ongoing research in trauma theory. In 2009, the scholar, Bernard-Donals, wrote in *Forgetful Memory: Representation and Remembrance in the Wake of the Holocaust* (2009), that the "representation ... produced ... of the event ... haunts both the one who was there and the one who catches a glimpse of the event secondhand.¹⁵² In this vein, Dominick LaCapra has become known for using literary studies techniques, aspects of psychoanalysis, critical theory and poststructuralism to integrate history studies in his theories on postmemory. Also important is Wulf Kansteiner, who examines the traumatic effects of the Holocaust, including the psychological effects on generations that have learned about the Holocaust only through second-hand accounts. Kansteiner explains the difference between scholarly findings throughout the 20th century and the ongoing propensity for representing

¹⁵² Bernard Donals, *Forgetful Memory: Representation and Remembrance in the Wake of the Holocaust* (2009), 3.

trauma as a “complex and mysterious affliction” in the arts.¹⁵³ LaCapra describes how trauma memory is conveyed by survivors of major atrocities,¹⁵⁴ and maintains that “intergenerational transmission of trauma refers to the way those not directly living through an event may nonetheless experience and manifest its posttraumatic symptoms [through] repetition, identification, or mimesis”¹⁵⁵ In her examination of the portrayal of war in contemporary German literature, Anne Fuchs has also made use of LaCapra’s theories on postmemory.¹⁵⁶ I will explore her conclusions in my chapter on Tanja Dücker, comparing her point of view on Dücker’s novel to my own.

In contemporary American literature, historical trauma plays a role in actor influencing black literature and literary theory. In *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Paul Gilroy applies theories developed in Holocaust studies to the meaning of trauma in Black diaspora. He argues thus:

It is integral, for example, to the narratives of loss, exile, and journeying which... serve a mnemonic function: directing the consciousness of the group back to significant, nodal points in its common history and its social memory. The telling and retelling of these stories plays a special role, organizing the consciousness of the "racial" group socially and striking the important balance between inside and outside activity—the different practices, cognitive, habitual, and performative, that are required to invent, maintain, and renew identity.¹⁵⁷

This particular use of trauma theory corresponds with my approach to showing how the construction of Nelly’s identity centers on the Holocaust and how she suffers due to her perception of her contemporary society based on her knowledge and identification with Jewish persecution in the past. Furthermore, as Sarat et al have argued, trauma can be interpreted as

¹⁵³ Kansteiner, “Testing the Limits of Trauma” 104.

¹⁵⁴ See also Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, which LaCapra believes historians have misunderstood.

¹⁵⁵ LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, 107, 108 LaCapra is director of the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University.

¹⁵⁶ Fuchs, *Phantoms of War in Contemporary German Literature, Films and Discourse*, 167.

¹⁵⁷ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic ...*, 198.

“socially constructed through a constant interplay on the individual and communal levels.”¹⁵⁸

This means that collective memory as well as community affiliation may influence an individual’s trauma formation and response to perceived trauma. The editors of *Trauma and Memory* explore the role of the media as well as the professions (law and medicine) to “invent” or “reveal” trauma. They believe that “acknowledging the social dimension of trauma and its construction within discourse and practice provides new opportunities for healing trauma.” Along with Ron Eyerman (2001), the authors argue that collective agents such as media and government authorities define trauma experienced, the group victimized and the perpetrators to blame.¹⁵⁹ In this vein, collective memory leads to a collective sense of trauma and may be translated to individual psychological trauma.¹⁶⁰

In the *Intergenerational Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, therapists and psychoanalysts, such as Yael Danieli, who wrote the introduction to this volume, have concluded that “intergenerational transmission of trauma” is a real and alarming widespread consequence of the trauma suffered by the wartime generation.¹⁶¹ Irit Felsen reviews studies of transgenerational memory of the Holocaust in Jewish families conducted in North America, while Zahava Solomon’s investigates the term “second generation” in families in Israel.¹⁶² Felsen’s main concern lies in developing effective research strategies to assess the impact of the Holocaust on HOF (Holocaust offspring) and therapy strategies to help those affected who show signs of distress due to trauma. She also calls for family therapy that would address communicative strategies. She argues that a review of the available studies have shown that lack

¹⁵⁸ Sarat, “Trauma and memory: between individual and collective experiences,” 3.

¹⁵⁹ Sarat, “Trauma and memory: between individual and collective experiences” 6.

¹⁶⁰ I differentiate between psychological and physical trauma in my analysis. Psychological trauma may include responses to experiences endured by others, with whom the traumatized individual identifies with (such as a family member or a member of one’s group).

¹⁶¹ Danieli, “Preface” *International Handbook of Intergenerational Legacies of Trauma*, xvi

¹⁶² For more on this subject, also see the articles in this book by Nanette Auerhahn and Dori Laub, as well as Gabriele Rosenthal and Bettina Völter.

of communication about the trauma suffered, what she terms the “code of silence,” leads to damaging effects on HOF.¹⁶³ However, Felsen acknowledges methodological problems and inconsistencies in studies, such as the overwhelming tendency to use volunteer subjects or subjects already engaged in therapy. In addition, subjects may feel that by not reporting any problems, they “belittle their parents’ suffering” which leads subjects to present themselves as victims to honor their parents’ status as victims.¹⁶⁴ Inconsistent findings call for careful reading of any study that purports to show definitive results. For example, different studies found varying degrees of depression and anxiety and a lower ego, while others found that the Holocaust lead to a higher developed ego amongst participants.¹⁶⁵

Lacking in Felsen’s report is a discussion of how the trauma is transmitted to descendants. Solomon, whose article centers on Israeli families, acknowledges the code of silence experienced by Holocaust survivors, but points out that HOF children often have better historical knowledge of the Holocaust than non-HOF children in the United States whereas in Israel there was no difference.¹⁶⁶ The difference is indicative of an identification of Jewish youths in Israel with the suffering endured by Jewish Holocaust survivors. Vamik Volkan, Gabriele Ast and William Greer working in the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis illuminate in *The Third Reich in the Unconscious* the psychological trauma that patients may endure after identification with historical traumatic events. They explain:

In descendants, the mental representation of a historical event is passed into the developing core identity and self-representation of individuals through their early interactions with their parents or other caretakers.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Felsen, “Transgenerational Transmission of Effects of the Holocaust ...,” 64.

¹⁶⁴ Felsen, “Transgenerational Transmission of Effects of the Holocaust ...,” 56.

¹⁶⁵ Felsen, “Transgenerational Transmission of Effects of the Holocaust ...,” 60, 61.

¹⁶⁶ Solomon, “Transgenerational Effects of the Holocaust: The Israeli Research Perspective,” 71.

¹⁶⁷ Volkan, *The Third Reich in the Unconscious*, 25.

The authors continue to explain that these effects may continue for a number of generations and are transmitted by conscious and unconscious means. Furthermore, they investigate the way transmitted trauma may create “*unconscious fantasies* in ... descendants whose task it becomes to deal with the shame, rage, helplessness, entitlement, and guilt [of] the previous generation.”¹⁶⁸ These fantasies manifest themselves in psychological symptoms and form a part of the person’s identity. The authors move beyond transmission of trauma by survivors to descendants and find cases of symptoms stemming from an identity informed by historical trauma endured by a group that the person belongs to.¹⁶⁹

This emphasis on identity is also central to Nelly’s portrayal in *Lagerfeuer*. Her identification with her Jewish heritage, although she appears to have only limited knowledge of Judaism, causes her to “suffer” from Holocaust trauma. Unlike Solomon’s findings that showed a positive aspect of identity transmitted to the second generation, the narrator in the novel portrays Nelly very pessimistic about the future. Both Felsen and Solomon also report on studies that have found more female HOFs suffering from depression than male HOFs. Solomon references an unpublished master’s thesis completed by L. Goder in 1981 at Tel Aviv University, Department of Psychology, entitled: *Personality Characteristics of the offspring of Nazi Holocaust survivors in Israel*:

A gender focused study found that second-generation women tended to be more depressive, moody, and emotionally labile than comparable controls, whereas second-generation men tended to be more extroverted, assertive, and dominant than controls.¹⁷⁰

These findings are mirrored in the portrayal of Nelly’s character. While Nelly is sometimes described as assertive, especially in sections seen from John Bird’s perspective, she is most often portrayed as emotionally unstable. While Nelly exhibits some symptoms identifiable as PTSD,

¹⁶⁸ Volkan, *The Third Reich in the Unconscious*, 37.

¹⁶⁹ Volkan, *The Third Reich in the Unconscious*, 40

¹⁷⁰ Solomon, “Transgenerational Effects of the Holocaust: The Israeli Research Perspective,” 78.

she has undergone tremendous upheavals with her lover's death and her move to West Germany. Her symptoms may be attributable to these stressors. Furthermore, similar symptoms of anxiety can be seen in the character of Hans Pischke who does not identify as an offspring of a Holocaust survivor. The narrator attributes these to being a victim of a corrupt East German state. Nevertheless, I maintain that Nelly is portrayed immensely affected if not guided by her self-described identity as an HOF. Her transgenerational trauma stems from identification with her persecuted grandparents and her own perceived marginalization. In this way, being Jewish is not about religious traditions or family heritage, but rather becomes synonymous with trauma in this novel.

Jürgen Straub explains in his article, "Erbschaften des nationalsozialistischen Judäozids in 'Überlebenden-Familien' und die Nachkommen deutscher Täter," that children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors suffer when survivors "transmit" their trauma through "Äußerungen, Handlungen ... und leiblich-interaktiven Inszenierungen"¹⁷¹ In effect, Straub and others describe how trauma becomes an *Erbschaft* even if specific experiences during the Holocaust or during exile are not relayed to the next generation (which was often the case). As I will discuss later, Rabinovici also suggests this possibility in his novels. Trauma may be inherited simply through gestures and behaviors interpreted by family members and through identification with their general suffering.

There are also accounts of writers examining their own personal experience with intergenerational trauma. Rebecca Grinblat Delohery, a third generation Holocaust survivor, attests to *inherited* trauma induced by her family's memory, "community expectations" and historical knowledge, which continues to affect the grandchildren of survivors.¹⁷² Delohery

¹⁷¹ Straub, "Erbschaften des nationalsozialistischen ...," 229.

¹⁷² Delohery, "Moving Beyond Trauma ...," 8.

writes about her attempt to move away from her family and culture to escape the community expectations surrounding her status as survivor. In her 2007 book, *Can these bones live?: translation, survival, and cultural memory*, Bella Brodzki explores “intergenerational transmission, conceived as acts of translation, ...[that] perform as well as disrupt the work of cultural memory” within the context of the Holocaust and Holocaust survivors’ children and grandchildren.¹⁷³ She explores how memories are communicated and perceived. Her ideas of historical transmission as translation harken back to LaCapra’s theories on postmemory. LaCapra understands the inherited trauma as practices acquired through identification and specifically “incorporation and symptomatic acting-out or compulsive repetition of posttraumatic effects.”¹⁷⁴ Likewise, Hirsch, postulates that postmemory is “an intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance, linked specifically to cultural or collective trauma. It is defined through an identification with the victim or witness of trauma.”¹⁷⁵ Contemporary novels reflect the scientific and scholarly community’s continuing emphasis on transgenerational trauma studies, as well as the nature of the disagreements with particular emphasis on the cultural context of trauma experiences. I believe that in Franck’s novels in particular, the medical and social discourse on transmission of memories and trauma is integrated into the characters’ portrayals. When asked how much research she completed for *Die Mittagsfrau*, Franck replies that although she researched a great deal, much of her book is based on her own memories:

Ich habe vor allem aus einem Fundus geschöpft, der aus inneren Bildern besteht. Solche inneren Bilder wachsen in jedem familiären Gedächtnis. Darunter gibt es neben den Bildern, die wir als Kinder erzählt bekommen auch die, die wir nicht erzählt bekommen und die trotzdem überliefert werden¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Brodzki, *Can These Bones Live?..*, 111, 112.

¹⁷⁴ LaCapra, *History in transit ...*, 107. LaCapra makes extensive use of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck’s definition of inherited traits in this discussion.

¹⁷⁵ Hirsch, “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Works of Postmemory,” 10.

¹⁷⁶ Becker, “Das gebrochene Schweigen der Helene.”

In this same manner, the protagonist in *Lagerfeuer*, Nelly, is constructed as affected by the Holocaust and interprets tragedies that befall her and her children from a particular perspective. Her young son is beaten in school and Katja shares with Nelly that the bullies were calling him a bastard. In this scene, as Katja describes what happened, she is also pressuring Nelly to tell the story of their unwed grandmother again and why she could not marry. Nelly provides short answers pushing her daughter and her questions away listlessly. As the scene continues, Nelly becomes more and more tired and traumatized. Her symptoms of numbness and paranoia remind of PTSD symptoms, which Richard McNally describes as “fundamentally a disorder of memory.”¹⁷⁷ However, no direct reference is made to a traumatic event that could have triggered symptoms like these aside perhaps from her lover’s death. There is a scene where she mentions that after receiving the death notice she had been unable to cry although sometimes she wished she could. Since Nelly experiences numerous traumatic events in the novel, and must cope with being a camp resident it seems possible that her lethargic behavior may be caused by her present situation rather than any inherited trauma. She must live in a small room with her two children, which they share with yet another woman, is continuously interrogated by CIA agents 8 hours at a time, kept a virtual prisoner within the camp walls, her son is beaten and she is accused by the doctor of not feeding her children, but in actually she must rely on the camp food dispensary since she has no work. The suicide of her lover and her treatment in East Germany as well as her experiences in the camp are added stressors to her inherited memories. The protagonist’s depiction may be better understood by comparing the events described in the novel to the findings by scholars who point to the fact that traumatized individuals may lead productive lives unaffected by the trauma until a trigger prompts symptoms of the trauma experienced in the past. This may be the case for “secondary” or vicarious trauma as well. This concept is illustrated

¹⁷⁷ McNally, *Remembering Trauma*, 9.

in *Lagerfeuer*, in the way Nelly's humiliating experience at the border and her interrogations by the CIA invoke memories of her family's trauma.

The way Nelly is portrayed mirrors Nanette Auerhahn's description of life themes, one of the indicators of how children of Holocaust survivors may be affected by the trauma of previous generations. She explains that "memory ... transformed to the level of life themes when a degree of distance from the traumatic event is established...[form] an organizing principle that becomes the center of an individual's personality."¹⁷⁸ In most cases, this life theme will make itself known in the individual's life choices and interpersonal relationships. Nelly is portrayed throughout the novel placing herself in situations that she interprets as analogous in some way to the persecution and suffering her grandmother endured. For example, I interpret her choice to stay in the camp, i.e., not to cooperate with the authorities who attempt to help her, and her self-definition of a victim, as well as the manner in which violence reminds her of Germany's past, as actions stemming from the Holocaust having become her "life theme." Her decision to enter a relationship in which she will be unable to marry her partner may also be part of her life theme of following her grandmother and mother in a long line of unmarried mothers.¹⁷⁹

Holocaust Remembered: East Germany versus West Germany

Although my chapter concentrates on analyzing the memory of the Nazi past in *Lagerfeuer*, there is another kind of historical memory implied in the novel. As Lyn Marven points out in her chapter entitled "Divided City, Divided Heaven? Berlin Border Crossings in Post-Wende Fiction" in the 2010 book *Berlin Divided City 1945-1989*, memory of the GDR and in particular the trauma of East/West divisions plays a significant role. Marven illustrates the gap the border represents in *Lagerfeuer* as it is depicted as the unknown, and how the novel "ironizes

¹⁷⁸ Auerhahn, "Intergenerational Memory ...," 32.

¹⁷⁹ A parallel may be found in the "life stories" of female characters in Katja Behrens' writings.

the political significance of the border.”¹⁸⁰ In fact, although Nelly crosses the physical border between the two countries, mentally she never really arrives in West Berlin. Furthermore, her refugee status remains ambiguous and although she can enter West Berlin, both her political status and her mind-set remains in the East. Marven’s article evaluates post-Wende literary depictions of the East/West border crossing and she suitably terms the Marienfelde camp where Nelly ends up as a “no man’s land.” However, in her analysis, Marven fails to elaborate on this point to show how Nelly’s border crossing is not only depicted as a gap or as the unknown as Marven shows, but also turns out to be an illusion. I believe that the narrator makes it clear that the characters had certain expectations upon crossing the “border,” i.e., that they could either escape their former life in East Germany or start a better life in West Germany, neither of which turns out to be possible.

Significantly, in *Lagerfeuer*, Nelly’s earlier intergenerational trauma is accentuated as she crosses the border from East into West Germany. Barbara Honigmann, has articulated in her autobiographical works the GDR treatment of Jewish Holocaust survivors, namely her parents. In *Ein Kapitel aus meinem Leben* (2004), Honigmann explains the hierarchical conceptualization of victimhood, whereby those imprisoned by the Nazis for their communist beliefs were held in higher esteem than those who were “nur’ als Juden nach Auschwitz deportiert,” because “die etablierte Hierarchie stellte die ‘Kämpfer’ über die ‘Opfer.’”¹⁸¹ However, Honigmann also contends that her general status as “Verfolgte des Naziregimes” afforded her certain privileges as this status also extended to the children of victims.¹⁸² In comparison, Julia Franck weaves references of the way GDR treated Holocaust survivors and their families into her fiction without providing a clear picture of the protagonist’s and her Jewish grandmother’s life in East Germany.

¹⁸⁰ Marven, “Divided City, Divided Heaven? ...,” 188.

¹⁸¹ Honigmann, *Ein Kapitel ...*, 123. Also quoted in Segelcke’s article, “Breaking the Taboo.”

¹⁸² Honigmann, *Ein Kapitel ...*, 122.

Nelly's grandmother is also portrayed as being granted advantages as a victim of fascism. What this persecution entailed exactly, whether she was deported, had to flee, or live in hiding remains unexplained. The grandmother is portrayed as a fervent believer in communist ideals and chose to live in the Eastern sector after the war, although Nelly believes her grandmother became a believer in socialism due to the trauma she experienced. However, this status did not ensure the grandmother's safety completely as evidenced by the scene I described earlier, in which her dental crowns were removed at the border due to suspicions that she is transporting state secrets.

The correlation between the way Franck and Honigmann describe the life of Jews and their offspring in the GDR is particularly interesting. Although Honigmann's *Ein Kapitel aus meinem Leben* was published one year after *Lagerfeuer*, she discusses similar instances in *Eine Liebe aus Nichts*, first published in 1991. Franck could have used Honigmann's fictional autobiographical account as research. However, the correlation may also be explained by Franck's statements about her biological grandmother, which are similar to Honigmann's depiction of her father's "experience of estrangement in spite of his privileged status."¹⁸³ Significantly, the difference between Jewish second-generation authors such as Honigmann, Rafael Seligman, all of whom depict German-Jewish characters in their novels, and Julia Franck is not only temporal (distance in time), but more importantly cultural, as the former authors have closer ties to a Jewish community. Franck portrays characters with Jewish heritage in three of her novels, *Lagerfeuer*, *Die Mittagsfrau* and *Rücken an Rücken* (2011). However, in none of these works are the characters depicted as adhering to any Jewish traditions. In *Die Mittagsfrau*, both the protagonist, Helene, and her mother do not convey information about their Jewish background to their children. Both women are married to a non-Jewish German. Helene's older sister informs her that their mother is Jewish. However, Helene's son never finds out that his

¹⁸³ Segelcke, "Breaking the Taboo," 168.

mother has Jewish heritage. Similarly, in *Lagerfeuer* and *Rücken an Rücken* the mothers in the novels, Nelly and Käthe respectively, do not discuss their Jewish heritage with their children extensively. In each novel, the mother's occasional remarks about Jewish family members provide the children with limited information on their mother's background.

A questionable character in *Lagerfeuer*, Dr. Rothe, a seemingly generous benefactor, who hands out presents at Christmas, offers Nelly and her children money because he claims he likes to help "Opfern menschenfeindlicher und unwürdiger Systeme" providing charity regardless of "Herkunft und religiöse Gesinnung" (L 254, 255). His statement alluding to her Jewish heritage is juxtaposed against Nelly's thoughts as she wonders: "Woher die Leute dieser Generation hier in Deutschland ihr Geld hatten" (L 255). The statement suggests that Rothe has acquired his fortune at the expense of others, possibly by exploitation during the war. At the end of the novel, she hears Hans Prieschke, a man she has befriended in the camp articulate her own suspicions even more when he watches Dr. Rothe handing out presents stating: "wer sitzt schon dreißig Jahre nach dem Krieg auf einem Vermögen und muß nicht mal arbeiten" (L 325). On the one hand, the narrator suggests that the Rothe family symbolizes the self-righteous manner in which West Germans treat East Germans or other Eastern Block refugees. On the other hand the family exemplifies Germans who are eager to look and act sympathetic to the needs of others (especially people fleeing dictatorships) in order to alleviate their feelings of guilt for the atrocities committed under National Socialism. Clearly, Nelly and Hans' thoughts about money also stem from the East German view of capitalism. If only 30 years ago the country lay in shambles, how did Rothe amass his fortune?

From the East German point of view, West German capitalism was associated with fascism. The historian, Josie McLellan, explains in *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany*

that “for the ruling SED, antifascism fulfilled a number of important functions ... it exculpated the East German population from their responsibility for the events of the Nazi period.”¹⁸⁴ When Hans wonders how Rothe has amassed such wealth so soon after the war and the years of rebuilding, he is reiterating the mistrust towards the West and capitalism in East Germany. Nelly is likewise mistrusting of Rothe, but for different reasons. She seems less outraged at the fact that he has money, but rather is perturbed and fearful that his offer of help may be a trap or that she may be accepting help from someone associated with fascism in some other manner. In the novels’ chapters narrated from Nelly’s perspective, the way East and West Germany had dealt with their past up to the 1980s is highlighted. Nelly becomes paranoid and begins to see violence and danger at every turn. It was common in East German rhetoric to emphasize the evils of capitalism in West Germany and even to equate Capitalists with Fascists. Pohlmann discusses the “Bündnis zwischen Kapitalisten und Faschisten” as propagated by “Vertretern neomarxistischer Faschismustheorien.”¹⁸⁵ Another example of this is Gabriele Rosenthal’s interview of an East German “Zeitzeuge” whose anti-Semitism seems infused with East German ideology: “Er schreibt den Völkermord dem internationalen Großkapital zu, das sich hauptsächlich aus Juden zusammengesetzt habe und für das Hitler nur eine Marionette gewesen sei.”¹⁸⁶ East Germany also remained relatively silent about Jewish victims of the Holocaust emphasizing the class struggle and its communist victims instead. In *Lagerfeuer*, Rothe visits Nelly’s room and states that he has come to the camp to donate money to refugees. Nelly’s suspicions are raised when she glances at her file Rothe leaves on the table and makes out

¹⁸⁴ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany*, 200. McLellan furthermore points out in her study of the International Brigades that “despite the SED’s best attempts to dominate history, multiple interpretations did exist” and that “children of Jewish veterans, who had not shared their parents’ traumatic experiences, were able to see identity as a more fluid construct” (202).

¹⁸⁵ Pohlmann, “Anmerkungen zu einem Faschismusbegriff der 70 Jahre,” 121

¹⁸⁶ Rosenthal, *Der Holocaust im Leben von drei Generationen*, 350.

several words such as “Republic, Semitenverein...” as well as her lover’s name – Batalow (L 257). She flees out of the apartment in fear and displays physical symptoms of paranoia.

However, what her fear is about remains unclear. Her reaction in her room when he offers her help, shows her growing paranoia, since Rothe is only indirectly portrayed as harmful or as a shady character. Only the East German characters in the novel perceive this representative of capitalism as such and mistrust the family.

Another scene constructed from Nelly’s perspective that links her perception of people to Germany’s relationship with its past, is in the hospital after Nelly’s son, has been beaten in school. While Nelly is visiting her son in the hospital, a woman enters the room with her son, Olivier, the boy who beat Aleksej. The mother has come to the hospital to bring Aleksej a present and apologize.¹⁸⁷ She remarks how terrible this situation is but seems oblivious to the real pain her son has caused. She is mainly thinking of her own pain of having to deal with this tragedy. Told from Nelly’s perspective, the narrator emphasizes the woman’s perfect make-up and expensive riding gear. She is portrayed as apologetic but not truly empathetic. In an eerie correlation to the West German pre-1980 Holocaust discourse, the mother, clearly depicted as a capitalist, avoids acknowledging Aleksej’s suffering and tries to minimize her son’s guilt by explaining how he was not the only one involved, that he was influenced by others.

Keinen Blick verschwendete die Frau an Aleksej ... “Die Lehrerin hat gleich gesagt, daß er nicht der einzige war ... Sehen Sie, Olivier hat immer wieder beteuert, daß er nicht Schuld ist und ein anderer Junge die Kinder angeführt hat. Aber ich sage, entschuldigen muß er sich trotzdem” (L197-198).

She promises to make amends without making it clear what that will entail and professes her own helplessness in changing the situation: “wenigstens sorgen wir für das Beste” (L 198). She is mainly concerned about her own shock at the discovery of her son’s brutal actions: “So etwas

¹⁸⁷ The present consists of “ein in Glanzpapier eingeschlagenes Päckchen mit einer großen silbrigen Schleife,” (197)

ist schrecklich ... wenn das Telefon klingelt und man geht nichtsahnend an den Apparat" (L 197). Rather than having empathy with Aleksej she positions herself as a victim, because she has been informed of her son's deeds and now has to feel guilty and ashamed of him. In this scene, as narrated from Nelly's perspective, I see various correlations to the discourse on German guilt. The analogy is further supported by the fact that Nelly believes Olivier's actions are most likely based on ethnocentrism.

Franck's latest novel, *Rücken an Rücken* (2011), emphasizes the correlation between capitalist West Germany and Fascism in an even more direct manner. In this novel, set in the first two post-war decades in East Germany, Käthe, a Jewish victim of Nazi persecution, has become a fervent believer in communism and attempts to explain to her now grown son why he should forget about his desire to travel and put aside his ideas about freedom:

Drüben wird laut geschrien, Freiheit nennen die das, und sind Ausbeuter. Da blüht der Faschismus, guck mal genau hin. (146) ... Es kommt auf die Gerechtigkeit an, gerechtere Verteilung aller Güter, der ideellen wie auch der materiellen. Nur wenn uns das gelingt, können wir den faschistischen Geist besiegen. Wenn einer ruft, ich will mehr, dann ist der Schritt zum Verbrechen klein. Warum, glaubst du, haben die Nazis Kommunisten und Juden ermordet? (151)

Käthe's makes her convictions clear in this statement. Throughout the novel she is a strong, hardworking and outspoken woman, a sculptor. However, the narrator presents Käthe as a neglectful, uncaring and spiteful mother to her son and daughter, the novel's protagonists. This character development helps to show that her convictions that Capitalism equals Fascism and that Fascism is only in West Germany are flawed, one-sided arguments, which dismiss important points about East Germany's treatment of the past. Thus, *Rücken and Rücken* further develops themes which Franck explored in *Lagerfeuer* published eight years earlier. Additionally, the negative manner in which Käthe appears in her role as a mother also calls to mind the maternal representations of the mother in *Die Mittagsfrau*, which I will explore in chapter four.

In *Lagerfeuer*, Nelly experiences traumatic events and must cope with her life as a camp resident. Therefore, it seems possible that her lethargic behavior was caused by her present situation rather than any inherited trauma. She lives with her two children in a small room shared with yet another woman, is frequently interrogated by CIA agents 8 hours at a time, and is kept a virtual prisoner within the camp walls. Her son is beaten and his doctor accuses her of not caring for her children adequately since the boy appears malnourished. The suicide of her lover is presented as another source of trauma since Nelly's numbness begins when she learns of his death. She states that she has been unable to cry since that time.

The way the narrator describes Nelly's response to trauma, resembles the language used in medical and therapy discourse on trauma. The "violent or sudden loss of a loved one" and feelings of fear and helplessness may be traumatic stressors sufficient enough to cause symptoms of PTSD.¹⁸⁸ While the suicide of her lover, her treatment in East Germany, and her experiences in the camp may represent stressors adding to her inherited memories, I believe that especially in conjunction with the way the song, "By the Rivers of Babylon," recurs throughout the novel and affects Nelly negatively, the narrator has constructed a reference to the Holocaust.

In an article on intergenerational effects of trauma, Elisabeth Brainin, Vera Ligeti and Samy Teicher argue that it is the fear of persecution and fear for their children in contemporary society that most marks the behaviors of Holocaust survivors and contributes to trauma transmission. They also point to the parents' inability to help the children deal with fear:

Eine Schwierigkeit für die Kinder der Verfolgten besteht eben darin, dass ihre furchterregenden Phantasieinhalte für die Eltern Wirklichkeit waren. Das bedeutet, dass die Eltern diese Ängste ihrer Kinder nicht beruhigen konnten, weil sie selbst voll Angst waren, und weil die Ängste ihrer Kinder eigene Ängste neuerlich aktualisierten.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Brewin, *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Malady or Myth?*, 6-7.

¹⁸⁹ Brainin, "Pathologie mehrerer Generationen oder Pathologie der Wirklichkeit?" *Unverlierbare Zeit*, 162.

