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**DRAMATIC INQUIRIES: ENCOUNTERING DISCOURSES ON
WOMEN ARTISTS' CREATIVE CONFLICTS**

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German

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Abstract

Since its inception at the end of the eighteenth century, the genre of the artist-drama has concerned itself with conflicts particular to the artist and the creative process. My dissertation project deals with women writers' artist-dramas that stage female artist-protagonists in their struggles for artistic expression. I argue that a gendered conceptualization of creativity that focuses on the traditional conflicts and crises of male artists (e.g. poverty, or distance from mundane experience due to the extraordinary talent) overlooks female artists and their experiences related to the creative process. The selected dramas critique conventional narratives on artists' crises by presenting the vastly different conflicts creative women encounter in their work. Furthermore, they highlight the interdependency of constructions of masculinity and femininity as pivotal to the experience of female artists.

The four dramas include Elsa Porges-Bernstein's *Johannes Herkner* (1906), Marie Itzerott's *Hilde Brandt* (1905), Mathilde Paar's *Helene* (1882) and Anna Croissant-Rust's *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* (1896). Driven by feminist literary criticism and notions of New Historicism, my analysis expands current understandings of the genre by exposing the distinctive conflicts experienced by women artists. Read through this lens, the dramas reveal new insights by linking discourses on public performance with prostitution, by demonstrating the debilitating effects of masculinity in its performance of honor codes and claims to ownership, and by expounding the pervasive effects of discourses that produce and perpetuate gender roles.

My aim in this project is twofold; I strive to contribute not only to the re-discovery of women writers and to the re-reading of their texts, but I also argue that their (disruptive) contributions provoke a re-evaluation of the genre's traditional narratives.

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Dramatic Inquiries: Encountering Discourses on Women Artists' Creative Conflicts

Introduction

The creative conflicts of artists have occupied the literary imagination for centuries. The genre of the artist-drama (*Künstlerdrama*), which originated in the late eighteenth century, attests to this and presents at its core a biting struggle of the artist-protagonist, one that deeply affects and attends to the very nature of the creative process. My dissertation project, entitled *Dramatic Inquiries: Encountering Discourses on Women Artists' Creative Conflicts* concerns itself with artist-dramas of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century. Few dramas, usually written by women writers, stage a female artist-protagonist and none of these are considered integral to the genre; in fact, most of them have disappeared into the archives. To shed more light on the fate of these texts, a different underlying issue needs to be approached first: the discourses employed to present creative women or to impede their recognition as such. Artists' creativity, as the motivation and ability to generate and express an idea in a novel or unique way, is imagined as closely linked to crisis and conflict in the process of production. I argue that the gendered conceptualization of creativity established through conflicts typical of male artists (e.g. poverty, distance to mundane experience due to extraordinary talent, and lack of inspiration), keeps experiences of female artists during the creative process at the margins. In addition, the interdependent constructions of masculinity and femininity highlight the deep effect of gender conventions for both male and female characters. The selected dramas, Mathilde Paar's *Helene* (1882), Anna Croissant Rust's *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* (1896), Elsa Porges-Bernstein's

Johannes Herkner (1904), and Marie Itzerott's *Hilde Brandt* (1905)¹ provide an opportunity to expose unexpected connections between women artists and creative crises in discourses on prostitution, money and the developing capitalist market, the labor market, masculinity, and the female body. These texts and their presentations of creative women can expand the current understanding of the genre of the artist-drama.

Vastly different discourses frame women's struggles with their creative work, struggles so far removed from traditional expectations that they foreclose recognition of their immanent correlation to the creative process as well as of women as artists. The discourses that found, solidify, and also oppose conventional gendered conceptions have to be uncovered in order to re-think and re-conceptualize creative conflicts and their implications for the artist-drama and beyond. Women writers' artist-dramas stage dramatic inquiries that can help to explore the discursive construction of the male artist by imagining his female foil. Following Sigrid Weigel (1983) and Elaine Showalter (1998),² my project investigates how women writers negotiate their position within the dominant culture by engaging with prominent discourses while developing their own voice and perspective at the same time.

Although the question of why women's dramas have been forgotten and have not become part of the canon has been asked and answered many times, the inquiry remains valid in the 21st century, when Uwe Japp publishes *Das Deutsche Künstlerdrama von der Aufklärung bis zur*

¹ Mathilde Paar, *Helene* (Berlin 1882). Anna Croissant-Rust, *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* (Berlin:Schuster und Loeffler, 1896). Marie Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt* (Strassburg: Heitz, 1905). Elsa Porges-Bernstein, *Johannes Herkner* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1904).

² See Sigrid Weigel, „Der schielende Blick. Thesen zur Geschichte Weiblicher Schreibpraxis,“ in *Die Verborgene Frau. Sechs Beiträge zu einer feministischen Literaturwissenschaft*, eds. Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel (Berlin: Argument Verlag, 1983) 83-137. Showalter, Elaine, “Twenty Years On: “A Literature of Their Own” Revisited,“ *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* (Vol 31, No.3, Summer 1998), 399-413.

*Gegenwart*³ without taking female authors into consideration. In order to address the question anew, the troubled relationship between women and creativity has to be approached on the discourse level. Wolfgang Ruppert's remark concerning female artists exemplifies the issue at stake:

Wenngleich das Berufsbild für Künstlerinnen im grundsätzlichen der in der männlichen Praxis entstandenen und im sozialen Raum der bürgerlichen Kultur dominanten sozialen Organisation des Künstlerhabitus folgte, so schufen doch die Geschlechterbilder unterschiedlich kulturell legitimierte Grenzen für die Entfaltungschancen der weiblichen Individuen.⁴

From a socio-cultural perspective, the female artist of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century stands in relation to and as an imitation of the male artist. While she is seen as attempting the same as her male counterparts and performing in the same field and by the same means, she finds herself limited due to gender conventions. Female artists have only been understood in comparison to male artists and to their works and their crises and conflicts, which has habitually resulted in defining women as artists of lower status. Similarly to Sarah Colvin (2003) and Susanne Kord (1992)⁵, I emphasize that comparing male and female artists (authors, in their arguments) remains problematic, because we do not have a full understanding of the

³ See Uwe Japp, *Das Deutsche Künstlerdrama von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 2004).

⁴ My Translation

Even though occupational expectations followed in general the social organization of the artist habitus, which were based on the social structure of the dominant bourgeois culture and developed in male praxis, gender conventions created different cultural limitations for the self-realization of female individuals.

Wolfgang Ruppert, *Der Moderne Künstler. Zur Sozial-und Kulturgeschichte der kreativen Individualität in der kulturellen Moderne im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 156.

⁵ See Sarah Colvin, *Women in German Drama. Playwrights and Their Texts, 1860-1945* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003). Susanne Kord, *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen: Deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992).

social and cultural conditions of women's work and would likely measure them against an internalized male standard. This project thus aims at examining the crises and conflicts of creative women in artist-dramas in order to complicate current understandings of the artist-figure while also pointing to the contributions of neglected women writers in this genre.

Pivotal to opening new opportunities for re-evaluating women's contributions is an investigation of cultural motives for the disappearance of women's texts that reaches beyond structural explanations, e.g. referring to male publishers and critics⁶ and beyond arguments concerning the gendered perception of the dramatic genre.⁷ This project argues that reasons for the repudiation and consequential disappearance of women's artist-dramas relate to the central conflict in the genre—the familiar discourses on male artists' struggles in the creative process. These conventional conflicts appear culturally manifested in discourses on the male artist and leave little room for counter-narratives. Female artist's conflicts differ to such an extent that their struggles are at times not recognized as related to the creative process, and an understanding of the artist as defined by conventional conflicts, keeps female artists completely out of sight or, at best, at the margins. In order to re-think and re-conceptualize creative struggles and their implications for the artist-drama, the gendered assumptions within cultural narratives about the artist as well as the cultural barriers due to gender conventions have to be uncovered. The texts selected for this project investigate the position of female artists in a cultural framework, in which women's artistic creativity appears almost unthinkable.

Currently, the German artist-drama appears as a stable genre with an established canon that is sufficiently theorized and historicized. Part of this seeming stability relies on the

⁶ See Linda Lewis, *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

⁷ See Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 5ff.

marginality of female artists and discourses on female creativity. Sarah Colvin's study on *Women and German Drama* concerns itself also with the issue of creativity; she points to the connection between gender and creativity as follows:

The drama of the female artist cannot – of course – escape the problems raised by the gendered discourse of creativity. Where the drama of the male artist can be primarily concerned with that individual's self-realization (because the legitimacy of the male artist per se is not in question), the drama of the female artist faces a set of initial hurdles relating to the place of woman in society before the question of artistic self-expression can be addressed.⁸

Colvin's main argument focuses on the connection between gender and genre, and she problematizes drama as a masculine genre, which complicates the access of women writers and their female characters. While aware of the different struggles of female artists and the gendered discourse on creativity, Colvin does not aim at identifying these different discourses concerned with the struggles of creative women. Instead, it appears that the conventional conflicts of the male artist remain the model for her understanding of and approaches to female artists.

The women writers analyzed for this project, attempt to negotiate contemporary notions of gender and creativity. By offering dramatic encounters with different artistic conflicts, they destabilize traditional expectations, at times in a troubling and not readily accessible manner. Far from presenting a simple reversal whereby a female artist stands in for a male protagonist, the texts open up encounters with different narratives and offer new intersections of gender and the cultural conceptualization of the artist.

Before outlining of the main themes that I discuss in the different chapters, I will use the following pages to describe my approach to reading and analyzing the texts and provide a brief overview of historical and current discussions concerning the genre.

⁸ Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 52.

Cultural Poetics/New Historicism and Gender Studies

The hesitation or, worse, refusal to consider certain texts as part of the artist-drama genre arguably stems from the texts' resistance to incorporation into existing understandings of creative conflicts and the artist. At times, the dramas break with expectations; they may disappoint, seem incoherent and un-dramatic, or simply leave the reader wondering. While these arguments may have provided justification for their exclusion, not only from the genre but from the literary canon at large, an approach based on cultural poetics demands a more in-depth engagement with texts and a closer understanding of their reciprocity with discourses that defined the time of their production. This approach facilitates an understanding of creative crisis not as an independent concept but as one that is deeply embedded within culture and dependent upon surrounding discourses. Exploring the cultural contexts in which notions of creativity and its struggles are negotiated furthers an understanding of the resisting work of these texts.

The goal of this project does not consist of developing a new theory of female creativity, but in revealing discourses on creative crises and exposing their interaction with related issues in society. My approach to the dramas is based on the practice of new historicism or cultural poetics, which is interested in the ways in which texts' negotiate their contemporary culture. By letting discourses emerge from the dramas and viewing them as already embedded in cultural conversations, my analyses uncover the gendered conception of creative conflicts in the dramas under consideration.

The term "discourse" in this context owes to the work of Michel Foucault and is not limited to or primarily concerned with linguistics or semiotics, but interested in the ways in which it categorizes, limits, or produces "the objects of which it speaks."⁹ While linguistic

⁹ Terry Threadgold, *Feminist Poetics. Poiesis, Performance, Histories* (Routledge: London and New York, 1997), 58.

analysis examines the rules that govern the construction of statements, the analysis of discursive events, as Michel Foucault explains in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,¹⁰ explores why a certain statement is uttered: “The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?”¹¹ The analysis of discursive events or practices is thus interested in the environment of their occurrence, i.e. in an examination of their “incision” and “emergence,”¹² and in their complexity and plenitude.¹³ The relevance of statements lies beyond language and semiotics: “[...] a statement is always an event that neither language (*langue*) nor the meaning can quite exhaust.”¹⁴ In addition to the verbal component, discourses include not only visual expressions, but also “behaviors, events, practices, technologies, and procedures [...]”¹⁵ Essential to a critical analysis of discourses or discursive events is the assumption that they stand in relation to other statements, to groups of statements, and to different events.¹⁶ This presumes an interconnectedness of different fields of discourses, such as politics, culture, and economics; and, as Chris Weedon points out, of language, social institutions, cultural values, and power.¹⁷ Following this presumption, Foucault stresses that discourses cannot be understood in isolation but in relation to each other, “[...] in the analysis of their coexistence, their succession, their mutual functioning, their reciprocal determination, and their independent or correlative transformation.”¹⁸

¹⁰ See Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

¹¹ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, 28.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵ Threadgold, *Feminist Poetics*, 62.

¹⁶ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 29.

¹⁷ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Basil, Blackwell, 1987), 35.

¹⁸ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 29.

New historicism situates fictional texts in the context of the time in which they are produced. Aram Veeseer outlines recurring aspects of new historicism that he finds in analyses based on this approach. One of the basic assumptions presumes that all acts are “embedded in a network of material practices,”¹⁹ which means that social and cultural practices cannot be understood in isolation or as separate from political and economic factors. The critical practice of new historicism is itself, however, bound up in its time, and its own critical texts.²⁰ It emerges, just like the texts under investigation, out of a certain cultural and political context.²¹ In addition, Veeseer adds, most new historicists agree that literary and non-literary texts “interpenetrate” and “contaminate”²² each other. This interconnectedness of discourses also alludes to the impossibility of stable truth and appreciates the complexity of discourses that lies at the foundation of the new historicist project. Cultural narratives around the female artist take center stage in each chapter and show a deep level of interrelatedness in terms of the recurring gender component. My analysis of *Helene* shows that women’s gainful employment both intersects and affects cultural conceptions of male honor. In *Hilde Brandt*, discourses on financial capital turn out to be deeply embedded in perceptions of masculinity and sexuality. Powerful narratives on the legacy of the male artist impede any discourses on women’s creative talents in *Johannes Herkner*. Anna Croissant Rust’s *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* discusses the potential for women’s freedom and friendship and presents how close connections between gender conventions,

¹⁹ Aram Veeseer (ed.). *The New Historicism Reader*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 14.

²⁰ See Veeseer, *New Historicism Reader*, 16.

²¹ Critics’ personal anecdotes or experiences often become part of the practice of new historicism to situate the writer and to show awareness of one’s own embeddedness in material practices. The practice of new historicism acknowledges that critics themselves are limited by the knowledge, conventions, and thinking of their time, which forecloses any possibility of stable truth.

²² Veeseer, *New Historicism Reader*, 16f.

limitations of artistic self-realization, and conjugal relationships play out for the two artists and their male partners.

As the analysis of artist-dramas shows, an artist is not only a fictional figure or historic persona but also a cultural idea. Ideas or conceptions cannot be fully grasped when described by themselves but need to be seen in context. Stephen Greenblatt refers to Clifford Geertz's²³ notion of thick description in which "Thickness is not in the object; it is in the narrative surroundings, the add-ons, the nested frames."²⁴ Geertz assumes these complex facets to be present in texts²⁵ and not externally imposed by interpretation. The text is thus expandable based on its intertextuality as well as its cultural complexity. Following Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Greenblatt argues that:

Literary criticism could venture out to unfamiliar cultural texts, and these texts – often marginal, odd, fragmentary, unexpected, and crude – in turn begin to interact in interesting ways with the intimately familiar works of the literary canon.²⁶

By considering the surroundings of a text and other texts related to it, new meanings as well as new connections can be uncovered. Gallagher and Greenblatt see these discoveries as reaching beyond what could be articulated from the position of the author at the time in which the text was produced.²⁷ New historicism aims to disrupt grand narratives, including literary canons, in order to push the limits of the comfortable and familiar and to expose power structures. It encourages suspicion and suggests questioning monolithic understandings of history. The critical practice of cultural poetics investigates the margins and looks for fissures or ruptures that could unsettle or trouble false stabilities. The risk of this practice, however, as Catherine Belsey points out, lies in

²³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

²⁴ Catherine Gallagher, Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago, 2000), 25.

²⁵ Geertz's understanding of text does not refer to the literary but the cultural text which can include all texts, artifacts or even discourses or performances developed in a culture.

²⁶ Gallagher, Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, 28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

neglecting the fictional text in favor of representing and re-telling cultural history²⁸ or “privileging context over text” and overlooking points of divergence within the fictional text.²⁹ Belsey thus calls for more consideration of formal aspects, such as genre questions, of fictional texts to ensure due attention to text and context, which results not only in better criticism but also in a stronger analysis of cultural history.³⁰ Interweaving cultural and social history and the conventions of the genre with the discourses and departures from traditions in the selected dramas constitutes an integral aspect to all chapters in this project.

Following assumptions of cultural poetics and the significance of text and context, Michael Payne states in his introduction to *The Greenblatt Reader* that “history is both what happened in the past (a set of events) and an account of those events (a story) [...]”³¹ There is an emphasis on the relationship and interaction between history and literature which also stresses the role of cultural discourses:

Just as it is no longer tenable to think of a literary text as a detached object that is independent of its author and readers, so also is it no longer possible to think of the past as an object that is detachable from its textual reconstruction. It is also no longer tenable for students of literature to think of history as some sort of detachable background to iconic works of verbal (or other kinds of) art. History and literature are mutually imbricated.³²

History itself is seen as a narrative, oftentimes forced into a coherent plot. Moritz Baßler notes that cultural poetics brings with it a new skepticism toward those coherent narratives, a willingness to deal with an overwhelming amount of facts, and an interest in connections

²⁸ See Catherine Belsey, “The Poverty of (New Historicism),” in *Literature as History: Essays in Honour of Peter Widdowson*, eds., Peter Widdowson, Simon Barker, Jo Gill (London, New York: Continuum Publishing, 2010) 11.

²⁹ See Belsey, “The Poverty of (New Historicism),” 15.

³⁰ See *Ibid.*

³¹ Michael Payne, ed, *The Greenblatt Reader* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 3.

³² *Ibid.*

between narratives, i.e. in a new (con)textualization or textuality of historical narratives.³³ Cultural poetics attends to the complexity of information by suggesting its embeddedness in a given social and cultural structure. A close look at discourses allows for a comparison of themes in different media or different contexts, thereby making similarities as well as interactions between different media more accessible³⁴. Baßler notes:

Die Diskurse sind nun das Verbindende zwischen diesen Medien, sie werden in verschiedenen Medien geführt und stellen damit die Fäden dar, die auch den Historiker von einem Medium in das andere leiten.³⁵

In order to gain a better understanding of a text within its historical moment, multiple discourses need to be seen in relation to each other to show their continuities and discontinuities, and to see the mutual implications of literary, societal, and cultural discourses.

In addition to following the practice of new historicism, my analytical approach to the texts in this project is indebted to feminist literary criticism; it investigates women's and men's roles and positions and questions traditional formations of canons and genres. Greenblatt and Gallagher refer to the influence of feminism on the formation of new historicism and stress a shared interest in marginalized groups:

Women's Studies and the feminism that motivated its formation, has served as an important, if little acknowledged, model for new historicism in that it has inspired its adherence to identify new objects of study, bring those objects into the light of critical attention, and insist upon their legitimate place in the curriculum.³⁶

³³ Moritz Baßler, *New Historicism. Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen and Basel: Francke Verlag, 2001), 10.

³⁴ Friedrich Kittler argues that the use of media affects narrative forms (296), a notion which suggests a close relation between the history of media and discursive practices. Kittler similar to Greenblatt thus assumes a cultural poetics in that narrative forms and discourses transfer and transform between media, which not only means that different discourses affect each other (such as science and aesthetics) but also that media affect cultural practices. See Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

³⁵ Baßler. *New Historicism. Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur*, 14.

³⁶ Gallagher, Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, 11.

Combining feminist literary criticism with cultural poetics invites inquiries of texts that have been at the margins and draws attention to prominent cultural discourses connected to their production and reception. In her germinal essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”³⁷ Linda Nochlin refers to institutional and cultural practices and also to complex social structures as the main point of interest for new feminist approaches to art history. Her criticism applies far beyond the field of art history and motivated my own inquiry into forgotten women’s texts and the underlying motivations for their disappearance as well as for the complicity of historical and contemporary audiences in neglecting certain texts. The dramas for this project present women writers’ female artists or aspiring artists and attempt to bring to the surface and into the light their embeddedness in historical narratives and to draw attention to their role within the given structures and discourses.

Since this project investigates women’s dramas about female artists, it necessarily engages with research on women writers and their position in the literary canon. Many feminist scholars, for example Susanne Kord and Helga Kraft,³⁸ have been concerned with retrieving lost or ignored texts written by women and have done much work trying to establish a new canon that emphasizes contributions of women writers. Following Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), feminist critics have looked at the conditions under which female artists, especially writers, produce. In addition, they have grappled with the fictional female artists of women writers who struggle with gender convention as well as social and cultural norms. Women writers in the genre of the artist-drama assume a marginal role—as do their dramas concerned

³⁷See Nochlin, Linda, “Why have there been no great women artists?” *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (New York; Harper & Row, 1988) 145-178.

³⁸ See Helga Kraft, *Ein Haus aus Sprache. Dramatikerinnen und das andere Theater* (Stuttgart Metzler, 1996). Susanne Kord, *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen : deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992).

with female artists. As has often been suggested, this position can allow for a distinct access to and perception of cultural conceptualizations and open up opportunities for subversive strategies and criticism of pervasive and traditional narratives.

The concern with women writers and their strategies has been a steady component of feminist research in literary criticism since the 1970s. Elaine Showalter's *Women's Liberation and Literature* (1971) and *A Literature of Their Own* (1977)³⁹ expresses notions of second wave feminism in defining women and their experiences in opposition to men, reflective of their different status in society. In broader terms, she contrasts dominant culture with potential subcultures and investigates possibilities for developing a voice from a marginal standpoint. This argument leads to the assumption that women, as a subculture, deal with and negotiate their experiences in some way or another in their texts. Showalter also contributed to a feminist literary criticism concerned with the recovery or re-discovery of women's texts by introducing lesser known British writers and their texts. Ellen Moers' *Literary Women*⁴⁰ expands this argument and stresses the political necessity of considering the broader political and historical conditions under which women produce their creative work. For her, the main reason for a category of women writers lies in its opposition to male writers and the patriarchal order. From a methodological perspective, Moers sees women's writing as an undercurrent riding under or along the male tradition and thereby defined in opposition to male authors. Both Showalter (1977) and Moers point to the marginalization of women writers and to their tendency toward subversive content or style.

³⁹ See Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, expanded ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); *Women's Liberation and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

⁴⁰ See Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

Moving beyond the lived gender experiences and toward the discourses that help construct these “knowledges,” Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar add the critical aspect of female creativity to the discussion. In their influential *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) they argue that creativity has historically been seen as a male trait. They address the phallogentric myth of male creativity, and contrast male authors’ intimidation of the accomplishments of predecessors with women writers’ struggles with the notion of authority. They point to the difficulty of creating personal and alternative images of femininity, once the “angel in the house” has been killed. Gilbert and Gubar touch on the very complex situation of the female artist under patriarchy: “For the female artist the essential process of self-definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between herself and herself.”⁴¹ Oftentimes, the female voice only exists hidden beneath layers of hetero-normative masculine perception and articulation. Gilbert and Gubar, however, believe in a distinctive female voice as one that has difficulties to make itself heard and silently emerges in metaphors of discomfort and disease and has to free itself from male projections of femininity: “[...] the woman writer acknowledges with pain, confusion, and anger that what she sees in the mirror is usually a male construct, the ‘pure gold baby’ of male brains, a glittering and wholly artificial child.”⁴²

Literary critics have further developed earlier notions of grounding female writing in daily experiences and approach texts not as a mere reflection of social structures but as a critical engagement with and a questioning of them. In *Literature after Feminism*, Rita Felski widens the scope of politics broader to see women writers as critical agents in society, not just as critics of female oppression. She argues that writing can be much more than a reaction to society; it can be

⁴¹ Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar. *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 17. See also Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1986) (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁴² Gilbert, Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 17f.

fantasy, role reversal and a different world.⁴³ Like many others, Felski resists the notion of women's writing as a mere mirror of experience (which would also assume limited creative potential), and believes their roles in society inform their writing in a critical way in that women do not necessarily write femininity but call it, and with it the construction of other gender and other cultural constructs, into question.⁴⁴

Women's particular standpoint informs their writing and inspires their engagement with and criticism of existing cultural and social structures. Following Sigrid Weigel (1983) and Elaine Showalter (1998), I understand the works of women writers as inquiries into women's position within a dominant patriarchal society and its structures and conventions. Weigel developed the notion of women writers' double focus as a strategy to negotiate their double existence between patriarchal notions of femininity and the potential for liberation from existing imaginations, projections, and expectations.⁴⁵ She sees women writers as navigating new potential positions by exposing and dealing with contradictions while in a double existence within patriarchal structures. According to her, they keep one eye on the system in which they live, while the other eye imagines a liberated existence. Similarly, Showalter understands women writer's texts as "bi-textual,"⁴⁶ i.e. as interacting with dominant (masculine) traditions as well as uncovering, however silently, muted (feminine) discourses. The dramas in this project show traces of bi-textuality in their approaches to negotiating the role of creative women within a male paradigm. As my analysis will show, the strategies reach from contrasting narratives on the legacy of the male artist with muted discourses on women's creative talents, to presenting different models of emancipation as potential means to women's freedom in a patriarchal

⁴³ See Rita Felski, *Literature after Feminism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 11, 74.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 74.

⁴⁵ See Weigel, *Der schielende Blick*, 104.

⁴⁶ Showalter, "A Literature of their Own" Revisited," 402.

society. My readings of these texts from a feminist perspective, then, include a close analysis of the presented gender roles. Integral to my reading is not only a critical analysis of the female characters and the cultural narratives that construct their position, but I am also analyzing the male characters in order to get at the constructedness of the discourses that affect both genders. This approach allows for a better understanding of the complex construction of gender conventions and the difficulty in changing cultural narratives as both men and women are equally implicated in these discourses.

The Genre: Artist-Drama

The image of the artist has been constructed and reinforced over centuries and supported by recurring legends and myths that seemingly stabilize and solidify cultural conceptions of the artist over time.⁴⁷ Theories of gender uncover similar processes in that notions of masculinity and femininity appear stable and natural when they are actually social constructs that help to define and maintain power relationships.⁴⁸ Silvia Bovenschen stresses the cultural and historical construction of femininity and points to the significance of cultural projections and imagination:

Der Begriff des Weiblichen erschöpft sich nicht in den sozialen Existenzformen der Frauen, sondern er gewinnt seine Substanz aus der Wirklichkeit der Imagination. Die mythologisierte, zuweilen idealisierte, zuweilen dämonisierte Weiblichkeit

⁴⁷ See Ernst Kris, Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (1934), trans. Alastair Laing and Lottie M. Newman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

⁴⁸ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

materialisiert sich in den Beziehungen der Geschlechter und in dem aus diesem fremden Stoff gewonnen Verhältnis der Frauen zu sich selbst.⁴⁹

As much as cultural imaginations of the male artist evolve around certain narratives that traditionally present them as child prodigies, socially isolated, or poverty stricken, female fictional artists appear grounded in culture's conception of womanhood and femininity. Her struggles are not independent of discourses on gender and sexuality but are instead continuations thereof in a different form or medium.

Linda Huf and Grace Stewart, as one of the first critics to explore literary conceptions of the fictional female artist, lament the gaping absence of female artists.⁵⁰ Creativity-related conflicts for the male and female artist differ according to Huf in that women are faced with a more essential and demanding decision between conventional womanhood and life as a female artist. The divided self of the male artist⁵¹ translates more dramatically into the divided life of the female fictional artist:

She is torn not only between life and art but, more specifically, between her role as a woman, demanding selfless devotion to others, and her aspirations as an artist,

⁴⁹ My Translation:

The concept of femininity is not exhausted in the social forms of women's existence, but rather gains its substance from the reality of imagination. The mythologized, and at times idealized and demonized, femininity materializes itself in relationships between the sexes and in women's relation to themselves, which is based on this based foreign matter.

Silvia Bovenschen, *Imaginierte Weiblichkeit: Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu Kulturgeschichtlichen und Literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen* (Frankfurt am Main; Suhrkamp, 1979), 40.

⁵⁰ See also Grace Stewart, *A New Mythos: The Novel of the Artist as Heroine, 1877-1977* (St. Alban's, Vt.: Eden Press, 1979). Linda Huf, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: The Writer as Heroine in American Literature*. (New York: F. Ungar Publications, 1983). Huf also points out that women of color constitute a further, even more, gaping, absence, 13f.

⁵¹ Maurice Beebe describes the male artist as being divided between an isolated life in the Ivory Tower or a life at the Sacred Founts of life and desire. See Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce* (New York: New York University Press, 1964) and particularly his chapter on the "Divided Self" 21-64.

requiring exclusive commitment to work. Unlike the artist hero she must choose between her sexuality and her profession, between her womanhood and her work.⁵²

As much as the male artist has internalized society's perception of him as different, perhaps as genius, the female artist, according to Huf, faces a devaluation of herself as a woman as well as an artist: "[...] the enemy has outposts in her own head. [...] because she has internalized society's devaluation of herself and her abilities, she must slay enemies within her own ranks: fear, self-doubt, guilt."⁵³ Other critics have explored the fictional female artist in a wide variety of aspects pertaining to gender, class, race, and literary traditions.⁵⁴ The essay collection *Writing the Woman Artist* by Suzanne Whitmore Jones⁵⁵ explores struggles and fantasies of the woman artist beyond the genre of the novel and attempts to challenge traditional gender norms that prevent an existence as both artist and woman.

A review of the literature on German artist-dramas will situate my research project more clearly. Few research studies have concerned themselves with the German artist-drama, and to this point, most studies have taken for granted that texts stage a male artist-protagonist.⁵⁶ The gender of the artist and implications thereof for the relationship between gender, creativity, and artist-conflicts has only recently become a point of interest. Until the 1980s, much attention had

⁵² Huf, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*, 5.

⁵³ Huf, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*, 12.

⁵⁴ See Susan Gubar, "The Birth of the Artist as Heroine: (Re)production, the Künstlerroman Tradition, and the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield," *The Representation of Women in Fiction*, eds. Carolyn Heilbrun and Margaret Higonnet (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1983), 19-59. Susan Gubar, "The Blank Page and Issues of Female Creativity," *Critical Inquiry* (Vol. 8, No.2, Winter 1981), 243-263.

⁵⁵ See Suzanne Whitman Jones, *Writing the Woman Artist. Essays on Poetics, Politics, and Portraiture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

⁵⁶ See Helene Goldschmidt, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama von Goethe bis Wagner* (Weimar: A.Duncker, 1925); Erna Levy, *Die Gestalt des Künstlers im deutschen Drama von Goethe bis Hebbel* (Berlin: E.Ebering, 1929); Ralph Stokes Collins, *The Artist in Modern German Drama* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, Dissertation, 1938); Christa Jusshoven-Trautmann, *Tendenzen des Künstlerdramas in der Restaurationsepoche (1815-1848)* (Univ. Köln, Dissertation, 1975); Nina Birkner, *Vom Genius zum Medienästheten. Modelle des Künstlerdramas im 20.Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2009).

been paid to the changing presentation of artists in reference to literary periods and in relation to the author. In addition, the struggles of the artist dealing with what Goethe termed the “disproportion of life and talent” have been in the center of attention. Approaches to a better understanding of the artist have been based on placing him in a historical epoch without, however, paying attention to constructions of gender and creativity through historical discourses. Reading and analyzing texts from the perspective of cultural poetics, means to include minor as well as contradicting narratives; thereby increasing the complexity of a text as well as the complexity of history.⁵⁷

The nineteenth century sees a shift in attention from the object of art to the artist, which brings with it increasing interest in artists’ biographies. From the eighteenth century on, the artist is no longer seen as a craftsman with distinct skills that allow him to create beautiful objects, but a man with extraordinary talent that sets him apart from the craftsman. The artist-novel (*Künstlerroman*) and the artist-drama provide evidence for this notion since both literary genres develop during this period and show a primary interest in the fate of the (male) artist. The artist-drama develops at the end of the eighteenth century and finds its beginnings with Goethe’s *Künstlerdramulette*, such as *Des Künstlers Erdewallen* (1774), but more prominently with *Torquato Tasso* (1790), which establishes the “disproportion of talent and life” as the main theme of the genre. The “genius” became an integral aspect of many artist dramas since the conflict can be internal (dealing with talent, desire, or emotion) or external (concerning his environment and oftentimes his coping with misrecognition). As the artist came to be seen as an *alter deus* or *genialer Schöpfer*, the potential for dramatic conflict increased and paved the way for a new kind of hero. “Wird hingegen der Künstler als genialer Schöpfer perzipiert, avanciert

⁵⁷See Baßler. *New Historicism. Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur*, 11ff.

er zu einem privilegierten Medium der Weltaneignung, in dem sich Exzentrizität und Repräsentativität auf konfliktuöse und folglich spannende Weise mischen”⁵⁸

In the artist-drama, the plot evolves around the creative artist who is dealing with a work-related conflict that generally originates in either his personal or professional life. Ludwig Tieck put forward a definition that defines the artist as a unique male persona whose experiences are particular to his talent. All aspects of the artist’s life such as his work, his environment, his character, and his fate form a coherent whole.⁵⁹ Later studies on the artist drama by Krista Jusshoven Trautmann, Willi Krienitz, or Uwe Japp emphasize the “disproportion of talent and life,” which originates in Goethe’s *Torquato Tasso*, as the main characteristic of the artist-protagonist in this genre. Japp develops a broader definition of the artist drama: “Künstlerdramen sind literarische Werke, die einen Konflikt um einen schöpferischen Protagonisten auf bühnenwirksame Weise zur Darstellung bringen.”⁶⁰ Although artists have been part of other dramas such as *Emilia Galotti*, the artist had not been in the center of the conflict. In contrast to the novel, the artist-drama is not interested in the development and different stages in the life and work of the artist but in a biting conflict that affects the artist’s creative process. Japp states:

Mit einem gewissen Recht ist deshalb erstens vom Künstlerdrama zu verlangen, dass es überhaupt einen Konflikt zur Darstellung bringe, zweitens dass dieser Konflikt sich aus der Besonderheit des Künstlers bzw. seiner Kunst ergebe.⁶¹

⁵⁸ My Translation:

If the artist is perceived as *alter deus*, he turns into a privileged medium for appropriating the world, a medium, in which eccentricity and representability mix in a potentially conflict laden and exciting way. Japp, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama*, 13.

⁵⁹ See Ludwig Tieck. “Corregio,” von Öhlenschläger. *Ludwig Tieck: Kritische Schriften* (Band 4: Dramaturgische Blätter. Zweiter Theil. Leipzig 1852. S. 270-313), 274.

⁶⁰ My Translation:

Artist-dramas are literary works that effectively stage a conflict concerning the creative protagonist. Japp, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama*, 2.

⁶¹ My Translation:

He thus requires that the artist-drama stages not only a conflict but one that is pertinent to the figure of the artist.

Discussions concerning definitions of the genre have always been accompanied by debates about the artist's characteristics. Such debates have long recurred to conceptions of the artist as genius or genius manqué. Japp continues this tradition by defining the artist as an exceptional person with a particular aura, which appears as the source of unfathomable talent.⁶² Marcel Duchamp's artistic work, which blurred the line between ordinary objects and art work, and Walter Benjamin's analysis of *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), which located the aura in the work of art and not in the artist,⁶³ unsettled traditional conceptions of the artist in the twentieth century. While the era of decadence around the turn of the century began to challenge these conventional conceptions as well, works such as Raymond Stephenson's *The Yard of Wit* and Christine Battersby's *Gender and Genius*⁶⁴ demonstrated that the concept of the artist as genius has remained a gendered model throughout the centuries. Since these notions of the artist were not usually accessible for women, none of the female artist-protagonists examined for my research project resemble an artist-genius; in contrast, their presentation demands a different definition of an artist-protagonist. Following Nina Birkner, the

It can rightfully be demanded from the artist-drama that firstly it stages a conflict, and secondly that the conflict develops due to the distinctive characteristics of the artist.

Japp, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama*, 9.

⁶² See Japp, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama*, 2.

⁶³ Walter Benjamin also argues in this text that the aura of a work of art is replaced by its commoditization. Turning art into a commodity affects the conception of the artist in that art can be (re)produced without the artist.