Nelly's daughter, Katja, the representative of the third generation, does not seem personally affected. However, the reader only sees her through the eyes of her mother and she could certainly be affected by Nelly's behavior toward her. The "passing on" of trauma in mother-child relationships or children affected due their mother's trauma is a recurring theme in Franck's novels. Tanja Dücker also utilizes depictions reminiscent of PTSD symptoms in her novel *Himmelskörper*. In the next chapter, I shall provide more background information on PTSD trauma theory.

A number of scholars, including Wulf Kansteiner and Anne Rothe, have voiced their opposition to using trauma theory on vicarious trauma to describe people's behaviors and feelings.¹⁹⁰ Kansteiner's article, "Testing the limits of trauma: the long-term psychological effects of the Holocaust on individuals and collectives," provides an overview on contemporary studies on Holocaust related trauma. He argues that a number of scholars conclude that no particular universal psychopathological effect of the Holocaust on survivors or their children can be determined. Yet, as Brainin points out, it is obvious that the second generation may see the Holocaust as an ever-present looming reality and see itself as members of a persecuted minority.¹⁹¹ Based on my close reading analysis, I argue that in Franck's and Dücker's writings, second and third generation characters are constructed in a manner that brings to mind these aspects and debates on trauma theory.

Psychoanalysts have also encountered second generation children of Jewish survivors living in Germany who suffer from the burden of the Holocaust as they encounter people in their everyday live and wonder what these people may have been doing during the war.¹⁹² This is also

¹⁹⁰ Vicarious trauma is trauma not due to a personal experience or not due to an experience personally remembered, but rather through second hand knowledge.

¹⁹¹ Brainin, "Die Zeit heilt keine Wunden ...," 40.

¹⁹² Brainin, "Die Zeit heilt keine Wunden ...," 48.

a common literary motif in contemporary German and Austrian literature, for example in Schindel's novel *Gebürtig* discussed earlier. At the same time, Brainin et al contend that some psychoanalysts place too much emphasis on transgenerational trauma. The authors provide examples of clinicians in psychotherapy who attribute patients' behaviors to the Holocaust which are either fairly universal (such as young adults having problems getting along with their parents) or which are not specifically related to the subjects' Jewish identity or Jewish heritage. For example, in "Pathologie mehrerer Generationen oder Pathologie der Wirklichkeit?" the authors describe a Jewish woman in Austria who has had multiple abortions. Her psychoanalyst makes an analogy between her abortions and the murders of Jewish children by the Nazis and claims the woman is suffering from transgenerational trauma.¹⁹³ By contrast, studying the effects of the Holocaust trauma on children of survivors living in Argentina, Ines Danziger writes in her article, "Die zweite Generation . . .," that these future generations exhibited "Beklemmung, emotionale Labilität, Schwierigkeiten bei der Anpassung an konfliktreiche Situationen im Alltagsleben, Schlafstörungen, Hypochondrie, psychosomatische Episoden oder Krankheiten" due to trauma the wartime generation experienced.¹⁹⁴

Historians, sociologists and psychologists have studied the effects of the Holocaust on survivors and subsequent generations, changing and updating their theories. While Kansteiner is critical of the ongoing propensity of representing trauma in the arts, these novels seem to mirror the ongoing trauma discourse in western society. Nanette Auerhahn and Dori Laub have also examined the transmission and effect of this knowledge on post-war generations of Holocaust survivors in the United States. They argue that "central to the response to trauma are the issues of knowing and forgetting." theorizing that traumatic memories form "an unconscious organizing

¹⁹³ Brainin, "Pathologie mehrerer Generationen . . .," 159.

¹⁹⁴ Danziger, "Die zweite Generation der deutschen Juden in Argentinien," 90.

principle passed on by parents and internalized by their children.”¹⁹⁵ While the application of trauma theory in the analysis of literary texts may be problematic, there seems to be evidence to show the constructions of vicarious trauma in contemporary German literature.

Jewish Absence and Transgenerational Trauma in Rabinovici’s and Menasse’s writing

The connection between trauma and memory is also evident in 21st-century literary works by Doron Rabinovici and Robert Menasse. In their novels, Jewish citizens are part of Austrian society though they do note the absence of a larger Jewish community after the Holocaust. In fact, the Jewish circles appear closely knit and claustrophobic. Unlike in the depiction in Franck’s novel, Jews are not entirely absent. In Rabinovici’s fiction, second generation characters are plagued by their parent’s survivor guilt. Rabinovici, born in 1961 in Tel Aviv, is a second generation Holocaust survivor. He moved to Austria with his family at a young age and writes in German. His father fled Rumania in 1944 and his mother survived the Vilna ghetto and concentration camp, arriving in Israel in the 1950s. In 1964 they moved with their young son to Vienna. In his novels, *Ohnehin* and *Suche nach M.*, Rabinovici portrays the pressure children of Holocaust victims experience as a result of their parent’s survival. In *Suche nach M.*, the young protagonist Dani, suffers from a psychological condition that causes him to constantly apologize and proclaim that he is guilty for transgressions others commit even though he is innocent. He is plagued by the way he imagines his parents view him:

Die Eltern sagten nie, daß sie bloß für ihn überlebt hätten, doch er hörte ihr Seufzen, sah in den Augen des Vaters, daß sein Sohn der Vorwand ihrer Existenz hätte sein können, wenn die Toten dereinst fragen mochten, warum sie beide nicht ebenfalls umgebracht worden waren ...¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Auerhahn and Laub, 22. See also their article “Annihilation and restoration: Post-traumatic memory as pathway and obstacle to recovery” in *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 11(1984), 327-344.

¹⁹⁶ Rabinovici, *Suche nach M.*, 83.

His parents' survivor guilt is passed on to Dani, who feels the pressure of living up to their expectations. Significantly, Rabinovici's stories are set mainly in Austria thus presenting characters, who traverse German Jewish and German non-Jewish culture. Living in Austria provides a constant reminder of the Holocaust. However, their decision to return to a German speaking country is not portrayed as uncommon; in fact, the relationship between victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust living side by side, in *Ohnehin*, literally within the same housing complex, becomes part of the everyday landscape of these characters. Rabinovici does however compare the situation for Jews in Austria in contrast to Germany, voicing criticism against Austrian's unwillingness to discuss their role in the Holocaust and seeing themselves as victims as late as the 1990s. In *Suche nach M*, Dani contemplates whether he may have escaped the pressure of his parents' survivor guilt and not developed the neurosis of seeing himself as a constant perpetrator. He believes "sein Scheitern machte ihn zum Täter, zum Komplizen der Menschen, die heute noch haßten."¹⁹⁷ He wonders, "vielleicht wäre er diesem Kurzschluß seines Denkens entgangen, doch er lebte in diesem Land. Niemand hatte die Vertriebenen zurückgerufen, keine Partei für eine Entschädigung der Beraubten, keine Regierung für die Verurteilung der Mörder gefochten"¹⁹⁸ Living in Austria exacerbates his condition.

The narrator in *Suche nach M*. also associates the suffering of Holocaust survivors with silence and the inability to share their experiences. Jakob Scheinowiz, a survivor, has kept his identity a secret from his son, who is affected by his father's silence. Scheinowiz' keeps his true identity a secret. Likewise, it is kept secret from the reader, as he moves from identity to identity and the reader becomes uncertain of which identity is the original or *real* person. He changes his identity as if he is attempting to escape himself. Even on his deathbed, he continues the charade

¹⁹⁷ Rabinovici, *Suche nach M.*, 83.

¹⁹⁸ Rabinovici, *Suche nach M.*, 84.

towards his new wife and his old friend and fellow camp survivor who refers to the two of them as “bloß Tote auf Urlaub.“ He is stuck in the past as he shares: “Zuweilen ist mir, als wäre die Befreiung ein Traum gewesen, als wachten wir eines Morgens wieder auf in der Baracke.”¹⁹⁹ Scheinowiz’s son, Arie, Dani’s friend, also has a strange condition, which allows him to find criminals. He hunts down a criminal and “accidentally” becomes a murderer who ends up fleeing to Israel where the authorities engage him in the secret service. The sons in these tales are afflicted with superhuman abilities that allow them to distinguish between guilt and innocence. In a sense, Arie ends up following in his father’s footsteps and his inherited trauma is clearly depicted in the developments of his life in Israel far away from Austria or his father. Navah, his daughter’s mother, finally confronts him with his behavior drawing the parallels between him and his father:

Du machst dich vor deiner Tochter zum Geheimnis...du wiederholst an deinem Kind alles, was dein Vater dir antat... Du kannst dich nicht in anderen finden, Arie. Wann wirst du endlich verstehen. Du bist wie Jakob Scheinowiz, dein Vater, als lebstest du im Untergrund, verstecktest dich vor der Vernichtung. Auf ewiger Flucht. Unter falschem Namen.²⁰⁰

This scene expresses the son’s transgenerational trauma. In Rabinovici’s novels the suffering of Holocaust survivors and their children is spelled out in clear terms. However, although I have argued that Franck portrays her characters in a similar manner, she provides only clues or hints that the reader must decipher. While Rabinovici’s characters contemplate their own lives and interpret their behaviors, i.e., think reflexively about their actions, Frank’s characters rarely interpret their own feelings and actions clearly.

Robert Menasse, an Austrian writer born in 1954, thematizes the plight of outsiders and anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria. He also describes inherited trauma in his fictional short

¹⁹⁹ Rabinovici, *Suche nach M.*, 101.

²⁰⁰ Rabinovici, *Suche nach M.*, 153.

story “Das Ende des Hungerwinters” in the 2009 compilation *Ich kann jeder sagen: Erzählungen vom Ende der Nachkriegsordnung*. This story portrays a man who survived the Holocaust as a child in hiding with his parents in the Amsterdam zoo. Now an old man, he has told and retold this story so often that his son can finish his sentences for him. At the funeral of his father, he is again telling the story of their survival. However, the son is immediately struck when his father changes a detail and includes the fact that the hiding family was plagued by the shrieking sound of the zoo birds day after day. On his way home the son passes his grandfather’s old apartment (where he died) and hears the sound of birds, noticing that the new neighbor has a collection of birds. The grandson realizes that his grandfather died due to a shock when he heard the same birds again that he had heard during his year of trauma in the zoo.²⁰¹ This story again reminds of two aspects of trauma theory: triggers may cause a victim to relive a traumatic experience and in narrating their experiences to future generations, victims may leave out specific details, which would be too painful to share. In Menasse’s story, the man had told his story repeatedly, but never mentioned the traumatic sounds the family heard until the day he found his deceased father crouching beneath pillows to keep out the sound of the neighbor’s birds.

German Ethnocentrism

Two recent events in 2010 exemplify today’s ethnocentrism in Germany. Proponents of a more German hegemonic society, i.e., people of *Germanic* origin, argue against Muslim “immigrants,” and growing Muslim culture and religion in Germany. Although the term Muslim does not designate an ethnic group, in his 2010 book, *Deutschland schafft sich ab: wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen*, Thilo Sarrazin calls attention to a genetic or biological influence of Muslims in Germany. Next to various theories on improving education and financial stability in

²⁰¹ Menasse, “Das Ende des Hungerwinters,” 24-44.

Germany, he argues that Muslims have “Erbfaktoren” which explains their children’s lack of success in school and demands that Turkish or Arab nationals become Germans in every sense or they are not welcome. Furthermore, he suggests that only particularly skilled workers should be allowed to immigrate to Germany. Although he proposes religious equality, he also advises against allowing students to miss class due to religious reasons, i.e., non-Christian religious holidays, and opposes allowing head covering in schools.²⁰² The book has sold over a million copies in Germany.

Also in 2010, at a Christopher Street Day event in Berlin, Judith Butler declined to accept the organization’s prize for “Zivilcourage.” Christopher Street Day is day of celebration, memorial and support for the rights of the LGBT community. However, Butler refused the prize because she claimed that the event was too commercialized and that within the CSD organization racism and discrimination against Muslims was an issue. She gave her prize to several queer outreach groups instead.²⁰³ The German media picked up her story on a large scale, but did not provide details regarding her accusation of racism nor did they mention the groups she gave the prize to.

Lagerfeuer addresses ethnocentrism by depicting the characters’ marginalization in a hierarchical system. West Germans see East Germans as “foreign” and “strange” and therefore treat them poorly. However, East Germans are still considered part of the in-group when compared to immigrants from Poland or Russia. Eastern European immigrants are discriminated against even more. For example, the winter clothing depository discriminates against the Polish character Krystina, claiming that there are no winter boots available in her size, while at the same time she sees them providing boots to East Germans. Once there is a choice between East

²⁰² Sarrazin, *Deutschland schafft sich ab* ..., 326

²⁰³ “Eklat beim CSD. Philosophin Judith Butler lehnt Zivilcourage-Preis ab.”

German or Polish, West German sentiments switch from looking down upon East Germans to believing they are helping “one of their own.”

The life theme of Nelly’s character, discussed earlier in connection with Auerhahn’s research, influences reactions to German ethnocentrism, even when it is not actually directly related to history or her son’s Jewish heritage. For example, in the way Nelly responds to Aleksej’s injury at school. She discovers markings on him that students made by poking him with pens and pencils. She determines that they resemble “Tätowierungen.” She cannot help but see these as a form of “Brandmale” and thinks of “Tiere, die gebrandmarkt werden” (L 186). This scene can be interpreted as a reference to the Holocaust as well. As Deborah Lee Prescott explains, “an integral part of the Nazi assault on the integrity of the Jews’ humanity was the Nazi propaganda that linked Jews with animals.”²⁰⁴ Additionally, Franck’s use of the term “gebrandmarkt” may also be seen both as indicating that she feels her son has been stigmatized or denounced and as a reference to the tattoos of concentration camp numbers, which functioned to label Jews.²⁰⁵ This reference immediately follows the scene where she explains to her children that her mother was not allowed to get married because “Sie war Jüdin und er nicht” (L 185). However, Nelly’s son is not a concentration camp inmate, nor is his fate analogous to persecuted victims. His encounter with a school bully could be interpreted as a “normal” albeit violent childhood experience. Nelly’s reaction to see the markings as *branding* is another example of Franck’s use of tropes in her writings that are allegorical references to history.

²⁰⁴ Prescott, 58. She reports not only on Stiffel’s memoirs where “Jews in the cattle cars were like animals” but also how “even before the implantation of the Final Solution, the Nazis linked Jews with animals” as she noted in a variety of autobiographies she examined. For example, she shows numerous instances in which Jews were equated to or referred to as dogs in signs and by members of the SS. Another common practice was to compare Jews to vermin.

²⁰⁵ Primo Levi points out “this is the mark with which slaves are branded and cattle sent to the slaughter ... the violence of the tattoo was gratuitous, an end in itself, pure offense,” quoted by Erin McGlothlin in *Second-generation Holocaust literature: legacies of survival and perpetration*, page 21.

The way Nelly reacts to Aleksej's injury at school at the hands of the other children is analogous to German racist anti-Semitism during the Nazi era. Her son is "different" in many ways, he is from East Germany, but even more so, he has a Russian name and a Russian father. Nelly at first cannot believe what has happened to her son. While returning from the front gate where she requested a doctor to be sent, she hears a line of the song again: "...*ye-eah we wept, when we remembered Zion*" (L 170). All of a sudden, she begins to formulate theories on how and why her son was beaten.

Kein Wunder, daß die Kinder sich so wehrten, dachte ich, ... Warum sollte man sich nicht gegen diese Eindringlinge wenden, gegen diesen ständigen Einbruch von außen, die Fremden, die anders sprachen und andere Ausdrücke verwendeten... Man ärgerte sie und siehe da, das Ärgern hatte Erfolg, binnen kurzer Zeit würde man sie vergrault haben... Einfach weg. (L 170).

Nelly adds to the children's general xenophobia the element of planning; a plan to rid their community of outsiders. Interestingly, a few lines later sitting next to her injured son, she wonders whether or not his demeanor played a role in the children's feelings toward him. She recalls labeling him a "Besserwisser und Naseweis" herself and justifies the children's actions because her son must seem "seltsam" to them and they may have felt "provoziert" (L 172). This points to ensuing self-hatred as the result of mistreatment. The analogies between xenophobic National Socialist rhetoric and West German hierarchical categories of "outsiders" set up in the novel would also make Nelly's children doubly outsiders, as they have an East German mother of Jewish descent and a Russian father.

Nelly's trauma is evident in her hopelessness and the reaction to her daughter: Katja tries to hug her exclaiming: "Ich will dich doch nur trösten." Nelly sees herself as a "toter Berg, riesenhaft in den Armen meiner Tochter...Unbeweglich harrete ich in ihrer Umklammerung aus. Mir wollte einfach keine sinnvolle Handlung einfallen" (L 188). While her son's mistreatment in

school affects Nelly and causes her to think about Jewish oppression in general, it is the memory of her grandmother's persecution, the knowledge of the Holocaust, that haunts her most of all.

Visiting her son in the hospital, she hears the song again:

Von irgendwoher erklang das Lied... Erst bewegten sich die Stimmen wie Springseile, sie spotteten fast über die Trägheit in mir, die sich gegen das Lied zur Wehr setzte ...doch je öfter das Lied seine Melodie wiederholte , desto stärker rollten die Stimmen auf der Musik, eine Woge ...ich schluckte, so übel wurde mir plötzlich. (L 176).

Nelly imagines herself sitting by this river and although she does not articulate it, we can presume that she is also imagining her own exile and the "enemies" the song sings of, who in a sense surround her.

Nelly's lethargic behavior and instances of illness transfer to other areas in her life as well. The question remaining in the end is why Nelly stays in the camp. She exhibits a paranoia and mistrust towards West German society. The camp may represent a barrier, both physical and psychological, in which she is neither in nor completely outside of society. She may also see it as a kind of protection from the "real" West German society. Staying in the camp also allows her to label herself a victim – something she voices at the beginning of the novel when she is offered a candy bar by a CIA agent: "So teure Sachen geben Sie Ihren Opfern?" (L 68) to which the agent responds "Sie sind doch nicht unser Opfer" (L 68). In some ways, the camp may also represent a kind of security for her that she has learned from internalizing her mother's claims who believed "Es gibt auf der ganzen Welt keinen sicheren Ort als ein kommunistisches Land mit einer Mauer wie der unsrigen" (L 67-68). Although Nelly laughs at her mother's beliefs, the narrator (who in this section is John Bird) does not know to what extent she may have internalized this message. This statement reflects Straub's theory on the way trauma is transmitted through the way parents express themselves. Nelly's quasi voluntary stay in the camp, the strong effect the song has on her as well as the novel's depiction of ethnocentrism continue to remind the reader of historical

violence, much like Nelly's transgenerational trauma informs her interpretations of contemporary events.

III. TRAUMA OF MAINSTREAM GERMANS IN TANJA DÜCKERS' *HIMMELSKÖRPER*.

“... daß jetzt die Enkel anfangen zu fragen, das hat mich gefreut”²⁰⁶
Christa Wolf

In the 1990s, German historiography about The Second World War began to examine the experiences of the German mainstream population during the war more publicly than previously. Although the portrayal of *Germans as Victims*²⁰⁷ was nothing new, for many, Sebald’s *Luftkrieg und Literatur* marked a turning point in the discourse, *transforming* a taboo into an accepted practice. Discussing one’s traumatic wartime experiences in the public realm became more commonplace as novels, history books, documentaries, films and TV programs, and personal memoirs on the subject flooded the market.²⁰⁸ Suffering Germans has been the dominant subject of literary representations following the war from immediate post-war novels by Wolfgang Borchert and Heinrich Böll to Grass’ *Blechtrommel* (1959) and the 1970s film *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter* to contemporary films such as *Eine Frau in Berlin* and *Dresden* to name a few. Contemporary texts also increasingly portray characters dealing with *being witness to*, *remembering*, or having *knowledge of* the war, and of the Holocaust.

Literary and historical scholars are examining the new wave of publications and re-publications as well as the cultural discourse on the war. Katharina Gerstenberger and Patricia Herminghouse in their recent 2008 work, *German Literature in a new Century*, explore the current literary trend in Germany today to identify how “history has shaped familial relationships” and call attention to the Post-Wende voices in German culture arguing for

²⁰⁶ Quotation is taken from the back cover of Dückers’ first edition paperback of *Himmelskörper*.

²⁰⁷ For more on *Germans as Victims*, see Bill Niven (2006), Helmut Schmitz (2007) and Stuart Taberner (2009).

²⁰⁸ In the chapter on “Memory Work,” I provided a more detailed discussion of post-war literary representations on the subject as well as a critical overview on the scholarly debates.

“normalization.”²⁰⁹ Anne Fuchs, author of the 2006 work *German Memory Contests*, uses the term “memory contests” for the contemporary discourse on memory in Germany including the seemingly competitive nature of Holocaust memories and memories of mainstream German suffering. She argues that multigenerational family narratives illustrate “intersection of the private and the public, a site where official representations of the past are contested by alternative memories from below.”²¹⁰ This is analogous to the debate on normalization discussed earlier. In Tanja Dücker’s *Himmelskörper*, the narrator depicts two siblings growing up with alternate tales of the same historical event, the family’s flight westward towards the end of the Second World War. The stories recounted to the third generation protagonists differ between the public and the private sphere as well as within the private sphere as the accuracy of the memory of the grandparent generation is challenged by their daughter, a member of the second generation.

Aleida Assmann contends that “new memory contests” are emerging in the German public discourse about the past.²¹¹ She explains how victimhood and guilt have replaced and attempted to supersede one another repeatedly in Germany since the Second World War.²¹² Assmann also asks, “why is the family memory of German suffering during and after the war returning today and meeting with great public resonance and broad popular interest?” Annette Seidel Arpaci may have an answer in her article “Discourse of German Suffering...” She states that in local memory, the Allied troops, rather than the Nazis, have been blamed for the destruction of cities and the suffering of the population all along.²¹³ Therefore, family memory is

²⁰⁹ Gerstenberger, “Introduction,” 6, 8.

²¹⁰ Fuchs, *German Memory Contests*, 4.

²¹¹ Assmann, “On the Incompatibility ...,” 187.

²¹² Assmann, “On the Incompatibility ...,” 194. The article specifically discusses Hannes Heer (*Wehrmacht* crime exhibition) and Friedrich’s *Der Brand*, outlining the suffering caused by the bombing of German towns.

²¹³ Arpaci, “Discourse of German Suffering...,” 176.

not “returning.” As discussed earlier in chapter one, it is now more socially acceptable to show interest in family memory. Rather than arguing facts (family memory versus historical memory), scholars debate “rules of discourse and representation” in the *battle* over how German guilt and suffering is to be assessed and represented. Assmann argues for a hierarchal system of memory contests whereby the Holocaust remains the “German national memory [and identity] ... as a normative framework.” but leaves the individual “human right to personal memories” intact.²¹⁴

At the same time, historians increasingly examine the suffering of the civilian population, such as the German historian Jörg Friedrich in his work *Der Brand* and the American historian Giles MacDonough in his text, *After the Reich: The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation*. The three main areas of German victimization under discussion are the air raids, mass expulsions from the East, and the treatment by Allied soldiers immediately following the war, including rape. Each of the novels I examine includes at least one of these instances. Even in a novel such as Dückers *Spielzone* (1999), whose overall topic is not the war, trauma experienced by the generation of the protagonist’s grandfather are portrayed as part of a microhistory within German families.²¹⁵

Increasingly, research also focuses on the way the memory of trauma experienced by mainstream Germans during and after the Second World War may have affected later generations. In this area, studies lagged behind the works about Jewish survivors and their children. Internationally, attention was focused on the latter issues and informed German scholarship as well. Similarly, in fiction after 1999, authors born after 1961, i.e., members of the *Enkelgeneration*, increasingly began to focus on the topic of trauma passed from generation to

²¹⁴ Assmann, “On the Incompatibility ...,” 196.

²¹⁵ My usage of the term microhistory corresponds roughly to the term *Alltagsgeschichte* and to the way scholars use the term to define historical studies concentrating on the history of families and individuals normally excluded from the mainstream narrative that seeks to cover a broad spectrum in its historical analysis. For more on microhistory, see Carlo Ginzburg’s *Microhistory* (1993) and Part 3 of *Historiography* (2006) edited by Robert Burns.

generation and on how memories function.²¹⁶ In chapter two, I explored Julia Frank's portrayal of a traumatized Jewish woman *remembering* her family's persecution in *Lagerfeuer*. This chapter likewise examines the way a third generation author depicts transgenerational trauma. Tanja Dückers' novels *Spielzone* (1999) and even more so her subsequent work, *Himmelskörper* (2004), portray mainstream German civilian suffering and the mainstream German memory discourse on the Holocaust.

At the same time that first generation characters keep silent about their involvement in National Socialism, they are also obsessed with the topic of the war. They are both silent and revealing. In *Spielzone*, a compilation of short stories about the lives of eclectic characters in Berlin, a brief passage narrates the relationship between a grandfather and his grandchild, Benno, a young man in contemporary Berlin. Benno has internalized his grandfather's stories and visualizes the trauma he experienced in 1945. The grandfather has been stuck on one story, the war, for the entire life of the grandchild. Vividly, he seems to remember and recount his experiences in the immediate aftermath of the war. Conversely, the grandchild can "see" these scenes as he traverses parts of the city where the events occurred. This story illustrates the way trauma from the Third Reich era has been transmitted to future generations. The stories are told from the grandchildren's perspective. Traumatized individuals pass along their memories to their grandchildren in familial settings, who "remember" the stories and images of their grandparents' war and post war experiences. Moreover, the knowledge (memory) of the Holocaust also becomes a source of trauma, both for the grandparents and for the grandchildren, who have only secondhand knowledge of history.

²¹⁶As the term "Enkelgeneration" is quite relative and depends on what one considers the "first generation" I will use a date instead and will consider authors born after 1961 as part of this group.

Scholars studying memory may argue that what Benno's grandfather in *Spielzone* remembers and recounts is not what really happened, that it is impossible to truly recall events in an objective manner. Michael Bernard-Donals argues the following in *Forgetful Memory* (2009):

Memory and forgetfulness are facets of the same phenomenon of understanding: the occurrence of events begins interminably to recede into an inaccessible past at the very moment of occurrence, while the event's passage into language – into any knowledge that we might formulate of the occurrence – makes of the occurrence something (narrative, testimony, history) *other* than the event.²¹⁷

His work discusses mainly the recollection of the traumatic events of the Holocaust for Holocaust survivors. He suggests that the “event ... stands in the way of recollection.”²¹⁸ A number of the wartime generation characters portrayed or referred to in the novels under consideration here experienced the war as a traumatic event. Some of them pass on the trauma of these events in their recollections to their grandchildren. In Dücker's *Himmelskörper* the grandmother also displays an obsession with talking about past events, which she feels victimized her and her family. Traumatic memories are passed to children and grandchildren by way of oral histories and everyday behavior and language.

Dücker was born two years before Franck in 1968. Born and raised in West-Berlin, she studied German, North American Studies and art history. In addition to her work as a writer of poetry, short stories and novels, she has also worked as a journalist and essayist. She wrote six published essays critical of Germany's engagement with its past on the topic of National Socialism, including the way the past is portrayed and the way students are taught about the war and the Holocaust in secondary schools. Dücker explores the way her generation has addressed the subject of National Socialism and how the past continues to affect present generations in Germany. In 2007, in her compilation of non-fictional essays, *Morgen nach Utopia*, Dücker

²¹⁷ Bernard-Donals, *Forgetful Memory*, 3.

²¹⁸ Bernard-Donals, *Forgetful Memory*, 4.

explains that one section of the book is dedicated to historical writings because of her interest in “das Vermächtnis der NS-Zeit, das ‘Nachbeben,’ das diese Ära immer noch oder: zur Zeit verstärkt auslöst.”²¹⁹

Himmelskörper includes a number of the same issues Dückers addresses in her essays. On the surface, the novel appears to be about a young woman, Freia, and her brother, Paul, growing up in Berlin and slowly over the years uncovering their grandparents’ past. Freia’s quest to discover her family “secrets” brings to light the familial sharing, internalizing, and rebelling against memories that all lead back to the Nazi period and post war trauma of *Vertreibung* including the sinking of the *Gustloff* with hundreds of German refugees on board. The novel reveals how memories of trauma are relayed to the grandchildren generation (or omitted) over the course of their childhood and how these memories affect them into their adulthood.

The political radicalization of the 1968 generation differs in its degree of political engagement with the questioning grandchildren in *Himmelskörper*, although many of the same themes are still present. In 2003, the second-generation author, Uwe Timm, published the semi-autobiographical account of his childhood, *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*. In this work, the narrator repeatedly addresses the stereotypical claims of the Vätergeneration, “Das haben wir nicht gewußt” alongside their tales of the war and its aftermath. The first person narrator reasons that this rhetoric allowed this generation an escape from their own guilt, rather than having to take personal responsibility: “Das waren die alltäglichen Geschichten, die nach dem Krieg erzählt wurden, in den Betrieben, den Kneipen, zu Hause ... so wurde das Geschehene und mit ihm die Schuld kleingemahlen.”²²⁰ In Dückers’ *Himmelskörper*, the narrator, Freia, recounts similar observations of her grandparents’ behavior. There are a number of parallels in the

²¹⁹ Dückers, *Morgen nach Utopia*, 9.