⁶⁴ See Raymond Stephenson. *The Yard of Wit. Male Creativity and Sexuality 1650-1750*. (Philadelphia: The University of Philadelphia Press, 2004); Christine Battersby. *Gender and Genius. Toward a Feminist Aesthetics*. (Southampton: The Women's Press, 1989).

female protagonists in the texts selected for this study are defined as artist because they either define themselves as such or they are listed as artist in the register of names.⁶⁵

Studies on the artist drama have primarily focused on the male artist's interaction with his social and political environment, as well as on the relationship between author and fictional artist. In 1925, Helene Goldschmidt published *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama von Goethe bis Wagner* and offered the first study entirely devoted to the German artist drama. Her approach to the genre was invested in a better understanding of the authors, and she analyzed fictional artists based on, and in relation to biographical information on the author. Goldschmidt argues for a close connection between author and protagonist and sees the artist drama as an outlet for an author as artist, who is himself in a phase of transition—an approach that leads her to assume a strong correlation between author and fictional artist.

Franz Grillparzer's *Sappho* (1818), a drama about a successful female poet who falls in love with a young man who is much below her own status, remains the only canonical drama concerned with a female artist that has received much attention and that continues to constitute an integral part of every overview of the genre. At the end, Sappho loses her lover to a woman closer to his own social status, and she realizes that she devoted her entire life and identity to art, neglecting human experiences—a conclusion that eventually leads her to end her life. Tracing the analysis of this drama in the following summary of research on the genre provides an opening impression of the status of the female artist in literary research. Goldschmidt, with her focus directed toward the author, analyzes this drama in relation to what she sees as Grillparzer's inability to give in to the pleasures of his own life. Interestingly, the main theme for her is not the conflict of the artist as a human, but of the human aspects of the artist which implies a lingering

⁶⁵ See Birkner. *Vom Genius zum Medienästheten*. 4.

conception of the artist as genius. Sappho, like Grillparzer, distanced herself from life, and Goldschmidt concludes that Sappho, as a self-doubting artist who fails in life, can best be represented as a woman while still standing in for male artist: “Nicht umsonst wird das Bekenntnis eines unterliegenden Künstlertums einer Frau in den Mund gelegt.”⁶⁶ While Goldschmidt asserts that artists can be represented as women, concomitantly, she notes that these female figures represent failing, or failing aspects of, male artists.

Authors in their socio-political environment constitute the key element of analysis in Krista Jushoven-Trautmann’s *Tendenzen des Künstlerdramas in der Restaurationsepoche (1815-1848)* from 1975. Jushoven-Trautman is interested in the development of the genre and the contributions of selected authors. Like Goldschmidt, she also does not consider a more in-depth analysis of the author or protagonist and, for the most part, seems to assume and accept a male-dominated tradition. In her analysis of Grillparzer’s canonical *Sappho*, again as the only fictional female artist, Jushoven-Trautmann notes that the drama was not intended to be an artist drama since it focuses more on the struggles of Sappho as woman than as poet. Her analysis ends on a somewhat surprising note with a reference to the theater performance by Sophie Schröder, which, according to Jushoven-Trautmann, highlighted an additional conflict of Sappho, that of an aging woman dealing with her passions.⁶⁷ In contrast to Goldschmidt, who considered Sappho as representative of Grillparzer’s engagement with his isolation from life, Jushoven-Trautmann does not see the artist behind the woman whose conflicts concerning love and social status appear not to qualify as conflicts related to the creative work of the artist. Her analysis indicates

⁶⁶ My Translation:

It is not without a purpose that the avowals of a failing artist are put into a woman’s mouth. Goldschmidt, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama von Goethe bis Wagner*, 114.

⁶⁷ Jushoven-Trautmann, *Tendenzen des Künstlerdramas*, 101.

not only the foregrounding of Sappho's identity as woman but also the difficulty of relating her conflicts to those of the male artist and the traditional struggle between life and art.⁶⁸

Erna Levy's *Die Gestalt des Künstlers im deutschen Drama von Goethe bis Hebbel* (1929) poses similar questions concerning the conflicts encountered by the artist and the relationship between fictional and non-fictional artist. In contrast to Goldschmidt or Jushoven-Trautmann, Levy focuses on only three dramas: Goethe's *Tasso*, the prototype of the artist drama, Grillparzer's *Sappho*, and Hebbel's *Michelangelo*. Less interested in minor authors, as she believes them to be too driven by traditions and conventions of the time, she focuses her analysis of the genre on the contributions of the most prominent authors and their role in shaping the genre and literary movements. She begins her chapter on *Sappho* by pointing to the fact that Grillparzer steps on new terrain by presenting a female artist: "Wichtig ist die Wahl der Frau. Das Künstlerdrama erhält nun ein neues und einmaliges Problem, nie wieder vorher noch nachher wurde die Tragik der künstlerischen Frau so bis in letzte Tiefen erfasst und gestaltet."⁶⁹ Although Levy sees Sappho in terms of the incommensurability of life and art, she turns out to be less interested in the woman as artist than on the prototypical artist conflict. Like Goldschmidt, she asserts not only that a woman artist would lend herself to this conflict but also

⁶⁸ In contrast to other critical works on the genre of the artist-drama, however, Jushoven-Trautmann considers a female writer, Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer, and her artist drama *Rubens in Madrid* in her analysis. In terms of the number of performances of her plays, Birch-Pfeiffer was the most successful German dramatist for several decades in the nineteenth century; and even though she was harshly attacked by theater critics, the audience supported her plays. Jushoven-Trautmann presents Birch-Pfeiffer as a modest author whose main interest is to entertain the German audience with her plays rather than to become immortal through her work. See Jushoven-Trautmann, *Tendenzen des Künstlerdramas*, 139.

⁶⁹ My Translation:

Choosing a woman is significant. The artist-drama now receives a new and unique problem, never before and never after has the tragic of a creative woman been grasped and presented in such detail.

Levy. *Die Gestalt des Künstlers im deutschen Drama*, 74.

that in this particular case, it relates to the drama's author and not to a general exploration of the female artist:

In keinem Wesen konnte Grillparzer sein Künstlertum, seine Hemmungen in seinem Trieb nach Leben, diese ewige Kluft zwischen dem einsamen Genie und der Welt besser darlegen, als in dieser weiblichen Seele der großen Künstlerin, deren Schicksal durch diese Eigenschaften bestimmt ist.⁷⁰

Levy sets up a new kind of parallel between Sappho as a female artist, who is assumed to be imprisoned or controlled by her emotions and desires, which she sublimates in her art, with Grillparzer. In the end, Sappho reflects what Levy, like others, believes to be Grillparzer's own internal conflict, thereby naturalizing the male artist and his conflicts as the prototypical conflicts of artists.

The definition of the artist broadens in Ralph Stokes Collins' work *The Artist in Modern German Drama* (1940), which considers artist-dramas from the end of the nineteenth century until expressionist movement and uses the term "artist" in a much broader way including not only painters and poets, but also actors and musicians. His analysis of the artist and his conflicts and, more generally, the presentation of the fictional artist in relation to his time, remains similar, however, to that of Levy and Goldschmidt. In contrast to others, he focuses not on the literary periods of storm and stress and romanticism but instead investigates the figure of the artist in naturalism, neo-romanticism, and expressionism.⁷¹

The most recent publication on German artist drama comes from Uwe Japp. Japp's *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart* (2004) provides an insightful

⁷⁰ My Translation:

There was no better way for Grillparzer to represent his artistry, his inhibitions in his drive for life, this ever-lasting chasm between the lonely genius and the world than in this female soul of a great artist, whose fate is determined by these characteristics.

Levy, *Die Gestalt des Künstlers im deutschen Drama*, 79.

⁷¹ Stokes Collins. *The Artist in Modern German Drama*, 3.

introduction to the genre and outlines prominent discourses related to the changing characteristics of the artist and the artist-drama. His overview of the genre's history concentrates on canonical works with additions of works published later in the twentieth century by authors such as Friedrich Dürrenmatt or Ernst Jandl. What holds true is the fact that even today, not a single drama on the list (not even on the extended list of other artist dramas discussed in relation to the main works) was written by a woman, and only one, *Sappho*, deals with a woman artist. Nonetheless, Japp emphasizes the importance of paying attention to lesser known works in this genre:

Es sind deshalb neben den bekannten auch weniger bekannte Beispiele des Genres zu berücksichtigen, insofern sie für die Geschichte des Künstlerdramas interessant sind. Was nennen wir interessant? Erstens die individuellen Deutungen des Künstlerproblems, zweitens die unterschiedlichen Maßnahmen der dramatischen Realisierung, drittens die Sinnakkumulation, die sich daraus ergibt, dass die jeweiligen Künstlerdramen nicht nur als solche, sondern auch in Beziehung zueinander gesehen und gedacht werden.⁷²

It appears problematic that Japp and others find it difficult to read women's dramas as texts within this genre or in relation to canonical texts. It seems that the conflicts, which often differ considerably, may not even be recognizable at first sight as artist-conflicts. Japp's analysis of *Sappho* deals with the question of whether the text qualifies as an artist-drama or as a drama about a woman's inner struggles. Japp concerns himself with Sappho's struggle for love and her renunciation of her creative work for the sake of experiencing love. He validates the text's place

⁷² My Translation:

Lesser known examples of the genre are to be considered besides the well-known texts if they are interesting contributions to the history of the genre. What do we deem interesting? Firstly, the individual interpretations of the artist-problem, secondly, the different means of dramatic realization, thirdly, the accumulation of meaning, which results if these artist-dramas are seen and thought as such, as well as in relation to each other.

Japp, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama*, 15.

in the genre at the end—not due to the female artist’s struggles but because of inter-textual references and the implementation of the author’s translation of an “Ode from Sappho.”⁷³

The first major examination of women writers in the genre of the artist drama was provided by Susanne Kord’s *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen. Deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im 18. Und 19. Jahrhundert* (1993), which dedicates one chapter to dramas about male artists and their muses. She analyzes five dramas written by women and separates them in subchapters based on the male protagonist’s artist genre. While not introducing texts with female artist-protagonists, Kord lays important groundwork for the rediscovery and reevaluation of the dramas that she discusses. In her readings of early nineteenth-century artist-dramas by women, she puts the female protagonist in the role of the muse in a new and more prominent position. She argues that women writers tend to write about male artists but pay more attention to the muse; this allows for new feminist readings of these texts and opens new opportunities for approaching the artist-protagonist from the perspective of his muse, who also often assumes the role of (imagined) lover. An important aspect of her work is that she stresses the relevance of the muse and her interaction with the male artists during the creative process. Sarah Colvin’s work *Women and German Drama* also dedicates one chapter to artists and women who support artists. While her close readings provide insightful new commentaries on issues of gender, they do not frame the characters in a historical context. Instead, Colvin sets out to explore the relationship between the genre of drama and gender.

The aim of this project is to explore the dramas of forgotten women writers and to reintroduce their text as well as their contributions to and challenges of the genre. To this end, the following pages analyze women writers’ dramatic representations of female artists who

⁷³ See Japp, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama*, 102f.

encounter conflicts pertaining to the creative process. I propose that a better understanding of the conflicts and obstacles that impede women's access to creative work will add new aspects to the cultural imagination of the traditionally male artist. Conventional artist-dramas tend to keep fictional female artists or women with creative talents and their experiences at the margins. The discourses related to the conflicts of female artists include issues such as prostitution, money, labor laws, conceptions of masculinity and male honor, and negotiations of domestic duties and creative aspirations. Understanding these experiences as intimately connected to the female artist will allow a renegotiation of the boundaries of the genre as well as of the significance of these texts. The following chapter overview provides a brief introduction into the different texts and topics; the chapters are organized thematically, not chronologically.

Chapter Overview

Chapter One

Negotiating Narratives: The Legacy of the Artist in Elsa Porges-Bernstein's *Johannes Herkner*

The first chapter examines Elsa Porges-Bernstein's drama *Johannes Herkner* (1904). This is the only text that does not have a female artist-protagonist, but instead presents a talented woman in her inability to access the creative world, which presents itself as an entirely male domain. In many ways, this chapter sets the stage for the following chapters by presenting a male-dominated art-world and female protagonists' challenges to being seen, heard, and taken seriously as artistically talented women. The drama has been criticized by Sarah Colvin and

others as presenting a masculinist orientation that implies Porges-Bernstein's imitation of male authors. In contrast, I argue that the author presents an overstylized male artist in order to comment on existing cultural narratives as well as on the lack of opportunities and imagination of alternatives or of counter-narratives. The text then deals with the cultural legacies of the male artist as God-like and as genius, and it presents a male protagonist who alludes to prominent artist figures of the time, namely Auguste Rodin and Rainer Maria Rilke. In her presentation of the female character, Elizabeth, Porges-Bernstein illustrates the stark gender disparity in that she is defined not in terms of her talents or aspirations, but instead in terms of her body and position within the patriarchal gender order.

Chapter Two

Discourses on Money, Consumption, and Prostitution in Marie Itzerott's *Hilde Brandt*

Chapter two is prefaced with a short introduction to the contemporary moment of the theater and the role of the actress. This sets the scene for both chapter two, which presents an actress as its main character as well as for chapter three, which deals with a singer as its female artist-protagonist. Chapter two focuses on Marie Itzerott's tragedienne Hilde Brandt (*Hilde Brandt*, 1905) whose most celebrated performance is followed by a fatal after play. As an actress, Hilde has to deal with the monetary interests of both the theater director and her patron, she has to entertain her audience's interest in fashion as well as in the female body on stage, and she needs to negotiate and defend her own beliefs in art. Caught between desperate financial needs and the opportunity to play a role to which she has aspired throughout her (so far mediocre) career, she chooses to give in to the demands of her patron and sells herself in order to perform Thusnelda. This chapter ties to the previous one as the analysis of this drama and the

discourses around its female actress highlight the importance of gender relations. At the core of the female protagonist's conflict lies the close connection between the opportunity to prove and to showcase her artistic talents and the impact of issues concerning the patron's masculinity. His need to assert his masculinity and virility impede her opportunity to play a role without compromising her own beliefs in art. Ultimately, the conditions at the theater, the expectations of the audience, and the demands of the patron create a network in which discourses on money, consumption, and prostitution take center stage.

Chapter Three

A Singer's Inquiry into Autonomy: Discourses on Marriage, Employment, and Male Honor in Mathilde Paar's *Helene*

Mathilde Paar's drama *Helene* (1882) follows a female singer from being a divorced and rather independent and self-sufficient artist to getting caught in past conjugal and familial relationships that deeply affect the future of her career. When her former aristocratic husband happens to come upon her performance and then confers with her father, who disowned her, discourses on marriage and divorce, on upper-class women's gainful employment, and on male honor begin to unfold and to define the future of her life as a singer. Again, as in the previous chapters, this chapter works out the intricate relationships between the male characters and the female artist. In this case, male honor and the ways in which the male characters perceive themselves and each other prove essential to Helene's decision between continuing her work as a singer (potentially in America) or returning to a domestic relationship that would bar her from the stage. This drama allows not only insights into contemporary legal discourses concerning

marriage, divorce, and women's labor as well as arising debates about a new Civil Code, it also provides a revealing view of society's underlying power structures.

Chapter Four

Challenging Gender Conventions: Freedom, Friendship and Frail Masculinity in Anna Croissant Rust's *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat*

Anna Croissant Rust's *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* (1896) focuses on a female writer, Johanna, and her ailing husband who supports his wife and her creative work until he decides that his life is not worth living any longer. The drama stands out in its different presentation of sexuality, gender relations, and its satirical undertones created not only due to provocative challenges to gender stereotypes, but also due to the contrast between Johanna and her friend, the singer Ernestine. Discussions about the need for freedom, the meaning of art, and the role of men in their lives first inspire and later alienate the two women from each other, and contribute to the text's ambiguity with regard to the long-term feasibility of negotiating gender expectations and artistic aspirations.

Chapter One

Negotiating Narratives: The Legacy of the Artist in Elsa Porges-Bernstein's *Johannes Herkner*

Elsa Porges was born in Vienna in 1866 to parents from Prague's Jewish-German bourgeoisie.⁷⁴ She grew up in Munich, where her father, based on Richard Wagner's recommendation, became the conductor for King Ludwig. Following her childhood interests in drama, theater, and music, Elsa began a career as an actress in Madgeburg and Braunschweig at age seventeen but concluded it only three years later due to problems with her eyes as well as due to bad working conditions at the theater.⁷⁵ The eye condition that kept her from a career on stage worsened over the years⁷⁶ and deeply affected her reading and writing; she published her last work in 1919 and was almost blind by 1925.⁷⁷

Her marriage to Max Bernstein (a lawyer, theater critic, and writer) in 1890 motivated her return to writing, using the pseudonym of "Ernst Rosmer,"⁷⁸ both her husband and her father

⁷⁴ Heinrich and Wilhelmine (née Merores) raised their children in the Protestant faith, Elsa was christened before her marriage, even though her husband was Jewish. See Deborah Viëtor-Engländer "Hidden from the World. Male Pseudonym and A-prominent. Elsa Porges-Bernstein alias Ernst Rosmer and in Theresienstadt L126" in *From Fin de Siècle to Theresienstadt The Works and Life of the Writer Elsa Porges-Bernstein*, eds. Helga Kraft and Dagmar Lorenz (New York: Peter Lang, 2007, 165-182), 165.

⁷⁵ See Schmid, *Gefallene Engel*, 89; K. Wiener, K. *Die Dramen Elsa Bernsteins* (Wien, Dissertation, 1923), 4.

⁷⁶ Elisabeth Graff Ametsbichler notes that a surgery around 1914 provided only temporary improvement to her eye affliction which became even more serious in the 1920s. See *Society, Gender, Politics, and Turn-of-the-Century Theater: Elsa Bernstein (P.S. Ernst Rosmer) and Arthur Schnitzler* (College Park: University of Maryland, Dissertation, 1992), 103.

⁷⁷ See Nancy Jean F. Pierce, *Woman's Place in German Turn-of-the-Century Drama: The Function of Female Figures in Selected Plays by Gerhart Hauptmann, Frank Wedekind, Ricarda Huch and Elsa Bernstein* (University of California, Irvine, Dissertation, 1988), 204.