²²⁰ Timm, *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*, 131-133.

portrayal of her grandparents and Uwe Timm's parents. However, while Freia and her brother are affected by the conflicting tales of their grandparents, they are more surprised and curious. They do not seem to explicitly judge their grandparents neither for their untrue stories, nor for their continued allegiance to National Socialism, which Freia uncovers after their death. While Timm seems critical of his parents' generation, Freia and Paul seek the truth and are more concerned with how their family legacy affects their lives. More importantly, they explore what how memories of trauma and ideological beliefs have been transmitted to them and play a role in their future as well as their children's future.

Traumatic Memories and Transgenerational Trauma

Richard McNally, explores the relationship between memory and trauma in his study *Remembering Trauma*. He reports on one study that found patients suffering from PTSD, although they did not have any personal memory of the traumatic event that caused their disorder. Instead, their trauma stemmed from reading about the event or seeing images of it. McNally concludes that "knowledge prompts their intrusive thoughts, nightmares and psychophysiological reactivity. Even though they cannot literally *remember* their trauma, they *know* what happened. They suffer from 'false' memory of trauma that corresponds to a genuine event."²²¹ In the examples of this study, patients had experienced an event which they could not recall or for which they were unconscious. They also experienced trauma from elements of the event that they did not play a part in. Although the grandchildren in the literary works I examine here did not experience any of the traumatic events of the war and post-war period, I believe McNally's study reaffirms the complicated nature of *learned* memories and their ability to lead to trauma regardless of firsthand experience. Along this vein, I explore how authors portray

²²¹ McNally, *Remembering Trauma*, 123.

learned memories, knowledge of trauma as a kind of trauma itself. My close reading of contemporary authors' recent novels and short stories, with particular emphasis on Tanja Dückers' works, shows how authors are bringing intergenerational effects of trauma to light in their fictional accounts by illustrating how grandchildren are influenced by trauma *inherited* from their grandparents. These authors have constructed characters whose actions and behavior illustrate contemporary German society's relationship to Germany's dark past as the authors address memory and its effects. My analysis will show that knowledge and memory (of knowledge) is portrayed as the root cause of trauma. I have identified three main sources of trauma in Dückers' novels: knowledge of an internalization of traumatic wartime suffering experienced by the grandparent generation, realization of the grandchildren of the true nature of their grandparent's continued adherence to Nazi ideology, and lack of knowledge, or silence, engulfing certain details or memories.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has been identified in response to war trauma and similarly imminent life threatening experiences. However, recent research (post 1990) has identified additional aspects of the disorder. One such diagnosis is *complex PTSD*, which is characterized by

- Impairment of affective regulation
- Chronic self-destructive behavior
- Amnestic and dissociative episodes
- Alterations in relationship to the self
- Distorted relationship to others
- Somatization
- Loss of sustaining beliefs²²²

Complex PTSD may stem from "extensive experience of domestic violence (interpersonal trauma)."²²³ Chronic stress is also included in the literature among the possible causes of

²²² Johnson, *Therapist's Guide to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Intervention*, 15.

²²³ Johnson, *Therapist's Guide to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Intervention*, 14.

complex PTSD symptoms. In my analysis, I will examine to what extent the narrator portrays characters in *Himmelskörper* as suffering from symptoms akin to PTSD symptoms allowing for a clearer understanding how trauma and its long-term effects are depicted. Both the children's mother (the second generation) and to a lesser degree, the children themselves (the third generation), exhibit signs of *inherited* trauma. The "interpersonal trauma" in the novel is not "obvious" domestic violence towards the children, but rather recurring subtle and nuanced experiences that are traumatic over time. For example, the grandparent's recurring stories of memories of their imminent threat of death during their flight westward at the end of the war coupled with the tension between grandparents and parents and memories "transmitted" through the media may all be constant, chronic stressors.

Studies on the way the brain forms and processes memories, specifically episodic memories, help to understand my analysis of transgenerational trauma in the novel. As memories of events are encoded in the brain, only a small portion of the event can be retrieved at a later date. People recounting an event use other available information to fill in the gaps. This information stems from what a person assumes happened, memory pieces from other similar events and general facts.²²⁴ In addition, a person may include details or experiences in these memories that did not occur, but which the person assumes are likely. John Ratey M. D. points out that constructed memories are common and that almost all adults have "false" memories, in particular of childhood events.²²⁵ Furthermore, as Allen Young points out in his article on "PTSD of the Virtual Kind," each attempt at recall is essentially the creation of a narrative of the event, a new "draft." In this article as well as in a number of his other books, Young remains skeptical of the growing numbers of PTSD cases including a number of new kinds of PTSD,

²²⁴ Kosslyn and Rosenberg, *Psychology: The Brain, the Person, the World*, 275.

²²⁵ Ratey, *A User's Guide to the Brain ...*, 182.

such as complex PTSD discussed above. Young explains that traumatic memory is influenced by the individual's "current mental state, emotional state, priorities, and intentions."²²⁶ The episodic memory therefore is easily changed from moment to moment.²²⁷ Young refers to this kind of memory work as mimicry consisting of factitious or fictitious, attributed and belated memories. Additionally, scholars have identified an important connection between memory development and a person's belief system. On the one hand, beliefs are shaped by memories and as Howard Eichenbaum and J. Alexander Bodkin discuss, a person's beliefs rooted in memories may be difficult to change despite new information from future experience.²²⁸ On the other hand, Katherine Nelson and Sissela Bok point out that memories are transformed by the very act of "remembering" and by a person's current beliefs.²²⁹

In Dückers' novel *Himmelskörper*, to some extent all of these aspects of memories play a role in the family's victimization narrative in relationship to trauma, experienced or "transmitted." In essence, I argue, the narrator portrays little difference between whether trauma is *remembered* through personal experience or through learned means. Young's discussion of traumatic memory helps to see how this is possible. When an individual constructs a memory using factitious memories, he or she believes the memories to be true. These memories may be based on "imagined or borrowed autobiographical events." By contrast, an individual remembering using fictitious memories has purposely invented the memories, but to such an extent that the memories become a part of the person's life and he or she has a "psychological identification with a fabricated past." An attributed memory first starts with a physical or psychiatric symptom, which is later attributed to a particular event in the person's life and seen

²²⁶ Young, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder of the Virtual Kind ...," 24.

²²⁷ Rately also points out that a memory is different each time it is remembered and that the act of recall is the actual formation of the memory. The memory is thereby influenced by a person's state of mind at the time of recall (186).

²²⁸ Schacter, "Introduction" Memory, *Brain, and Belief*, 6.

²²⁹ Schacter, "Introduction" Memory, *Brain, and Belief*, 8, 9.

as the cause of the person's distress. Belated memory takes this further and attributes negative feelings (trauma) to the event experienced which the person did not necessarily feel at the time of the experience.²³⁰ In *Himmelskörper*, the grandmother best illustrates this process of adding or changing details in the narration of past events. Over time, the grandmother shares her constructed memories with such personal conviction that she likely believes them to be true.

The trauma affecting the protagonists in Franck's and Dücker's novels is not personally experienced by them. The trauma is experienced through stories, visualizing the continuing effects of suffering on people they are close to (their grandparents and other family members of the wartime generation) and is cemented as well as disturbed by historical knowledge gained about Germany's past. Scholars have identified the potential for experiences of trauma to cause long-lasting and often unrecognized psychological damage. Rainer Traub reports in a Spiegel-Buch on the effects of wartime trauma on children growing up during the Second World War, which are finally being studied in Germany. His claim that only a small number of children escaped traumatic experiences may seem far-reaching, but is expected. However, Traub also reports on research that is even more pertinent to my examination, when he presents evidence that in some cases "unerkannte Traumatisierungen an die nächste Generation weitergegeben werden."²³¹ The case study in the article is of a woman of the 1968 generation directly affected both physically and psychologically by her parents' fears of war. Traub claims scholars believe this is not an isolated incident. Although Traub articulates *inherited* trauma through direct experiences with the wartime generations, literature shows additional, more nuanced ways to *inherit* historical trauma through different forms of *memory*.

²³⁰ Young, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder of the Virtual Kind ...," 24.

²³¹ Traub, "Die gebrannten Kinder," 239.

In many contemporary novels, the trauma of the war becomes a transgenerational problem. In her 2009 article, “Familial Legacies of Nazi Perpetration,” the literary scholar Susanne Luhmann examined autobiographical works written by direct descendants of known Nazi perpetrators such as Albert Speer and Hans Ludin. She analyses the writers’ attempts to “resolve the contradictory forces of family loyalty and loving attachments, on the one hand, with the historical knowledge of the perpetrators’ deeds on the other hand.”²³² Luhmann refers to “inherited memories” and argues that these memories have become part of the descendants’ identities.²³³ Dücker’s novel *Himmelskörper* seems to contain some of the same elements Luhmann investigated as a granddaughter, Freia, the protagonist, traces family legacy and makes discoveries about her grandparent’s culpability during the Third Reich. In Dücker’s two novels discussed here, the emphasis is on “inherited memories” of war and post war trauma the grandparents experienced and relate within their families. Freia is somewhat affected by the eventual knowledge of her grandparent’s anti-Semitism and status as Nazi party members as well as the realization of their continued allegiance to Nazi ideology. Unlike in accounts of descendants of Nazi criminals, which Luhmann examined, in *Himmelskörper*, no memories of the parent’s or grandparent’s actions against Nazi victims are passed down. Ironically, the family is held responsible for the death of another German family rather than for any Nazi victims. The protagonist’s mother is negatively affected by the memory of her parents’ Nazi past that indirectly caused the death of a mainstream German family. She remains silent about her parents’ guilt due to her own feelings of shame and guilt. I argue that Dücker’s novels bring to light the way “remembered” events may be passed down and become part of the memories of future generations. On the one hand, future generations have no “real” memory of the traumatic past

²³² Luhmann, "Gender and the Generations of Difficult Knowledge," 175.

²³³ Luhmann, "Gender and the Generations of Difficult Knowledge," 179.

events, but on the other hand, they are nevertheless negatively impacted by the “memory” of the experienced trauma of their family.

In *Spielzone*, the grandfather “transmits” his wartime trauma to his grandson, Benno by telling him stories and by sharing his general perspective on everyday events, which are colored by his traumatic experiences. For example, when Benno was a child, he was hospitalized after being run over by a truck and his grandfather visited him “und berichtete unermüdlich in seiner heiseren und rauhen Stimme von den Zuständen in den Lazaretten damals” (S 170). Shortly after Benno turns eighteen, he experiences flash backs from listening to his grandfather’s stories:

Dann hat Großvater, der den Krieg in Berlin miterlebte, Benno erzählt, daß eines der berühmtesten Krankenhäuser, die Charite, damals in Trümmern lag und Tausende dort aufbewahrter mißgestalteter Menschen und Menschenteile in den Straßen bis Unter die Linden zu finden waren. Benno, der schon damals mit Großvaters einzigem Gesprächsthema, Kriegsgeschichten, übersättigt war, sah diese Szene, wie Großvater sie mit seiner Liebe zum Detail geschildert hatte, immer wieder vor sich, nachts, wenn er einzuschlafen versuchte. (S 168).

Benno is portrayed early in the novel as mentally unstable. Eventually, he breaks into a research hospital and steals the body of his baby twin brother preserved in a jar and takes him to the Tiergarten. This scene in *Spielzone* underscores how grandparent memories of being victims and ancestral wartime suffering can affect future generation, especially grandchildren as the memories become part of their psyche.

The grandparents in *Himmelskörper*, especially the grandmother, compulsively recite the story of their horrific experiences during and immediately after the war while fleeing to the West. The grandchildren listen to these tales during their grandparents’ frequent visits. One scene involves the grandparents once again telling the story of boarding a small ship instead of the *Gustloff*, which sank from enemy torpedoes:

Paul und ich nickten. Diese Geschichte war beängstigend. Immer, wenn wir sie hörten, starrte ich meine Großmutter an, sah auf ihr faltiges Gesicht, ihre runzligen Hände, als

hätte sich das Alter in ihrem Körper eingefressen wie die Granatsplitter in die Kupferteller [des Schiffes Gustloff] (H 142).

The narrator makes it clear the stories have an effect on the listening children. While the grandfather explains that the bulkheads hold back the water in a large ship and save many lives while sacrificing the lives of a few, “Paul schüttelte sich. Er hob vorsichtig den Kopf und blickte um sich, als würde er eine unmittelbare Gefahr wittern” (H 143). There are also instances in daily life in which the grandparents behave as affected by the trauma they experienced alluding to their suffering. For example, in response to the father’s playful handling of the children’s snacks (throwing them across the room), the grandmother harshly reminds him and the children “so was war mal kostbar” passing on the value associated with food and alluding to a time of hunger (H 53).

The necessity to “read between the lines” becomes a driving theme as Freia seeks to understand her grandmother’s stories that she has heard so often and could retell as her own experiences. At the beginning of the novel, Freia becomes interested in her family’s “secrets” due to her pregnancy: “Es gibt so viel Ungeklärtes in unserer Familie, das mir plötzlich keine Ruhe mehr läßt” (H 26). She ponders at the source of her renewed interest in family affairs at this point in her pregnancy and wonders if it is “ein unbewußter Drang zu wissen, in was für einen Zusammenhang ... ich da mein Kind setze” (H 26).

Growing up and starting families of their own may indeed cause the third generation to reflect on history as a source of their selves, their identity. The connection between identity and memory will be discussed further in chapter two. She looks for what is unsaid and seems to find it in her grandparent’s behavior and passing remarks, rather than their narration. The grandmother enjoys combing and braiding her granddaughter’s long hair (until Freia cuts her hair) and the grandfather reveals his prejudicial attitudes in his comments about his bee colony.

The grandmother watching her granddaughter's hair being braided remarks: "Das erinnert mich an früher" (H 62). Presumably, the grandmother feels nostalgic about braids as a symbol of wholesomeness during the Third Reich. These hair rituals become a source of sharing memories. "meine Zöpfe brachten Jo dazu, von früher zu erzählen" (H 62). She shares trauma stories from when she knew a young girl her age, who had lost her father and was traumatized (H 63). After Freia cuts her hair, in rebellion, she remembers, "Paul und ich trauerten den aufregenden Geschichten nach, die wir jetzt leider nicht mehr zu hören bekamen" (H 67). Similar to Nelly's children in *Lagerfeuer*, Paul and Freia are curious to learn about their parents' and grandparents' experiences.

In her work, *haunting legacies*, Gabriele Schwab, includes an autobiographical component to her literary analysis of fictional texts. She relays a personal experience with transgenerational trauma. Born after the war, she listened to her mother "tell the same story over and over" of bombs falling on the city and her brother's death in a fire. Schwab says "I carry it [the image] inside like a ghostly presence. Sometimes I think that my mother went insane that day. She was never able to cope with the trauma of the war ..."²³⁴ As a result of her mother's wartime experiences, Schwab was witness to her "erratic behavior, her unpredictable mood swings ..."²³⁵ With this personal example, Schwab provides some insight into the transmission of trauma simply by living with affected family members. In *Himmelskörper*, Freia's mother is similarly affected by the trauma of war and her own survivor guilt. She exhibits "unnatural" behavior that the children notice, such as staring out the window, oblivious to the rest of the family. Moreover, the grandmother, affected by her loss in the war, "transmits" her trauma through repetition of stories that are internalized by the children.

²³⁴ Schwab, *haunting legacies*, 85, 86.

²³⁵ Schwab, *haunting legacies*, 86.

The compilation work, *Stadt, Land, Krieg* (2004), which Dückers edited along with another third generation author, Verena Carl, contains a number of short stories that evidence passed on trauma. In the foreword, Dückers and Carl explain how the generation born after 1960 has discovered that although they seem far removed from the historical past of the war and the Holocaust, memories passed down in familial circles have affected them as well.

Die untergründigen Erschütterungen vergangener Erlebnisse und Verbrechen machen sich Jahrzehnte nach dem Ende des zweiten Weltkriegs und der NS-Zeit immer noch in gebrochenen Schicksalen einzelner, in innerfamiliärem Schweigen oder gestörtem öffentlichen Diskurs bemerkbar. Während sich die Eltern mit der Schuld oder Verstrickung ihrer Väter und Mütter und eigenen Kriegserlebnissen auseinandersetzen mußten, bemerken die heute 30- bis 40jährigen zunehmend, daß selbst an sie all diese Erfahrungen weitergegeben wurden.²³⁶

In many of the stories, what has been passed down is a haunting silence. In Tanja Langer's short story "Ruf und Gegenruf," a young woman is haunted by her mother's eccentric behavior and eventual disappearance. Her mother experienced the Third Reich as a young child and after finding a photo of her mother with another young girl, the woman imagines that her mother was traumatized by her best friend's deportation. At the end of the story, the woman expresses, "Ich möchte so gerne eine Antwort."²³⁷ In this and other short stories in this collection, the trauma consists in not knowing. The narrator combines the unknown with the acquired historical knowledge of Germany's past and constructs a traumatized childhood for her mother, because the daughter herself feels traumatized by the loss of her mother. In this case, the woman has inherited trauma, but attempts to place it into a historical context. While her sister, Anke, attempts to find a medical answer and her father is simply at a loss, she explains away her mother's actions using history.

²³⁶ Dückers, *Stadt, Land, Krieg*, inside Front Cover.

²³⁷ Langer, "Ruf und Gegenruf," 38.

Although contemporary literature, such as Dückers' and Frank's novels, constructs traumatized characters, many other contemporary writers portray grandchildren unaffected by or even disinterested in their families traumatic accounts. For example, Sophia, in Judith Hermann's short story by the same title in *Sommerhaus, später*, seems traumatized as she tells the story of her grandmother's horrific demise²³⁸ to a character unknown to the reader. However, her grandmother's "Kriegsgeschichte, Russen schon vor Berlin und meine Grossmutter mit den Kindern im Zug und auf der Flucht" hardly seems to affect the narrator emotionally.²³⁹ The key reason is probably the grandmother's own attitude toward the events and her abusive nature towards her children and grandchildren.²⁴⁰

In my opinion, transgenerational trauma does not only stem from the content of traumatic stories, but also from the manner in which the story is told. Feelings of fear and suffering may be transmitted to a person's family members by the way events of the past are treated. Rather than simply knowledge of the past, future generations also retain the memory of the narration. The dominating memory includes the image and tone of voice of the narrator, be it the parent or grandparent relating the story, especially when the same story is told over successive years. All these events will combine in the listener's mind to one impression.

If trauma can be transmitted and if past trauma can affect future generations, then the way the novel constructs trauma transmitted through memory must be examined. Significantly, the narration involving Paul and Freia's experiences with their grandparents in *Himmelskörper* is told by way of memory. First, the grandparents "remember" their plight and tell their stories to their families. Secondly, however, Freia, the first person narrator, looks back and reconstructs

²³⁸ At the end of the short story, the grandmother sets herself on fire.

²³⁹ Hermann, *Sommerhaus...*, 91.

²⁴⁰ Throughout the short story, she is negatively portrayed as she lashes out at her children, as they try to assist her or while they were innocent victims of her cruelty during their childhood.

her quest interweaving it with additional excursions into her childhood. She “remembers” and uses memory to recall events. In her 2005 book on memory, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit ...*, Aleida Assmann explains that “die Grenzen zwischen dem selbst Erlebten und dem nur Gehörten und identifikatorisch Nachempfundenen sind dabei [bei dem individuellen Gedächtnis] nicht immer leicht zu ziehen.”²⁴¹ Recent literary works make the fluid boundaries between imagination and memories more evident. The grandmother claims to report her actual experiences during and after the war. However, the mother, who was five at the end of the war, habitually reads historical accounts and interrupts the grandmother’s narratives with *details* she gleans from history texts. These details, which she believes are historically verifiable facts, are often in conflict with her parents’ accounts. As Assmann describes in her study on memory and history, the grandmother has likely included particulars heard from others into her own narrative, reiterating these as her own personal (and therefore true) experiences.

Another contemporary German novelist, Martina Hefter, also thematizes memory in her novel *Zurück auf Los* as her narrator incorporates “real” and “imagined” memories of the past. The novel is set in one 25-hour period. For the most part the storyline involves the protagonist watching the front desk at her mother’s hotel and relaying her recollections of past events. The novel focuses on how memory functions. While some of the events the protagonist contemplates remembering are mundane everyday occurrences, she also spends time deliberately constructing or inventing past events. In these episodes, she does not change her language or style leaving it up to the reader to determine which are the actual past occurrences. Hefter calls into question the validity of memory, without claiming that accurate or real remembering is important. She advocates a different kind of remembering – including claiming “memories” of others as one’s own. This is especially true when it comes to the character’s identity or family heritage. Unlike

²⁴¹ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit ...*, 33-34.

Dückers, she does not retell her grandmother's war trauma though she does allude to it. She relays her grandmother's occasionally violent tendencies and how these may stem from past trauma:

Der Schreck, von dem die Großmutter Zeit ihres Lebens befallen sein muß, hat sich auf ihrem Gesicht nicht gespiegelt. Vielmehr ist er im Versenken der Großmutter in das Hotelfach zu spüren gewesen, noch mehr in den gelegentlichen Ausbrüchen aus dem Versenken ...²⁴²

What is unique about Hefter's novel is the way the narrator asserts on the one hand that she cannot remember anything about her grandmother's vacations in Quasow and on the other hand spends much of the novel telling the reader what her grandmother did during her time in Quasow. It is clear on several occasions in the novel that she invents *memories* and often she makes this obvious by questioning her own *memories*.

A number of novels question the transmission of memories, including the novels and short stories by Katja Behrens, a German Jewish second generation author. In their introduction to the anthology *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Germany Today*, Leslie Morris and Karen Remmler explain that Katja Behrens' work often deals with "indeterminacy of place and identity in the post Shoa landscape."²⁴³ Specifically her short story "Arthur Mayer oder das Schweigen" "not only suggests the impossibility of knowledge of the past or its narratability but also insists on the protean quality of this knowledge."²⁴⁴ Similarly to Hefter's treatment of memory, Behrens shows how memory may result in trauma, but it does not "replicate" the exact events of the past. In another short story, "Salomo und die Anderen," Behrens writes about going to Israel, where Germany is simply referred to as "shama, which means simply there." The narrator explains that avoiding the name of the country avoids the memory and allows Germany to be a

²⁴² Hefter, *Zurück auf Los*, 63.

²⁴³ Morris and Remmler, Introduction, 11.

²⁴⁴ Morris and Remmler, Introduction, 11.

place of *fiction*.²⁴⁵ In this passage, the trauma of the past reveals itself in language. As I will discuss later, Dücker also explores the theme of traumatic memory transmission into language, however, in contrast, suggesting it as a therapeutic activity. Behrens's texts also focus on identity and the contribution of memory to identity. This process will be discussed further in the next chapter on Franck's *Die Mittagsfrau*.

In Hefter's novel, telling stories about the past becomes such a habit that the line, "Das Telefon klingelt" is followed by "Das Telefon klingelt wirklich" as if to indicate that the narrator is lost in her thoughts and the phone startles her. It also indicates that here is an event that is actually and truthfully occurring in contrast to the past events being partially invented.²⁴⁶ The narrator also recounts events that are occurring in the present, but that she is not a part of, such as when she imagines her boyfriend and what he is doing in her home during her time at work. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator reflects: "... wieder ziemlich viele Erinnerungen für eine Nacht" and justifies her remembering: "Aber solange man sich erinnert ist man noch am Leben" without distinguishing what in her memories were real or which were imagined events.²⁴⁷ To emphasize the imagined nature of her past memories, she also imagines future events or what is presently occurring somewhere else in the same way she remembers the past.

The complexity of distinguishing between *real* memories and *imagined* memories also plays a role in Dücker's *Himmelskörper* in the *official* versus *family* memory of the past. The novel explores the difference between the way students learn about historical events in secondary school and the media versus the way they hear the events described within the family. The images shown in school seem to be from a "different world" than the life the children experience

²⁴⁵ Behrens, "Solomon and the Others," 79.

²⁴⁶ Hefter, *Zurück auf Los*, 80.

²⁴⁷ Hefter, *Zurück auf Los*, 118.

at home (H 92).²⁴⁸ “Diese Diagramme, Daten und Fakten schienen in keinem Zusammenhang zu den Gesichtern um uns herum zu stehen” (H 94). The children are confused when at one point they are told “Freia, wir waren keine Nazis” in response to a direct question and yet learn in school material that does not fit into the grandparent’s stories (H 126). These passages reveal the fluidity of the term “Nazis,” the definition of which changes depending on the character’s perspective. In school, historical events seem removed from the children’s realities, namely because they have heard their grandfather’s stories about the war and how he lost his leg in Russia and the grandmother’s narrative of the family’s harrowing escape westward. The family stories are not the same as formal historical accounts. This discrepancy is portrayed as yet another point of confusion for Freia. Just as school instruction does not seem applicable to her grandparents, the knowledge she acquires about them later in life, does not fit either:

Wie konnte ich die vielleicht gelegentlich etwas barsche Großmutter, die, seit ich denken konnte, alle Ferien mit uns verbracht hatte, mit der Frau in Verbindung bringen, die Göring eine Gratulationskarte schrieb und die die Gesichter ihrer Mitmenschen auf edle oder unedle Züge untersucht hatte ... (H 286).

Learning more about Nazi society allows her to recognize her grandparents’ actions, behaviors, and personalities as remnants of Nazi ideology. In “Topographie eines Familiengedächtnisses ...” Norman Ächtler argues that the mother develops a “Gegengedächtnis,” with her critical stance towards her parent’s version of the truth and her attempts to correct them. He locates Freia’s recognition of the past and the beginnings of her critical reflection in Poland as a memory sphere, one of the main “Erinnerungsräume” of the novel.

In der Konfrontation mit dem Erinnerungsort der großelterlichen Wohnung kommen [Freia] ... erste Zweifel an der Kohärenz der eigenen Familiengeschichte. Zu einer

²⁴⁸ For more on the inability of school instruction to influence family memory, see Bill Niven’s *Germans as Victims* and Harald Welzer’s study *Opa war kein Nazi*. Bialer and Kersting, who examine “Collective Identity in German-Israeli Exchange,” additionally argue that Welzer’s study shows hardly any correlation between information from school and home because, unlike in Israel, “family stories” are not included in “school curriculum” (61).

Erschütterung des innerfamiliär kummunizierten Welt- und Geschichtsbildes führt jedoch erstmals die Reise nach Warschau...²⁴⁹

He argues that Freia merely occupies the role of “Protokollantin ... und nimmt in Bezug auf die Familiengespräche eine neutral Beobachterposition ein” until her trip to Poland.²⁵⁰ Ächtler describes Freia and Paul as generally unaffected by the knowledge they gain in school or their grandparents’ stories. He disregards the many moments in the novel which illustrate the strong influence the memory of the past has on the children. Jens Stüben, in his 2004 article “Erfragte Erinnerung – entsorgte Familiengeschichte ..,” likewise focuses on the generational differences and the process by which the characters in *Himmelskörper* remember.²⁵¹ However, Stüben also points to the way the novel portrays the continuing influence of history in family circles and points to Dückers’ intent to provide a new and differentiated perspective on the debate of *Germans as Victims*.²⁵² Ächtler and Stüben both interpret Freia’s (and thereby Dückers’) position as that of a more or less objective or “nüchtern” perspective, although Stüben praises Dückers for her contribution, while Ächtler remains critical of her “sinnliche” approach to the past.

As I mentioned earlier, scholars point to the difference between historical representation in familial circle and in the official school curriculum. However, in *Himmelskörper*, while the Holocaust seems unfathomable to Freia, the knowledge about it affects her in other ways and causes her to ask questions at home. The narrator identifies the time when she learned about the Third Reich in school as a difficult period in her adolescence. “Es war die Zeit wo ich keine Lust mehr hatte .. irgend etwas zu tun, das nicht gerade meiner Laune entsprach. Ich schmierte ‘Null Future’ ... Mischung aus Null Bock und No Future ... an meine Zimmerwand” (H 28). In this respect, acquiring knowledge is portrayed as a “traumatic event” in and of itself. Laurel Cohen-

²⁴⁹ Ächtler, “Topographie eines Familiengedächtnisses ...,” 287.

²⁵⁰ Ächtler, “Topographie eines Familiengedächtnisses ...,” 278, 289.

²⁵¹ Stüben, “Erfragte Erinnerung – entsorgte Familiengeschichte ..,” 174.

²⁵² Stüben, “Erfragte Erinnerung – entsorgte Familiengeschichte ..,” 186.

Pfister argues that *Himmelskörper* illustrates the way the younger generation of authors (born after 1960) in 21st-century literature views history from a personal standpoint.²⁵³ Although both Cohen-Pfister and Dücker discuss the temporal distance, which provides an *emotional* distance, I argue that a close reading of the way the past affects the third generation children in *Himmelskörper* shows that they are emotionally linked to their family's history.

The grandmother's fascination with her granddaughter's long, braided hair and with Nordic myths are reminiscent of Nazi ideology. Similarly, the grandfather's behavior and passing remarks reveal his dormant anti-Semitism more so than his accounts of the past. One day the grandfather, who is keeping bees, compares Jews to a certain type of bee that has no home and uses other bees' resources rather than working for the common good.

Für mich sind die Kuckucksbienen die Juden im Bienenvolk. Sie bereichern sich an den Grundlagen, die andere Völker geschaffen haben, Nutznießerisch. Berechnend. Aber eine starke Bienenkönigin ... läßt die Kuckucksbienen natürlich verjagen (H 187).

The narrator is surprised to hear him speak that way, because "so hatte Großvater noch nie gesprochen, bei keinem der Kamin-Abende" (H 187). These evenings with the family around the fire had been the times when stories were told about the past, his actions in the war, being wounded, and the family fleeing West on the *Gustloff*.

The grandmother's stories are told as if they were mythical tales. Assmann explains that "im kollektiven Gedächtnis werden mentale Bilder zu Ikonen und Erzählungen zu Mythen ..., die von Generation zu Generation weitergegeben werden." She explores how myths involve "Verfälschung von historischen Tatsachen," contribute to "dem gewünschten Selbstbild der Gruppe," and play a role in identity formation.²⁵⁴ In *Himmelskörper*, the story of the *Gustloff* ship functions to frame the narrative. The grandmother and the mother tell different versions of

²⁵³ Cohen-Pfister, "An Aesthetic of Memory ...," 131.

²⁵⁴ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit* ..., 40.

this story from a personal and a historical point of view respectively. However, the grandmother's version remains dominant. Sabine Kallweit investigates the divergence of collective memory and family memory in her article "Cirrus Perucidus und die Einsamkeit zwischen zwei Generationen: Tanja Dücker's Roman Himmelskörper als Beitrag zum kulturellen Gedächtnis" in Andrea Bartl's 2005 collection on contemporary German literature, *Verbalträume*. Kallweit identifies that *Himmelskörper* "bildet ...einen literarischen Kommentar zu der ... Diskrepanz zwischen den schulisch vermittelten Inhalten des kulturellen Gedächtnisses und dem familiär tradierten Geschichtsbewusstsein."²⁵⁵ During the novel, Freia is searching for a particular cloud, which she finally spots during a trip to Poland with her mother. At the end of the novel there is now a growing interest in the cloud as "Geschichtsspeicher." Kallweit compares the cloud to the inability to communicate and concludes that it is representative of the "vielseitigen Austausch zwischen dem subjektiven Innenraumes kommunikativen Gedächtnisses und dem objektiven Außenraum des kulturellen."²⁵⁶ Kallweit welcomes the increased communication and public discourse between the generation that experienced the war and the third generation, but cautions that the second generation is being left out in the debate similarly to the way the mother's, Renate's, knowledge and feelings are dismissed in the novel. While I agree that a number of characters in *Himmelskörper* ignore or disagree with Renate's views, the way that the narrator reflects on her mother and her suicide makes it clear that the third generation respects her insights.

While I understand that the increased communication in the novel is a positive sign, I also point to the fact that by the end of the novel Freia may have made discoveries about her grandparents, and learned more about their involvement through the artifacts they left behind,

²⁵⁵ Kallweit, "Cirrus Perucidus und die Einsamkeit zwischen zwei Generationen ...," 183.

²⁵⁶ Kallweit, "Cirrus Perucidus und die Einsamkeit zwischen zwei Generationen ...," 185, 186.

but “real” answers from them or her mother continue to be left unanswered. All the characters with any first-hand knowledge, grandparents and the mother, are gone. Moreover, the trauma continues to haunt the grandchildren into adulthood as Paul articulates at the end of the novel:

Ich bin so weit fortgegangen von zu Hause ... Und trotzdem: An all das, was passiert ist, denke ich täglich... Alles was ich male, steht unter diesem Bann oder Fluch. ... Wir sind glücklich, aber trotzdem spüre ich den Sog der Vergangenheit einfach immer. (H 316)

Interestingly, Paul believes the “solution” to his problem, the way to “forget” or at least to rid himself of the everyday presence of the past is to record it, perhaps to write a book. With the plan to write a book titled *Himmelskörper*, the novel ends. Questions remain as to why the children were so affected by their grandparents and how writing about their childhood will help them in adulthood, how translating memories into language will be beneficial.²⁵⁷ In *History in Transit*, LaCapra also discusses the transmission of history, specifically “traumatic memory” and points to the possibility of “working-through” difficult memories by narration.²⁵⁸ Aleida Assmann explains that “kollektive Gedächtnis” uses media and traditions to form “eine gemeinsame Erinnerung” without relying on personal or familial memory transmission.²⁵⁹ In *Himmelskörper* conflict arises as “official” or collective memory collides with familial traditions and interpretation of history.

Postmemory Discourse and Nationalism

Günter Grass also wrote a novel which thematizes history and memory and in which the sinking of the *Gustloff* ship plays a central role. *Im Krebsgang* (2002) addresses the dichotomy of

²⁵⁷ Similarly, in Vertlib’s 2003 novel *Letzter Wunsch*, writing is suggested as a “solution,” albeit an imperfect one.

²⁵⁸ LaCapra, *History in Transit*, 122. With his views, LaCapra stands in contrast to Theodor Adorno and Cathy Caruth’s theories on memory testimony since they suggest either the impossibility of sharing memories (resulting in the loss of the event) or the narration as “betrayal” of the victims.

²⁵⁹ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit...*, 35.

collective (official memory) and familial memory of the Second World War. The grandmother represents family memory, while her son, a member of the second generation, born in 1945, represents official memory. The grandmother passes her National Socialist views onto her grandson, which eventually leads to murder. In her article on Grass' novel, Katharina Hall discusses that Grass intended to shed light on the "memory taboo" about German suffering prevalent in Germany, a claim reiterated in a speech on literature that "breaks the silence." Hall argues that Grass goes against the grain of the dominant memory discourse, both in his famous Danzig trilogy as well as in *Im Krebsgang*, to bring to light controversial issues "whether in relation to the horrors of concentration camps or to the theme of German wartime suffering."²⁶⁰

In her book length study, *Günter Grass's 'Danzig Quintet': Explorations in the Memory and History of the Nazi Era from Die Blechtrommel to Im Krebsgang*, Hall explores how Grass' novels, *örtlich betäubt* (1969) and *Im Krebsgang* fit into his „Danzig Trilogy.“ She argues that the latter two texts do not present a break but rather show a continuity of ideas Grass started writing about in the late 1950s. Viewing the novels as a "quintet" illustrates that Grass is more inclusive in covering and uncovering Germany's memory discourse. She argues that his claims about the memory taboo are "misguided" and "exaggerated"²⁶¹ although the way Tulla, the grandmother, is portrayed, "demonstrates Grass's continued awareness of the complexities involved in remembering the National Socialist past."²⁶² Hall also discusses the transmittal of memories, quoting the grandmother's insistence that her son should write about the *Gustloff* event.²⁶³ As Hall demonstrates, each of the narrators in the five texts, including Paul in *Im Krebsgang*, unsuccessfully attempt to communicate events from the past.

²⁶⁰ Hall, "Why Only Now? ...," 136.

²⁶¹ Hall, "Why Only Now? ...," 133.

²⁶² Hall, "Why Only Now? ...," 145.

²⁶³ Hall, "Why Only Now? ...," 140.

As Anne Fuchs illustrates, a comparison of Dückers' *Himmelskörper* and Grass' *Im Krebsgang*, shows vastly different treatments of the same past. The same historical episode appears in the two novels as two distinctly different events. Fuchs examines Dückers' "postmemorial engagement"²⁶⁴ and the relationship between memory and trauma theory. Hirsch describes postmemory as memory "mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation."²⁶⁵ Fuchs compares postmemory to trauma theory. She critiques Cathy Caruth's theory of traumatic history, namely that "history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence."²⁶⁶ Rather than focusing on specific traumatic events transmitted within the family, she hopes to deconstruct the concept of "history as trauma" and illustrate how in Dückers postmemory appears "as an alternative to historical discourse."²⁶⁷ While she commends Grass for presenting "German war trauma without any hint of relativism," she believes that Dückers' novel underscores the third generation's "emotional distance and an increased sense of historical relativism."²⁶⁸

In "The New Right and Postmemory" in *German Memory Contests* (2006) Roger Wood examines how the *New Right* tries to influence German national identity formation. Although Fuchs does not relate Woods' text to Dückers' novel in her article, her claims about Dückers' *Himmelskörper* are particularly harsh when compared to Woods' discussion of the use of aspects of postmemory by Germany's extreme right to advocate for remembering history in such a way as to make it a tool for "a resurgent nationalism."²⁶⁹ Woods uses the same terminology, the

²⁶⁴ Fuchs, *Phantoms of War...*, 45.

²⁶⁵ Cited by Fuchs, *Phantoms of War...*, 47-48. For more on Hirsch's term postmemory, see Arpaci, "National Memory's Schlüsselkinder ...," 107-109.

²⁶⁶ Cited by Fuchs, *Phantoms of War...*, 51.

²⁶⁷ Fuchs, *Phantoms of War...*, 52.

²⁶⁸ Fuchs, *Phantoms of War...*, 53, 54

²⁶⁹ Wood, "On Forgetting and Remembering: The New Right since German Unification," 273, 277

“relativizing” of history,²⁷⁰ in describing the *New Right’s* attempts, as Fuchs uses to analyze the way Dückers presents history. For Fuchs, Dückers’ novel “trivializes” history rather than portraying its trauma. While I agree that Dückers does not present history objectively, objectivity is not the issue in a work of fiction. Her novel provides the reader with insight into the confusion, frustration, and tensions that these grandchildren experience because of their grandparents’ and Germany’s past. She portrays the relationship between public and private history realms as well as transgenerational transmission of trauma rather than seek to downplay the negative aspects of Germany’s past. Grass’ novel also portrays trauma transmitted from a grandparent to a grandchild with devastating consequences. He depicts a disturbed character in Konrad, the son of the narrator, Paul. Paul’s perspective may, as Fuchs claims, provide a more careful continuously self-examining view of history, than Freia’s perspective. In both novels, the grandchildren are traumatized and influenced by their grandparents’ stories. However, Dückers and Grass show opposing effects of transgenerational trauma. While Freia rebels and behaves against the wishes of her mother and grandmother,²⁷¹ Konrad becomes anti-Semitic.

In *Im Krebsgang*, the first person narrator tells his story of “surviving” the sinking of the *Gustloff* ship in his mother’s womb as she boarded another ship that day. His mother continues to recall the tragedy throughout his childhood and urges him later as an adult to write about it, which he did not do until the 1990s. He reasoned: “mochte doch keiner was davon hören, hier im Westen nicht und im Osten schon gar nicht. Die Gustloff und ihre verfluchte Geschichte waren jahrzehntelang tabu, gesamtdeutsch sozusagen. Mutter hörte trotzdem nicht auf ...”²⁷² Grass is more direct with statements about the way Germans treated the past. Much of his novel reads

²⁷⁰ Wood, “On Forgetting and Remembering: The New Right since German Unification,” 278.

²⁷¹ For example, she shaves her head in response to her grandmother’s fascination with long blond braids and her brother Paul is portrayed as feminine and does not become “manly” until after the mother’s suicide.

²⁷² Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 31.

like historical journalism. The first person narrator's son is influenced by his grandmother's stories of survival. The father believes "daß das schwere Schicksal der Großmutter ...auf das Enkelkind ... einerseits prägend, andererseits durch heftig eingebildetes Miterleben verstörend gewirkt hat."²⁷³ The grandchild in this novel, Konrad, reacts to his grandmother's relayed trauma with an increased interest in the events surrounding the sinking ship from which she escaped and develops nationalistic tendencies that cause him to murder another young man who he believes is Jewish. Political fanaticism is portrayed as a consequence of transgenerational trauma as well as the official collective memory discourse's imposed silence on individual trauma experiences of the German mainstream. Aleida Assmann explains that Grass portrays "the limits of understanding and communication from an intergenerational perspective"²⁷⁴ Konrad views his grandmother as a victim and a hero although he studies the Holocaust in school and his parents attempt to convey "accurate" historical knowledge to him. It is evident in Dückers' and Grass' novels that neither formal school instruction nor family history can effectively convey history. However, in *Im Krebsgang* Konrad's actions at the end of the novel are too extreme for the reader to identify with him or with the family. Rather than present a revisionist account, Dückers' characters are more "mainstream" and invite the reader to consider history, memory, and trauma from many perspectives. Dückers presents the transmission of trauma and its effects as more nuanced and shows the continuity of the grandparent's frame of reference.

Family Memory and Collective Guilt as Trauma

The documentary *Harlan: im Schatten von Jud Süß* (2010), directed by Felix Moeller, illustrates the way the past may influence family members in subsequent generations in different ways. The film shows footage of Veit Harlan, the director of the infamous Nazi propaganda film,

²⁷³ Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 194.

²⁷⁴ Assmann, "Limits of Understanding....," 37.

Jud Süß, and his descendants. A few years after the documentary, Thomas Harlan explores his painful relationship with his father and his infamous legacy in a book simply entitled *Veit*. Thomas' trauma is clear in the language he uses to portray his father and the FRG after the war.²⁷⁵ In the documentary, in which Thomas Harlan is interviewed extensively, he also expresses the harshest criticism of all the second and third generation family members. The family tree presented in the documentary is substantial culminating in approximately three main lines of children and grandchildren from Veit Harlan's two marriages. Each line of grandchildren has a different view of Harlan depending on their parents' view. The eldest son, Thomas, born 1929, from Veit Harlan's first marriage, denounces his father in the documentary. He tells the story of a postcard he once received from Poland where his father stated that the Jews were happy to work with him (for *Jud Süß*, Jews from Polish ghettos were used in the scenes, shot in the 1940s). Thomas cannot understand that his father would not face reality, namely that people used in the film would soon be killed. He terms his father's actions "ungeheuerlich." In a documentary on his life, *Wandersplitter*²⁷⁶ Thomas Harlan voices his two main frustrations: his frustration over the fact that his father would not accept responsibility and his view of postwar Germany as "das Vierte Reich." He saw himself surrounded by "einer bis ins Unendliche gehenden Zahl von Mörder."²⁷⁶ Thomas Harlan's children from two different marriages also take a critical stance toward Veit Harlan. Thomas' daughter, Alice, a French woman who did not grow up with her father, saw her grandparents simply as Nazis but was curious to learn more about them and set out on a quest to discover her roots. Veit Harlan's daughter, Susanne Körber, born 1932, converted to Judaism after marrying Claude Jacoby. She committed suicide in 1989. Aside from Thomas, Susanne's daughter, Jessica, was the most traumatized by Veit's legacy and

²⁷⁵ The novel was published posthumously in 2011. Thomas Harlan died October 16, 2010.

²⁷⁶ Hübner, *Wandersplitter*.

had the most negative view of her grandfather. Jessica's paternal grandfather was killed in the Holocaust and she believes Harlan was an Anti-Semite without scruples.²⁷⁷ She blames "Nazi judges" in Germany for the fact that Veit Harlan was acquitted twice in 1949 and 1950 when he was charged with "Beihilfe zur Verfolgung" for his work on *Jud Süß*.²⁷⁸ In contrast, Veit Harlan's two sons from his second marriage, Caspar (born in 1946) and Kristian (born in 1939), defend their father. Unlike Jessica and Alice, Caspar's three daughters, have no feelings of shame or anger toward Harlan. In the documentary, Caspar's daughter, Lena, wonders in response to seeing the movie *Jud Süß* "Wieso ist dieser Film eigentlich so lange verboten worden?" Her feelings may be attributable to her father's beliefs who firmly states "Er ist garantiert kein Nazi gewesen ... auf gar keinen Fall!" Caspar's daughters say that in their time, in the third generation, personal feelings of guilt or shame are not necessary. On the other hand, Alice, Thomas' daughter, feels a genetic sense of guilt and shares with the viewer that she feels her grandfather (and his actions) are a part of her, passed down to her, somehow in her blood. The director, Felix Moeller born 1965, also grapples with his family history. He explains

You don't have to dig deep to find these stories in German families ... The mother of my father was such a fanatical Nazi that, like Magda Goebbels, she committed suicide at the end of the war and used poison to take five of her six children with her. Those dark, unsettling times never leave you alone. My hope is that you learn from our lesson in history.²⁷⁹

This documentary shows a biographical instance of transmission of memory, which Grass and Dückers address in their novels – the way the family's past affects family members' approach toward Germany's history and their view of specific family members. None of Harlan's

²⁷⁷ Veit Harlan's niece, Christiane Kubrick, born 1932, is also critical of her uncle. In 1958, she married the American director Stanley Kubrick, whose parents were secular Jews.

²⁷⁸ Reichel, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland ...*, 132-134. The first acquittal was nullified by the British occupation authorities. The public celebrated Harlan's successes in court. His next film was *Unsterbliche Geliebte* (1950).

²⁷⁹ Rohter, "Nazi Film Still Pains Relatives," C1. Moeller's quotations stems from this NY Times article.

grandchildren grew up with him but they were influenced by their parents' beliefs of their grandfather and by their perspective on the past.

Tanja Langer (born 1962) also thematizes the impact of history on later generations in her novel, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich* (2002). The text tells the story of a woman who uncovers her father's National Socialist past and is haunted by it. The first person narrator is a second generation woman doing research on Dietrich Eckart, an early Nazi supporter born in the mid-19th century and to whom Hitler dedicated the second part of his *Mein Kampf*. The protagonist is obsessed with Eckart's life and wonders how a young man from a well to do family, an artist with a proud upbringing, ultimately becomes an anti-Semitic supporter of National Socialism.²⁸⁰ These ponderings mirror her feelings towards her own parents. On the third page of the novel, the narrator shares that her father "bestreitet jegliche Beinflussung durch das Naziregime" This shows that she has asked her parents about their involvement. Interestingly, the narrator is more concerned with the present, with the way "old" ideas continue to influence or surface in the present, than in her parent's actions, since they were quite young, born in 1927 and 1930.²⁸¹ Essentially her investigation of Eckart is a front for her research into her parents and how her parent's past has influenced her.²⁸² Similarly to *Himmelskörper*, this text conveys the sentiment that uncovering secrets and stopping the silence is ironically a way to put the past behind oneself: "... im Kopf singt eine Stimme: Erinnere dich um zu vergessen."²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 22.

²⁸¹ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 9.

²⁸² It is easier to research an obvious Nazi than to begin to question her own parent's actions: "Ich kann mich in aller Ruhe annähern. Er wird mich nicht eines Besseren belehren können. Wird mich nicht mit Geschenken bestechen, damit ich ein oder zwei Augen zudrücke, und wird mich nicht zwingen zu schweigen, denn er ist tot. Fünfundsechzig Jahre tot" (12).

²⁸³ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 51.

The woman wonders at the irony: “Etwas auflösen, damit es verschwindet? Etwas auftauchen lassen, um es loszuwerden?”²⁸⁴

In the same way the grandmother in *Himmelskörper* is portrayed with a certain tough exterior, the parents in *Morphinist* possess a certain “Prussianness” or harshness in their behavior and attitude toward their daughter.²⁸⁵ While Freia begins to search for the truth during her pregnancy in order to know what she will be passing on to her child in terms of family history, the narrator in *Morphinist* is haunted by the past she “sees” in the present during her pregnancy. “Am Ende meiner Schwangerschaften sehe ich mich umzingelt von der ‘Rechten Gefahr.’” At a theater performance, directed by Tabori, a Jewish director, she sees the potential for violence in society. “Da glaubte ich es zu hören.... Parolen, die Tabori als Juden denunzierten, die ‘Jude raus’ forderten ... Im Füßescharren der Zuschauer ... ahnte ich die Aggression von Menschen, die früher oder später Steine werfen würden.”²⁸⁶ Her inability to stop researching and the way the research affects her makes her transgenerational trauma evident. The structure and the content of the novel are as multifaceted and potentially confusing as the history of Eckart’s life, which the narrator attempts to unearth. The novel depicts the unraveling of the protagonist’s life due to the history and the memories she tries to understand. It portrays German identity as a cause for trauma. The narrator questions where her contemporary society is headed. Her investigations relate continuously back to “mein Vater als Kind im Dritten Reich.”²⁸⁷ Either really or in a dream (the narrator is unsure), she *remembers* her mother’s peculiar remarks about Jews.²⁸⁸ Her obsessive research on Eckart takes on a life of its own: “da kamen sie, die Unholde, die sich hereindrängen, wenn man sie nicht braucht, aber ein Teil in mir verlangt wohl nach ihnen, sonst

²⁸⁴ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 8.

²⁸⁵ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 11 and 107.

²⁸⁶ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 9.

²⁸⁷ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 37.

²⁸⁸ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 43.

kämen sie schließlich nicht, diese Unholdgedanken” that prompt her to forge ahead in her research. She cannot enjoy closeness with her children as her mind drifts frequently: “Ich kann mich gegen die Unholde nicht wehren.”²⁸⁹ Unable to stop the voices, she hopes that she may be able to forget by remembering. Analogous to *Himmelskörper*, the woman, a mother of three small children is disturbed by the memories of her childhood, which she now examines against her knowledge of history acquired while researching Eckart and Nazism. The more she knows about National Socialism, the more traumatized she becomes about her own life. I believe at this point these two novels, *Himmelskörper* and *Morphinist*, converge and present the unified theme of the power of memory and knowledge to traumatize. This trauma stems from knowledge or lack of knowledge, rather than from personal experiences. Additionally, Moeller, Langer and Dückers portray individuals and characters who suffer from their inability to completely understand their family’s involvement in the Nazi period and their family members’ approach to National Socialism after the war.

Seit der Geburt Jakobs kommen diese Erinnerungen an meine Kindheit, meine Jugend wieder. Sträube ich mich gegen sie, überfallen sie mich umso heftiger, vor allem traurige Erlebnisse ... Manchmal erstickt mich die graue Decke meiner Traurigkeit, und manchmal wärmt sie mich ...²⁹⁰

As the narrator in *Morphinist* reads about fervent Nazi ideology and love of country, she begins to find her own German identity traumatic: “Neulich fragt Linda [her young daughter], ob es hier deutsch rieche. Mir schoß Hitze ins Gesicht, ich wußte nicht, was sagen.”²⁹¹ Interestingly, she blends her everyday experiences and memories about her life, her marriage, her childhood, and her children, with her parents and grandfather’s stories (memories) and her research (the historical narrative). It is often unclear to the narrator as well as to the reader what the source of

²⁸⁹ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 45.

²⁹⁰ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 96, 244.

²⁹¹ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 59.

her thoughts are and how accurate they are in reflecting events. At the end of the novel, her father has died and she regrets that she never really knew him and that he never really explained his pain: “wochenlang habe ich geweint, über Gespräche, die wir niemals führten, niemals geführt hatten ...”²⁹² Writing becomes a catharsis for the narrator so that she will not be as silent as her father.²⁹³

On the surface the trauma transmitted in *Himmelskörper* through repetition seems to be the horrific wartime experiences the grandparents and mother endured. These are the “scary” stories to which the children are exposed. However, the unspoken continued family allegiance to National Socialism, which Freia slowly recognizes, represents a different kind of trauma transmission. What becomes a traumatic memory for the children and causes the mother to commit suicide is guilt. A potentially traumatic experience of the post war generations in Germany is the collective guilt, or as Monika Maron puts it in her novel *Pawels Briefe*, “Die Angst von Mördern und Folterknechten abzustammen.” Maron did not have to live with this kind of fear. Rather, she reports, her Jewish grandfather’s horrific fate at the hand of the Nazis allowed her to grow up with “die Geborgenheit der Unschuld.”²⁹⁴ In *Spielzone*, a young woman feels affected by her school-sponsored trip to a concentration camp although her parents admonish her for what they believe is disrespectful behavior. The parents of 14 year old Laura try to get her to stay home and watch a television program about a concentration camp. However, she refuses and reasons, “Ich bin schon zweimal höchstpersönlich in Plötzensee gewesen” (S 20). The parents are portrayed as hypocrites for paying too much attention to external details rather than focusing on what really matters. Laura reports a strong emotional response to her visit to the camp, but her parents worry only about her proper behavior. Laura says: “Ich habe

²⁹² Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 242.

²⁹³ Langer, *Der Morphinist oder Die Barbarin bin ich*, 246.

²⁹⁴ Maron, *Pawels Briefe*, 8

jedesmal Alpträume nachher gehabt, mich hat das überhaupt nicht kaltgelassen, wie Wolf [her father] mir vorwarf, bloß weil ich da drin ‘ne Tüte Chips gegessen habe, was er aus irgendeinem Grund ‘sehr unpassend’ fand“ (S 20, 21). The way the parents are chiefly concerned with their daughter’s proper behavior in respect to the Holocaust and work hard to be anti-Authoritarian reveals their feelings of guilt.

Assmann describes memory as “soziale und kulturelle Konstruktion.”²⁹⁵ She terms the family unit as the main site of remembrance and continuity for the individual. Generally, this “family memory” encompasses three generations, which combines to form a “Generationsidentität.”²⁹⁶ The grandchildren’s personal relationship to their grandparents intensifies the transmission of trauma. In *Toleranz und Konflikt*, Vancea interprets Schlink’s 1995 novel, *Der Vorleser*, as a “Metapher für die deutsche Geschichte und für die ‘traumatische Nähe zu den Tätern’” because it illustrates the struggle between the protagonist’s feelings of love and guilt, collective guilt as well as guilt for loving a perpetrator.²⁹⁷ The protagonist, Michael, is traumatized by the sexual relationship with Hanna, an older woman, who dominates their relationship. As a law student, he discovers years after their affair is over that she is on trial for war crimes she committed as a former concentration camp guard. He suffers throughout his life because of this relationship and has difficulties meshing his collective memory (of German guilt) with his personal memory (of his infatuation). Through his eyes, Hanna is eventually cast as less culpable, because she is convicted in court based on written reports that she could not have written since she was illiterate. However, there is no doubt as to her involvement in the death of the prisoners. Vancea compares the protagonist’s struggle to German collective memory and identity. She claims that “der Roman macht deutlich, wie unterschiedlich sich kollektives

²⁹⁵ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit* ..., 15

²⁹⁶ Assmann *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit* ..., 22, 26

²⁹⁷ Vancea, *Toleranz und Konflikt*, 94.

Gedächtnis und individuelle Erinnerungen aus der Sicht der Opfer, der Täter beziehungsweise der verschiedenen Generationen darstellen können.”²⁹⁸ Vancea examines authors such as Schlink and Grass and many other first and second generation authors and determines that German contemporary literature “atmet den Geist der Toleranz und aufgeklärten Kosmopolitismus ..” and believes that it “strahlt ... ein bedeutendes Toleranzpotential aus”²⁹⁹ However, she fails to examine authors who may be classified as “young” (third generation) German authors. Tanja Dückers, Julia Franck, and Tanja Langer, who focus on the past, contribute to a wider understanding of contemporary Germany’s memory culture.³⁰⁰ In an interview with Charlie Rose, Schlink explains that his novel is about “this entanglement into the guilt of someone whom you love.” According to Schlink, Michael suffers from the realization that one of the most important people in his life is a mass murderer. Schlink explains that the text mirrors the way members of the second generation, his generation, were confronted with the culpability of their parents, relatives, teachers etc.³⁰¹

The protagonists in *Himmelskörper* also struggle with their grandparents’ culpability, in particular because they enjoy a close relationship. The Norwegian psychotherapist, Reidunn Stuedahl, explains the significance of grandparents in her research on contemporary family dynamics. As close relatives, grandchildren in the late 20th century were possibly closer to their grandparents than their parents. Often, parental disagreements lead to closer relationships with grandparents. Stuedahl provides both informational advice and case studies as examples:

Ihre Oma, sagt die 27-jährige Norwegerin Kirsten, versteht alles, was sie ihr erzählt... Mit ihrer Mutter, erklärt sie, habe sie keinen guten Kontakt... Die Oma dagegen sei mit

²⁹⁸ Vancea, *Toleranz und Konflikt*, 95.

²⁹⁹ Vancea, *Toleranz und Konflikt*, 186-187.

³⁰⁰ Although the book was published in 2008, the cited literature does not contain any sources published after 2005, so it is understandable that Julia Franck 2007 *Mittagsfrau* is not included. However, Tanja Dückers 2004 *Himmelskörper* would have provided valuable material.

³⁰¹ Rose, “A conversation with Bernhard Schlink.”

ihren 85 Jahren erstaunlich offen ... und habe seit jeher Anteil an Kirstens Leben genommen. Mit ihrer Großmutter kann Kirsten über alles reden. Ihre Oma steht ihr sehr nahe, und bei ihr fühlt sie sich rundum wohl.³⁰²

Ruedahl claims that close relationships such as these develop because young people separate themselves from their parents in order to attain or maintain their own personal identity. She explains: “Da sie eine Generation von den Enkeln trennt, betreffen deren Konflikte mit den Eltern sie nicht. Und weil sie nicht Teil der Lebenswelt sind, von der sich die Jugendlichen befreien wollen, stellen sie keine Bedrohung dar”³⁰³ This closeness between grandchildren and grandparent makes learning “the truth” about the grandparent’s nationalistic inclinations more difficult or the grandchildren may avoid recognizing the truth. Dückers’ Freia eventually learns the truth while her grandmother is on her deathbed and “forgets” not to remember. Her suspicions are confirmed after her grandmother dies and she finds a copy of *Mein Kampf* as well other Nazi memorabilia in her grandmother’s house.