⁷⁸ Wiener and Deborah Viëtor-Engländer relate the name choice "Rosmer" to Ibsen's text Rosmersholm, and see Ibsen and his writings about women's fate as essential to Bernstein's literary works. See K. Wiener, *Die Dramen Elsa Bernsteins*, 5. Viëtor-Engländer "Hidden from the World," 167. Viëtor-Engländer also notes that while it was widely known amongst critics that Elsa Porges-Bernstein was

supported her career decision. Growing up in the salon culture of her parents' home, Elsa Porges was deeply embedded in discussions on art and culture of the time. She and her husband continued to have salons or *Sonntag-Nachmittag-Tees* (Sunday-afternoon-teas) in their home in Munich, and Elsa maintained the tradition after the death of her husband in 1925. Public figures such as Ludwig Thoma, Theodor Fontane, Michael Georg Conrad, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Riccarda Huch, and Thomas Mann⁷⁹ frequented their gatherings. In addition, Elsa developed a lasting enthusiasm for music and, due to her father's work and close relation to Richard Wagner, she became intimately familiar with cultural discourses on Wagner.⁸⁰

Though Elsa Porges-Bernstein always considered herself as German and as a Protestant (she was not aware of her Jewish heritage until her teenage years), her life changed dramatically under the Fascist regime.⁸¹ In 1939, she had to vacate her home, and despite Winifried Wagner's arrangements for Elsa to be with her son in New York, she decided to stay in Germany with her sister, Gabriele. The siblings were detained and brought to Theresienstadt in 1942, and Elsa survived her sister in the concentration camp, where she continued to organize gatherings for

behind the pseudonym, it still allowed her to hide that she was a Jewish woman. See "Hidden from the World," 168.

⁷⁹ See Ulrike Zophoniasson-Baierl, *Elsa Bernstein alias Ernst Rosmer. Eine deutsche Dramatikerin im Spannungsfeld der literarischen Strömungen des Wilhelminischen Zeitalters* (Bern, Frankfurt a.M, New York: Peter Lang, 1985) 30; Graff Ametsbichler, *Society, Gender, Politics, and Turn-of-the-Century Theater*, 103.

⁸⁰ Andrea Albrecht and Romana Weiershausen present an insightful analysis of her drama *Dämmerung* in which they investigate Porges-Bernstein's intellectual engagement with Wagnerism at the turn of the century. The writer's intimate familiarity with discourses on Wagner constitutes an aspect of her life that has received little attention in the analysis of her work. See „Das Motto Aus Tristan und Isolde.“ Elsa Bernstein's *Dämmerung* als Auseinandersetzung mit dem Wagnerismus um 1900.“ *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* (Band 126, 2007 (4), 547-573).

⁸¹ Deborah Viëtor-Engländer discusses Porges-Bernstein's Protestant upbringing and her parents' intentions to let their children decide their religious faith once they would be old enough. The two daughters, Elsa and Gabriele, as well as the parents were christened in the 1880s. See "Hidden from the World," 165f.

intellectuals as a form of resistance to the physical and emotional tortures endured in the camp.⁸² After the liberation of Theresienstadt, she spent the last years of her life in Hamburg, where she died in 1949.

As a Jewish woman and a female writer, as a hostess of salons, and an active participant in cultural conversations, Elsa Porges-Bernstein occupies an extraordinary position in that she moves between margin and cultural center. Helga Kraft adds to the writer's diverse profile by describing her as a "Germanophile and, according to Nazi-ideology, a Jew; she was a traditional mother and housewife as well as a feminist and independent writer."⁸³ Porges-Bernstein was a versatile writer, and besides her dramatic works, she published poems and novellas. Her twenty dramatic works include texts concerned with Greek mythology (*Themistokles* [1897], *Nausikaa* [1906]), contemporary issues of love, relationships, and women's role in society (*Königskinder* [1895], *Maria Arndt* [1908], *Dämmerung* [1893]), and her two artist dramas *Wir Drei* (1893) and *Johannes Herkner* (1904). Only six of her plays were performed on stage, *Johannes Herkner* among them.

Elsa Porges-Bernstein's drama *Johannes Herkner* was first performed in the *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin.⁸⁴ It received positive reviews that most likely motivated its translation into English in 1911.⁸⁵ The play's title refers to the male protagonist's father and alludes to the central role of the male artist in this text. The figure Johannes Herkner never enters the stage, yet

⁸² Pierce, *Woman's place in German Turn-of-the-Century Drama*, 204.

⁸³ Helga Kraft and Dagmar Lorenz, eds., *From Fin-de-Siecle to Theresienstadt. The Works and Life of the Writer Elsa Porges-Bernstein* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007) 2.

⁸⁴ Pierce, *Woman's place in German Turn-of-the-Century Drama*, 229.

⁸⁵ Pierce, *Woman's place in German Turn-of-the-Century Drama*, 229. According to Nancy Pierce this is the only play in which she uses her maiden name (Elsa Porges) and adds her pseudonym only in parenthesis.

his name and position as the father of the artist plays an essential role; his death and funeral take center stage for two acts and motivate the lasting transformation of the protagonist Albrecht Herkner. Although in very different ways, both female characters, Mirjam and Elisabeth, inspire the work of Albrecht Herkner. The emphasis lies on their beauty and purity, while their talents are mentioned only in passing. It is exactly this negligibility, however, this focus on their appearance, in conjunction with the overpowering presence of the male artist and his father that draws attention and alludes to the author's critique in this drama. Caught in their roles as muse and model (Mirjam) or daughter and assistant (Elisabeth) their strictly defined positions offer very little opportunity to develop and showcase their talents. Instead, male-centered discourses dominate the text that evolves around the cult of the male artist, likening his creative potential to that of God and pointing to social and cultural hierarchies within and outside the family. By presenting the powerful discourses that define the male artist and by showing that her male characters are determined by cultural and social expectations as well, the author also critiques the stagnation due to the gender conventions that restrict all characters in their roles.

At the turn of the century, Porges-Bernstein was a well-recognized dramatist and often compared to Gerhart Hauptmann, the leading naturalist dramatist.⁸⁶ As a reflection on and reaction to the rise of technology, industrialization, and the natural sciences, the naturalist movement questions not only former ideas of self-responsibility but stresses the impact of social and cultural milieu on the individual within society. The movement was considered a protest against society's inability to account for and intellectually deal with its transformations. It developed a program, in which art was supposed to mirror nature and reality with all its ugliness

⁸⁶ See Edgar Steiger, *Von Hauptmann bis Maeterlink. Das Werden des Neuen Dramas* (Berlin: Fontane, 1898) 327; Rudolph Lothar, *Das Deutsche Drama der Gegenwart* (München and Leipzig: G. Müller, 1905), 163f.

and deterministic forces and concerned with issues such as society's decay, decline, and decadence.⁸⁷ Theodor Lessing, though he dislikes Porges-Bernstein's neo-classical texts, praises her dramas *Wir Drei*, *Dämmerung*, and *Königskinder* and states: "Insbesondere wäre den Rosmer'schen Dramen neben den Hauptmann'schen ein bleibender Platz im Bühnenrepertoire zu wünschen."⁸⁸ The texts *Wir Drei*, *Dämmerung*, and *Johannes Herkner* tend to be categorized as Porges-Bernstein's naturalistic works, although, as Astrid Weigert demonstrates in her essay "Gender-Art-Science,"⁸⁹ Porges-Bernstein shows a critical perspective toward the naturalistic movement and naturalist aesthetics. Her writings seem to explore the boundaries of the movement and attempt to expand its ideas to different genres and to move beyond its conventional discourses. Weigert stresses the author's concern with issues of gender as her way to critique prevalent notions of the naturalist drama. Ulrike Zophoniasson-Baierl has pointed out that Porges-Bernstein's dramas also engage with psychological processes, thereby establishing a contrast to the naturalist movement, which tended to focus on observations or descriptions of the surface as representations of reality.⁹⁰

The renewed recognition of Elsa Porges-Bernstein as a critical woman writer between the turn of the century and the 1920s received a decisive push in 2007 with Kraft and Lorenz's edited volume *From Fin de Siècle to Theresienstadt. The Works and the Life of the Writer Elsa*

⁸⁷ Graff Ametsbichler, *Society, Gender, Politics, and Turn-of-the-Century Theater*, 58.

⁸⁸ My Translation:

In particular, one would wish for a permanent positioning of Rosmer's dramas beside Hauptmann's dramas.

Theodor Lessing „Zwei Münchner Dichterinnen. Ernst Rosmer aund Helene Böhlau.“ in *Die Gesellschaft* (Vol. 13, No. 3, 1898, 16-28), 28.

⁸⁹ See Astrid Weigert, "Gender-Art-Science. Elsa Bernstein's Critique of Naturalist Aesthetics," in *From Fin de Siècle to Theresienstadt The Works and Life of the Writer Elsa Porges-Bernstein*, eds. Helga Kraft and Dagmar Lorenz (New York: Peter Lang, 2007, 77-90).

⁹⁰ Zophoniasson-Baierl, *Elsa Bernstein alias Ernst Rosmer*, 66.

Porges Bernstein. This volume deals with the writer's biography including her years in the concentration camp and also provides critical analyses of selected texts. Although this text has garnered considerable attention, the re-discovery of this woman writer first began in the 1985 with Ulrike Zophoniasson-Baierl's *Elsa Bernstein alias Ernst Rosmer. Eine deutsche Dramatikerin im Spannungsfeld der literarischen Strömungen des Wilhelminischen Zeitalters*, an analysis of some of Bernstein's major texts in the context of her time and literary movements. Zophoniasson-Baierl concerns herself with Porges-Bernstein's attempts to move beyond or to re-conceptualize the naturalist movement by exploring notions of the neo-romantic and the symbolist movement. She sees Porges-Bernstein as an author who strives to become an equal member of a community while writing from a marginal position.⁹¹ Zophoniasson-Baierl provides many insightful contributions to a fuller understanding of Porges-Bernstein's oeuvre, but her analyses are limited by her attempts to categorize the author's works according to literary movements of the turn of the century. In the 1990s, Susanne Kord's *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen. Deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im 18. Und 19. Jahrhundert* (1992) and Helga Kraft's *Ein Haus aus Sprache. Deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen: das 'andere' Theater* (1996), both concerned with forgotten women writers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, provide a brief biographical sketch and short analyses of her dramatic works *Wir Drei*, *Dämmerung* and *Königskinder*. In addition, Sarah Colvin included two of Porges-Bernstein's works, both artist-dramas, in her book *Women and German Drama. Playwrights and their Texts 1860-1945* (2003). She provides a short analysis of *Johannes Herkner*, in which she focuses on the role of women supporting male artists or intellectuals in their careers. Colvin's close reading of the female figures, however, does not engage with cultural discourses on the male artist, and

⁹¹ Zophoniasson-Baierl, *Elsa Bernstein alias Ernst Rosmer*, 133f.

she reads the play not as a critique of conventions but as a presentation of “(idealized) female self-subordination.”⁹²

While I agree with Weigert’s and Zophoniasson-Baierl’s assessment of Bernstein’s critical stance toward the naturalist movement, I argue that the author in fact anticipates themes of later expressionist texts. In her presentation of the male artist-protagonist and in her development of the stark contrast between male and female figures, Porges-Bernstein shows a deep concern with questions of gender, art, and religion, suggesting her as a precursor of the expressionist movement of the following decades. In contrast to Sarah Colvin, I argue that Porges-Bernstein’s “masculinist orientation of the play”⁹³ does not mean that “no obvious attempt [is made] to find space for female subjectivity;”⁹⁴ instead she uses this play to critique the masculinist underpinnings of society’s conceptualization of the artist as well as the masculine discourse in the arts. My analysis adds to Colvin’s by contextualizing Albrecht in relation to contemporary discourses on art and the artist. From my perspective, Porges-Bernstein critically evaluates gender relations, and, in the end, leaves little doubt that her female as well as her male characters are restricted due to gender and social conventions. The strong focus on Albrecht reflects the author’s engagement with prominent contemporary artists such as Rainer Maria Rilke and Auguste Rodin. In her representation of the male artist, the author employs Rilke’s writings on Rodin as a reference to contemporary discourses on the male artist. In addition, she depicts an exclusively male artist-community represented and reinforced through the artist’s relationships with other men associated with the artist-community and through the father-son relationship, which further introduces discourses on redemption and art as religion (*Kunstreligion*). These

⁹² Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 65.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

male-centered art- and artist-discourses let the female characters disappear behind the stylized, i.e. exaggerated and intensified, presentation and performance of the male artist-hero. The play depicts a lack of space for women's creative ambitions and a lack of access to certain cultural or social positions due to women's perception as body, model, or muse. Less a celebration of the accomplishments and apotheosis of the male artist, the drama shows how cultural expectations and conventions restrict the development of the male artist. At the same time, she critiques cultural discourses on the male artist-hero and demonstrates a critical engagement with women's role in relation to the artist and to art. As the first chapter, this analysis connects all chapters by pointing to underlying difficulties in imagining women as artists within a cultural environment abundant with discourses and metaphors that describe and pre-determine the male artist as genius. While the drama does not present a female artist-protagonist but a creative woman in a supporting role, it provides insights into the struggles of being recognized or recognizable as a creative woman.

Synopsis

The play begins with a scene in the studio in which Albrecht, the artist-protagonist, works on a sculpture of a nude clay group. Immediately following the opening lines, Albrecht's model and lover, Mirjam, faints from exhaustion because she has to hold her positions for hours on end. Instead of rushing to help her, he first takes his camera to capture the beauty of his unconscious model, a scene that introduces Herkner as the focused artist and Mirjam as the model for the

female figure of his sculpture. This opening scene also introduces Mirjam's struggle with Albrecht's work and her perception of him as a God-like, yet imperfect, artist.

During the first act, Albrecht receives a letter from his aging and ailing father Johannes Herkner. The letter constitutes a key element of the drama in that Johannes Herkner wonders about his son's artistic development and attempts to motivate him to become a different artist by working toward redemption from life's conflicts through his work. By the end of the act, a friend of the family informs Albrecht that his father is dying, and Albrecht leaves to return home. The following three acts center on Johannes Herkner's funeral and on several interspersed conversations about the father-son relationship between Elisabeth (Albrecht's sister) and Frau Herkner. Albrecht, who comes to realize the impact of his father on his own life, has to re-negotiate his new role and position within his family. His struggle with combining the role as his father's successor with his life as an artist keeps him from working throughout these acts. Finally, Elisabeth encourages his return to work and accompanies him to his house and into his studio. After a confrontation between Mirjam's brother, Siegmund, and Albrecht, in which their affair and Mirjam's work as a nude model is revealed, Mirjam accompanies her brother and leaves Albrecht. Elisabeth, the artist's unmarried sister, takes on the role of the model for his new work—their father's gravestone.

The following two sections approach the drama from two perspectives. The first section explores underlying discourses on the male artist by investigating the legacy of the artist through references to Rilke's writings on the French sculptor Auguste Rodin, to an exclusive male intellectual/artist community, and to the notion of art as religion. In addition, it analyzes the father-son relationship in light of overbearing bourgeois values that determine and guide the transformation of the artist. The second section focuses on the relation between the artist and his

models and explores the role of women in relation to the artist and his art. So far, the discourses on Rodin in this drama have been overlooked in favor of analyzing the minor role of women in the text. A closer look at the artist-protagonist reveals the author's engagement with notions of the artist as genius as well as her critique of contemporary discourses on gender conventions.

Albrecht as Bernstein's Rodin

At the beginning of the play, Porges-Bernstein connects the story of her fictional artist-protagonist, Albrecht, to a non-fictional artist, Auguste Rodin. The author establishes Albrecht Herkner as a talented and recognized sculptor by referencing his acquaintance Rodin with whom he worked in Paris⁹⁵ and who gave him a watch as a gift.⁹⁶ After several years in Paris during which he worked on his sculpture techniques, Albrecht has now returned to a *süddeutsche Kunststadt* (South German art center). By establishing these connections, the drama suggests an engagement with discourses on art and the artist at the turn of the century. Moreover, the author's familiarity with Rainer Maria Rilke's writings on Rodin is apparent in the text and invites reading this drama as a critical approach to the cultural conversation on Rodin or, in more general terms, as a critical approach to the conceptualization of the male artist.

⁹⁵ Elsa Porges-Bernstein, *Johannes Herkner* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1904) 19.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

In her salon in Munich, Elsa Porges-Bernstein made the acquaintance of Rainer Maria Rilke in the late 1890s.⁹⁷ Rilke was deeply impressed by the work of Auguste Rodin and traveled to Paris in 1902 to meet the famous sculptor and to write about the artist. He developed a friendship with Rodin, worked as his secretary, and wrote several essays and a monograph on the artist and his work. Numerous points of reference in the drama indicate Porges-Bernstein's close examination of contemporary discourses on Rodin, and create a curious protagonist in that Albrecht not only appears as a fictional friend of the famous sculptor but at times as a fictionalized Rodin. This approach allows her not only to include material directly related to the Rodin reception through Rilke and Georg Simmel but also to add her own storyline and place the artist in a complicated relationship with his family and with his lover and model Mirjam.

Porges-Bernstein intersperses dialogues and stage directions with Rodin-references and thereby reveals Rodin as the model for her fictional artist. Albrecht resembles Rodin in that his main materials are clay and bronze, and he is working on a clay sculpture reminiscent of Rodin's *Eternal Idol* (1889) at the beginning of the play. The stage directions note a miniature version of Rodin's *The Kiss* (1889) in his studio; both sculptures were created during Rodin's relationship with Camille Claudel. Albrecht, like Rodin, has sculptures of his models from various perspectives or profiles⁹⁸ and, according to Mirjam, pays particular attention to hands.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Rilke writes about the Sunday Salons at Elsa Porges Bernstein's house in a letter in 1897: "Diejenigen aus diesem Kreise (Porges-Salon), welche nicht "nur musikalisch" sind, finden sich am Sonntagsempfang der Frau Bernstein-Rosmer wieder und haben Gelegenheit, jedesmal aufs neue zu staunen, wie zart und weiblich—im besten Sinne—die blasse, blonde Frau, die durch ihre realistischen Schauspiele berühmt wurde, ist. Wie stolz sie als Hausfrau, wie liebeich sie als Mutter der kleinen Eva sein kann und wie gern sie gesteht, daß sie ihre Stücke an dem kleinen Nähtischen auf der Fensterstufe schreibt. Sie ist selbst eine leise und weiche Natur und steht dem 'Frauenemacipationstreiben,' welches reichlich in Blüte steht, ganz fern. Quoted in Ziphoniasson-Baierl, *Elsa Bernstein alias Ernst Rosmer*, 32.