After her grandmother, Jo, becomes ill and her grandfather has died, Freia, as an adult, pregnant with her first child, begins in earnest to search for answers with devastating results. The relationship between memory and either purposeful or “real” forgetting is explored in these encounters. During her visits, Freia attempts to discern: “woran sie [the grandmother] sich noch erinnern konnte, und zu verstehen warum andere Dinge spurlos ihrem Gedächtnis entglitten zu sein schienen” (H 208). One day Jo is particularly indisposed and confuses present and past, spouting fragmented parts of the story Freia has always heard. However, the grandmother reveals at this point that they had been “in der Partei” and Freia is taken aback and wonders what else she could learn (H 219). She still does not suspect the extent of the story but is beginning to suspect that there is more to it. That night, she is haunted by her family’s past:

³⁰² Ruedahl, *Ein Glück, dass es Oma und Opa gibt!* ..., 51

³⁰³ Ruedahl, *Ein Glück, dass es Oma und Opa gibt!* ..., 55

Ich schlief schlecht in dem tiefen, weichen Bett meiner Großmutter. Immer wieder liefen erst Wasser, dann Blut unter der Tür hindurch in mein Zimmer,... begrub mich unter sich. Ich wachte auf und hielt selbst noch, als ich das Licht anknipste, einige dunkle Flecken auf dem Teppich in Nähe der Tür für Blutlachen... ich wollte nicht in dieses tiefe, weiche Bett sinken, mich fallen lassen, zurück in die Geschichte, dorthin wo ich herkam... Ich blieb wach sitzen bis zum Morgen ... dem Morgen, dem Tagesbewußtsein, der Geschäftigkeit, der Vergeßlichkeit (H 220).

On a subsequent visit, Freia learns that her grandparents and her mother were saved onto a torpedo boat because her mother (at the age of five) informed on the family next in line. She advised the authorities that the family no longer used the Heil Hitler greeting (H 249). In this scene, it becomes clear that Renate, the mother, was most affected by her parents' Nazi party membership and the fact that she caused a boy her age to drown after the family in question had boarded the doomed *Gustloff*, which later sank. For years, the mother stared out the window, quiet and melancholy, knowing and silent.

However, Freia too is affected by these revelations and it influences the way she describes her grandmother throughout the novel. In contrast to Mäxchen, the grandfather, who is portrayed as a weak invalid and as a victim that the children pity, the grandmother appears strong and forceful. In a scene during Freia's childhood, the narrator uses the term "Täter" for the grandmother when she kills a fly.

Mit leise schwingenden Bewegungen aus dem Handgelenk näherte sie sich der Fliege.... Die Augen meiner Großmutter funkelten, und auf einmal bekam ich Angst vor ihr....Plötzlich fuhr die Klatsche nieder ... Sie ließ die Täterhand mit der Klatsche sinken ... und starrte unglaublich zufrieden auf den zerquetschten ... Fliegenleib (H 89, 90).

This passage reveals how Freia views her grandmother now, looking back. As a child she would not have used the term "Täterhand." However, given her knowledge of the Holocaust, her grandmother's Nazi party membership, continued adherence to Nazi ideology and her lies or "forgetfulness," her choice of language is telling.

The dichotomy between Freia's father and mother reveals interesting aspects of memory and trauma. During Freia and Paul's childhood, the family's attention was on the father, Peter, while the mother was a quiet almost forgotten figure. Peter's place was "im Mittelpunkt unserer Familie" (H 10). The father (rather than the mother or the grandparents who experienced the war) is portrayed as being full of secrets and tall tales about *Waldgeister*. The only picture Freia carries of her father is an image in which her brother Paul is in his arms and looking up at him "ihn mißtrauisch beäugend" (H 9). She remembers how her father enjoyed secrets and being mysterious. He often disappeared after dinner until the next morning (H 9). I believe the mother may be paradigmatic of Germany's "memory taboo" She is unassuming, quiet, and intent "keine Aufmerksamkeit auf sich zu lenken" (H 14). Throughout the novel, the mother knows and keeps the truth from the children. She interrupts the grandmother emotional tales with "facts" but does not share her knowledge about her parents and the incident with the family that boarded the *Gustloff* and perished. Freia seldom takes notice of her mother's presence. During her childhood and early adult years, Freia considers her mother boring and there is "keine Reibung, kaum Kontakt" (H 15). She startles if her mother turns to her and says something, because she has forgotten her. Later in life, Freia is sitting in a train and sees her mother standing on the platform of the train station through the train window. She cannot get to her. The mother remains unattainable and unreachable. However, unlike normally, Freia *sees* her mother in this scene rather than simply overlooking her. "Völlig unerwartet, wie sie hier auftauchte, nahm ich sie viel intensiver wahr" (H 18). The mother is ever present and yet not noticeably present. In contrast, Freia's father is extremely noticeable and his presence is never forgotten. Ironically, he ends up being the character sharing lies and keeping secrets about his extra-marital affairs. Freia remembers one instance in which the mother was noticed by the family as she rode off on a horse

with her red scarf blowing in the wind during a trip to Poland (H 16). Significantly, the mother is portrayed differently (or perceived differently) on trips to Poland. It is also on a trip to Poland that Freia glimpses the cloud she has been researching and has meaningful discussions with her mother. At the end of the novel, Renate commits suicide, after most of the truth has been revealed.

In her article “An Aesthetic of Memory for Third Generation Germans,” Laurel Cohen-Pfister likewise examines generational memory in Dücker’s novel. She argues *Himmelskörper* “implies that the third generation must find its own way to access and then question this history” due to the silence of the wartime generation.”³⁰⁴ Cohen-Pfister discusses Renate as a key allegorical figure. She concludes that the mother resembles the elusive cloud, which Freia searches for in the novel. Analyzing the way the mother (the representative of the second generation) is portrayed, Cohen-Pfister concludes that

the grandchildren, not the parents, are the gatekeepers of family memory and recipients of the uninterrupted transfer of the wartime memories ... In their non-adversarial relationship to the generation of perpetrators, the grandchildren are called to evaluate and record family memories once obscured or suppressed by the second generation...³⁰⁵

Cohen-Pfister discusses the Nazi memorabilia left behind by the grandparents as the main (if not only) source for the grandchildren’s quest to discover family memories and understand history. She aptly points to the classic construction of generations with the grandparents’ silence about their true involvement in anything unseemly, and the mother’s criticism of her parents’ image as German victims. As Cohen-Pfister discusses, the memorabilia hold little meaning to the grandchildren beyond a “discovery” of the past. What she fails to discuss is that the true influence comes not from learning through the artifacts, but from the grandchildren’s realization of who their grandparents were in the past. Examining these artifacts in conjunction with the

³⁰⁴ Cohen-Pfister, “An Aesthetic of Memory ...,” 122.

³⁰⁵ Cohen-Pfister, “An Aesthetic of Memory ...,” 123.

many moments and clues in their interaction with their grandparents makes history more visible. Clues unrecognized at the time become part of the children's identity and are recognized only after the artifacts provide evidence that their grandparents believed in the ideology of the Nazis and did so long after the end of the Third Reich. The mother's suicide represents the end of the memory taboo. Renate had hidden the truth from her children (and potentially from her husband) because of her own shame and guilt. Although she was a child during the Nazi era, she is constructed as a "typical" second-generation German individual. She resents her parents, carries a tremendous amount of collective guilt, and refuses to discuss her and her parent's past. However, she also carries guilt and shame of her own actions as a child and her parent's involvement in the Nazi party.

While in Julia Frank's novel *Lagerfeuer* the character of Nelly identifies with her Jewish grandmother, in Dücker's *Himmelskörper*, Freia attempts throughout the novel to disidentify with her grandmother's German identity. Being German is often portrayed as being hypocritical or continuing to adhere to traditional ideals. Paul also changes location and lives in Paris at the end of the novel. Freia's character aligns herself with her Polish heritage rather than her "German" roots. Both novels portray the traumatic impact of transmitted memory. However, *Himmelskörper* focuses on the protagonists' search for truth. Similarly to the ending of Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*, a novel that also exhibits a first person narrator in search of the truth, whether the search has been successful, will actually yield any change, cannot be determined. However, there is of course a major difference between the accounts by Wolf and the texts written by Franck or Dücker. The key lies in their varied generational perspective. Both deal in one way or another with the self, self-perception, with identity. Memory and trauma heavily impact the construction and deconstruction of identity in *Lagerfeuer* and *Himmelskörper*.

However, in Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*, the search for truth is directly a search for the elusive "I," the self, with grave consequences. As Elizabeth Snyder Hook illustrates in her detailed chapter on memory discourse in *Kindheitsmuster*, that as a member of the first generation, "the author finds it difficult to speak of this period from a secure and integrated position"³⁰⁶

As Anne Fuchs posits, Tanja Dücker is less hampered by her historical position in relation to Germany's past. However, as this chapter has illustrated, third generation authors portray the potential impact of memory and continue to engage critically with Germany's past. As the next chapter will explore in greater depth, early 21st century German novels also serve to create, circumvent and deconstruct both collective and personal German identity. The authors of *Identity Theory*, Peter J. Burke, and Jan E. Stets, illustrate the way people consciously and subconsciously attribute meaning to particular behaviors, personality traits and perceptions and assign identities to support a particular society or group membership. Julia Franck's novel *Die Mittagsfrau* provides insight into the discourse on the engagement of third generation authors with Germany's past as well as the relationship between identity, memory and trauma

³⁰⁶ Snyder-Hook, *Family Secrets and the Contemporary German Novel...*, 21

IV. IDENTITY AND SILENCE IN POST-WENDE HOLOCAUST NARRATIVES: IN PARTICULAR, JULIA FRANCK'S *DIE MITTAGSFRAU*

Wovon man nicht reden kann,
Darüber muß man schweigen.
-- Wittgenstein

In the 1990 film *Europa Europa*, by Polish filmmaker Agnieszka Holland, a young Jewish German boy in his teens survives the Holocaust by “hiding” in plain sight pretending to be a Nazi, first fighting amongst German soldiers in the German army and then attending an elite Hitler Youth training school.³⁰⁷ Solek (aka Josef Peters) must continuously stay vigilant to hide his true identity and to perform his life-saving new identity as a Volksdeutscher (ethnic German) and Nazi and remain silent about his real background. His physical appearance, brown hair and blue eyes, helps him in passing as an “Aryan” German, because the National Socialists identify him as superior and belonging to a “Master Race,” although they categorize him as a “Baltic type.” Nonetheless, it is his body that makes Solek fearful of being found out. He is in danger of being detected because of his circumcision and laments, “Ich konnte meinem eigenen Körper nicht fliehen.” After the war, Solek is just about to be shot by Russian soldiers as a Nazi, regardless of his circumcision, when his brother, who has been freed from a ghetto by the soldiers, recognizes him. His brother identifies him to the soldiers as Jewish and his brother and thereby saves his life. Although silence is a necessity for Solek to remain hidden, once he is freed, the bounds of silence disappear. After the war, Solek *returns* to his Jewish identity, eventually moving to Israel.

³⁰⁷ The film is based on Solomon Perel’s 1989 autobiography. It is a coproduction of German, French, and Polish companies, by Polish director Agnieszka Holland, born 1948, whose Jewish grandparents perished in the Warsaw ghetto. For more on this director see Cohen’s article “Holland Without a Country.” Lilienthal/Jurek Becker, “David” (1979), is also a story of a Jewish boy donning Nazi clothes to survive, but the focus of the film are the circumstances that lead up to David’s transformation.

Although this film thematizes identity by portraying the protagonist taking on a new identity, there is never any question in the viewer's mind as to who the character really is and who he believes himself to be. This is also the case in other narratives with a similar storyline, such as the West German film *David* (1979), directed by Peter Lilienthal and based on the autobiography, *Den Netzen entronnen* (1967), by Joel König. In *David*, the protagonists' brother, Leo, conceals his Jewish identity by wearing a Nazi uniform. The film thematizes the brothers' struggle with their Jewish identity and highlights generational differences as David's and Leo's father, a rabbi, encourages his sons to remain proud of being Jews. The protagonists are depicted as being in mortal danger and take on an "opposing" identity, the identity of their persecutors, to survive.

In *Europa Europa*, Solek could be interpreted as both a victim and a kind of perpetrator since he is seen fighting at the front alongside Wehrmacht soldiers. However, it is clear from the way the film is shot that this does not actually make him a *real* perpetrator. Throughout the movie, Solek remains a victim. During his time pretending to be a Nazi, the film does not show him committing any heinous acts and his pretense is understood as a mask. He is continually depicted wrestling with his new role. His one act of heroism at the front for which he is commended, is shown to be the result of an accident without any forethought on Solek's part.

At the end of the film, Solek resumes his Jewish identity and raises his sons Jewish, including circumcising them. In terms of how identity is portrayed, the film is rather straightforward. The boy has one identity, takes on a "fake" identity to hide from persecution, and then openly returns to his true identity. It is clear to the viewer that his identity has not really changed. His memory of his family survives and identity is portrayed as a constant. Being Jewish and being a Hitler Youth are portrayed as two distinctly different identities in *Europa Europa*.

Furthermore, in the film cultural markers serve to distinguish one group from another. Significantly, the entire focus of the film revolves around Solek's persecution due to his Jewish identity. Other areas of his personality, upbringing, likes and dislikes – in a sense any other markers of identity – are only sparsely developed in the film.

The 2006 novel, *Die Mittagsfrau*, by Julia Franck likewise thematizes identity and portrays a character of Jewish heritage “hiding” in Nazi Germany, pretending to be “Aryan,” similarly to *Europa Europa*. The focus of this chapter is on Franck's treatment of identity and her use of silence as a trope. While there are some interesting similarities between the protagonists in the novel and the film, their treatment of identity and silence differs remarkably. *Die Mittagsfrau* deals with a woman of Jewish heritage named Helene hiding in Nazi Germany in plain sight, married to a Nazi party member and in possession of false papers. Helene's false papers identify her as a mainstream German woman named Alice. Similar to Solek's portrayal, Helene also *looks* “Aryan,” which helps her remain undetected. The film and the novel both depict Germans admiring Solek and Helene as beautiful representative examples of Aryanism.

Another similarity between *Europa Europa* and *Die Mittagsfrau*, is the fact that Helene is shown supporting the war effort in her occupation as a nurse and using her job as a nurse to support herself in order to hide her Jewish background. However, in contrast to the film, the novel depicts Helene as more than just a persecuted victim of National Socialism. On several occasions she is portrayed as a kind of perpetrator, in her job as a nurse performing state ordered tubal ligations and as a mother neglecting her young son, whom she abandons at a railway station. Helene's identity is not a constant. The novel portrays identity as fluid, and as virtually unidentifiable. The narrator does not portray Helene with first one distinct identity and then later with another to cover up her *true* identity due to persecution. Rather, she is depicted with a

variety of elements of different identities at once. She is also shown moving between seemingly incongruous identities and it is never quite clear to the reader who they are dealing with and what identity really defines Helene. Helene is not Jewish and not non-Jewish, both a victim and a perpetrator, a mother and not a mother, a housewife and an ambitious career woman etc. The narrator depicts Helene as whatever she needs to be at any particular moment without any easily identifiable continuity. One red thread that runs through the novel is silence, i.e., the inability or unwillingness to communicate on the part of the characters as well as the lack of information or knowledge provided available to the characters or the reader.

In chapter three, I explored the relationship between trauma and memory in Dückers' *Himmelskörper*. The protagonist in this novel aims to reconstruct her family's past and thereby determine where indeed she comes from, who she is. This means that *reconstruction* essentially leads to a *construction* of identity. The character takes on a *chosen* identity. Similarly, as I explored in chapter two, the protagonist of Frank's *Lagerfeuer*, experiences effects of transgenerational trauma because of her family heritage, her *chosen* Jewish identity. She is confronted with a culture shock as she navigates West Berlin while still adhering to East German ideals on Fascism and Capitalism. This causes her to view West Germany critically, beyond the negative side of capitalism, as a place of fascist prejudice and danger causing her to *remember* her family's trauma as persecuted Jews and to feel traumatized herself. While in these novels identity plays a role in the relationship between trauma and memory, I argue that Franck's *Die Mittagsfrau* brings this symbiotic relationship to light even more.

In order to analyze the way history, memory and trauma are portrayed in *Die Mittagsfrau*, the novel's unique structure and use of perspective must be examined. One of the overarching plot elements is a mother's abandonment of her child. Indeed the novel begins and ends with the

perspective of the abandoned child, a boy named Peter. The prologue of 21 pages describes Peter's life with his mother, Helene (aka Alice) shortly after the end of The Second World War. The prologue ends with Peter being left by his mother at a train station. The next 385 pages of the novel tell the story of the mother's life, starting with her experiences as a young girl and ending with the night before her trip to the train station where she abandons Peter. The 12-page epilogue is again devoted to Peter and narrated from his perspective. The body of the book seems written from the mother's perspective, however, it could also be interpreted as a story narrated by someone to explain the mother's seemingly inexplicable action. This resembles Franck's claim that the novel represents a fictitious reconstruction of her father's mother who abandoned him the way Peter was abandoned. Franck never knew her paternal grandmother and met her father as a teenager shortly before he died. In this light, the novel may be understood as a site of memory, as a kind of familial memorial. The unknown and the inability to know the real facts of history and how this influences identity are prominent aspects of this novel. The dramatic interpretation for the stage, written by Volker Hesse, which premiered at *Deutsches Theater* in Göttingen, October 2010, begins with Peter, as an old man, telling the audience the story of his childhood and his mother as a memory.³⁰⁸ Hesse interprets the body of the novel, similarly to Franck, as an explanation "wie es dazu [the child's abandonment] kommen kann"³⁰⁹

The novel touches on major themes that are part of the contemporary discourse on the memory of Germany's National Socialist past, such as Victim/Perpetrator dichotomy, the Holocaust, persecution, exile, inner emigration, and anti-Semitism. My close reading analysis traces the depiction of silence and identity in this literary narrative about historical trauma. My focus is on the symbolic literal and figurative use of silence as a trope as well as the

³⁰⁸ Pohl, "Die Mittagsfrau im Deutschen Theater"

³⁰⁹ "Die Mittagsfrau ..." StadtRadio Göttingen

representation of the fluidity of identity (or perhaps the absence of identity). I discuss this novel's portrayal of identity in connection with the effects of trauma in Germany's volatile early 20th century, in particular, the inability to know who someone was and what their intentions and/or motivations truly were. Furthermore, I discuss the novel's depiction of loss as trauma and loss portrayed as a trigger for silence. As with the other novels I discuss in this dissertation, *Die Mittagsfrau* also portrays transgenerational effects of trauma.

Additionally, I address the gendered aspects of trauma and memory in *Die Mittagsfrau*. The novel focuses on the suffering endured mainly by women and children. The character of Helene is subjected to gender discrimination, rape, domestic violence as well as oppression, persecution, anti-Semitism, child abuse, wartime bombings, and living in hiding. The way her story is narrated highlights specifically women's experiences. Furthermore, in the home between mother and child, trauma is also experienced as both mothers in the novel abuse or neglect their children. Silence is depicted most profoundly in this private realm as well, since the lack of communication causes the children to misunderstand the motives for their mother's negative treatment of them. In some ways, the two mothers, Helene and her mother are portrayed as "passing on" the suffering they experience in society in the form of familial neglect and abuse. These instances are not depicted as an excuse, but rather presented by the narrator as circumstances leading to each woman's treatment of her child. Furthermore, silence may be interpreted as an inability to communicate, as a kind of numbness that envelopes Helene after her traumatic experiences. This portrayal is reminiscent of McNally's studies on PTSD trauma theory introduced earlier. Interestingly, in the way Helene is portrayed, motherhood itself may also be interpreted as a form of suffering.

However, regardless of the negative experiences and harmful forces in the characters' lives, loss is depicted as the most profound cause for trauma. The loss of a loved one or loss of community is the most identity shaping experience. Remarkably, although Helene and her son, Peter, face incredible trauma, such as the fear of being deported and surviving air raids and hunger in wartime Berlin, loss of loved ones remains the character's worst and most defining experience. Helene loses her fiancé in a deadly accident in the early 1930s and loses contact with her family after assuming a false name to avoid persecution. Peter is abandoned at a train station shortly after the end of the war by his mother. These defining moments of loss form the crux of the trauma in the novel. This trauma generates most of the silence in the novel, causing Helene to shut down emotionally and communicate less and less to her son and to the reader after the loss of her lover and her family. At the end, Helene's son decides to remain silent, refusing to speak to his mother, who returns on his seventeenth birthday to see him. I will analyze these events further, later in this chapter.

Examining Franck's portrayal of the interrelationship between silence and identity, I argue that the novel uses these tropes to draw attention to historical unknowns. The narrator of *Die Mittagsfrau* illustrates the inability to define or determine a person's identity, instead showing the fluidity of identity. Furthermore, the inability to understand or interpret individuals' past actions is explored. History itself becomes an unknown. The narrative remains silent about the course of historical events and many of the characters' feelings and motives for their actions. The reader is left to fill these silent spaces with his or her own historical knowledge, assumptions and interpretations.

In order to examine the themes of silence and identity, I begin by identifying the relationship between memory and identity, followed by a discussion of the unique way the novel

portrays history. Next, I provide a close reading of the novel centered around the following topics, which serve to illustrate the novel's silent spaces and fluidity of identity: the novel's structure or perspective, its portrayal of the protagonist's victim-perpetrator duality, the protagonist's experiences of trauma, and the portrayal of motherhood.

Memory and Identity

The relationship between memory and identity can be more easily understood if memory is responsible for the formation of identity in the first place. A person's memory of his or her origins and experiences can be seen as contributing to the formation and continual re-formation of identity throughout the person's life. The way the past is interpreted (perhaps differently at different life stages) can also color a person's perception of self in relation to his or her community, which also influences identity formation. This means that a change in how historical events are interpreted (individually and/or collectively as a culture or nation) can contribute to a change in identity. In these cases, the historical events and the facts surrounding those events may remain the same, but how the facts are understood is what matters. How history is *remembered* also influences identity in the sense that people are perceived differently depending on whose perspective is used and how much is known about them. For example, in *Die Mittagsfrau*, the son likely never learns of his mother's false papers, Jewish heritage, and the persecution of her family members in the Nazi regime. To him she remains a negative figure, the woman who abandoned him and potentially a Nazi perpetrator (given her work as a nurse in the German war effort). Additionally his caretakers' opinions of his mother likely influences his view of her. His memories of his mother and the way she and her actions are defined, play a role in his identity.

Continual identity re-formation based on memory is only possible if memory is understood as constantly changing and in flux. In literary portrayals, memory is often depicted as uncontrollable. In *Die weisse Frau* (1979), Katja Behrens characterizes memory as unstable and fleeting, as uncontrollable:

The memory comes and goes. Sometimes, when I'm thinking about something quite different, it suddenly returns, and try as I may to shake it off, there's nothing I can do about it. And then again, when I'm like a stone for days on end and would prefer to bear the pain, it disappears: I've forgotten everything and the door is closed.³¹⁰

The question may then arise how history can even be “known” and how facts can be assessed. History may be interpreted as always relative to one's understanding of the present in relationship to the past. As Robertson points out, Katja Behren's fiction portrays her characters' Jewish identity and family relationships quite negatively, manifesting itself “not in religious practice or cultural traditions, but in the indelible memory of the Holocaust.”³¹¹ Behrens construction is reminiscent of my discussion of Julia Franck's portrayal of Nelly's Jewishness in *Lagerfeuer*. Franck's *Die Mittagsfrau* also deals with these topics in an interesting and nuanced way.

In order to analyze the literary portrayal of the relationship between memory and history and identity, it is necessary to first discuss what I mean by identity and how this concept has been portrayed and interpreted. To begin with, I focus on identity as a social construct. Furthermore, in my assessment, identity is neither a constant nor an easy to define phenomenon. Robert Louis Stevenson's 19th-century tale, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), is well known for thematizing the identity split of one man. Stevenson's first person narrator gradually begins to realize his condition and articulates the fluidity of identity thus: “Man is not truly one, but truly two... and I hazard to guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere

³¹⁰ Behrens, *Die weisse Frau*, 17.

³¹¹ Robertson, *The German-Jewish Dialogue ...*, 359.

polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent citizens.” He describes his realization that there is a “duality of man,” “two natures” which struggle to surface.³¹² At one point, the narrator acknowledges that while the two identities seem different in personality, thought, morals and behavior, they are nonetheless one and the same man.³¹³ If the character is portrayed with multiple identities existing within one individual, then identity itself is ever-changing, fluid and hard to define. In this sense, identity is a performance.

In *Die Mittagsfrau*, identity and the knowledge of identity is lacking. There is a sense of the unknown. Characters attempt to identify others, yet the reader is often aware that the characters’ sense of someone else’s identity is inaccurate. *Die Mittagsfrau* showcases the fluidity of identity, perhaps even the absence of identity or at least the inability to concretely express a person’s identity. Moreover, characters themselves are often unaware of who they are. A close reading of the novel reveals the commentary on the detriments of silence (about history), the complexities of family identity to influence personal identity and the difficulties associated with the defining categories of victim and perpetrator.

Memory may be interpreted as the basis for identity formation as well as the continuing identification of self. The biographical novel by Karen Duve, *Keine Ahnung* (1999), illustrates the relationship between memory and identity. The novel consists of a female narrator telling her story to the reader. After recounting a particularly traumatic moment from her childhood, she suddenly remembers a small detail. Most of her childhood, she is haunted by the fact that she urinated on the rug at a neighbor’s house when she was five years old. Her sister continues to “remind” her of the incident and it affects her each time. However, one positive aspect in her

³¹² Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 108.

³¹³ I contend that this depiction is not a description of the 20th-century discourse on Multiple Personality Disorder. In particular because this disorder has itself been identified by a number of scholars as a social construct.

memory is an eight-year-old boy that offered to take her home that day. Interestingly, her memory of the event grows in details as she narrates it:

Doch während ich diese Geschichte aufschreibe, mich zu erinnern bemühe und meine Fahrt auf dem Gepäckträger noch einmal vor mein inneres Auge rufe, da sehe ich den Jungen und mich durch eine Straße fahren, die eindeutig nicht auf dem direkten Weg zu meinem ... Elternhaus liegt. ... Jetzt, nach dreißig Jahren, fällt mir das auf.³¹⁴

The boy took the wrong way, something that had not occurred to the narrator. The detail is called into her consciousness through the practice of remembering and recording the event. The narrative traces the way events are remembered and how additions are woven into the fabric of people's memories. To the reader, the narrator is constantly a different person, with a different identity as she relates different memories from her life. She "explains" her identity by providing past experiences with her family and friends to account for parts of her identity that may seem as if they need explanation. Just as trauma can be inherited and shape identity and behavior, identity is shaped through memory. By remembering details of the defining traumatic event in her life, the narrator paints a different picture of herself and understands herself differently from one moment to the next.

In the Introduction to *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, Paul Antze and Michael Lambek outline the way the past and memory play a large role in identity, in its construction and (re)construction, what we remember and what we *choose* to remember. Antze and Lambek explain, "People emerge from and as the products of their stories about themselves as much as their stories emerge from their lives."³¹⁵ Their discussion explains how memory as a narrative of the self helps to fashion identity; identity in turn influences the narrative (memory) itself. This illustrates why memory is so much a part of any identity discourse. Memory is part of the present that acts "to represent the past," rather than a regurgitation or calling up of the past.

³¹⁴ Duve, *Keine Ahnung*, 77, 78.

³¹⁵ Antze, *Tense Past*, xviii.

This means that it is a “work of interpretation,” interpreting the past based on present values.³¹⁶ Antze and Lambek locate identity “in the dialectical, ceaseless activity of remembering and forgetting, assimilating and discarding,” rather than seeing it based on a specific set of constant memories.³¹⁷ In the first article of *Tense Past*, “Telling Stories, Making Selves. Memory and Identity in Multiple Personality Disorder,” Antze explains that memory is the foundation of identity formation and identity indicator. He presents examples particularly geared toward understanding multiple personality disorder, but argues that his conclusions apply to the relationship between memory and identity in general. He furthermore argues that the disorder may be seen as a social construct. His theory pertains to my literary examination as well, because studies on multiple personality disorder highlight the constructed nature of memory and trauma. How trauma is remembered has as much to do with the present as it does with the impetus (the traumatic event). Additionally, Antze explains that trauma impedes the formation of a stable identity. But in so doing, he also questions whether identity is as stable and as identifiable as it seems. Antze paraphrases Paul Ricoeur’s work “Oneself to Another” (1992), who uses the term *emplotment* for the “perpetual weaving and reweaving of past and present events into characters, motives, situations, actions.”³¹⁸ The process of emplotment helps people identify who they are, i.e., what they believe is their identity. Likewise, Aleida Assmann explains that memory and personal “Vergangenheitsbezug” play an important role in “Identitätskonstruktion”³¹⁹

Jay Winter also discusses the way collective identity is influenced by history and memory in “The performance of the past: memory, history, identity” which serves as an introduction to the volume *Performing the Past: Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe*. He asserts

³¹⁶ Antze, *Tense Past*, xxiv.

³¹⁷ Antze, *Tense Past*, xxix.

³¹⁸ Antze, *Tense Past*, 6.