⁹⁸ See Porges-Bernstein, *Johannes Herkner*, 8; and Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, (XX)

⁹⁹ See Porges Bernstein, *Johannes Herkner*, 14; and Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, 32

By the time Rilke wrote on the prominent sculptor, Rodin had already gained recognition in Germany through several exhibitions in the late 1880s and early 1890s, two of them also in Munich in 1893¹⁰⁰ and further increased his fame and status with the exhibition of several sculptures in his private pavilion at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1900. Rodin became a representative of the “modern” in Germany and a member of the Munich Secession, a progressive artist coalition, in 1896 (later he joins groups in Vienna [1898] and Berlin [1900]).¹⁰¹ Georg Simmel, who first saw Rodin’s work in a Rodin-exhibition in Prague in 1902¹⁰² published an influential essay on Rodin in the newspaper *Der Zeitgeist* in 1902,¹⁰³ in which he celebrates Rodin as a modern artist who revived the art of sculpture that had ended with Michaelangelo.¹⁰⁴ Simmel sees Rodin in opposition to the naturalist movement and to artistic conventions since he creates from the inside: “hier scheint ein Innenleben des Steins an seiner Oberfläche zu vibrieren, sie widerstandslos nach sich gestaltet zu haben, wie man wohl sagt, dass die Seele sich ihren Leib baut.”¹⁰⁵ According to Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth, this essay initiated a broader Rodin-reception and paved the way for publishers to commission Rilke and others to write on Rodin. With their presentation of Rodin’s work and their reverence for the artist, both Rilke and

¹⁰⁰ See J.A. Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth, *Rodin Studien. Persönlichkeit—Werke—Wirkung—Bibliographie* (Prestel Verlag: München, 1983), 348.

¹⁰¹ Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth, *Rodin Studien*, 348f.

¹⁰² Hannes Böhringer and Karlfried Gründer, *Ästhetik und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende: Georg Simmel* (Frankfurt am Main : V. Klostermann, 1976), 19.

¹⁰³ Simmel’s „Rodins Plastik und die Geistesrichtung der Gegenwart“ was first published in *Der Zeitgeist. Beiblatt des Berliner Tageblatts*, 29.9.1902. Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth considers Simmel’s essays on Rodin, besides Rilke’s, the most influential in Germany. See *Rodin Studien*, 321ff. Simmel continually published on Rodin for more than two decades after his first encounter with his works in 1902. See Böhringer and Gründer, *Ästhetik und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Böhringer and Gründer, *Ästhetik und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende*, 231.

¹⁰⁵ My Translation:

It appears that the inner life of a stone vibrates on its surface, to have it sculpted without resistance, as one may say that the soul forms the body.

Simmel quoted in Böhringer and Gründer, *Ästhetik und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende*, 235.

Simmel contributed to the conceptualization of the artist as genius at the turn of the century. While there is little documentation of exchanges between Simmel and Rilke, they shared experiences in their encounters with Rodin:

Beide hatten ihre ambivalenten Erfahrungen in der Begegnung mit dem, wenn man es so ausdrücken darf, 'leibhaften Genie' gemacht, mit dem Michaelangelo ihrer Zeit. Denn davon waren sie beide überzeugt, in Rodin das bildkünstlerische Genie ihrer Epoche getroffen zu haben, das—im alten mythischen Sinne Prometheus—und im historischen Sinne nur Phidias und Michelangelo vergleichbar sei, die überragende Künstlerpersönlichkeit, die da Menschengestalten formte nach ihrem inneren Bilde wie jene. [...] Getragen von der Genievereehrung des 19. Jahrhunderts und seiner Spätblüte (Wagner, Nietzsche, George!) suchten sie beide die persönliche Begegnung mit dem bedeutenden Bildhauer.¹⁰⁶

The continual discourse on the (male) artist as genius and God-like creator constitutes an important aspect of the Rodin reception in both Rilke and Simmel and proves integral also to Porges-Bernstein's stylized presentation of her artist-protagonist.

Besides Rodin's influence on the visual arts, Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth also notes his impact on German literature:

Rodin inspirierte mehrere Schriftsteller und Dichter, nicht nur Rilke, so zum Beispiel auch Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, Stefan Zweig, Gerhart Hauptmann, Ernst Penzoldt und die expressionistische Tragödie „Die Bürger von Calais“ von Georg Kaiser.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ My Translation:

Both had made their ambivalent experiences with, if one may call him, the "real genius," with the Michelangelo of their time. Because both were convinced to have met the genius of the visual arts of their era in Rodin—who could be compared, in the old mythical sense to Prometheus—and in the historical sense to Phidias and Michelangelo; the outstanding artist-personality, who forms humans after his inner image as they did. Carried by the genius-cult of the late nineteenth century and its late cultural flourishing (Wagner, Nietzsche, George!) both longed for a personal encounter with the most prominent sculptor.

Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth quoted in Böhringer and Gründer, *Ästhetik und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende*, 25.

¹⁰⁷ My Translation:

Rätus Luck adds in the introduction to Rilke's letters and documents of his encounter with Rodin:

An dieser Rodin-Rezeption sind im deutschsprachigen Raum, wo von Weimar und dann vom Kaiserlichen Hof allerdings nicht weniger starke Gegenströmungen ausgingen, Schriftsteller beteiligt wie Hermann Bahr, Stefan George, Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, Gerhart Hauptmann—von Kunsthistorikern und Kritikern, Sammlern, Museumsleitern und natürlich Künstlern ganz zu schweigen. Sie alle haben ihren eigenen Rodin geschaffen und über ihn kommuniziert.¹⁰⁸

With this drama, Elsa Porges-Bernstein creates her own Rodin-like figure, as a starting point for her reflection on the contemporary artist figure. In addition, discourses on redemption through art and the father-son relationship as reference to the (male) artist-community contribute to the stylized presentation of her sculptor, and allow her to present a critical perspective on contemporary conceptualizations of the artist.

Rodin inspired multiple writers and poets, not only Rilke, but also authors such as Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, Stefan Zweig, Gerhart Hauptmann, Ernst Penzoldt, and the expressionist tragedy "The Burgers of Calais" by Georg Kaiser.

Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth, *Rodin Studien*, 350.

¹⁰⁸ My Translation:

Part of this reception in the German-speaking area, in which equally strong opposition was voiced in Weimar and at the imperial court, were authors such as Hermann Bahr, Stefan George, Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, Gerhart Hauptmann—not to mention art historians, art critics, collectors, directors of museums and, of course, artists. They all created their own Rodin and communicated about him.

Rätus Luck, *Der Briefwechsel und andere Dokumente zu Rilkes Begegnung mit Rodin*. (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 2001), 20.

The Legacy of the Male Artist

While *Johannes Herkner* does not seem to offer a way out for Mirjam and appears to negate women's role in the creative process, its contribution lies in the discourses it applies to expose and critique social and cultural structures that reinforce this negation. The author introduces several aspects that manifest, but also critically question the role and position of the male artist. The artist that Porges-Bernstein creates is by no means an ideal artist; he appears ambiguous, and she continually undermines his status by pairing almost negligible details that call Albrecht's practices and status into question (such as the violent imagery in the description of his work) with hyperbolic depictions of the artist-figure as God-like creator. This section analyzes the ways in which the author contrasts the cultural conception of the male artist with aspects that challenge conventional notions of the artist and his approach to work. By presenting the powerful discourses on the male artist, Porges-Bernstein simultaneously points to the limitations inherent in these narratives in that his work turns into a reiteration of his father's notions.

As a sculptor, Albrecht's deep interest in shapes relates primarily to the body and its parts. The play opens with a description of his living room, which, as stated in the stage directions, conveys an impression of harmony despite a somewhat chaotic appearance. In contrast to the harmony of the living room stands the description of the studio as a room full of casts of legs and arms as well as a towering Lucifer:

Einzel aufgehängt Gipsmasken, Abgüsse von Armen und Beinen. In einer Ecke die alles überragende Bronzestatue eines triumphierenden Lucifer mit weit ausgebreiteten Flügeln (8).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Hanging on the walls are plaster masks and casts of arms and legs. In a corner towering above everything else, a bronze statue of Lucifer triumphant, with widespread wings. Trans. Mary Harned, *John Herkner* (Boston: R.G. Badger, 1911), 322.

The combination of casts of arms and legs and the triumphant Lucifer in the studio alert the reader from the beginning and introduce this workspace of the artist as a perilous place. The introductory description of the studio also provides a first impression of the artist's current work:

Ein kleinerer Drehtisch mit der von verschiedenen Seiten immer wiederholten Gestalt eines nackten Mannes, und eine Gliederpuppe. Im Vordergrund des Ateliers, ganz nach rechts gerückt, ein großer Drehtisch, darauf eine lebensgroße, beinahe vollendete Tongruppe. Aus dem Gipfel eines Felsens wächst eine völlig nackte, sich mit beiden Armen hoch emporwerfende Mädchengestalt. Vor ihr auf den Knien hingestreckt ein nackter Jüngling, der sie mit den Armen umschließt, den Kopf in leidenschaftlicher Bewegung nach ihrem Angesicht emporwendet (8).¹¹⁰

The first moments of the drama depict Albrecht as both extremely gifted and dangerous. Mirjam's description refers not only to the blind spot of the artist but also foreshadows the blind spot in the cultural perception of the stylized artist figure that remains focused on its view of the artist as genius. The stage directions describe Albrecht Herkner as a man in his thirties, of tall and strong build, with dangerous and intimidating eyes: "tiefblauen, gefährlichen Beobachteraugen, die auch beim Lächeln eine gewisse Strenge des Ausdrucks nicht verlieren (8)."¹¹¹ In the opening scene, the sculptor takes a photograph of his unconscious model, stressing the role of Albrecht's eyes and gaze for his work. Mirjam describes his eyes as crucial and as the main agent in the creative process; she compares them to the eyes of a young God in their power and precision, but she also has a view of his blind spot. Albrecht's blindness concerns his life

¹¹⁰A smaller revolving table with the figure of a nude man, repeated over and over as seen from different sides, and a jointed puppet. In the foreground of the studio, pushed clear over to the right, a larger revolving table, on it a life-size group in clay, almost completed. Out of the top of a rock rises the wholly nude figure of a girl with both arms raised as if flinging herself upward. Stretched before her on both knees a naked youth who clasps her in his arms, his head thrown back with a passionate gesture, his face upturned toward her.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 322.

¹¹¹Stage directions: Dark blue, dangerous, observing eyes, which even when they smile do not lose a certain severity of expression.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 322.

outside of work, i.e., especially his relationship with Mirjam. In a dialogue about the sale of a recently finished sculpture, a bronze Lucifer, Mirjam notes the power of his eyes:

Albrecht: [...] Meinst du ich weiß noch, wie's zugegangen ist? Meinst du ich weiß noch, wer's gemacht hat?

Mirjam: (deutet mit dem Zeigefinger auf seine beiden Augen). Die da! Die haben's gemacht. Die blauen, gefährlichen, schrecklichen. Schauen einen durch und durch. (Nimmt seinen Kopf zwischen beide Hände.) Solche Augen müßte Gott gehabt haben—wie er jung war—und wenn's einen gäbe...Und wissen doch nicht Alles! Und sehen doch nicht Alles (13f)!¹¹²

His piercing and God-like eyes remain focused on the surface, but he fails to perceive and represent what lies underneath. At this point in the play, Albrecht appears too concerned with the outer appearance of bodies, which is an issue that becomes particularly important to Mirjam in Albrecht's initial decision to represent a perfect female figure by matching her body with Luigia's head. Albrecht's focus on his work results in disregard for Mirjam's feelings, and his concern with her body leaves him blind to the inside of his lover, to her talents, her soul, and her feelings. Mirjam's statement about his eyes confirms earlier stage directions that describe the artist's eyes as "dangerous". She adds "dreadful" (maybe even cruel) to her perception of his eyes as they pierce and dissect her body and create a new female figure.

While the drama engages with contemporary cultural discourses on the artist as genius and God-like creator, it also points to what lies outside the field of vision and presents an artist who creates life-like sculptures but threatens life in the process. Albrecht's understanding of and approach to work is first articulated as a reaction to a letter from his father. After Albrecht has

¹¹² Albrecht: [...] do you think I know how it came about? Do you think I know who brought it about? Mirjam: (points with her forefinger at both his eyes) These, here! They brought it about. These blue—dangerous, dreadful things. They look one through and through. Burn one through and through. (Takes his head between her two hands) Eyes like these God must have had—when He was young—if there is a God. And yet, they don't know everything. And yet, they don't see everything. Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 325.

spent several years of apprenticeship in Paris and has gained some recognition for his work, Johannes Herkner wonders about the intellectual and artistic state of mind of his son, and he initiates contact through a letter. Albrecht's reaction to the letter conveys their somewhat estranged relationship in that he presents himself in contrast to his father's ideals and understanding of art.¹¹³ The letter introduces not only the father-son relationship to the drama but also accentuates the ambiguous presentation of the artist-protagonist:

Albrecht: (springt empor, der Brief fällt zur Erde, Mirjam hebt ihn auf.) Was will der Mann von mir? Was denn? Ich bin kein Philosoph. Ich hab' keine Ideen. (Leidenschaftlich auf und ab.) Geist! Erkenntnis! Dreck!! Die Erscheinung wahrnehmen—fassen und festhalten—die Natur auffinden und knebeln, bis ihr der Atem vergeht—das will ich. Darum rauf ich mich ab (19)!¹¹⁴

Albrecht approaches his work as a representation of what he perceives, can hold on to, and even choke until the last breath has been drawn. Mary Harned's translation of this drama seems almost too innocent at this point, and does not quite convey the violent images Albrecht uses to describe his work, images that further add to Mirjam's earlier description of his eyes as "dangerous" and "dreadful." Instead of representing his ideas, Albrecht represents that which he has gained

¹¹³ The father-son conflict becomes a prominent theme around the turn of the century, particularly in the expressionist drama, in which the emotional son rebels against the authoritarian father. See Ernst Schürer, "Provocation and Proclamation, Vision and Imagery: Expressionist Drama between German Idealism and Modernity," in *A Companion to the Literature of German Expressionism*, Neil Donahue, ed. (New York: Camden House, 2005, 231-254), 241. Beginning around the mid-century, the motif of the father-son relationship/conflict occurs more frequently, esp. in the bourgeois setting. Their conflict presents issues such as power differences, different notions of honor and (political) values, or the crisis of the nuclear family. The resolution of the crisis ends with the son's suicide, the son's departure from the family, or the triumph of the son over the father. See Torsten Bügner and Gerhard Wagner, „Die Alten und die Jungen im Deutschen Reich. Literatursoziologische Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis der Generationen 1871-1918,“ in *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* (Vol.20, No.3, Juni 1991, 177-190).

¹¹⁴Albrecht: (Jumps up, the letter falls to the ground. Mirjam picks it up.) What does the man want of me? What is it? I am no philosopher. I have no ideas. (Pacing passionately) Sprit! Knowledge! Rats!! To observe phenomena—seize and hold them firmly—to find out nature and bind her until her breath leaves her—that's what I want! For that I grapple with her.”
Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 328.

control over; and he struggles with nature until he has a firm hold—a notion that also indicates certain violence with regard to his models. At this early stage in the drama, Albrecht appears as an obsessive sculptor concerned with taking control over and depicting what he perceives while rejecting intellectual approaches to art. Porges-Bernstein's presentation of Albrecht's approach to work insinuates a critique of the artist's status and his ambition to overcome nature in his art.

The discussion of Albrecht's work as representing surface versus inside (perception versus idea) echoes Rilke's discussion of Rodin, and shows Bernstein's engagement with and reflection on Rilke's text from 1902. Rilke describes Rodin's diligent examination of surfaces that build the foundation of his art, and he writes: "Seine Kunst baute sich nicht auf eine große Idee auf, sondern auf eine kleine gewissenhafte Verwirklichung, auf das Erreichbare, auf ein Können."¹¹⁵ Rilke continues this description by referring to the artist's treatment of life:

Es gab weder Pose noch Gruppe noch Komposition. Es gab nur unzählbar viele lebendige Flächen, es gab nur Leben, und das Ausdrucksmittel, das er sich gefunden hatte, ging gerade auf dieses Leben zu. Nun hieß es seiner und seiner Fülle mächtig zu werden.¹¹⁶

Though Rilke refers to Rodin's desire to master nature and shows a deep concern for the shapes and forms of bodies, he aspires to transfer life into his sculpture and intends to convey the movement that is present at all moments in the features of his models.¹¹⁷ He, in contrast to Albrecht, moves from the expression on the outside to the inside and appreciates the fullness of

¹¹⁵His art was not based on a great idea, but rather on the strength of a humble, conscientious realization, on something attainable, on ability.

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, trans. Daniel Slager (Archipelago Books: New York, 2004), 36f.

For German text see Rainer Maria Rilke, *Auguste Rodin* (J. Bard: Berlin, 1902), 17.

¹¹⁶There was no longer any pose, group or composition. Now there was only an endless variety of living planes, there was only life and the means of expression he would find to take him to its source. Now it became a matter of mastering life in all its fullness.

Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, trans. Daniel Slager, 37.

For German text see Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, 17.