³¹⁹ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten* ..., 35

that "the performative act of remembrance is an essential way in which collective identities are formed and reiterated." He also illustrates how historical "remembrance and identity formation are braided together in powerful ways."³²⁰ The articles in this volume forge the common thesis that identity is a performance and that memory and history are inextricably linked. Similarly, Harald Walzer claims that "mit dem Interesse an der Familienvergangenheit sei die Suche nach der eigenen Identität verknüpft."³²¹ Rather than looking for facts, a particular truth, the articles in *Performing the Past* investigate how fictional and non-fictional accounts serve to both draw attention to and to reiterate truths about people even if details of particular events or places are in fact untrue. In a discussion of the nostalgia involved in diasporic memory, Winter concludes that the convergence of "memory and history ... distorts the past."³²²

As with the concept of "collective memory," the existence or the need for a "collective identity" is debated. Furthermore, determining a collective identity, especially in the German context, may be a particularly difficult task. Lutz Niethammer argues against collective identity in his book, *Kollektive Identität: Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur* (2000). Niethammer is a German historian, born in 1939, who specializes in German postwar history and in oral history. According to Niethammer, identity and in particular collective identity is being marketed as something positive and necessary. He accords the idea of collective identity as just another means to restrict certain populations from inclusion in the affairs of the majority. According to Maurice Halbwachs, collective memory is not merely a person's memory of an event they experienced, but rather includes his or her heritage and perhaps knowledge of historical events. Collective memory can be defined as cultural heritage. Possessing similar memories creates an in-group and may give individuals a sense of belonging. Halbwachs

³²⁰ Winter, "Introduction: the performance of the past: memory, history, identity," 15-16

³²¹ Quoted by Kallweit in her article, "Cirrus Perucidus und die Einsamkeit zwischen zwei Generationen ...," 177.

³²² Winter, "Introduction: the performance of the past: memory, history, identity," 20

furthermore posits that the past is mostly a “social construction ... shaped by the concerns of the present.”³²³ In this sense, the ideas, concerns, and beliefs of the present influence how the past is understood. Often people may “find” in the past exactly what they are looking for only because they are searching for it and it is important to them in the present. I elaborate on the impact of history on the present and vice versa, the way the present influences historical interpretations in the next chapter.

Portrayal of History

Julia Franck’s novel, *Die Mittagsfrau*, presents history as both the most important element in the protagonist’s life and yet at the same time strangely irrelevant or on the periphery. History is presented without context; the novel is filled with cliché-like images of history: sex and drugs in the roaring twenties, boycott of Jewish shops and a deportation train in the Third Reich, and post war Russian soldiers raping a German woman. Yet in each of these instances, no context is provided and the images are left unexplained as if no explanation were necessary. The novel seems written with the assumption of the reader’s historical knowledge of iconic images, which convey the meaning of each situation. History does not need to be clarified. As Katharina Gerstenberger also points out, *Die Mittagsfrau* portrays a breakdown of communication about the past whereas Dücker’s *Himmelskörper* focuses on characters who aim to reconstruct history.³²⁴ However, in every way possible, history *is* the focus of *Die Mittagsfrau*. In a sense, it is like a study in microhistory. Literary scholars have termed this type of novel, which focuses on the everyday details of a family a “Familienroman” or a “Generationenroman” when the family includes three or more generations.

³²³ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 25. Note my discussion of Mathias Berek’s work in the Introduction on memory as a construct.

³²⁴ Gerstenberger, “Fictionalizations ...,” 105

The portrayal of Helene's experiences and perspective take center stage while historical events remain on the periphery. For example, upon her return from a trip which masked her recovery after an abortion, she overhears the conversations on a train. By deducing the content of the conversation along with the fact that Helene was in Wöhrden, the reader is able to recognize the reference to a scrimmage between the SA and the KPD in Wöhrden in 1929.³²⁵ Without making an effort to spot these small references, it is unclear when the events in Helene's life are occurring. There is also little to no overtly political commentary on the part of the characters. As Gerstenberger notes in her analysis of *Die Mittagsfrau*, the novel "avoids political statements and does not pass judgment on its characters"³²⁶

Personal experiences of tragedy impact the characters more than history. The lives of the two main characters, the protagonist, Helene, and her son, Peter, are characterized by profound experiences of loss. Some of the traumatic losses the characters undergo do not seem to be related to the historical events of the Third Reich and the war, such as the two major turning points of the novel: the accidental death of Helene's fiancé, and Peter's loss as he is abandoned by his mother. However, the day-to-day events as well as the traumatic events unfold with history as a backdrop and usually historical occurrences are the cause. The all-encompassing importance history has in shaping the character's familial circumstances is ironically juxtaposed to a deliberate deemphasizing of history.

In reviews, Julia Franck's prize-winning novel was critiqued for its "Figuren und Sachverhalte, die eines Vergangenheitsbewältigungsfilms im Hauptprogramm würdig wären."³²⁷

³²⁵ Ian Kershaw claims in his work, *Hitler*, that the event was formidable in increasing support for the NSDAP among the country working class (191).

³²⁶ Gerstenberger, "Fictionalizations ...," 105

³²⁷ Döbler, "Peterchens Mutter ..." *Die Zeit*. This review concluded that Franck's use of language shows great promise but that her content is a "Klischee" – archetypes, and borrowings from "Werke der Literatur, des Theaters und des Films."

These remarks are not without merit. Her multi-generational epic extends from the Wilhelmine period to the 1950s, although the main thematic deals with the Nazi era and the immediate post war period. However, it would be more accurately described as presenting selective memories of Germany's past, more of a *Vergangenheitserinnerung*. These reviews fail to consider that Franck's approach does not focus on relaying history or "overcoming" or "coming to terms" with the past. The reader's assumed knowledge of the periods in the novel allow for a different understanding of the characters. Helene is subject to Nazi persecution (if she were not in hiding) and the novel is replete with reminders of Nazi atrocities. However, the Nazi period is not singled out as a singularly dark time period in Germany's history, rather, the small town residents of Bautzen are portrayed as Anti-Semitic long before the Third Reich. Frank describes a continuum of prejudice in German society and often comments upon these aspects both in her fiction and in her public comments and stories of her own life. This approach harkens back to pre-1933 writing by German speaking authors, such as Gertrud Käthe Chodziesner (writing under the pseudonym Gertrud Kolmar), Else Lasker-Schüler, and Arthur Schnitzler. *Die Mittagsfrau* is not intended as a contribution to "overcome" the past, since the present still includes many aspects of this past, making such an endeavor pointless. Additionally, the theme is ubiquitous in works by many other 20th century German speaking authors, including Edgar Hilsenrath, Barbara Honigmann, and Doron Rabinovici, to name a few. The novel reminds its readers of the power of oppression and even more so shows that categorizations of identity (such as victim/perpetrator) are wrought with havoc and may lead to a singular interpretation of history.

In her 2008 article, Rūta Eidukevičienė examines *Die Mittagsfrau* to ascertain how the third generation, which would include Franck, portrays the past in literary works. She discusses

the novel as an example of a Familienroman and a kind of autobiography with the author as the grandchild, Helene as the grandmother, and Peter as the father.³²⁸ Franck reports that her father, whom she barely knew, was left at a train station following the war. Eidukevičienė concludes in her article that third generation texts, unlike second generation works, have led to “einer harmonisierenden, wenn auch nicht rechtfertigenden Darstellung der Großelterngeneration.”³²⁹ She claims the novel is part of a “Verharmlosung der Nazizeit” since it does not include direct “Schuldzuweisungen an frühere Generationen”³³⁰ While her argument has valid points, I argue that blame in the novel is expressed, albeit obliquely and beneath the surface. Eidukevičienė also quotes Friederike Eigler, who wrote in her 2005 study *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende* that “... Verharmlosung weniger in den Selbstdarstellungen der Zeitzeugen selbst zu beobachten sind, als bei den Generationen der Kinder und insbesondere der Enkelkinder.”³³¹ Eidukevičienė uses this quotation to substantiate her claim about *Die Mittagsfrau*. However, the passage is taken out of context and Eidukevičienė does not mention that Eigler is referring to statements made by participants in the sociological study *Opa war kein Nazi*, rather than discussing the portrayal in literary texts. In her section on novels after 1989, Eigler explains that “Generationenromane eröffnen neue Perspektiven auf die Verschränkung von unterschiedlichen Schichten der individuellen und kollektiven Vergangenheiten ...”³³² In *Die Mittagsfrau*, rather than blaming individuals for their actions, or even blaming “the Nazis” in general, the narrator associates societal assumptions, prejudices and preconceived notions about men and women with the trauma the characters experience. Most of Franck’s works, including *Lagerfeuer* and *Rücken an Rücken* present a variation on the theme of

³²⁸ Eidukevičienė, “(Re)konstruktion der Vergangenheit...,” 38.

³²⁹ Eidukevičienė, “(Re)konstruktion der Vergangenheit...,” 42.

³³⁰ Eidukevičienė, “(Re)konstruktion der Vergangenheit...,” 41.

³³¹ Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte* ..., 23. Also quoted in Eidukevičienė’s article (42).

³³² Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte* ..., 37

individuals who are not accepted into mainstream society. A close reading of *Die Mittagsfrau* reveals the physical and psychological effects on individuals viewed as the “other,” including Helene’s mother, Helene, her sister, her sister’s lover, and Peter.

Trauma and Identity in *Die Mittagsfrau*

The mother-child dichotomy takes center stage in the novel exploring Peter and Helene’s trauma. Helene’s relationship to her mother is an initial source of trauma in the body of the novel. Her mother is portrayed as abusive and neglectful of her two daughters. Peter’s trauma, associated with his mother, is presented most clearly. Being Peter’s mother, or motherhood in general, is also portrayed as a source of Helene’s trauma. In the prologue, Peter’s mother is portrayed as creating distance between herself and her young son. The fourth sentence shows Peter baffled that his mother has decided he is too grown up to sleep in her bed anymore: “Vor einigen Tagen hatte ihm die Mutter ein Bett auf dem Boden der Küche gemacht. Er sei jetzt ein großer Junge, er könne nicht mehr in ihrem Bett schlafen” (M 9). Peter interprets the situation for the reader: As he is washing, his mother tells him to wash everything, including “das da auch” and Peter believes she is pointing out his genitals and interprets “ihm schien, als zeige sie mit einer gewissen Abscheu auf sein Geschlecht” (M 10). These scenes seem to relate to the mother’s rape by Russian soldiers, which her son witnessed the day before. Helene’s character is portrayed as disassociating with her son based on her experiences with men, Peter’s father and as well as the soldiers who have raped her.

At the forefront is the protagonist’s ambiguous role as victim and perpetrator. The tenuousness of her dual identity forms the central theme. This constellation was constructed intentionally, as Franck stated in an interview. She intended to write a novel featuring a character in the role of victim and perpetrator. The rape Peter witnesses identifies the mother as a victim,

whereas the mother's abandonment of her son shortly thereafter identifies her as a perpetrator. The narrator does not reveal the mother's motives for her actions, either to her son or to the reader. Furthermore, in the prologue, the reader is placed in a position of judge and jury in defense of Peter. Although some readers may not sympathize with Peter, the majority of press reviews, literary interpretations and Franck herself interpret the mother's actions as contrary to expectation and unfathomable.

While Helene's narrative in *Die Mittagsfrau* takes up considerably more space than Peter's story, his narrative includes more emotional language and more insight into his wartime experiences. Once Helene is cut off from her community, the reader also seems cut off from her emotionally. The narrator begins and ends the portion of the novel illustrating the devastating results of Helene's suffering from her son's perspective. Franck stated in an interview that she intended for the reader to sympathize with the young boy of the prologue and wonder how any mother could leave her son in this way. The rest of the novel is not meant to provide an answer or even to justify the mother's actions, but rather to help the reader understand the mother from another perspective. Essentially, Franck "sets up" the reader to be outraged at the mother, only to give a myriad of reasons throughout the novel why the mother's actions may be understandable given the circumstances.

The focus on mother figures and on motherhood frames the narrative in *Die Mittagsfrau*. Literary scholars, such as Alexandra Merley Hill and Valerie Heffernan, emphasize this aspect of the novel in their analyses. Heffernan's article in *Emerging German-Language Novelists of the Twenty-First Century* (2011) is entitled "Julie Franck, Die Mittagsfrau: Historia Matria and Matrilineal Narrative." In this article, Heffernan introduces Franck as a writer who concentrates on strong female figures, discusses Franck's motivation to write about her father's abandonment,

links Franck's microhistory to *historia matris* (theory of maternal microhistory), and analyses Franck's portrayal of motherhood. Heffernan concludes that *Die Mittagsfrau* provides a fresh perspective on "the possibilities and limitations of maternal influence" and insight into how women "contribute to shaping the course of history."³³³ I concur with Heffernan's assessment of Franck's depiction of "history from below" and her focus on women and motherhood. However, I argue that a key element in the novel's discussion of motherhood, is the fact that both mothers are persecuted for their Jewish heritage. While history may be presented as a backdrop, it plays a vital role in the character's trauma. Heffernan only hints at Helene's Jewish background, briefly mentioning that Helene is concerned about the Nuremberg Laws and referring to Fanny as Helene's mother's Jewish cousin. She does not explain that Helene is in hiding, that she married Wilhelm to help herself and her mother and that she becomes aware of the persecution her family and friends are facing. In her discussion on Martha and Helene as strong women involved in the war effort and shaping their own destiny, she describes Helene's role of motherhood as an additional "crucial role ... in the progression of history." Heffernan supports her analysis by describing a scene from the novel in which Helene is on a trolley with Peter during the war and a woman says to her "Gott sei Dank bekommen Frauen wie Sie wieder Kinder. Muss man sagen" (M 384). However, Heffernan fails to contextualize the scene and the woman's comment and instead discusses that "Helene has a crucial role to play in the progression of history."³³⁴ The woman is likely referring to Helene and her beautiful blond son as perfect examples of the *Aryan* race. Helene has also just come from the hospital where she assisted with the sterilization of a deaf girl. The woman's comment reminds Helene of the girl's beautiful red hair and she wonders at the senselessness of sterilizing women. Passages like these provide insight into Helene's

³³³ Heffernan, "Julie Franck, *Die Mittagsfrau*: *Historia Matris* and Matrilinial Narrative," 158.

³³⁴ Heffernan, "Julie Franck, *Die Mittagsfrau*: *Historia Matris* and Matrilinial Narrative," 152.

mindset as a mother and certainly warrant inclusion in a discussion on motherhood. Helene's circumstances contribute to her experiences of trauma, although she is able to successfully "pass" and survive as an *Aryan* woman. Furthermore, in her discussion on the novel's contribution to microhistory, Heffernan claims that "Helene's fate represents the fate of many mothers, daughters, and sisters who lived during this turbulent phase ... [and] reflect[s] the experiences of many German women"³³⁵ Analyzing Helene solely as a mainstream German character ignores a vital aspect of the novel, because from my perspective, it is written from a minority position and highlights the experiences and challenges faced by a minority character.

Franck portrays Helene's humiliation, her "Demütigung" as a result of her husband, Wilhelm, manipulating and sexually victimizing her. In contrast, Helene's relationship with Carl Wertheimer, a young student from an upper middle class Jewish family, is portrayed as one of mutual love and respect. Although Wilhelm, Peter's father, controls and demeans his wife, she resigns herself to this treatment as well as his demands that she not shop in Jewish-owned businesses even though she is aware of her Jewish background. Interestingly, Franck stated in an interview that the loss of Helene's lover can be interpreted as the cause of her listlessness in her marriage and the reason she ultimately leaves her son behind. While I agree that Helene displays symptoms of numbness after Carl's death and while Wilhelm is courting her, her childhood experiences, her precarious situation in Nazi Germany, her husband's maltreatment and her wartime experiences must be taken into consideration as well. Helene recognizes the danger she is in after visiting her mother in a clinic and being unable to help her due to the Nuremberg race laws and her employer's insistence that she produce an "Ausweis." She is essentially forced to marry Wilhelm, since he is able to provide her with false papers (M 327). After Wilhelm discovers she is not a virgin on their wedding night, Helene recognizes that he is staying with her

³³⁵ Heffernan, "Julie Franck, Die Mittagsfrau: Historia Matria and Matrilineal Narrative," 152

only because “Wilhelm hatte ihr die Papiere besorgt, er hatte sich strafbar gemacht, sie konnten jetzt einander fürchten ...” (M 348).

The protagonist of *Die Mittagsfrau* appears unable to face the reality of the racially motivated persecution she suffers. Despite the fact that she is marrying a man she is not in love with to obtain false papers, she appears unwilling to face the truth of the danger she and her family are in. As Andrea Reiter discusses in *Narrating the Holocaust*, some deportation victims and their families could not face the truth of their concentration camp experiences due to their belief “in the logic of ordinary life,” and the fact that the truth “threatened totally to shatter their faith in the world.”³³⁶ Helene’s refusal to acknowledge her plight or at least to put it into words must be understood in light of Reiter’s analysis. Even camp inmates charged with “shoveling human ashes” did not face the truth.³³⁷ Reiter attributes their incredulity to their “will to survive.” Their “self-deception served a protective function” according to her.³³⁸ On her wedding day to Wilhelm, after moving to Stettin, she wonders why she has not received any mail from her sister (M 336). Months later, she continues to write to Martha, under the alias Elisa, and her mother in hopes of receiving news. Wilhelm has made it clear that he believes Helene should no longer view “diese Leute ... als Verwandtschaft” (M 355). Wilhelm also clarifies his view of Helene the night the Reichsautobahn project in Stettin in 1936 was completed. “Vielleicht ist das doch ne Frage der Rasse, Kindchen ...” (M 357), It is clear that Helene has been avoiding thoughts about her background, because she is surprised to hear Wilhelm use the word “race” even though the race laws had already affected her mother.

Gradually, Helene learns more and more about the persecution of Jews. Even after she finds out that Martha has to work in an Arbeitslager and her aunt Fanny has been deported

³³⁶ Reiter, *Narrating the Holocaust*, 14-15.

³³⁷ Reiter, *Narrating the Holocaust*, 17

³³⁸ Reiter, *Narrating the Holocaust*, 15

“abgeholt worden,” she continues to have difficulty facing the situation (M 390). “Sie konnte nicht anerkennen, was sie verstanden hatte” (M 391). During the war, she also copes by not analyzing her precarious situation, but rather by burying herself in her work. There are moments that Helene’s suffering is portrayed. Her vivid memories and yearning after receiving a letter from Leontine, her sister’s lover, is one of these moments. “Helene würde ihre feste und flüchtige Handschrift immer erkennen, sie hatte sich in Helenes Inneres gebrannt. Eine unbändige Sehnsucht ergriff Helene, ihr wurde schwindlig, sie schwitzte”(M 391). This passage depicts Helene with classic PTSD symptoms. Her inability to continue to acknowledge and openly identify with her Jewish heritage and her knowledge of her family’s and friend’s fate is presented as traumatic. Helene cannot share her past with her son: “Wie sollte sie ihrem Sohn erklären, was die Juden für Menschen waren, wer sie war, warum sie nicht Sprechen konnte” (M 401). With her past cut off, she faced the loss of her former self, the loss of those around her that sustained her identity. On an excursion in the woods to collect mushrooms, Helene is finally confronted with the truth:

Sie hörte das Bellen eines Hundes, es klang aus der Ferne, dann eine Trillerpfeife ... Es würde doch kein Förster am Sonntag jagen? ... Helene lief weiter, Peter immer hinter ihr her. Sie kreuzten die Bahnlinie. Ein sinnesbetäubender Gestank wehte ihnen entgegen. ... Auf der Strecke stand in einiger Entfernung ein Viehtransport. ... Helene drehte sich um. Unterhalb des Stammes, in der Grube, ... kauerte ein Mensch. Helene eröffnete den Mund, sie konnte nicht schreien. Ihr Schreck saß so tief, dass kein Laut aus ihrer Kehle kam. (M 403-405)

Helene sees the man in hiding, shaking and fearing for his life. Peter has not seen him and she seizes her son and escapes through the woods. She realizes while she is running that humans are being transported like animals (Vieh) and that the man she found was a prisoner (“ein Entflohener”) (M 406). Shortly thereafter, they hear a shot fired, which Peter excitedly interprets as “ein Jäger” (M 407). Significantly, after these passages is the first time in the novel that

Helene contemplates abandoning her son. She had avoided getting pregnant and hoped to have a miscarriage with the help of some wine and pin needles (Stecknadeln), but after Peter's birth, she took very good care of his physical needs. In the woods, Helene walks ahead of her son and he loses sight of her. He begins to call her and then cry out in fear and she recognizes that he would not be able to find her. She hides from him and wonders: "War es nicht einfach, stillzuhalten? Die einfachste Übung schlechthin, kein Zittern, kein Knacken, nur Stille" (M 409). Certainly this is also a reference to the man she had discovered in hiding who had been unable to stop shaking. She asks herself "mit welcher Absicht, warum" she had hidden from Peter. She is ashamed of her actions at this point but waits until Peter gives up searching and begins to head back to town. Before she reveals herself to him, she takes a moment to eat some of the mushrooms she found and considers "wie süß war das Alleinsein, das Kauen, die Ruhe" (M 410).

Die Mittagsfrau portrays oppression and discrimination caused by many different reasons, including disability, Jewish heritage, and sexual orientation. I argue that a close textual analysis also shows that motherhood is a source of victimization for the female protagonist. Helene's identity as a woman is intertwined with expectations of her to become a mother in German society. However, she is not the kind of mother her society expects. In this sense the narrator brings societal expectations into play and shows how and why Helene rejects the expected role of motherhood. She leaves her child at a train station, something society expects no adult would do. Alexandra Merley Hill posits in her 2009 dissertation *Maternal drag: Identity, motherhood, and performativity in the works of Julia Franck* that "the mother figures in Franck's novels exhibit a performative maternal identity, specifically one that so conflicts with

expectations of the maternal that it calls into question those very expectations.”³³⁹ In the German press, the mother figure in *Die Mittagsfrau* was condemned for her treatment of her son. The marketing of the novel ensures that readers have formed an opinion regarding Helene and her actions toward her child before reading the book. Readers may be outraged at her maternal behavior, seeing her as a perpetrator against her child. The text is also framed in the prologue and epilogue from the abandoned child’s perspective. As the novel develops though, readers are confronted with Helene’s upbringing and adulthood in which she clearly becomes a victim.

It is interesting to examine Julia Franck’s construction of Helene as a mother in light of the press reviews that emphasize the themes of motherhood and abandonment. A half a century ago, in her ground-breaking work, *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir discussed the relationship between women and their children. While she argued that there is no real maternal instinct, she also believed “that unless the circumstances are positively unfavorable the mother will find her life enriched by her child.”³⁴⁰ In *Die Mittagsfrau*, Helene is thrust into an extremely *unfavorable* situation. As Beauvoir explains, if the mother dislikes the father of her child, she may “hate it, [the child], as being the offspring of the man she detests.”³⁴¹ The language used to portray the relationship between Helene and her husband shows that she loathes the Nazi she felt compelled to marry. Helene also had no aspirations to become a mother and placed more importance on her career. When Carl exclaims to Helene: “Vielleicht schenkst du mir Kinder” (M 238), she quickly retorts that she has no wish to have children before finishing school (M 239). She secretly aborts an unplanned pregnancy with Carl’s child. In her marriage, Helene carefully and desperately attempts to avoid pregnancy by performing elaborate cleansing acts after sex with her husband. A close reading of the interplay between Peter and his mother reveal

³³⁹ Hill, Abstract, *Maternal Drag*

³⁴⁰ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 511.

³⁴¹ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 494.

that Helene feels smothered by her son, as she describes his affection similar to an octopus squeezing her: “Mit seinen Händen griff er nach ihr, legte sie sich zu ihm ins gemeinsame Bett, umschlang [er sie] wie ein Krake. ... Seine Arme nahmen ihr die letzte Luft” (M 412).

Abandoning Peter also releases Helene from her previous life, from her identity as Alice, from any association with Wilhelm and from her role as mother.

It is Helene’s identity as a mother that seems to influence most of the reviews of *Die Mittagsfrau*. Helen’s character faces a loveless, demeaning marriage, but arguably better than the alternative of deportation. Similarly, to Franck’s depiction of Nelly in *Lagerfeuer*, the protagonist’s behavior in *Die Mittagsfrau* is influenced by her awareness of the threat facing the Jewish people in the Holocaust. Moreover, both Nelly and Helene seem affected by the death of a lover. The narrator in both novels depicts these women traumatized and at times debilitated from this loss.

Helene’s depiction in *Die Mittagsfrau* may be compared to Cordelia Edvardson’s autobiography, *Burned Child Seeks the Fire*, originally published in Swedish in 1984. Edvardson describes her childhood, her deportation, and her move to Sweden after the war. In Sweden she marries and has a child. As a mother to a boy, she is “aloof,” almost indifferent. One way she is able to deal with her past and make a future for herself, is to leave her husband, who has provided her with a calm supportive respite she needed. Lorenz argues that “after her [Edvardson’s] liberation, she worked toward creating a new identity for herself without mending broken ties” with her family in Germany.³⁴² Not only does Edvardson not restore her relationship with her German family, but she leaves her new Swedish family behind as well. Similarly, the narrator of *Die Mittagsfrau* shows that one way Helene can reconstruct an identity, is to shed her past which includes her son. How long can she pretend to be his mother, Alice? She may have

³⁴² Lorenz, *Keepers of the Motherland*, 150.

given birth to him, but their life together has been a lie. Severing ties with her son allows her to “forget” her Nazi husband and her time in hiding. Edvardson’s autobiography begins with a summary statement of her “the girl’s” outlook on life during her childhood: “The girl had of course always known that something was wrong with her.” The third person narrator refers to the girl’s “shameful, dark, secret,” her “dark” appearance and the “darkness” surrounding her childhood in Berlin.³⁴³ In *Die Mittagsfrau*, Peter grows up in a family of secrets. He understands that his mother is keeping something from him and searches for answers by prying open a secretary in her absence. He never finds the answers and only knows: “Sie hatte eine fragwürdige Herkunft” (M 28).

In her autobiography, Edvardson compares her mother’s actions to a mother in the concentration camp, who committed suicide because her child was taken from her and murdered. Can this suicide be labeled noble, as the “right” course of action under the circumstances? Is this the reaction that society expects of mothers? It seems that Edvardson implies that such a self-sacrifice is what makes a mother truly a mother. As Helga Kraft points out, the social construct of the self-less caring mother is a “Mythos” that developed especially during the nineteenth and twentieth century and “bewirkt heute noch Schuldgefühle und Rollenzwang.”³⁴⁴ The press reaction to the child’s abandonment in *Die Mittagsfrau* clearly shows this to be true.

As I have shown, the trauma of silence is a recurring theme. Both mothers suffer silently without revealing their true identity, their feelings or their experiences to their children. Unlike the narrative in Dücker’s novel *Himmelskörper*, where trauma is transmitted to the grandchildren through the communication of the traumatic wartime events, in *Die Mittagsfrau*, the narration

³⁴³ Edvardson, *Burned Child Seeks the Fire*, 3. See also Lezzi’s article “‘Gebranntes Kind sucht das Feuer’: Über die Zerstörung von Kindheit und Mutterschaft durch Auschwitz.“ She attributes this deception in her family, to the reason “das Mädchen eigene quälende Phantasien über ihr Andersein entwickelte” (605).

³⁴⁴ Kraft, “Vorwort,” *Mütter-Tochter-Frauen*, 1.

reveals itself instead in the mother's behavior towards their children. However, there is also a kind of trauma associated with silence. Peter is unaware of his mother's suffering and thus cannot rationalize her actions. *Himmelskörper* also thematizes the family conflicts arising from a mother's silence. The protagonist's mother has hidden the truth from her daughter because of her own shame and guilt. Although the mother was a child during the Nazi eras, she is constructed as a "typical" second generation German. She resents her parents, carries a tremendous amount of collective guilt and refuses to discuss her and her parent's past. However, she also carries guilt and shame of her own actions as a child and as the protagonist slowly begins to realize, her parent's involvement in Nazi circles as Party members. However, while in *Himmelskörper* silence plays a major role, the silence itself is not the chief cause of trauma, but rather it is the grandparent's enduring allegiance to Nazi ideology which is apparent in their actions and behaviors and which the protagonist eventually uncovers that causes transgenerational trauma.

Not only the characters in *Die Mittagsfrau* are silent, the novel may be interpreted as "silent" as well. Peter's perception of maltreatment may contribute to his unwillingness to see his mother, but it is striking that this is not articulated to the reader. While he recounts his experiences living through air raids, Helene's wartime suffering remains only implied. Helene shares her feelings neither with her son, nor with the reader.