¹¹⁷ See Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth, *Rodin Studien*, 92.

life. Albrecht's mastery of nature remains on the outside and instead of bringing his material to life and letting life transpire from it, he chokes life out of nature in order to represent it—implying death or a violent transformation of life. Rilke's description of Rodin and his numerous remarks about the sculptor as a God-like creator are taken up in Porges-Bernstein's text but are complemented by conflicting images in the presentation of Albrecht. When Rilke analyzes the artist's creation of *The Man with the Broken Nose*, he alludes to God-references and states that: "Er hatte ihn gemacht, wie Gott den ersten Menschen gemacht hat [...]." ¹¹⁸ He adds to this that in his creations Rodin completes the intentions of nature. ¹¹⁹ Porges-Bernstein's depiction of Albrecht's approach to his work and of Mirjam's perception of him as an artist allude to both the deification and worship of the artist-genius (Albrecht as a young God) and his ambiguous persona and imperfection due to his own blind spot and his potentially violent acts in his subjugation of nature.

Porges-Bernstein's staging of the artist-protagonist remains unsettling throughout the play, which complicates any potential identification with Albrecht. The statement concerning Albrecht's approach to his work is followed by another excerpt from his father's letter, which moves beyond the artist's understanding of his work and introduces the notion of salvation from life's struggles through work and of rebirth within an exclusive male artist community. Albrecht takes up the letter again and continues to read Johannes' words aloud:

Albrecht:[...] "Die lange Trennung hat mich in der Beurteilung Deiner geistigen Gesichtszüge unsicher gemacht. Ich glaube zu fühlen, daß du manches hinter Dir, aber noch das Meiste vor Dir hast, und daß der Augenblick nicht mehr ferne ist, in dem auch Du Deiner inneren Wiedergeburt entgegenreifst, die man wohl in Gegensatz zu der ersten körperlichen bringen mag. Erst wird mit Wasser getauft, und dann mit dem heiligen Geist. Was soll ich Dir zu diesem Augenblicke

¹¹⁸ "He made him just as God made the first man [...]."

Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, trans. Daniel Slager, 54.

¹¹⁹ See Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, 51.

wünschen? Untergang der Willkür im Wollen des Notwendigen, Erkenntnis von der Wahrheit des eigenen Wesens und Entschlossenheit zum Bekenntnis dieser Wahrheit, dem Lebenskampf eine Erlösung im Lebenswerk. Das wünsche ich Dir und damit, mein lieber Junge, sage ich Dir gute Nacht. Dein alter Vater Johannes Herkner (20f).¹²⁰

This excerpt contains two significant notions: spiritual rebirth and salvation through art. The artist's father believes that Albrecht is about to experience his inner (artistic and spiritual) rebirth that stands in contrast to his physical birth. In fact, this second birth, which seems also much more consequential to Johannes, speaks to the achievements and the spiritual condition of those who experience this kind of birth. Disconnected from the womb of the mother, this rebirth appears to be part of the male intellectual community, induced by the maturity of the artist. Moreover, this second birth lays the foundation for redemption or deliverance from life's struggles. Besides the experience of rebirth, he wishes his son the will for the necessary, the recognition of his true being, and redemption from life's struggles through his work. It becomes clear that Albrecht's model and lover (or any other woman) plays a minor role, at best, in this rebirth and redemption scenario that appears accessible only to a male community. It is possible Porges-Bernstein anticipated the renewed discourse on the male genius that began to develop around the turn of the century and gained more momentum in the coming years. About ten years after her presentation of the notion of spiritual rebirth within a male community, the painter and

¹²⁰ Albrecht: [...] "Our long separation has made me uncertain in my estimation of your spiritual features. I believe I feel that you have much behind you, but still have the most before you, and that the moment is no longer distant in which you too will be ripe for your spiritual rebirth, which may well be regarded as the antithesis to the earlier physical birth. First the baptism with water and then the baptism with the Holy Ghost. What shall I wish for you at the moment? The sinking of free will in willing the necessary, recognition of the truth of your own being and determination to avow this truth, deliverance from life's conflict in life's work. This is what I wish for you, and with this, my dear boy, I bid you good night. Your old father John Herkner.
Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 329.

sculptor Otto Freundlich points to the necessity for man to transcend physical birth and its connection to women with the potency of his mind: “männliche Geistespotenz.”¹²¹

Finding salvation in one’s work as an artist or in art in general is by no means a new notion or discourse at the turn of the century, but its conceptualization differs from that of its origin around 1800. Increasing secularization combined with an orientation toward new and diverse forms of religion, the development of the sciences, as well as the lasting cult of the genius, contribute to this status of art as a potential substitute for religion.¹²² Bernd Auerochs stresses the ability of art to disclose and reveal the divine, which had been located only in the realm of religion until the early nineteenth century. In contrast to the eighteenth century, art would not have to present religious themes to be perceived as divine and was no longer seen as a potential savior of religion.¹²³ Instead, art became a new way to access the divine in that “art as art,” independent of religion, could take a status comparable to that of religion. The modern conceptualization of “art as religion” (*Kunstreligion*) further stresses the redemptive potential of art; salvation thus becomes dissociated from an afterworld and appears as a worldly possibility.

¹²¹ See Barbara Wright, “New Man,” *Eternal Woman: Expressionist Responses to German Feminism*. *The German Quarterly* (Vol. 60, No. 4, Autumn, 1987, 582-599), 596.

¹²² Manfred Jakobowski Tiessen points out that art was not the only form of Ersatzreligion, terms such as Nation and Volk also had strong religious connotations (See *Religion zwischen Kunst und Politik Aspekte der Säkularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 10f. Martina King also adds the sciences to this discourse. See *Pilger und Prophet Heilige Autorschaft bei Rainer Maria Rilke* (Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht: Goettingen, 2009), 47.

¹²³ Glenn Stanley sees Friedrich Schleiermacher’s text *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* from 1799 as one of the inaugural texts concerned with *Kunstreligion*. Schleiermacher, however, did not approve of the idea of art as religion but of art as a way to return to religion. See “Parsifal; Redemption and Kunstreligion” in *The Cambridge Wagner Companion*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2008, 151-176), 154. Bernd Auerochs agrees and names Novalis and Schlegel as part of this early development. Novalis and Schlegel, consider new forms of religion and new ways of mediating religion in which art plays an essential role. Wackenroder and Tieck develop this further in their text *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, in which the recipient of art, i.e. the audience experiences revelation through art and a religious devotion to art. See Bernd Auerochs, *Die Entstehung der Kunstreligion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2006), 438-482.

Art can redeem the modern human being from the burden of their time. Both the artist as well as the audience can find salvation from their life's struggles in art:

Das Schaffen des Künstlers, aber auch die Versenkung des Rezipienten in das Kunstwerk gewähren jene Rettung vor der Welt, die traditionell nur durch Religion zu haben war.¹²⁴

In *Johannes Herkner*, the discourse on salvation and redemption through art appears limited to a male intellectual community. Various religious references in the text concerning Albrecht's work as well as his creative potential, point to a discourse on the redemptive power of art and of the artist. Albrecht's mother mentions to her daughter that only a few days before his birth, Albrecht's father read the myth of Prometheus to her,¹²⁵ indicating a common comparison between genius and God:

So wird etwa von dem Genie gesprochen, das in der Kunst Wahrheiten offenbart; vor einem Kunstwerk verharrt man in Andacht; der Künstler ist der Mittler zwischen Gott und den Menschen oder der Mittelpunkt eines religiösen Kults; er ist der Gottmensch, der das heilige Feuer vom Himmel auf die Erde bringt, um sie zu läutern, zu beseligen, zu erlösen; [...].¹²⁶

Curiously, the reference to the myth is positioned directly in contrast to a woman giving birth. It underscores again, Porges-Bernstein's critique of the masculine discourse in that her reference to Prometheus presents a further contrast to women's childbirth—in addition to discourses on redemption and rebirth. Frau Herkner's reference to the Promethean myth alludes to Albrecht's

¹²⁴ My Translation:

The creation of the artist as well as the immersion of the audience into the work of art, award salvation from the world, which, traditionally, was only possible through religion.”

Auerochs, *Die Entstehung der Kunstreligion*, 14.

¹²⁵ Porges-Bernstein, *Johannes Herkner*, 69.

¹²⁶ My Translation:

One speaks of the genius, who reveals truths in art; one pauses in awe when looking at a piece of art; the artist is the mediator between God and humans or the center of a religious cult; he is a Godlike human, who brings the sacred fire from heaven to earth in order purify, to bless, and to redeem.

Auerochs, *Die Entstehung der Kunstreligion*, 15.

God-like status and the redemptive power inherent in the artist and his art. It further alludes to the creative genius, to the autonomy of the genius, and to dissociation from religion.¹²⁷ Prometheus represents a rebel who challenges the Gods and engages with the condition of humans. As a punishment for not joining the Titans in a war against the Olympians, Prometheus was given the task to create man from clay. The second aspect of the Promethean myth refers to his decision to bring fire to the humans—for which the immortal is then punished by being tied to a mountain and having his re-growing liver repeatedly eaten by an eagle.

The myth of Prometheus as the creator/sculptor of man has long been appropriated as an artist-narrative. Jochen Schmidt traces the transformation of the Promethean myth from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century and notes that Prometheus turns into the model for the autonomous creative genius of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a genius that by bringing fire also brings culture to humankind.¹²⁸ He refers to Goethe's conception of Prometheus in his *Ode to Prometheus* (1789) as a genius, emancipated from the authority of religion. Above all, he exhibits a new kind of autonomy and dissociation from authority. Schmidt, however, also notes

¹²⁷ "Art as religion" also constitutes a key topic in many of Wagner's works with which Bernstein was very familiar. Most biographic summaries of her life include anecdotes about her obsession with Wagner in her childhood and adolescent years. Her father's relationship with Wagner fostered her interest in the renowned composer and his Bayreuther Festspiele. As Andrea Albrecht and Romana Weiershausen show in their article on Bernstein's drama *Dämmerung*, the author indeed engaged with Wagner's ideas and debates on Wagnerismus in her texts and her conceptualization of the artist. See Albrecht, Andrea; Weiershausen, Romana. "Das Motto. Aus Tristan und Isolde." Elsa Bernstein's *Dämmerung* als Auseinandersetzung mit dem Wagnerismus um 1900, in: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* (Band 126, 2007 (4), 547-573.) Wagner created a myth of an artist-hero in the nineteenth century that elevated the artist and ascribed prophet-or even god-like abilities to him. Not least, Wagner also stylized himself as such. In addition, as Dieter Schnabel notes, many of Wagner's works are concerned with redemption. See Dieter Schnabel "Religiöse Klänge-Klangreligion. Einige Ideen und Einfälle zu Wagner," in Richard Wagner Handbuch, Ulrich Müller, Peter Wapneski, eds. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1986, 689-703), 698f. *Erlösung* (redemption) in the works of Wagner also appears as *sich-lösen* (dissociate) as a liberation and a complete devotion to music, or to art in more general terms, and a dissociation from life's struggles. See Schnabel, "Religiöse Klänge-Klangreligion," 703.

¹²⁸ See Jochen Schmid, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750-1945*, Vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2004).

that new conceptions of Prometheus as part of the nineteenth-century genius conception replace older ideas of the genius with new but equally dogmatic and idealistic notions that refer to the artist as God-like creator. The religious undertones that resonate in the description of the male artist anticipate Ralph Stokes Collins' notion of a tendency toward transcendental spirituality in expressionist drama.¹²⁹

The discourse on redemption in connection with the male artist community contributes significantly to the stylized presentation of the artist and the author's imbedded critique of the gendered conceptualization of the artist and his male community. Johannes Herkner's comments on redemption and rebirth remain with Albrecht throughout the drama. As a result, the artist-protagonist begins to seek redemption in his art, first with the help of his model and muse and later by himself, relying on his creative potential. Redemption as part of a circular movement offers a return and a new beginning. Albrecht's hope to find redemption through his work with the help of Mirjam is crushed when she decides, or rather forced to decide, to follow her brother and leave Albrecht after their affair is revealed. The end of the drama, however, allows for redemption in that Albrecht's sister, Elisabeth, becomes his model for his father's gravestone—which marks an end (that of his father) and a new beginning for Albrecht as his successor and his continuation as an artist. What is troubling about this cyclical movement of redemption and rebirth is the position of “woman as model;” she becomes the facilitator for a new beginning for the artist while she remains relegated to her supporting position as model.

In addition to Siegmund's work as reviewer and promoter of Albrecht's sculptures, the development of the father-son relationship underscores the authority and primacy of the male intellectual and artistic community. By the end of the drama, Albrecht's relation to his father

¹²⁹ Stokes Collins. *The Artist in Modern German Drama*, 71.

proves essential to the work of the artist. Not only does Johannes Herkner provide the necessary input to trigger a transformation in his son, but he considers his son—not his daughter, who diligently assists him in his work—his spiritual and intellectual legacy. Johannes Herkner provokes Albrecht to follow in his footsteps, and although he initially resists or ignores his father’s conception of art and the artist, he begins to search for redemption from life’s struggles, eventually finding it through his art in the final act. The experience of his father’s death causes Albrecht to reflect on his life and his father’s legacy, and it slowly brings about a transformation in himself and in others’ perception of him. Albrecht had distanced himself from his family a long time ago, and when he travels to his parents’ house to see his dying father, his sister and mother wonder, like Johannes had done before, what has become of him during the years in which he has gained recognition as an artist. Though he has kept in touch sporadically with his family through letters, Elisabeth describes these letters as “locked doors”: „Denke doch an seine Briefe. Lauter verriegelte Türen (54).“¹³⁰ When Albrecht arrives and believes his father to still be alive, he begins to reflect on the relationship with his father and realizes the importance of a father figure as a person who is both powerful and mild at the same time.

Albrecht: [...] Ich hatte mich von ihm weg verloren. Aber nun bin ich wieder da und ich will für ihn tun—was will ich nicht alles tun. [...] Es kommt mir nicht aus der Angst, es kommt aus der Not. Ich brauche ihn! Ich brauche einen Menschen, vor dem ich Ehrfurcht haben kann, einen Menschen, der mächtig ist und milde zugleich. Ich brauche meinen Vater (63).¹³¹

¹³⁰ Mirjam: [...] Think of his letters. Nothing but bolted doors.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 346.

¹³¹ Albrecht: [...] I had gone away from him and I had lost my way. But now I am back again, now I will do for him. What will I not do! [...] This doesn’t come from my anxiety, it comes from my need, from a fearful need. I need him! I need a man whom I venerate, a man who is tremendously strong and gentle at the same time, I need my father.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 350.

The words of his father have resonated with Albrecht in his sudden realization of a fearful need for his father, a fearful realization that speaks to the anticipation of spiritual rebirth, for which a male community and the creative work of the artist lay the foundation.

After Johannes' death, Albrecht spends his time on solitary and lengthy hikes in the mountains and continues to distance himself from his sister and mother as well as from his work. Frau Herkner and Elisabeth begin to see more and more similarities between Albrecht and his father and compare Albrecht's appearance, voice, and behavior to that of Johannes. Albrecht's resemblance to his father is further stressed when he takes his father's seat at the kitchen table, drinks from his father's cup, and speaks with his father's voice.

Frau Herkner: [...] Er sitzt auf Vaters Platz, er spricht mit Vaters Stimme—die Stimme hat er von ihm, ganz gewiss (69).¹³²

Frau Herkner also voices her increasing resentment toward her son's behavior and attitude. Johannes Herkner left behind a considerable amount of writings that Frau Herkner handed over to Albrecht in the hope that he would publish his father's letters as a book or find an alternative way to honor his father's work and legacy. In a conversation with her daughter, Elisabeth articulates the relationship between father and son and Albrecht's new position in the family:

Frau Herkner: [...] Ihr habt mir doch versprochen, daß das Buch herausgegeben wird. Albrecht hat's mir versprochen, daß für Vater's Vermächtnis Alles geschehen wird, was nur geschehen kann. Darum ist er noch hier geblieben. Und nun kümmert er sich um nichts und steigt tagelang auf den gefährlichsten Gebirgswegen herum und wird sich nächstens noch den Hals brechen.

Elisabeth: (die in tiefem Sinnen dagestanden hat) Vaters Vermächtnis—Mutter—was ist eigentlich Vaters Vermächtnis? Ist das nicht etwas ganz anderes als das Buch?

Frau Herkner: Was soll es denn sein?

Elisabeth: - Der Albrecht, Mutter! [...]—mich hat Vater lieb gehabt, aber den Albrecht—den hat er geliebt. Nicht weil es der Mann, weil es der Sohn gewesen

¹³²Frau Herkner: [...] He sits in father's place, he speaks with father's voice—he has his father's voice that is certain.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 353.

ist, sondern weil er diejenige Kraft verkörpert hat, die sein Geist als die höchstse ansah: die schaffende. Fortsetzung und Erfüllung des eigenen Wesens war er ihm und selbst da, wo sie sich feindlich begegnen mußten, was für einen geliebten Feind hat er in ihm gesehen (111).¹³³

Albrecht, the artist-son who severs ties with his family, is seen as the legacy of the father, not Elisabeth, the caring daughter who assists Johannes in his work. By insisting that Albrecht's position stands in no relation to his sex and by emphasizing his creative force as that which stood out to his father, Elisabeth adds to the exaggerated presence of the artist and points to the naturalized role of women as marginal in the creative process. Johannes Herkner saw his legacy not in Albrecht as his son, but in Albrecht as an artist and as the continuation and fulfillment of his own spirit. This continuation and fulfillment, similar to the notion of spiritual rebirth, is removed from women, the female body, and corporeal birth. Johannes' continuation in Albrecht is again a spiritual continuation, unattainable to Elisabeth as the father's secretary, or to Mirjam as the sculptor's model—in spite of their talents. Albrecht adds to this notion of continuity using a birthing metaphor when he asserts that “[...] nichts, was vom Geiste geboren wurde, kann sterben (91),”¹³⁴ thereby emphasizing the superiority of this male-dominated intellectual and artistic community. At the end, Albrecht understands his father's words and realizes that

¹³³Frau Herkner: You promised me that the book would be published. Albrecht promised me that everything would be done for father's legacy. He stayed here for that purpose. And now he doesn't bother himself about anything and all day long he climbs around on the most dangerous parts of the mountain, and the next thing we know, he'll break his neck. Elisabeth: (who has stood still, sunk in deep thought).—Father's legacy, mother, what is father's legacy, really? Is it not something quite other than the book? Frau Herkner: What can it be, then? Elisabeth: Albrecht, mother. [...] you see, mother, father was fond of me, but Albrecht he loved. Not because he was a man, not because he was his son, but because he embodied that force which his mind regarded as the highest, the creative force. He was to him the continuation and fulfillment of his own existence, and even the time when they met here in hostility, what a beloved enemy he saw in him.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 374f.