V. TRANSGENERATIONAL IDEOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

“Memory ...is *knowledge from the past*. It is not necessarily knowledge *about* the past.”
-- Avishai Margalit³⁴⁵

In 1933, Martin Buber wrote: “Ich lebe nicht fern von der Stadt Worms, an die mich auch eine Tradition meiner Ahnen bindet.”³⁴⁶ This mid-size German town in Rhineland Palatinate was an important community of Ashkenazi Jewry in the Middle Ages and has remained a symbol of “German and Jewish life for a thousand years.”³⁴⁷ For decades, every church bell has sounded in Worms at noon every year on February 21st and March 18th. This commemoration or ritual serves as a reminder of the two most destructive Allied bombings of Worms in 1945. The bells sound for a few minutes and then stop. For decades, the bells sounded and no further explanation was offered; no formal speech given by the mayor. Knowledge of the meaning of this moment was mainly available by word of mouth and by studying history. In many ways it seemed like a nod to the surviving wartime generation in Worms. They would understand why the bells were ringing and take a moment to “remember.” Peter Burke discusses rituals of this sort in his essay entitled “Co-memorations. Performing the Past” and explains that performances of memory like the church bells in Worms annually on the anniversary of wartime Allied bombing is a performance of consensus, a kind of social memory. Commemorations or performances like these serve as “collaborative acts of recall or recollection” that make an event “historic” and part

³⁴⁵ Margalit, Avishai. *The Ethics of Memory*. 14. Philosopher writing about the the relationship between ethics and memory and morality and memory.

³⁴⁶ Quoted in Messmer, *Der Jüdische Friedhof*, 34.

³⁴⁷ This is Israeli president, Chaim Herzog’s statement on his visit to Worms in 1987. The Jewish synagogue (1034 CE) and cemetery are amongst the oldest in Germany and Europe. For more on the Jewish significance of Worms, see Nils Roemer’s account, *German City, Jewish Memory: The Story of Worms* (2010).

of a “grand-narrative”³⁴⁸ Today, the bells still sound, but are accompanied by formal celebrations of commemoration including an official speech by the mayor and press coverage. In his speech on Feb 22, 2010 the mayor, Michael Kissel, dedicated the commemoration ceremony to “den Wormser Opfern und allen Menschen, die unter dem Terror des Krieges leiden mussten” while at the same time calling attention to the need to also remember the atrocities committed by National Socialists. Kissel reproached Germans for allowing the National Socialist to gain power and for standing by as they committed their crimes. The following points were included and set apart in the written version of the speech provided on Worms’ city website:

- das deutsche Volk hat den Nationalsozialisten 1933 die Macht verliehen, die Welt mit Krieg, Terror und Völkermord zu überziehen,
- das deutsche Volk hat - abgesehen von den Mutigen des Widerstands - die Nationalsozialisten nicht an diesen Verbrechen gehindert,
- lange bevor unsere Stadt brannte, brannten die Synagogen, brannten Warschau, Coventry oder London,³⁴⁹
- und schließlich: Hitler und seine Clique haben nicht kapituliert, als klar war, dass der Krieg längst verloren war. Im Gegenteil: sie haben den Untergang des deutschen Volkes in Kauf genommen, am Ende sogar bewusst gewollt und gezielt betrieben.

These points were preceded by the mayor’s explanation that “60 Jahre nach Ende des Krieges müssen wir zur Kenntnis nehmen, dass rechte Kreise die Tragik der Luftangriffe einseitig umdeuten.”³⁵⁰ There are two points, which are particularly interesting and laden with meaning in the mayor’s speech: He suggests that including information about Germany’s reign of terror is necessary mainly because history is being “rewritten” by right wing extremists. In the section that discusses what Germany did, emphasis is placed on crimes committed by National Socialists. I believe that examining examples of this type of rhetoric shows that local commemorations remember German suffering while downplaying German guilt as a whole. In

³⁴⁸ Burke, Peter. “Co-memorations. Performing the Past” *Performing the Past*, 106.

³⁴⁹ Worms also has a synagogue. It is one of the oldest in Europe and home to the rabbi Raschi in the 13th century. The inside of the synagogue was destroyed by vandalism and fire on Kristallnacht. It was restored after WWII.

³⁵⁰ Gedenken an Bombardierung

the speech he differentiates between Germans, “das deutsche Volk,” and National Socialists, “Nationalsozialisten” thereby establishing a difference between Nazis and Germans. According to the mayor, extremists are to blame for how history is being viewed erroneously and extremists were to blame for crimes committed during the Third Reich. “Ordinary Germans” are only at fault for allowing National Socialists to gain power and for allowing *them* to commit crimes.

Such observations about Germany’s political culture and rhetoric correlate well to how some contemporary German authors structure their characters’ worldview in novels such as Tanja Dücker’s *Himmelskörper*. As I have previously discussed, in this novel, the grandparents, the wartime generation, make a clear distinction between themselves and *Nazis* whilst continuing to adhere to Nazi ideology. In *Himmelskörper* or in Grass’ novel *Im Krebsgang* discussed in chapter three, one may argue however that the grandparent generation presented by the narrator were Nazis during the Third Reich and stayed Nazis. There would be nothing too particularly interesting about that. What interests me in these novels is not just the way ideology is presented as something that is maintained by these characters despite knowledge of the Holocaust, but the way ideology is presented as something that is passed on to future generations.

This chapter investigates the way contemporary literature and film comment upon a *transmission* of ideology (belief system). My examination focuses on key texts that include second and third generation characters in contemporary Germany behaving and reacting in ways that show that certain teachings of ideology have been passed down to them. This *inheritance* may be explicit, implicit or fall somewhere in between being purposeful instruction and embedded in interactions, retained and interpreted by the subconscious. In a novel such as Grass’ *Im Krebsgang*, a member of the wartime generation deliberately indoctrinates her grandchild, while in a novel such as Dücker’s *Der längste Tag des Jahres*, several German postwar

generation characters display transgenerational influences without fully understanding the origins of their beliefs. In this chapter, I examine history, memory and trauma in Dücker's 2008 novel, *Der längste Tag des Jahres*, and her critic of the increasing "Opferdiskurs" and success of right-wing parties and groups in Germany in her compilation of essays in *Morgen nach Utopia* (2007). I argue that Dücker's work presents a post-war German society affected by "imbedded" or "transmitted" Nazi ideology and reactionary to the atrocities committed in the past. Within my discussion of the portrayal of transmitted ideology in contemporary German film and literature, I include a discussion of studies conducted in contemporary Germany on how Germans today view the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Furthermore, I examine contemporary debates on the (re)interpretations of history, normalization and right-wing extremism.

"Collective Instruction"

In her 2004 book, *Regarding the Pain of Others* Susan Sontag articulates an additional perspective on the concept of collective memory seen in terms of "collective instruction." She describes the way photographs become "memories" of the past and argues that certain specific well-known or iconic cultural images become part of a shared past. However, Sontag cautions that this is "over the long run, a fiction." She argues that instead of thinking of such a shared past as memory or collective memory, it may be termed more accurately "collective instruction." She explains that the term collective memory "is not a remembering but a stipulating: that *this* is important, and this is the story about how it happened..."³⁵¹ In line with Sontag's view, this chapter examines the portrayal of inherited ideology, a kind of instruction to future generations. Instruction include not just those about history, or what to remember, but also ideological viewpoints of how to judge others, how to behave, and what is right and wrong. Contemporary

³⁵¹ Sontag, *Regarding the pain of others*, 85-86.

authors in Germany portray National Socialist ideology *transmitted* to second and third generation characters, who may internalize the message or react to it on a conscious or subconscious level. This instruction may be explicit and direct as it is in *Im Krebsgang* (2002), or in the film *Anatomie* (2000). In *Der längste Tag des Jahres* (2006), viewpoints are *passed on* to future generation in a more nuanced way through behavior and language choices resulting in reactionary lifestyle choices. In *Anatomie*, the instruction is easily identifiable as fascist and combated by various individuals. In *Der längste Tag des Jahres*, characters are portrayed as generally unaware or unable to articulate the source of their beliefs although they may at times reflect on the origin of their behavior or reactions.

The continuation of Nazi ideology in contemporary German society is the main topic of the 2000 Thriller *Anatomie*, directed by the Austrian screenwriter and director Stefan Ruzowitzky (1961). *Anatomie* portrays a group of medical students involved in dubious medical practices in present day Germany that are based on Nazi ideology and practices. In *Anatomie*, a young woman enrolls in the Heidelberg University medical school only to find out that the head research group is led by Anti-Hippocratics, who conduct unethical experiments of patients, a practice dating back to the Nazis. The Nazis are specifically mentioned and the young protagonist finds out that her beloved grandfather was involved in developing inhumane medical experiments on patients. The film is essentially about dubious medical practices in present day Germany that are based on Nazi ideology and practices. The protagonist uncovers illegal, inhumane medical practices of dissections of live bodies. Reminiscent of the secret cult in the movie *The Da Vinci Code*, the underground organization of the Anti-Hippocrates have high-ranking medical and political officials in their membership and are in power to control society. In a similar vein to Konrad in Grass' *Im Krebsgang*, a young medical student takes the ideas of the

older National Socialist generation to heart and kills his fellow students to protect the organization. The Lodge is portrayed as a contemporary remnant of National Socialism, practicing medicine in line with Nazi ideology, but whose members do not fully recognize that they are essentially still following the ideas of the past and are horrified to learn the truth when the young medical students kills one the professors who is also a member of the organization. The press steps in and the cult breaks up. It seems as if this should be the end of Nazi medical practices, but the film shows how deeply ingrained ideology can be and how younger generations can take up older ideas. At the end of the film, a group of medical students plan on stepping into the footsteps of former Lodge forefathers even as the Lodge itself is gone. National Socialist ideals are presented as continuing in society into the 21st century. Neither exposure, nor education has succeeded in stopping the ideology from being taken up by the next generation.

Dückers' *Der längste Tag des Jahres* reads like a follow-up to *Himmelskörper* as it portrays transgenerational influences within the family starting with a grandparent figure, who is part of the Second World War wartime generation in Germany. However, this novel leaves more questions unanswered and provides a less straightforward explanation of how and why the characters are psychologically traumatized by Germany's past. The unique structure of the novel exemplifies one of the main themes of the text: memory and contributes to the overall sense of ambiguity. The novel is divided into five sections, told from the perspective of different third postwar generation characters. It takes place in 2002, on the day that the five adult children of Paul Kadereit learn of their father's unexpected death at the age of 60. Each section reveals the characters' memories about Paul and their relationship with him. There is some continuity across the sections, however each functions like a short story, giving the novel a choppy feeling.

The father, Paul, born in 1942, is part of the immediate postwar generation. He was raised in a small Bavarian town by his single mother after his father is killed fighting in North Africa during the Second World War. He marries Eva in 1960 and has five children: Silvia, David, Johanna, Benjamin and Thomas. Until his bankruptcy shortly before his death, he runs a shop specializing in exotic desert animals. Paul has a conservative middle-class outlook on life and values family, money, personal fitness, strength or ability to overcome adversity and succeed or survive despite obstacles. He believes in outdoor exercise and doesn't drink alcohol or smoke. He is described by the third generation characters as "autoritär" (TJ 24), serious, masculine, not religious (55), melancholy, distant and "eigenbrötlerisch aber auch energisch wirkend" (TJ 27). His home and business are presented as dark, mysterious and "maskulin" (TJ 22). Paul's son Bennie (Benjamin) is left with many unanswered questions about his father and wonders why his father insisted on having many children, yet was not interested in spending time with them or why he joined "einem Heimatlieder singenden Wanderverein" instead of demonstrating or living in communes in the 1960s (TJ 31).

Dückers paints a bleak picture in *Der Längste Tag des Jahres*, as the trauma of the war is passed on to post-war generations causing emotional and psychological problems. As Ingeborg Harms also points out in her review in *die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: "Tanja Dücker zeichnet ein rabenschwarzes Bild von dem Versuch nachwachsender Generationen, der psychischen Narbe des Zweiten Weltkriegs zu entkommen."³⁵² A black and white photograph of Paul's fallen father in a desert uniform hangs in his office and "sein Blick beherrschte den ganzen Raum" (TJ 23). Paul's obsession with desert animals seems to stem from his father's death in the war. Paul has placed his fallen father "auf einen Thron der Mystik und Exotik um ihm fernzubleiben, um ihn anhimmeln zu können, um nicht einen ganz normalen wahrscheinlich

³⁵² Harms, "Deutsch sein heißt tarnen. Kopf in den Sand: Tanja Dücker weckt Wüstentierinstinkte," 12.04.2006

hitler- oder Rommel begeisterten Deutschen vor sich zu sehen” (TJ 200-201). Paul’s youngest and late-born son Thomas leaves home at the age of twenty and eventually ends up in the American southwest living in the desert with little contact with his family. The novel ends with Thomas’ unsuccessful attempt to explain his father’s death to his young son, Sami, described as a wild and precocious child. Whereas Paul places importance on family, stability and a secure income, his two sons, Bennie and Thomas move from relationship to relationship and are unable or have no desire to seek financial security in a traditional full-time job or business. Thomas feels unable to change the circumstances of his life and even imagines that he may someday end up “als Penner.” His “irresponsible” life choices cause him both frustration and a “kindliche Euphorie.” Unlike Paul, who chastises his son Bennie for having several part-time jobs, Thomas “hatte weder Vorstellungen noch Wünsche, was aus seinem Sohn einmal werden sollte” (TJ 207).

Unlike Bennie and Thomas, Paul’s oldest daughter, Sylvia, had a special and close relationship with her father. She recalls his warm and loving nature towards her and the sense of “Geborgenheit” she felt in his presence as a child. She does not get along well with her siblings, David and Anna, partially because she feels that they criticize her life choices and their father. Sylvia appears weak and unsure of herself; she prefers her husband in the role of protector and has a troubled relationship with her daughter Miriam, who espouses anti-bourgeoisie, anti-establishment and anti-Capitalist views. Miriam critically refers to the United States as “voll der Fascho-Staat” (38). Sylvia’s reacts thus:

Sylvia fixierte ihre Tochter und dachte: So fett wie du war ich nicht mal im neunten Monat. ... So dummen Käse wie du erzählt niemand nach der Tagesschau. Du kannst ja nicht einmal den Namen Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul richtig aussprechen. Und

überhaupt: Weißt du überhaupt, was Faschos sind? Lern du erst mal vernünftig einzuparken, bevor du vom “Fascho-Staat” quatschst (TJ 45).³⁵³

Silvia defends her father’s traditional lifestyle and conservative views but she also appears affected by his beliefs as she suffers from psychosomatic asthma attacks and is unable to tell her husband and her daughter about her father’s death (TJ 61)

The father’s obsession with desert animals functions as a metaphor for his admiration for hard work, success and survival. He delights in explaining his fascination for the animals’ nature: “‘Es ist unglaublich wie diese Tiere unter den härtesten Bedingungen überleben können!’ rief er aus und wiederholte ‘unter den härtesten Bedingungen.’” (TJ 26). What he admires most is the various forms of “Überlebensstrategie” that different animals specialize in. Paul became interested in these kinds of animals from a neighbor, whose exotic collection survived the bombings of the war (TJ 52). The animals’ ability to survive adverse living conditions as well as prolonged hunger and thirst attracted Paul to these creatures. His interest in them represent a reaction to the trauma he experienced as a child and his beliefs in “survival of the fittest.” Paul’s daughter, Anna, finds herself quickly prejudice against people who are ill or people with “defects” and ponders that her feelings do not make any sense. She cannot understand what the origin of these feelings are (TJ 92-93). His animals also allow Paul to distance himself from his everyday family life. His son David also distances himself to escape reality, what he terms “Ausblendung der Außenwelt” (TJ 101) and Thomas leaves home without really understanding why. He only knows that he felt a kind of “Beklemmung zu Hause” and wanted to escape his father (TJ 158). However, as the last and longest section of the novel about Thomas indicates, regardless of how much he attempts to distance himself, he invariably and ironically ends up

³⁵³ “Wieczorek-Zeul wehrt sich gegen Vorwürfe.” Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul is a German SPD politician who has been criticized by Germany’s *Zentralrat der Juden* for being anti-Semitic due to her stance against Israeli’s use of violence.

making life decisions based on his father's obsession with the desert, which harkens back to his grandfather's death in Africa.

Contemporary views of the perpetrators and History (Re)interpreted

In *Täter der Shoah: Fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?* (2002), the editor, German historian Gerhard Paul, criticizes that contemporary history studies in Germany “spiegeln die Tabus und Verdrängungen, die Ängste und Interessen der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft und der Geschichtswissenschaft wider.”³⁵⁴ The compilation of book articles is in response to renewed interest in studying National Socialist perpetrators following the publication of Goldhagen's and Browning's studies and the changing view of the German army after the German Army exhibition in the 1990s, discussed in chapter one. His book questions the way German historians have emphasized radical theories of National Socialist perpetrators ranging from viewing them as “psychopaths” to “ordinary Germans.”³⁵⁵ Specifically, Paul presents perpetrators not simply as machines or cogs in a wheel, but examines small-scale mid-level *managers* loyal to the regime gladly helping to plan, organize and execute mass murder whilst taking pride in their work.³⁵⁶ Claudia Koontz explains that Paul emphasizes the “key role of specifically National Socialist values in preparing men and some women to slaughter helpless human beings, apparently with little mental anguish.”³⁵⁷ Harald Welzer's article in Paul's book, “Wer waren die Täter,” illustrates this point succinctly.

In contrast to public and private discourse on victims and perpetrators, Welzer advocates that there is no essential difference between Nazi Germans and contemporary Germans in their

³⁵⁴ Paul, *Täter der Shoah* ..., 13.

³⁵⁵ In the 1970s, Klaus Theleweit studied the Freikorps and argued in *Männerphantasien* (1977) that some German men were traumatized under the practices of the Wilhelminian era and formed fascist perspectives. His analysis was influenced by psychological and psycho-analytical theories.

³⁵⁶ Paul, *Täter der Shoah* ..., 65.

³⁵⁷ Koontz, “Review ...”

willingness to become perpetrators under certain circumstances. He discusses past approaches in historical scholarship that examines who the perpetrators of the Holocaust were. Just as in the mayor's speech in Worms in the beginning of this chapter, Welzer concludes that scholars have continued to differentiate between a collective *us* and *them* when investigating how *they* (the perpetrators), could commit such atrocities. He suggests the following:

eine analytische Annäherung an die Täter und Täterinnen vorzunehmen. die sie grundlegend als nicht verschieden von uns wahrnimmt und konzipiert - zumal es im Fall der Shoah keine gesellschaftliche Gruppe gegeben hat, die sich als immun gegen die Bereitschaft zum Töten gezeigt hat... Das heißt: Wenn es zutreffend ist, daß es keine Mörder gibt, sondern nur Menschen, die Morde begehen, sind die meisten von uns unter Umständen wahrscheinlich bereit zu töten – es müssen nur die situativen, sozialen und handlungsdynamischen Bedingungen dafür vorliegen, daß sich Potentialität auch in Handeln übersetzt.”³⁵⁸

Welzer's proposal on how to view perpetrators includes a reflection on humankind in general and what humans may be capable of doing given certain circumstances. Such a critical but perhaps realistic view can be interpreted in a variety of ways. On the one hand this view stops differentiating between *those* German perpetrators and contemporary Germans. This differentiating has allowed contemporary Germans to distance themselves from atrocities committed by their forbearers. However, it could also easily allow historians to “excuse” Germans of the Third Reich. If it is just the case that humans, given a certain set of developments and circumstances may behave a certain way and become willing to kill others, then the notion of guilt or shame would not apply.

However, another study by Welzer on “ordinary” German Wehrmacht soldiers would argue against the view that there was simply a *Bereitschaft* or willingness to commit murder. With historian, Soenke Neitzel, Welzer examined recorded transcripts of German soldiers interrogated by British intelligence in which they were asked about civilians they had killed

³⁵⁸ Welzer, “Wer waren die Täter,” 238.

during the war. In the 2011 publication, *Soldaten Protokolle vom Kämpfen, Töten und Sterben*, Neitzel and Welzer report their findings that many soldiers responded that they killed because they enjoyed it. Many historians have asked the question: how could seemingly ordinary people commit such crimes and commit them so enthusiastically with such fervor and allegiance? The *Soldaten Protokolle* accounts provides unique insight since it consists of transcribed conversations German prisoner of war soldiers had with one another while they either forgot or were unaware that they were being recorded. The book provides a mix of scholarly contextual information and interpretations and transcribed dialogs that serve to illustrate various points the authors make. These conversations took place before the end of the war, while the soldiers were isolated from news sources in American and British POW camps during and after the Second World War. One surprising finding the authors made, is how candidly the soldiers discuss killing Jews and others, how proud they seem to be about these actions and how easily these topics of murder are integrated into the rest of the soldiers' conversations. This means that killing has become a norm, it is discussed no differently than the way the topic of love or family is approached and it is something to boast about – seen as a positive element of one's identity.

In an earlier historical study, *Ordinary men Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the final solution in Poland* (1992), author Christopher Browning also asks this question in his examination of a group of policemen assigned to a special battalion to round up and kill Jews after the invasion of Poland. While Browning discusses a number of factors that could have led these ordinary men to commit unspeakable crimes, he points to the psychological indoctrination on race that the men received under National Socialism. He terms the Second World War a “race war” from the German perspective.³⁵⁹ Another major factor Browning identifies is socialization

³⁵⁹ Browning, *Ordinary men ...*, 160-161.

in family, school and society to adhere to authority and to conform to society's norms.³⁶⁰ Browning's findings were attacked and dismissed by Daniel Goldhagen in his study, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996), in which he argued that Germans possessed a unique kind of "eliminationist antisemitism" as part of their national identity, which made them willing and even happy to execute Jews.³⁶¹ I agree with Goldhagen that Germans were anti-Semitic before National Socialism, however, in line with other scholars that have questioned Goldhagen's findings, I disagree that Germans' anti-Semitism was particularly unique or different from anti-Semitic beliefs in other countries. The evidence presented by Browning as well as a number of scholars in sociology on the dangers of ideological teachings on prejudice, including anti-Semitism, and peer pressure are astounding.³⁶²

Trends of normalization can be seen particularly in pop culture, from sporting events to music. In the 2010 scholarly compilation of articles, *Reworking the German Past: Adaptations in Film, the Arts, and Popular Culture*, Sunka Simon traces the re-appropriation and adaptation of Nazi Schlager in post 2000 popular culture. She points to a re-interpretation and the loss of a taboo surrounding the lyrics and melodies associated with songs from the 1930s and 1940s in popular film, television shows, and music productions.³⁶³ Simon concludes that these *new* or seemingly re-discovered adaptations and rearrangements of old popular Schlager "issue a license to claim pleasure about one's Third Reich memories or, in lieu of actual memories, to claim the evoked heritage"³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ Browning, *Ordinary men ...*, 172-174.

³⁶¹ Goldhagen, 50. This phrase is contained in the title of his second chapter: "The evolution of Eliminationist Antisemitism in Modern Germany"

³⁶² See also the Stanley Milgram's experiment in *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (2009).

³⁶³ Simon, "Reappropriation ...," 133-141. This trend has also led to the de-tabboization of performers such as Hans Albers, Zarah Leander and Lale Anderson to name a few. In 2012, the mayor of Berlin presided over the induction of Hans Albers' star on the "Boulevard der Stars" in Berlin.

³⁶⁴ Simon, "Reappropriation ...," 149

In her capacity as author of articles at *Die Zeit*, Tanja Dückers regularly comments on issues in German society, such as religion, politics, social reforms, and poverty. She remains critical of how people in Germany respond to Germany's National Socialist past. In a 2006 article that discussed a recent project to re-publish NS newspapers with commentary which was halted and prohibited by the government, Dückers expressed her concerns with the ways projects like these are handled in contrast to the way fictionalized accounts, which she believes can be quite influential, are treated:

Vor allem spricht dieses Verbot von den anhaltenden Schwierigkeiten in diesem Land, mit den Residuen der NS-Zeit und der Aufarbeitung derselbigen adäquat umzugehen. Geschichtlich verklärende Filme wie "Der Untergang", in dem ausgerechnet die letzten Tage (statt die ersten!) des dritten Reichs als Tragödie inszeniert wurden und Figuren wie Albert Speer als moralisch intakte Edelmänner dargestellt wurden, wurden zum Teil hoch gelobt, dabei boten sie sich viel eher für jüngere Menschen als hollywoodesk-verharmlosende Folie des NS-Regimes an – und erreichten im Übrigen ein zahlenmäßig viel größeres Publikum als es dem Zeitungszeugen -Projekt jemals gelingen wird.³⁶⁵

Popular music and films, such as those discussed by Simon and critiqued by Dückers that provide a differentiated picture of Nazi ideology or values contribute to the re-interpretation of history.

Several 21st-century texts portray second and third generation characters reinterpreting history and with beliefs similar to Nazi ideology. In *Im Krebsgang*, the narrator, born in 1945, encounters lively internet chatroom discussions regarding the circumstances around Wilhelm Gustloff's death and the sinking of the *Gustloff* ship named after Wilhelm Gustloff. The narrator is perplexed by the growing contemporary interest in the historical time period of The Reich: "Wieso, hab ich mich gefragt sind heutzutage Jugendliche ganz verrückt nach diesem Gustloff, und all dem, was sonst noch mit ihm zu tun hat?"³⁶⁶ His mother, who mourns for Stalin while praising the "Kraft durch Freude" programs and the classlessness of the *Gustloff* ship, attributes

³⁶⁵ Dückers, "Die Zeitungszeugen-Debatte ist ein Nebenschauplatz."

³⁶⁶ Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 50.

young people's interest to the silence surrounding German civilian suffering (including the sinking of the *Gustloff*) and adds that the West German emphasis on only valuing the memory of Auschwitz is also to blame.

History's rewriting, reexamining and reviewing results in contemporary consequences. Right wing extremists have referred to the Dresden bombing as "Bombenholocaust" – an attempt to change perpetrators into victims, to relativize the atrocities of the Nazi regime and its people.³⁶⁷ February 2010, a massive demonstration took place of (mostly) young people in support of remembering the victims in Dresden. This group claims it supports nationalism, but does not affiliate itself directly with the Nazi regime. I believe this is only because it is a crime in Germany to do so. Right wing groups such as these label Germany a "Schuld und Sühne Gesellschaft" and call for a re-evaluation of history because they claim that post-Wende generations demand to know why the death of their family members in the Dresden bombing is not termed a *war crime*.³⁶⁸ German historian Jörg Friedrich makes similar statements in the controversial account, *Der Brand, Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940-1945* (2002).³⁶⁹ At the same time, a demonstration took place in support of Jewish and Muslim citizens and with anti-Nazi slogans to blockade and disrupt the "Nazi supporters." The blockade succeeded and the approximately 5000 strong "Naziaufmarsch" dissolved.³⁷⁰ Demonstrations like these are easily combatted and would most likely be viewed negatively by most Germans. However, as a number

³⁶⁷ "Neo-Nazi march blocked in Dresden."

³⁶⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGhzXD4crZc&feature=related>.

³⁶⁹ Of course, Germany had started the war unprovoked, and escalated it to large-scale proportions, bombing cities such as London without care to civilian concerns. Although the bombing of German cities was devastating and may have gone beyond the scale of what was necessary for the Allies to win the war, it was still a part of "normal" warfare. Additionally, one of the aims of the RAF was to weaken the German morale and disrupt everyday life to reduce the German support for the war at home. See Keith Crawford, *War, nation, memory: international perspectives on The Second World War in school history textbooks* (2007).

³⁷⁰ Jansen, Frank and Henning Onken, "Naziaufmarsch in Dresden verhindert" *Der Tagesspiegel*. 12.02.2010.

of major studies have revealed, they are not as dangerous as more widespread values of anti-Semitism and Fremdenhass, which are more widespread and less easily combatted.

In 2011 *Spiegel* reported on right-wing “ideologische Erziehungskultur” in Germany. The article specifies Brandenburg in its examples, detailing how children in Neo-Nazi families are being indoctrinated and NDP community organizations are keeping the memory of National Socialism alive through rituals, materials, dress etc.³⁷¹ The number of children in the community reported upon is relatively small in comparison to the number of inhabitants in Brandenburg. Nevertheless, right wing organizations are closely watched by the authorities including the department of education and *Erziehung* to determine how the children are influenced. Extreme examples like these easily gain the attention of the media and show how history and memory may be used for ulterior reasons to foster people’s beliefs. “Holocaust Denial” is a part of most of these right-wing organizations and as Stephen Atkins explains in his study, serves to legitimize the movement and criticize the state of Israel. Such denial can take many forms and is widespread internationally.³⁷² Nonetheless, famous Holocaust deniers, such as Ernst Zündel, David Irving, and Fred Leuchter are quickly ostracized by the mainstream press and most individuals consider them ludicrous extremists. However, in contrast to demonstrations by right wing groups or NDP party members, as the study *Opa war kein Nazi*, showed, a large number of *ordinary* Germans are disconnected from the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany in the mid-20th century. History reconfigured to emphasize German mainstream victims of war and either question or *forget* various aspects of the Shoah is much more common than extreme examples of Neo-Nazis.

³⁷¹ Baumgärtner, “Rechtsextreme Erziehung: Kindheit am rechten Rand“

³⁷² Atkins, *Holocaust Denial As an International Movement*, 2. Atkins concludes that “Holocaust denial has become a dangerous international movement” (233) and points to the internet as a haven for Holocaust deniers to disseminate their material (235). However, as I also point out in my discussion, Atkins states that “the saving grace [of this problem] is that so much of Holocaust denial material transcends reason” (236).