¹³⁴ Albrecht: [...] For nothing that has been born of the spirit can die.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 365.

redemption cannot be gained through one masterpiece but through the entirety of his created works:

Albrecht:[...] Nun versteh ich es, Vater—nicht ein Werk—das Werk eines ganzen Lebens erst kann es sein (153).¹³⁵

In addition to stressing the significance of the male artist community, Albrecht's transformation points to a conservative turn in his approach to work. Not only do his mother and Elisabeth begin to see Albrecht as the legacy of his father, his friend Siegmund, who is Mirjam's brother and an editor promoting and supporting his work, also sees him more and more as his father's double. When Albrecht returns to work, Siegmund laments his changed attitude, which makes him wonder if Albrecht will continue to pursue his work in the same way. Albrecht had denied new commissions, and made no attempt to save his clay group from being damaged over time due to his long absence:

Siegmund: Aus meinem Albrecht Herkner ist der Sohn Johannes Herkners geworden. Was geht mich der an? Mag ja ein sehr respektabler Herr sein, dieser Herkner Junior, mit weißer Wäsche und herkömmlichen Manieren. Aber wer so gut angezogen ist, der knetet mir kein solch herrliches splitter nacktes Menschenpaar mehr als da drin eins zugrund gegangen ist (143).¹³⁶

Siegmund's statement provides a different twist on the notion of legacy than previously seen in the text. From his perspective, Albrecht, as a continuation and legacy of his father, represents a conservative generation, a group that would shy away from the provocative art exemplified in his naked dancer from the Moulin Rouge or his naked clay group. Siegmund's perception seems to be accurate; Albrecht indeed turns away from his former work, ends the affair with Mirjam,

¹³⁵ Albrecht: Now I understand, father—not a work—the work of a whole life alone can be it
Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 396.

¹³⁶ Siegmund: My Albrecht Herkner has become the son of John Herkner. What do I care for him? He may be a very respectable man, this Herkner Junior, with clean linen and conventional manners. But the man who is so well dressed will never again mold such a magnificent, stark naked pair of human beings as that one in there which has gone to ruin
Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 391.

dethrones Lucifer, and resorts to his unmarried sister as a purer model for his next sculpture, which celebrates the legacy of his father.

Elsa Porges-Bernstein puts much emphasis on the role (and name) of the father in this drama and shows a complicated development of her artist-protagonist. The initial father-son conflict, which often appears in artist-dramas and is also a theme in expressionist drama, is resolved and reversed here into a father-son-assimilation. While Albrecht initially rebels against his father's perspective, he follows in his foot-steps soon after his death. The drama comments on the superficiality of that rebellion and on its underlying support of the patriarchal system. The revolt of the younger against the older generation appears as a platitude. The rebellion against moral codes turns into an affirmation of conservative conventions when Albrecht decides to remove the statue of Lucifer and of the dancer from the Moulin Rouge. Albrecht's initial aggressive reaction to Johannes Herkner's comments on his work as an artist cease with his metamorphosis into his father's doppelgänger. Porges-Bernstein indicates that Albrecht's development as an artist, who reaches salvation and immortality through his work, is most successful within existing structures. In a way, the play foreshadows what David Roberts considers the conservative response of the expressionist movement to social and political issues at the time:

Vom künstlerischen, ästhetischen, stilistischen Standpunkt aus nimmt der Expressionismus wesentlich teil am Durchbruch der Moderne in Europa. [...] Ideologisch gesehen aber bedeutet diese Bewegung eine rückläufige Antwort auf die gesellschaftlichen Forderungen der Zeit.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ My Translation:

From an artistic, aesthetic, and stylistic perspective, the expressionist movement contributes significantly to the breakthrough of modernity in Europe. [...] But from an ideological perspective, this movement represents a backward (conservative) response to the societal demands of the time.

By turning the generational conflict of the turn of the century into a generational assimilation, Porges-Bernstein stresses both the limitations for men to develop outside of cultural and social expectations and the difficulty for women to locate actual and discursive space in which they could pursue their artistic talents. The resolution of the father-son conflict reconciles not only their divergent perspectives on art but also puts an end to Albrecht's more bohemian lifestyle. When Albrecht takes on the role of the father, he provides a seamless continuation between the two generations, part of which is also to adhere to and support bourgeois moral standards. The pressure of bourgeois norms is already visible in the first act when Albrecht informs Mirjam that he cannot walk with her in public and be seen with her outside the house,¹³⁸ but Albrecht and Mirjam hold on to their doomed relationship until he leaves to visit his father. After he returns from his father's funeral, he leaves behind the lifestyle of a (Parisian) artist that was antiauthoritarian, removed from religion, and hierarchies,¹³⁹ as well as from conventional marriage.¹⁴⁰ As part of the notion of l'art pour l'art, the bohemian artist tended to resist the commercialization of art,¹⁴¹ which Albrecht also attempts at the beginning of the play when he

David Roberts, „Menschheitsdämmerung,“ in *Expressionismus und Kulturkrise*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1983, 85-103), 103.

¹³⁸ See Porges-Bernstein, *Johannes Herkner*, 16f.

¹³⁹ See Mary Gluck, “Theorizing the Cultural Roots of the Bohemian Artist,” in *Modernism/Modernity* (Vol. 7, No.3, Sept. 2000, 351-378), 358; Elizabeth Wilson, “Bohemian Love,” in *Theory, Culture & Society* (Vol. 15, 1998, 111-127), 115.

¹⁴⁰ See Stokes Collins, *The Artist in Modern German Drama*, 88.

¹⁴¹ See Stokes Collins, *The Artist in Modern German Drama*, 90. Stokes Collins refers to Max Halbe's drama *Die Heimathlosen* (1899) as a text representative of bohemian themes in that the women in the drama are unattached (and strive to become actresses or musicians). *Johannes Herkner* provides an interesting parallel considering that Mirjam takes the role of the unattached woman who grew up without parents and engages in a romantic relationship with Albrecht.

refuses to participate in events at which artists compete for attention and commissions granted by the secretary of culture and influential wealthy patrons.¹⁴²

Ralph Stokes Collins compares *Johannes Herkner* to Gerhart Hauptmann's artist-drama *Michael Kramer*, which was published in 1900, and states that Hauptmann's influence can be "seen rather clearly in the plays of Ernst Rosmer."¹⁴³ Hauptmann's drama, also titled after the name of the father, evolves around an estranged father-son relationship as well. While similar to Albrecht and Johannes in that the son, Arnold, is more talented than the father, Arnold Kramer does not make use of his talent, which contributes to the rift between father and son. In contrast to *Johannes Herkner*, the son dies in Hauptmann's drama, making it impossible for him to continue his father's legacy, though Michael Kramer had also hoped for his son to consider himself as a continuation of his father. Even as some resemblances seem evident, such as choice of title figure, the father's interest in a career in music, the father-son conflict, and maybe even the role of the sister, Porges-Bernstein's drama develops in the opposite direction in that she shows a successful continuation of the father in his son. Her protagonist affirms and endorses continuity; he turns away from his former works and lifestyle and invests himself fully into building a monument to his father. His actions allude to stagnation, a return to conventions, and an affirmation of cultural notions of sexuality by making his (unmarried, thus pure) sister his new model. Elsa Porges-Bernstein lets her protagonist not only assert discourses on redemption through art and rebirth within the male intellectual community, but she also emphasizes consequences of these actions for her female characters. The author creates an ambiguous artist in this drama in that the sculptor oscillates not only between God-like genius and violent master of nature but also between an artist reminiscent of the decadence at the beginning, and a rather

¹⁴² See Porges-Bernstein, *Johannes Herkner*, 12f.

¹⁴³ Stokes Collins. *The Artist in Modern German Drama*, 23.

conservative artist with an affirmation of male-dominated traditions at the end. Referring to Rilke's Rodin reception, allows the author to establish Albrecht as an artist who is perceived as a genius and God-like figure, which is further emphasized through the discourses on redemption and rebirth. In addition, the father-son bond strengthens the notion of an exclusive male community. Albrecht takes a conservative turn, and he recognizes the possibility of redemption in his work as an artist; however, none of these alternatives prove beneficial, productive, or even cognizant of the women involved.

Comparing Hauptmann's *Michael Kramer* and Porges-Bernstein's *Johannes Herkner* highlights the ways in which this woman writer interacts with both the tradition of the genre and the naturalist literary movement by conforming with and deviating from their defining characteristics. She deals with the conception of artist as genius, but also includes deviant perceptions of the artist and highlights repercussions of this artist-idea for women with artistic talent. In addition, she stages an artist-figure that exemplifies the naturalist tradition while also anticipating themes of the expressionist movement.

Porges-Bernstein critiques conceptions of the modern artist by drawing attention to the gendered construction of the artist in his cultural context. Sarah Colvin, in her rather negative review of the drama, wishes she could find more indicators that Albrecht's overly masculinized presentation was meant as a masquerade with critical intent.¹⁴⁴ Porges-Bernstein presents a stylized depiction of the artist as God, Prophet or genius, and Redeemer. In addition, she creates an artist who is embedded in a male world of spiritual rebirth nurtured by a father-son relationship. The text constitutes an interface between contemporary discourses on celebrated artists and Porges-Bernstein's critique of this conceptualization. It engages with figures such as

¹⁴⁴ See Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 67.

Rainer Maria Rilke, Auguste Rodin, and probably also traces of Richard Wagner —men that were integral to discourses on the artist and the cult of the genius in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—as a way to situate her artist in a certain context. Based on these references, she challenges idealistic conceptions of the artist by exaggerating and stylizing his presentation, and critically comments on the marginal role of women in this setting.

Although Colvin is right when she claims that the overly masculinized narrative seems to leave no room for the development of female characters, this should not be seen as an anti-feminist statement by the author. Instead, the author uses these powerful discourses that emanate from the art world to critique an overly masculinized artist-narrative. At the same time, she shows the effect of these pervasive discourses by pointing to rigid gender conventions that solidify cultural and social hierarchies but also restrict the development of both male and female characters in this play.

The Artist and his Women

In her analysis of the Victorian woman artist, Linda Lewis asserts that narratives in Western mythology, Judeo-Christian iconography, and psychoanalytic theory present men as creators and exclude women:

Woman, however, lacked a major myth to establish her as creator/maker/heaven-stormer: Pandora and Eve only let loose evil in the world, and the wisdom goddess Athena, while patron of artisans, represented the patriarchy in war and the civic state—enterprises that excluded earthly females.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Linda Lewis, *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 2.

By foregrounding the wealth of cultural references to the male artist, Porges-Bernstein alludes to this lack of metaphors available to describe women's creativity and autonomy and shows the difficulty of opening creative space, in an actual and metaphorical way, for women artists.¹⁴⁶

The presentation of Albrecht as an artist stands in stark contrast to the role of his musically talented model and lover as well as to that of his gifted sister. Interpretations of the drama have focused on Mirjam's role concerning her (futile) insistence on being integral to the progress of the artist's project,¹⁴⁷ and on her (hopeless) struggle for self-determination in light of society's conventions.¹⁴⁸ This section argues that discourses on the male artist restrict Mirjam to her position as model (body) and, as a consequence, limit the development of her own artistic talents. Descriptions of her hinge on Albrecht's transformation and needs and desires, from serving as his model to facilitating his way to redemption. In addition, her role as model and muse is laden with conventional conflicts of artist-dramas such as a romantic relationship with the artist, her support of and struggle with his work, her consideration of life in a convent, and her departure at the end of the drama. However, both Mirjam's and Elisabeth's relationships to Albrecht constitute a critical aspect of the drama in that they provide crucial moments for Porges-Bernstein's criticism of gender conventions.¹⁴⁹ While these discourses complicate

¹⁴⁶ Lewis notes the lack of a network, tradition, and pervading myth in the mid-nineteenth century for English women writers and their imagination of female artists. English women writers, however, were inspired by Germaine de Staël's fictional artist Corinne (*Corinne* 1807), as well as by George Sand's Consuelo (*Consuelo* 1842). Both figures served as an inspiration for women writers' female artists. Lewis claims that both Staël and Sand created the genre of the female *Künstlerroman* and inspired imaginations of the female artist-protagonist in English literature for the rest of the nineteenth century. See *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist*, 10.

¹⁴⁷ See Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 63f.

¹⁴⁸ See Pierce, *Woman's place in German Turn-of-the-Century Drama*, 260.

¹⁴⁹ Since the figure of Albrecht appears inspired by Auguste Rodin and Rilke's Rodin reception, it would be interesting to think of Mirjam in terms of Camille Claudel. The relationship between Albrecht and Mirjam resembles in certain aspects that of Rodin and his muse, model, and assistant—an allusion that points to the woman's difficulty of negotiating her own talents in a relationship to a well-known and

women's access to independent creativity in this drama, I argue that they also accentuate the perception of women as passive and as a material that can be formed or sculpted, thereby pointing to the limitations inherent in contemporary gender roles in bourgeois society.

Mirjam's position and agency in the drama changes after Albrecht received the letter from his father and transforms into a more conservative artist adhering to bourgeois expectations. At the beginning of the play, Mirjam and Albrecht engage in a few playful and flirtatious interactions. For example, Mirjam asks for the pink instead of the blue blanket after she regains consciousness,¹⁵⁰ or she refers to the fairytale *The Princess and the Pea* and complains that something is bothering her under the cushion, under the carpet, under the floor: a pea!¹⁵¹ After reading his father's letter, and even more so after returning from his father's funeral, Albrecht's behavior changes, and he distances himself from his romantic relationship with Mirjam and follows in his father's footsteps. The more Albrecht turns toward the conventional expectations and begins to adhere to bourgeois values, the more difficult it becomes for Mirjam to maintain her position, and she shifts more and more into the role of a body/muse who is willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of the artist.

As Albrecht's model, Mirjam's stage presence in the drama is limited to the artist's studio. In the opening scene, Albrecht works on the nude female figure of his current clay group

recognized artist. Angelo Caranfa attempts to explore and define Camille Claudel's aesthetic as influenced by but different from Rodin's while drawing on the difficulties in their relationship; he summarizes Claudel's situation in relation to Rodin as follows: "That Rodin was actually aestheticizing Camille Claudel's body at the expense of her own creative and aesthetic vision would eventually dawn upon her, resulting in their conflicts and in their eventual separation." Angelo Caranfa, *Camille Claudel. A Sculpture of Interior Solitude* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1999) 12. The drama, however, does not provide any access points for verifying that claim and Rilke's Rodin reception also provides little insight into the relationship between Rodin and Claudel.

¹⁵⁰ See Porges-Bernstein, *Johannes Herkner*, 10.

¹⁵¹ See *Ibid.*, 10.

with his model Mirjam. This group constitutes the central work of art throughout the play, and both Albrecht and Mirjam pronounce their investment in this project. The clay group, however, also provides ground for conflict between the two protagonists and helps to introduce some of the major discourses of the drama. As the sculptor's model, the young and beautiful Mirjam has to hold her position to the point of complete exhaustion and faints in her first appearance on stage due to physical fatigue. When she asks for a break and some water, Albrecht remains fully immersed in his work and ignores her condition until she faints. Even as she lay unconscious on the floor, Albrecht pursues his artistic visions and gets his camera to take a picture of her:

Albrecht: (legt den Spatel weg, wischt sich oberflächlich an einem Tuch die Hände ab). So—für heut' langt's. Also was gibt's denn? (Erblickt die Ohnmächtige). Mira! Mäd! (Springt zu, überfliegt die hingestreckte Gestalt.) Donnerwetter ist das schön! Das muß ich haben! Wo ist denn—wo hab' ich denn—(ergreift den photographischen Apparat, nimmt Stellung und zieht ab). So! Und jetzt—(Nimmt die Blumenspritze und drückt sie auf Mirjams Stirne ab, die schauern und erschreckt sich zu regen anfängt. Er richtet sie halb auf.) Das hilft! Das weckt auf! Dummes Ding! Dumme kleine Gans (10)!¹⁵²

Symptomatic of Albrecht's goal to create a perfect figure, his decision to take a photo of his model before assisting her, points to the gaze of the artist and his interest in the body. The perceived beauty of the passive and corpse-like Mirjam provides insight into Albrecht's perception of her as a woman and alludes to her as an image or an idea. Albrecht's interest in Mirjam as a model is related to the ideal figure he envisions. The ideal sculpture does not merely represent the model but reflects and manifests the artist's imagination. The fainted Mirjam

¹⁵²Albrecht: Lays down his tools , wipes his hands off a little on a towel.—There that'll do it for today. Now, what is it? (See the fainting girl). Mira, little girl! (Springs toward her, takes in at a glance the outstretched figure.) Great heavens, but that is beautiful! I must have that! Where is—where have I—(seizes the camera, gets it in position and snaps it) There! And now—(Takes the flower syringe and squeezes it over Mirjam's forehead. Shuddering and frightened, she moves a little. He lifts her half up) That helps you! That wakens you up! Stupid little thing! Stupid little goose!
Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 323.

resembles the mute clay figure, and her state of unconsciousness emphasizes her corporeal existence over her mental or spiritual one. In addition, Albrecht's desire to captivate the moment and "to have it"—meaning a photograph¹⁵³ of her body—stresses the importance of the image or idea of the artist. Her body becomes an object that the artist must have or take control over. It becomes an object whose beauty he needs to capture for his work; and his desire to capture and own the body outweighs his initial instinct to provide help. Susanne Kord notes the disunion between the artist and his muse in nineteenth-century artist-dramas (written by women) in that the presentation of the model-muse often stands in contrast to the real woman behind the idea of the artist.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the woman behind the muse often disappears:

Die Rolle der Frau als Muse des Künstlers aber schließt meist ihre reale Existenz als Frau und Mensch aus, denn die Muse ist nichts anderes als das Bild des Künstlers- im wörtlichen oder übertragenen Sinne.¹⁵⁵

The model-muse thus inhabits a paradoxical position in which she is both: mere body as well as an idea or image.