The study, *Opa war kein Nazi*, is the report of a study conducted with families and individuals in Germany of all generations about their “Geschichtsbewusstsein” and describes the generational view of history in Germany. It generalizes that young people in Germany know and learn factual information about National Socialism yet at the same time cannot picture their grandparents as part of that system. Even if they know that they lived at the time or that their grandfathers fought in the war, there is a disconnect between their relationship with their grandparents and great-grandparents and the historical material covered in school classes. They “know” their grandparents were a part of the Nazi regime, but they do not associate them with Nazi atrocities. Students furthermore display a “feeling” of the Nazi period which does not stem from factual historical information learned in school but rather from the information relayed in familial circles. Students profess to be familiar with certain concepts before they learned these in school. One student born 1983 remarks “Das Normale halt bekommen wir an der Schule, und die Beispiele dafür, die hört man dann bei der Oma”³⁷³ In contrast to knowledge students obtain in school, which emphasizes “Verbrechen, Ausgrenzung und Vernichtung,” students show an “understanding” of history born from familial sources that emphasize “Krieg und Heldentum, Leiden, Verzicht, und Opferschaft, Faszination, und Größenphantasien.”³⁷⁴ The authors of *Opa war kein Nazi*, argue that an understanding of history has a cognitive and an emotional dimension and that the past is relayed from generation to generation “dass die Vergangenheit über intergenerationelle Weitergabeprozesse höchst lebendig in die Gegenwart hineinreicht.”³⁷⁵ The study furthermore shows that history is not simply transmitted and does not simply match up with historical events, but rather is constructed in the present. The authors aim to study if Geschichtsbewusstsein from familial circles does or does not match the “kulturelle Gedächtnis”

³⁷³ Welzer, *Opa war kein Nazi*, 9. The name of the study is “Tradierung von Geschichtsbewusstsein.”

³⁷⁴ Welzer, *Opa war kein Nazi*, 10.

³⁷⁵ Welzer, *Opa war kein Nazi*, 11

of National Socialism discussing Jan Assmann's findings regarding "kommunikatives Gedächtnis."³⁷⁶

The authors selected families in which history was a topic discussed, which means that their findings do not apply to all German families since silence about the Nazi period was the case in many families. However, the study is important because it shows that history is transmitted and opinions about history are formed from information relayed in families and in fictional movies rather than knowledge learned in the education system. Indeed, family information was shown to be more powerful in shaping people's understanding of history and the school material was often interpreted based on knowledge learned in families.

Contemporary Antisemitism not in spite but because of Auschwitz

In the 1990s there were numerous occurrences of violent anti-Semitism and ethnocentrism in Germany that garnered press coverage. The authors I have examined in this dissertation, Julia Franck and Tanja Dückers, bring the concerns of memory, history, identity and trauma to the forefront in their novels. My close reading of these authors' works and other fictional accounts shows the continuing struggle with history in the third generation revealing contemporary prejudice and anti-Semitism. In the study "Autoritarismus und Ethnozentrismus in Deutschland. Ein Phänomen der Jugend oder der Alten?" Aribert Heyder and Peter Schmidt examine the level of authoritarian and ethnocentric tendencies in Germans today. The authors discuss that feelings of shame and problems associated with coming to terms with the German past contribute to present day anti-Semitism and ethnocentrism. Interestingly, the article states that prejudice is directed not at specific instances or people, but rather at a variety of beliefs about "the Jewish people," such as that they have too much influence in the world or are trying

³⁷⁶ Welzer, *Opa war kein Nazi*, 12

to benefit from the Holocaust.³⁷⁷ In his review of the book *Exklusive Solidarität: Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland...*, Tracey Kinney identifies how the work discusses “anti-Semitism and German identity” concluding that the authors see a “secondary anti-Semitism” emerge after The Second World War, because “Jews now became the source of ongoing German guilt, well beyond the perpetrators’ generation.” Kinney also discusses how in the book, the Left is identified as trying to “relativize the crimes of the Nazis by drawing parallels to the bombing of German cities ...and equate Israeli action against the Palestinian people with those of the National Socialists against Jews.”³⁷⁸ The study reported by Heyder and Schmidt confirms that some people have developed racial prejudice due to learning about the events of the Holocaust. Kinney discusses how an article by Andrei Markovitz illustrates a relationship between “anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism,” which reached a highpoint in “European anti-Americanism (with strongly anti-Semitic overtones)... in a Kulturkampf against George W. Bush’s United States – a struggle that was an integral part of the formation of a new European identity.”³⁷⁹

With the discourse on Germans as Victims and the lifting of taboos in Germany, organizations and political party organizers aim to “remember” or “re-write” history to gain popular support for their causes. One example is the NPD party in Germany, which states that “Die Deutschen ... müssen sich zwischen einer multikulturellen Gesellschaft und einer nationalen Gemeinschaft entscheiden. Nur die NPD vertritt den Weg der nationalen Gemeinschaft.” They maintain the premise “Unsere Sprache wird verschwinden, unsere Kultur wird verschwinden und in der letzten Konsequenz werden wir als Volk verschwinden”³⁸⁰

Hateful and Anti-Semitic/anti-multicultural organizations and individuals use the German

³⁷⁷ Heyder, “Autoritarismus und Ethnozentrismus in Deutschland ...,” 127, 129.

³⁷⁸ Kinney, Review, 2.

³⁷⁹ Kinney, Review, 3.

³⁸⁰ “Fragen an die NPD.”

memory culture and Germany's renewed interest in examining the Germany civilian population's suffering during The Second World War to garner support. For example, right wing extremists marched under the banner "Nie mehr Bombenterror" on the 60 year anniversary of the bombing Dresden February 13, 2005.³⁸¹ The German TV movie *Dresden* also received responses by extremist groups and individuals. An apparently American writer, calling himself Incog Man, published a discussion about the bombing of Dresden and a response to the movie on his Anti-Semitic website, under the title "I Cried Tears For Dresden ...". The article begins with a memoir of the son of an American servicemen who questions how his father could kill so many German civilians in bomb raids and not know the extent of the death toll. The short memoir is followed by Incog Man's discussion of the movie *Dresden* and its portrayal of German suffering. The text is eerily reminiscent of Günter Grass' fictional Konrad's online hate speech as it claims that "because of the Jew control of the Western media, Americans generally know next to nothing about Dresden or any of what happened to the Germans. The Jew just cannot allow anyone else to be as big a victim as them ..."³⁸²

Wolf Biermann spoke in Israel in 2006 and alluding to his own statement many years prior that Germans would never forgive the Jews for what the Germans did to them, he assessed the current situations thus:

Drei Jahrzehnte nach dem Holocaust hatten die Deutschen dem jüdischen Volk schon fast verziehen, was sie ihm angetan haben. Doch nun werden die Täter mehr und mehr ungnädig angesichts dieses heillosen Dauerkonflikts ihrer Opfer. Immer wieder höre ich das kalt-herzliche Argument: Diese Juden müßten doch während der Nazizeit am eigenen Leibe gelernt haben, was Unterdrückung ist.... Die simpleren Durchschnittsdeutschen ergreifen Partei für die Araber. Es wird wieder der Refrain des alten Liedes geschwiegen, geknurr und geplärrt: Die Juden sind an allem schuld!³⁸³

³⁸¹ This term caused a debate on freedom of speech and the legality of the right wing extremist groups' use of such terms. It was ruled that it was not illegal. See the newspaper article "Kein Verfahren wegen 'Bomben-Holocaust'"

³⁸² "I Cried Tears For Dresden ..."

³⁸³ "Zu Gast am Bucerus-Institut: Wolf Biermann" (2006). See also "Deutschland verrät Israel" in *Die Zeit*.

Similarly, Katja Behrens argues in a 1999 newspaper article in *Die Zeit*, “Zu Hause in der Fremde,” that Ignatz Bubis was not seen by the majority of Germans as a German and that this remarks were misconstrued in the press, even by papers such as die Tageszeitung, which Behrens considers a reputable paper concerned with “Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit.”³⁸⁴ She argues that the Jewish-German symbiosis is a myth because she believes that such a “deutsch-jüdisches Gespräch” has never truly existed as an historical concept. Behrens echoes the sentiments of normalization I have discussed in this chapter when she describes her experiences with a teacher in the early 1990s spouting the words “Lassen wir die Vergangenheit ruhen” – the same phrase used in the 1950s after the war. Her teacher had learned from his former teacher, “der ihm nach dem Krieg den Weg gewiesen hatte: ‘Wir müssen jetzt den Blick nach vorn richten.’” Furthermore, in this article, Behrens also comments on contemporary German society’s continuing prejudice of Jews (which I have termed inherited ideology). Behrens describes her painful personal experiences living in Germany with the “secret” of being Jewish. A secret which her mother aimed to keep Germans in her midst from knowing. After Behrens published an article on her family in the 1980s, her mother was upset and reacted ashamed that the neighbors would now know about her “Wiedergutmachungsrente.” Behrens recalls her mother stating that she did not want others to know that she belonged to a part of “einer missachteten Rasse.” Clearly, Behrens portrays her mother afraid to tell her German friends and neighbors who she really is, because they would think less of her if they knew she was Jewish and a Holocaust survivor. Historian of German-Jewish history, Julius Schoeps, discusses Germany’s fascination with Norman Finkelstein’s book translated 2001 as *Die Holocaust Industrie* which pushed the text to the top of Germany’s bestseller list and theorizes that many Germans like the book because they believe it confirms already existing stereotypes about Jews,

³⁸⁴ Behrens reports that in a survey, only 43% thought Bubis was German and 22% thought he was from Israel.

such as their willingness to exploit others for their own gain.³⁸⁵ Furthermore, Schoeps argues, the text allows Germans to approach taboo topics about the Holocaust without fear of being labeled Anti-Semitic.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ Schoeps, "Die deutsch-jüdische Anormalität ...," 276

³⁸⁶ Schoeps, "Die deutsch-jüdische Anormalität ..." 283

CONCLUSION

Leben? oder Theater?
Charlotte Salomon³⁸⁷

My dissertation contributes to the understanding of the interplay between history, memory and trauma in 21st-century German culture as it is illustrated in novels that thematize the Second World War and the Holocaust and includes a survey and critical discussion of relevant historical, therapeutical and social critical debates. The two authors, whose work I have chosen for the primary analysis, Julia Franck and Tanja Dückers, are similar in terms of age, gender, locality, and their novels' subject matter, but write from vastly different perspectives. Both authors are women, relatively close in age (both members of the third generation), from Berlin (albeit Franck spent her first seven years in the GDR), and both write novels that highlight familial and generational issues of memory and trauma. However, Franck writes from a minority position whereas Tanja Dückers identifies herself as a member of the mainstream majority. Franck focuses on characters of Jewish descent and in two of her novels, with East German background. As I have discussed, both authors critically examine the consequences of trauma in their novels. The description of characters' responses and experiences correlates to the way contemporary scholars in psychology identify the effects of trauma transmitted generationally in populations affected by the Second World War and the Holocaust. Both authors also thematize the influence of family upbringing and choose a familial setting for all the following four novels I have discussed in my study, Franck's *Lagerfeuer*, *Die Mittagsfrau* and Dückers' *Himmelskörper* and *Der längste Tag des Jahres*. An analysis of the novels' focus on transgenerational aspects of memory and history, identity and silence, trauma and ideology

³⁸⁷ Steinberg, "History, Memory, Modernism," 3. Michael Steinberg interprets Salomon's work as "a work of recovery" that presents the close relationship between memory and history and the relationship of the self to history.

provides another perspective with which to evaluate ongoing debates in German society. As Julia Pascal points out in her book review in *The Independent*, Franck's *Mittagsfrau* highlights "the generational damage which continues in the European memory." She credits Franck with "explor[ing] intergenerational trauma in a totally fresh way."³⁸⁸

My study underscores the complexities involved in exploring the cultural influences of the intersection of memory, history and trauma. Although I focus on analyzing literary texts based on a close reading, my work is interdisciplinary as it utilizes theoretical principles derived from sociological and psychological studies. Furthermore, I have analyzed the literary themes by relating them to contemporary cultural trends and historical phenomena. Examining the work of psychologists and sociologists who have studied traumatized individuals and groups enables me to contextualize the representation of transgenerational trauma in recent works of German literature more closely. Additionally, as I have shown, the way Franck and Dücker present the effects of trauma transmission mirrors the way psychologists and others working in the field of memory and therapy describe transgenerational trauma.

The theme of continuity permeates my discussion in the preceding chapters. Most of the novels I have examined illustrate the link between history (the past) and the present. Continuity is evident in the way second-generation characters of Jewish descent struggle with their parent's and grandparent's trauma. Moreover, the authors reveal a kind of continuity in the attitudes toward Jews or the "other" in German society before, during and after the Nazi era. Franck addresses oppression and discrimination in East German society in *Lagerfeuer* and more succinctly in *Rücken an Rücken*. In *Mittagsfrau*, the protagonist and her family are confronted with anti-Semitism before World War I, in the Weimar Republic and in the Nazi era. In a short documentary film on *Rücken an Rücken*, Franck shares that Thomas, one of the protagonists in

³⁸⁸ Pascal, "The Blind Side of the Heart ..."

the novel, who commits suicide at the end, recognizes “dass er in dieser Gesellschaft nichts als ein winziges Rädchen sein wird, dass einer Ideologie dienen soll”³⁸⁹

To see themes of history in literature simply as a rehashing of the past, as an emphasis on something relegated to earlier times, or as a representation of former events do not do these works justice. Rather, as my study has shown, this literature addresses critical questions in the present. As Tanja Dücker emphasizes:

Allemaal eignet sich in Zeiten diffuse gewordener Feindbilder und einer “neuen Unübersichtlichkeit” ein komplexer Roman besser zur Kritik der Verhältnisse als ein “Diskussionsbeitrag” oder eine geraffte Stellungnahme auf einem Forum (MU 164).

Both Franck and Dücker comment openly on oppression and intolerance in society in interviews, media articles, and published essays. Their fiction illustrates these concerns as well. By focusing on topics that harken back to aspects of the Third Reich and on continuity as a theme, the authors invariably draw attention to societal prejudices and discrimination.

In responses to matters of public debate, Julia Franck and Tanja Dücker exhibit a similar perspective as in their novels and aim to highlight issues of marginalization in German society. Today, *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (prejudice against foreigners) is a more pressing concern in Germany than anti-Semitism, albeit not unrelated. In particular, Turkish residents and Germans of Turkish descent are targets of prejudice, especially Islam phobia. Consequently, the German government and various institutions aim to amend policies to further equality and inclusion. The 21st-century citizenship reforms are one example of these measures. Another movement supported by the Muslim community was “Pro-Reli” in Berlin, which hoped to provide parents with more choices and religious equality in religious education in German schools. Interestingly, both Franck and Dücker have voiced their concerns and authored newspaper articles against movements or changes in policies intended to provide Muslim communities with inclusion. They

³⁸⁹ Schmidt-Langels, *Julia Franck Rücken an Rücken*.

advocate against Pro-Reli and for a stricter separation of church and state respectively. Although religious instruction (Religionsunterricht) is offered as “ordentliches Lehrfach” in most public schools in Germany, in certain states, such as Berlin and Bremen, the courses are electives, taught by instructors from religious communities, vary from school to school and may be replaced by general classes in ethics or religious history classes. In 2004, the Berlin Senate added philosophy/ethics to the curriculum as another elective and in 2006 implemented this course as a mandatory “Werteunterricht.”³⁹⁰ Pro-Reli constituted a movement supported by all religious communities in Berlin to give students and parents the right to choose between the ethics course and a course in their respective religion or denomination, including Islam. Although Pro-Reli seems to advocate tolerance and equality, Franck argued against religious instruction in schools in which students are separated based on their faith. In the 2009 *Der Spiegel* article, “Staat und Religion,” Franck favors courses in ethics or philosophy with units on religious faiths. She opposes the efforts by Pro Reli, which wanted schools to offer students a choice between ethics and religious instruction provided by various denominations and eliminate the mandatory course in ethics.³⁹¹ Pro Reli argued that allowing students a choice would be more inclusive, especially for students from fundamentalist religious groups. Their slogan was “Freie Wahl! zwischen Ethik und Religion.”³⁹² Franck argues that religion classes based on faith increases the division amongst the students. Furthermore, she conjectures that schools would include certain denominations, such as instruction in the Muslim faith based on their student demographics which would lead to students choosing certain schools based on the religious instruction available and divide students even further. She also does not believe the school administration

³⁹⁰ Gräb, 48. The decision was largely in response to an “Ehrenmord” in Berlin in 2005. The course includes religious material but is not geared toward a particular religion or denomination. “Es wird weltanschaulich und religiös neutral unterrichtet” (49)

³⁹¹ Franck, “Staat und Religion,” 124-125

³⁹² Gräb, 51

should assume each student to have either a fixed religion or no religion. According to Dücker, in a 2012 article in *Die Zeit*, the city of Hamburg wanted to add religious Muslim holidays to the current list of holidays on which schools and most businesses are closed. Dücker is against this measure advocating instead for more separation of church and state and posits that religion is a private, individual matter. These examples show the way Franck and Dücker oppose the assumption of an individual's fixed identity based on heritage, family, life choices or social constructs and a multicultural segregation of society. In their fiction, as I have discussed, this theme is also present as the characters challenge categorization as well as social norms and expectations.

I believe, as my analysis illustrates, these and other contemporary authors are critical of the concept and trend termed *normalization*. The term is questionable, since it implies that German society underwent an abnormal period and is now returning to normal. Mitchell Ash points out that the term normalization is often equated with modernization. He explains that supporters of Germany's development toward a normal nation state regard both the Nazi period and the GDR as not normal and pre-modern.³⁹³ Franck's and Dücker's depiction of continuity runs as a red thread through their texts and exemplifies that *normalization* is not an appropriate term for what is taking place in German speaking countries. My study does not seek to provide the answers to the complex questions of how history should be remembered and how today's problems in Germany may be rectified or even integrated into the memory discourse of the dominant culture. It also does not necessarily describe the situation in Germany negatively or imply that history has or has not been dealt with appropriately. My dissertation highlights the way third generation writers draw attention to the potential of trauma to be transmitted to future generation and subconsciously affect contemporary society. This potential may be

³⁹³ Ash, 304-305

underestimated by the prominence of normalization, which implies a kind of stability and dwindling influence of the atrocities and the trauma experienced in another century. Scholars in history certainly continue to examine this period and the turn of the century has even seen an increase in publications on the Holocaust, the Nazi period and the Second World War as well as historical events of the Cold War attributable to this period. However, as contemporary literature thematizes, a critical examination of the period has waned in German society (if it ever existed on a large public scale) as the number of individuals who were old enough to experience the Nazi period diminish with the passing of time. Their experiences may be relegated to history as events studied but not as events that affect everyday life. The lessons to be drawn from this period may also not be seen as important to today's German society. Furthermore, emphasizing the need to learn from history may also have generated the opposite effect as these lessons seem superfluous and only exist to continue to shame and victimize Germans. More importantly, Franck and Dücker do not simply write novels to remind Germans of their historical legacy in the sense of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, but rather point to renewed, returning, or continuing efforts to marginalize the "other" in German society. Furthermore, in these authors' novels what may be termed "Nazi ideology" is not attributable singly to the Nazi period or to certain fanatic individuals, but is prevalent in society before and after the Nazi period, quietly continuing to permeate contemporary thoughts and ideas.

The emphasis on the familial stems from the author's personal experiences and beliefs in the way history is transmitted in the family and the power of identity formation within the family. Dücker in particular highlights family in her novels, because she believes that society's stress on individuality dismisses the importance of the family. However, she has experienced that the family's views are continually influential on a person's worldview, through "prägenden

Bindungen,” a theme she says she explored in *Der längste Tag des Jahres*. She states that she examined this concept in the figure of Thomas, who has moved away and not seen his parents in nine years, but thinks about his father more than anything else. Thomas remembers his father’s emphasis on “Ordnung” and his father’s terrarium in which nothing changed. This terrarium becomes the metaphor for the father’s views transmitted to Thomas from his father. As Dückers explains, Thomas both follows his father’s obsession with the desert (by moving to the desert of the American Southwest) but rebels against his father by living precariously in a trailer without any stability to his life. In the novel, Thomas experiences relief in the chaotic world of the fluctuating desert nature.³⁹⁴

In her essay collection, *Morgen nach Utopia*, Dückers equates politics with its emphasis on instilling ideology with religion. She admonishes literary writers for blindly following established political parties in Germany, in particular the SPD an “alteingesessenen Partei, die biedere Realpolitik verkörpert” instead of developing their own political views based on issues pertinent to them and their generation.³⁹⁵ She believes that no intellectual can agree with every part of a party’s platform and therefore being “political” to her means remaining “politisch unabhängig.”³⁹⁶ In this discussion, Dückers does not mention history or the Nazi period, but her implications and the language she uses reminds of Germany’s National Socialist past as well as the GDR:

Die Jungen [Schriftsteller] haben sich jemandem, der ihr Großvater sein könnte, und von seinem Weltbild vereinnahmen lassen ... so konservativ waren junge Schriftsteller noch nie... Da stehen nicht Visionäre, sondern Pragmatiker in der Reihe. Oder vielmehr: in Reih und Glied.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liiwP2YF0Aw>

³⁹⁵ Dückers, *Morgen nach Utopia*, 163

³⁹⁶ Dückers, *Morgen nach Utopia*, 164

³⁹⁷ Dückers, *Morgen nach Utopia*, 165

In Franck's *Lagerfeuer*, the protagonist, Nelly sees people's acceptance of GDR ideology as a result of the Holocaust and the war:

Nehmen Sie einem Menschen nur weg, woran er glaubt. Dann hinterläßt der Schmerz und das Gefühl der Ungerechtigkeit eine große Sehnsucht nach Wiedergutmachung, nach dem Aufgehen in einer neuen Ideologie, die dem Niedergang der alten gewachsen ist. Der Kommunismus war das für kurze Zeit. (L78-79)

Nelly asserts this both for Holocaust survivors searching for a new ideal as well as for the Nazis "wounded" after losing the war. Franck compares people who saw in communism an ideal society to East Germans who saw the West as a land of utopia (L76).

Franck explains that she chooses her topics to write about not based on what may be interesting to readers but that she chooses topics that haunt her. In a short film on the author and her new book *Rücken an Rücken*, she states "Es sind eher Themen, die mich verfolgen von denen ich nicht lassen kann. Bei denen ich das Gefühl habe sie ... besitzen mich und lassen mich nicht mehr los"³⁹⁸ In each of Franck's and Dücker's novels in this study, *Lagerfeuer*, *Himmelskörper*, *Die Mittagsfrau* and *Der längste Tag des Jahres*, characters are similarly consumed by their family's past and the way the past influences the present and the way the present (re)constructs the past.

Michael Rothberg approaches "memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" in his book *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009).³⁹⁹ Rothberg argues against a "competitive" approach to memory work, but calls for a cross-cultural, multi-national view of memory. I believe it is important to understand the way contemporary collective cultural attitudes impact the memory of the Second World War and of the Holocaust and vice versa. Furthermore, as Franck's and Dücker's novels show, the traces left by

³⁹⁸ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IR2gWZ_hBgk

³⁹⁹ Rothberg, 3

transgenerational trauma may go unseen and may not be identified readily as trauma, but nevertheless impact the formation of the character's identity.

In the Central European context, the concept of cultural or collective trauma is most prominently associated with the Holocaust.⁴⁰⁰ Using trauma theory in literary criticism is not new, especially amongst American scholars analyzing American "trauma novels," such as those dealing with slavery and the Black diaspora. Informed by the works of Assmann, Diner, Hirsch, and LaCapra, my study combines a literary critical approach using trauma theory in conjunction with the discussion of historical and cultural debates. This approach allows me to study the way Franck and Dücker construct fictional trauma in their novels as a commentary on contemporary culture. My primary focus is the authors' representation of trauma in terms of a collective cultural trauma, which manifests in their writings in a subtle, nuanced manner. Examining the relationship between memory and trauma in Franck's and Dücker's fiction, I have identified an interesting representational pattern. The two authors include "major" personally traumatic events, such as rape, persecution, and suicide or death of a person close to the narrator, but surprisingly they do not treat these experiences as the characters' main source of trauma. Rather, the authors show their characters as victimized by events or experiences that trauma theory may not readily define as trauma. Furthermore, the authors emphasize the way the characters have been significantly shaped and impacted psychologically by their family history.⁴⁰¹

Scholars examining German literature dealing with the issues of contemporary memory and trauma have not raised this aspect of the narratives. Anne Fuchs comments on Dücker's

⁴⁰⁰ Aleida Assmann and Dan Diner highlight the "Zivilisationsbruch" effected by the Holocaust. See Assmann's *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (2006) and Diner's *Zivilisationsbruch. Denken nach Auschwitz*. (1988)

⁴⁰¹ In a recent interview, Julia Franck stated: "It would be unnatural if certain twists in my family didn't have any influence on my work. ... Perception always happens along the path determined by experiences that have come before. They shape the structure of the brain as they do the matrix of the spirit and the soul. Psychology and biology (neurophysiology) are completely agreed in this." *World Literature Today* March/April 2012, 53.

overly confident presentation of post-memory and mythologizing of the Nazi past. Stuart Taberner and Friederike Eigler discuss the literary representation of German victimhood in other contemporary German novels with an emphasis on the depiction of major events, such as bombings, expulsion, and death of family members. Caroline Schaumann, Susanne Veas-Gulani and Katharina Gerstenberger emphasize the generational differences in the way memory and trauma is understood and portrayed. Furthermore, Schaumann and Gerstenberger also stress the way identity, i.e., belonging to specific groups in society (Jewish, non-Jewish, male, female etc.) impacts the way historical events are remembered and depicted. My approach reveals that Franck's and Dücker's novels do not center on the atrocities of the Holocaust or the experience of war, but rather on the characters' "doomed" status as a victim of memory, of the psychological impact Germany's history has had on their parents or grandparents. *Die Mittagsfrau* may be an exception; it comes closest to being a "trauma novel" as Helene, the protagonist, faces persecution as a Jewish woman in Nazi Germany, must live in hiding in fear of discovery and learns of the Holocaust by encountering a train car in the woods transporting prisoners. However, both in its structure and in Franck's own statements about the novel, the emphasis is on the trauma experienced by Helene's son when he is abandoned at a train station.⁴⁰² In *Der längste Tag des Jahres*, Dücker's characters seem more affected by their father's quirky lifestyle during their childhood, which stems from his father's death in the war, than by the news that their father has died unexpectedly. The emphasis on the characters' victimization seems contrived unless the reader examines the work carefully. While my research points to the authors' engagement with the impact of the past on the present and plays a role in contemporary marginalization of *the other*, I also find that the authors tend to concentrate

⁴⁰² Childhood abuse, neglect and/or abandonment is certainly a topic in trauma theory. However, the emphasis on this trauma as well as Helene's trauma over the loss of her fiancé in lieu of focusing on Helene's traumatic experiences facing persecution in Nazi Germany is interesting.

heavily on the psychological or psychosomatic effects of the past on the family and on future generations.

Research on the rendering of experiences or memories as “traumatic” in other contemporary German texts, such as in Karen Duve’s novels would go beyond the scope of this study, but would prove useful in understanding the way the language of trauma and trauma therapy are applied by German authors to emphasize inscrutable and melancholic perspectives. Furthermore, Duve’s work is likely to provide compelling examples for research in the field of “medical humanities,” in which illness, disease and death in literary narratives are analyzed to reveal relationships between medicine and the human condition. In addition, exploring GDR memory would complement my research on the topic of familial memory. In my dissertation, by examining memory and trauma in Franck’s and Dückers’ novels in conjunction with historical and contemporary debates, I have laid the groundwork for future research on the literary representation of the transgenerational transmission of trauma in the family. Furthermore, my research contextualizes third generation German authors’ emphasis on portraying the psychological impact of the *knowledge of* the Holocaust and of the Second World War on the character’s perception of historical and contemporary events.

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VITA

NAME: Sandra Kohler

EDUCATION: B.A., German, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1998.
M.A., German, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 2001.
Ph.D., Germanic Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2013.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE: Department of Germanic Studies, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2012 – 2013.
Department of Germanic Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2009 – 2013.
Liberal Arts Division, College of Du Page, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, 2004 – 2013.
Department of English, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2008 – 2010.
Department of German, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1999 – 2002.
Department of Germanic Studies, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana, 1998 – 1999.

HONORS: Scholarship Grant, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies: Reading Yiddish for Holocaust Research at the Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana: Department of Slavic, East European, and Central Asian Languages, 2008.
First Place Award, Graduate Research Symposium, Germanic Studies Department: University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2008.
Max Kade Fellowship, Germanic Studies Department: University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 2007 – 2008.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS: American Association of Teachers of German
American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages
German Studies Association
Midwest Modern Language Association
Modern Language Association
Women in German

CONFERENCE PAPERS: “Inherited Trauma in Julia Franck’s *Lagerfeuer*” Midwest Modern Language Association Conference, 2010.

“Roswitha’s ‘Schritt vom Wege’ in Fontane’s *Effi Briest*” Midwest Modern Language Association Conference, 2008.

“Gendered Perception of Motherhood: Gretchen and Gretchen’s Mother in Goethe’s *Faust*” German Studies Association Conference, 2008.

“Gendered Visual Representation in the Weimar Republic in Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Symphonie einer Grossstadt*” FOCUS on German Studies: Graduate Student Conference, 2007.