An essential aspect of the parting between artist and muse in many dramas relates to the incongruity between the idea of the artist in the visual presentation of his muse-model and the

¹⁵³Bernstein's decision to have her artist-protagonist take a photo of his unconscious model speaks further to the relation between body and art. Photography, unlike any other medium of the nineteenth century, dramatically changed the view and perception of the body. It helped to create archives of deviant bodies in terms of deformations or of the criminal body (linking the outside and inside of the body) as well as images and norms of the beautiful body (See Allan Sekula "The Body as Archive" in *October*, Vol. 39, Winter 1986. 3-64). This scene stresses the close connection between the female body and art and alludes to the transient state of Mirjam's body; transient not only between consciousness and unconsciousness but also between corporeal materiality and art in form of sculpture and photography.

¹⁵⁴ Kord, *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen*, 158.

¹⁵⁵ My Translation:

The role of the woman as the artist's muse precludes for the most part her existence as woman and human, because the muse is nothing but the image of the artist, in a literal and metaphorical sense.

Kord, *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen*, 158.

real women.¹⁵⁶ The nude figure of the clay group idealizes Mirjam's body but also sparks conflict concerning Albrecht's artistic approach to the creation of his female figure because he uses two women as models for different body parts. The figurative beheading of his model and the fusion of Mirjam's body and Luigia's head speaks not only to the artist's attempt to create the perfect figure but also to the dismemberment of the female body and the consideration of his model as mere body and as a reservoir of body parts. Mirjam contests Albrecht's approach because it dissects her body, and she refers again to the artist's blindness and his aggressive obsession with his work:

Mirjam: [...] Blind bist du, nach einer Seite blind wie ein Molch. So ein Künstler wie du! So ein unbarmherziger wie du! Denn ich seh doch, wie du dich abmühst—abringst—qualvoll ist's manchmal mit anzusehen, diese zähneverbissene —diese Vorwärtswut—ich weiß, du läßt dich lieber totschiagen, eh du einem Fingerglied eine falsche Biegung gibst—und setzt mir den Kopf von einer anderen auf!

[...]

Mirjam: Diesmal nicht! Ja, ich haße sie, diese Luigia, mit ihren Glotzkugeln, mit ihrer ganzen dummen Kuhschönheit, und doch würd ich's hinunterschlucken—auch das. (Die Decken von sich abwerfend und aufspringend.) Aber schau mich doch an, Albrecht, schau mich doch an! Kann der Ausdruck ihres Gesichts jemals zum Ausdruck meines Körpers—and das muß doch zusammengehn—ach ich weiß nicht, wie ich sagen soll (14).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Such as in Engel Christine Westphalen, *Petrarca* (Hamburg, 1806), Caroline Pierson, *Meister Albrecht Dürer* (Nürnberg, 1840), or Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer, *Rubens in Madrid* (Zürich: Orell, Füssli 1839).

¹⁵⁷ Mirjam: [...] You are blind, on one side, blind as a mole. An artist like you! A merciless person like you! For I can see how you wear yourself out—wrestle—it is torturing sometimes to watch you clenching your teeth—the mad passion to press on—I know you would let yourself be struck dead rather than give a false bend to a finger joint—and yet, you will put someone else's head on my body. [...] Mirjam: Not this time. Yes, I hate her, this Luigia, with her goggle eyes, with all her stupid cowlike beauty, but I would swallow all that—even that. (Throwing the covers off and springing up). But just look at me, Albrecht, look at me! Can the expression of her face and the expression of my body ever—and yet they must go together—oh, I don't know how to say it.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 323.

While part of Albrecht's hesitation to create his nude figure as a clear representation of Mirjam appears to be based on her brother's opposition to her work as a (nude) model, Albrecht adds that he finds her facial expression unfitting for his project and thus decides to use Luigia's head.

The ideal body as a composition of multiple models or templates resonates in the worlds of medicine and art. When Samuel Thomas von Sömmerring drew Germany's first female skeleton in 1796, he based his portrayal of the skeleton on a twenty-two year old woman but also "checked his drawings against the classical statues of Venus de Medici and Venus of Dresden to achieve a universal representation of woman."¹⁵⁸ From Mirjam's perspective, Albrecht's concern with anatomy appears as invested in minute details such as the bending of a joint, while at the same time his artistic aspirations motivate a fusion of anatomies or bodies. Combining different body parts of multiple models for a painting or sculpture can already be seen in the legend of Zeuxis' painting of Helen (in the fifth century BC) as based on the five most beautiful virgins of Croton.¹⁵⁹ Panofsky notes that the move from copying nature to adding to it and creating a new form emphasizes the intellectual aspect of the artist's work in that he moves beyond sensory perceptions.¹⁶⁰ The prominence of the idea of the artist or his vision for the work of art is reiterated again by Michealangelo since he considered the work as a realization of an inner idea rather than derived from sensory input.¹⁶¹ Albrecht's composition of the nude figure reflects a long tradition that underscores the mastery of nature and the creative power of the artist. The artist's concern with the perfection of his female nude figure further stresses that Mirjam's body (as well as Luigia's) facilitates the realization of his idea.

¹⁵⁸ Londa Schiebinger, "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy," in *Representations* (No. 14, Spring 1986, 42-82), 58.

¹⁵⁹ See Erwin Panofsky, *Idea. A Concept in Art Theory*, trans. Joseph J.S. Peake (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 15.

¹⁶⁰ See Panofsky, *Idea*, 15f.

¹⁶¹ See *Ibid.*, 121.

The drama, then, reflects aspects of the conventional artist-muse narrative in that it shows Mirjam's investment in the artist's work, her love for Albrecht, and her willingness to self-sacrifice. The discussion concerning the body of the model-muse in relation to the idea of the artist refers to one of the traditional conflicts of the muse in the artist-drama of the nineteenth century. As Kord notes, female characters often pay with their life for the transformation into the model-muse of the artist. The woman, who in her life and actual bodily existence does not reflect the artist's idea, eventually has to disappear or spend the rest of her days in a convent.¹⁶² Mirjam's determination to support Albrecht's work becomes stronger throughout the drama, and her willingness to sacrifice herself for the artist and his work are reminiscent of other women-writers' approaches to artist dramas.¹⁶³ While the artist acknowledges the sacrifice of the model-muse, he does not hesitate to take advantage of it for the sake of his work. When Albrecht returns to his house and to his workplace after his father's death, he reveals not only his affair with Mirjam to Siegmund but also her role as nude model for his clay group. While Elisabeth, who accompanies Albrecht to his house, shows concern for Mirjam and her relationship to Siegmund, Albrecht seems convinced that he can rely on Mirjam's investment in his work, and determination to endure the consequences for the sake of his work. Mirjam's assumed resolve alludes to the traditional role of the muse in nineteenth century artist-dramas in that the model and muse is willing to endure hardship for the sake of the artist and his work.

Elisabeth: Albrecht—ich fürchte, sie wird es nicht aushalten.
Albrecht: Doch. (Auf die Gruppe weisend). Dafür (137).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² See Kord, *Hinter den Kulissen*, 158.

¹⁶³ See note 84.

¹⁶⁴ Elisabeth: Albrecht, I'm afraid she will not be able to stand it. Albrecht: Yes, she will. (pointing to the group) For that.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 388

Her sacrifice, however, is more than the endurance of her subjugated role in their relationship; she is willing to sacrifice her sexuality. While Mirjam spends weeks in Albrecht's studio waiting for his return, she engages in a conversation with Mödl, in which she inquires about a nearby convent:

Mirjam: Bist du von Steinkirchen?

Mödl: Na, a habls Stünderl davo—von Klosterweil.

Mirjam: Ist da ein Kloster?

Mödl: Ja—von dö Salesianerinnen.

Mirjam: Da möcht ich hin ...(133)¹⁶⁵

She appears highly aware of Albrecht's feelings and needs, and she even anticipates the end of their relationship. Her actions and intentions support their relationship in which she serves the needs of the artist and stays by his side for as long as he needs her:

Mirjam: [...] Ich weiß genau, was ich will! Dich halten, so lang ich kann—und dich lassen, so bald ich muß. Das werd' ich spüren, ehe du selbst es weißt, und dann gehe ich so leise zur Tür hinaus, daß auch du mich nicht hörst (47).¹⁶⁶

The drama hardly provides a clear presentation of Mirjam's character since her actions usually stand in relation to Albrecht, and even the description of her hinges on Albrecht's rather vague perception. In a conversation with Albrecht, Elisabeth asks him about Mirjam and prompts him to describe her or to show her a picture. Albrecht struggles to describe Mirjam, and states that he cannot draw but only form or sculpt her. When Elisabeth insists on a description in words, Albrecht resorts to musical terminology as a reference point:

¹⁶⁵Mirjam: You are from Steinkirchen, too? Mödl: Faix, an'tis maybe on'y a half hour from there—Cloisterweil. Mirjam: Is there a cloister there? Mödl: Sure, is there—belongin' t' th' Salesians. Mirjam: I would like to go there.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 386.

¹⁶⁶ Mirjam: [...] I know exactly what I want. To keep you as long as I can—and let you go as soon as I must. I shall scent that before you know it yourself, and then I shall go so softy out at the door that even you will not hear me. [...].

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 343.

Elisabeth: [...] Sag mir, ist diese Mirjam auch wie ihr Name? Hast du kein Bild von ihr?

Albrecht: Nein?

Elisabeth: Kannst sie nicht zeichnen?

Albrecht: Die kann man nicht zeichnen, die kann man nur formen.

Elisabeth: So form‘ sie mal mit Worten [...]

Albrecht: [...] Anmutig und leicht—aus Kraft und Festigkeit. Alle Glieder beredt—
einzeln wie Töne—gesamt wie Harmonien. Bittende und weinende Hände, Füße,
die tanzen können und lachen—und das Jauchzen ihrer nackt emporgeworfenen
Arme! Dieser Körper! Die schreckliche Herrlichkeit dieses Körpers (121).¹⁶⁷

This description reflects not only his struggle to talk about Mirjam as a person but also his concern with her body and its parts. Her body turns into an obscure object when he speaks of her “weinende Hände” (crying hands) und “lachende Füße” (laughing feet) and of her “terrible” beauty.¹⁶⁸ Curiously, as seen in this passage, her limbs speak, not her mouth. The personification of her hands and feet and their ability to speak, to sing, and to express sorrow and joy further emphasize the abstractness of her body and its dissociation into parts. Stunned by Albrecht’s focus on Mirjam’s body, Elisabeth returns to her initial question and inquires about the inner side of Mirjam, her soul:

Elisabeth: Und—und die Seele? Hat dieser Körper auch eine Seele?

Albrecht: Seele? Was ist einem Mann eines Weibes Seele? Hingabe, Hingabe ist sie,
eine Demut, die größer ist als seine Stärke, die ihn überwindet und überwältigt

¹⁶⁷Elisabeth: [...] Tell me, is this Mirjam like her name/ Don’t you have a picture of her? Albrecht: No. Elisabeth: Can’t you draw her? Albrecht: She can’t be drawn, she can just be modeled. Elisabeth: Then model her in words. Go on, Albrecht, boy, show what you can do and what she is like. Is she young? [...] Albrecht: [...] Graceful and light—from strength and firmness. All her limbs speak—singly, like tones—
together, like harmonies. Praying and weeping hands, feet that can dance and laugh—and the exultation
of her naked arms thrown high above her head! That body! The terrible splendor of that body!

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 380.

¹⁶⁸ Bernstein-Porges, *Johannes Herkner*, 121.

und vor ihr in die Knie wirft, nicht als einen Besiegten, als einen Erlösten—das ist Mirjams Seele (122).¹⁶⁹

The notion of her soul as consecration and humility and with the power to save man returns to the notion of redemption. At this point in the drama, Albrecht connects his desire for redemption to his model or to the body and soul of Mirjam. His description of Mirjam's soul, as Colvin points out, puts his own needs and himself as man and artist in the center of attention.¹⁷⁰ This portrayal, however, does not actually reveal anything about Mirjam's soul apart from its relation to the male artist's work and his sexual desire.

Curiously, an additional aspect of his account refers to Mirjam's musical talent that can only be conceptualized by references to her body and to her sexuality. Early in the play, Albrecht recognizes his model as a musician and Mirjam appears as a talented violin player. Yet again, references to her musicality are based on the artist's perception of her body. Mirjam's body turns into music, her limbs produce tones, and he perceives her bodily composition as a harmony or a harmonious sound. Her brother, Siegmund, also establishes a connection between her body, her sexuality, and music in that he hears her innocent longings in her music:

Siegmund: [...] Und hast du sie vorhin spielen hören? Die ganze Sehnsucht eines jungfräulichen Herzens (36).¹⁷¹

The creation of Mirjam, or Mirjam's body, in sculpture and language precludes a full recognition or realization of her figure in the drama. Referring to her body with musical terminology and only being able to form it in clay but not in words, reflects limited interest in and understanding

¹⁶⁹Elisabeth: --And—and the soul? Has this body a soul, too? Albrecht: soul? What is a woman's soul to a man? Consecration, consecration is what it is, a humility that is greater than his strength, which overcomes and overpowers him and throws him on his knees before her, not as one conquered but as one saved—that is Mirjam's soul.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 380.

¹⁷⁰ See Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 65.

¹⁷¹Siegmund: [...] And did you hear her playing a while ago? The whole yearning of a young girl's heart.

Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 337.

of Mirjam. Though Albrecht and Siegmund recognize her musical talent, it cannot stand by itself but only co-exist in connection to her body and her sexuality, and thereby only in connection to the male figures' intentions and desires.

Elsa Porges-Bernstein increases the contrast between Albrecht and his model concerning their dedication and respect for each other by depicting Albrecht's troubling perception of her with his pragmatic need for her presence. Albrecht expects her to help him so that he can find salvation in his life's work:

Albrecht: Und wir bleiben gefangen—du und ich—und er. Und dein und mein Werk wird nie vollendet werden. [...] (Er zieht den alten Brief aus der Tasche) Mirjam! Willst du mir die Verheißung des toten Mannes nicht in Erfüllung gehen lassen? „Dem Lebenskampf eine Erlösung im Lebenswerk.“ Willst du mich nicht erlösen (140)?¹⁷²

In the final act, after realizing the importance of Mirjam's cooperation for the completion of his work and potential redemption, and after claiming that he has learned to see and understand her, he expresses his willingness to match her body with her head, instead of Luigia's.

Albrecht: Und nun, Mirjam, wird dein Körper dein Haupt tragen, deine Seele aus deinem Gesicht sehen. Ich habe sie begreifen gelernt. Ich kann sie gestalten. Willst du mir noch einmal helfen? (138)¹⁷³

Both of these exchanges end with Albrecht asking for Mirjam's help to complete the clay group.

Albrecht's decision to confess their love affair to Siegmund puts Mirjam in a muted position and once again shows a gendered power dynamic when Mirjam has to leave the room

¹⁷² Albrecht: And we shall remain prisoners—you and I—and he. And yours and my work will never be completed. [...] (he pulls the old letter out of his pocket.) Mirjam! Will you not allow me to bring about the fulfillment of the dead man's promise? 'Deliverance from life's struggles in life's work'. Won't you deliver me? Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 389.

¹⁷³ Albrecht: And now, Mirjam, your body is to have your head on it, your soul to look out of your face. I have learned to understand them. I can model them. Will you help me once again? Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 388f.

with Elisabeth as the two men decide over her fate.¹⁷⁴ In an attempt to disburden himself from any guilt associated with using his friend's sister as a nude model while refusing to marry her earlier in the play, Albrecht tells Siegmund about Mirjam's role without worrying much about the consequences for her. When Siegmund realizes that Mirjam has served as the model, his praises cease; he feels betrayed and cannot help but consider the work of his sister as prostitution from his bourgeois perspective.

Siegmund: (bitter vor sich hin). Also so habt ihr mir's gemacht! Gleich totschiagen, Albrecht, wär barmherziger gewesen. Warum ist's euch darauf noch angekommen? Aber so vergiftet bis in die Knochen—daß man als ein Krüppel herumlaufen muß—und nicht einer, der mit Ehren seine Glieder verloren hat—nein, einer, dem der Aussatz sie weggerissen—nicht ein Unglück, das Achtung—eines, das Ekel erregt—eine Tragödie ohne die Würde der Tragödie. Und zum Schluß das Satyrspiel dieser gezwungenen Ehe, ihre Hand in eine, die mich so beschmutzt hat, weil er anders ihrer nicht mehr habhaft werden kann, weil er den Sklavendienst ihres entblößten Leibes braucht—nein. [...] (148).¹⁷⁵

Not only does he consider her work as prostitution or as slavery, but he also sees a direct relation to his own status and his honor. Though the close tie between male honor and women's public presence and work will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Mathilde Paar's *Helene*, it is noteworthy in the relation between Siegmund and Mirjam as well. The issue of honor provides insight also into the existing double standard in that the sculpture of a naked woman is considered a high form of art, while the model for the sculpture is perceived as a prostitute. This

¹⁷⁴ See Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 66f.

¹⁷⁵ Siegmund: (bitterly to himself) —So that's what you have done to me. To have struck me dead on the spot, Albrecht, would have been more merciful. Why didn't it occur to you to do that, too? But to be so poisoned clear in to the bone—so that one must go about as a cripple—and not even to have lost one's limbs with honor—no, to have them eaten away by leprosy—not a misfortune that excites respect—one that excites disgust—a tragedy without the dignity of tragedy. And in conclusion this satirical drama of this forced marriage, placing her hand in one which has so befouled me, because in no other way can he have possession of her, because he needs the slavish service of her naked body—no. Trans. Harned, *John Herkner*, 393f.

scene also exemplifies the contrast between bourgeois values and bohemian lifestyle. Siegmund's judgment further motivates Albrecht's transformation. By admitting his affair and Mirjam's work as his model, he terminates their unconventional relationship (from a bourgeois perspective) as well as his art style to transform into a more conventional artist. As part of this transformation, Mirjam has to disappear.

In the end, the artist does not complete the clay group, and Mirjam has to accompany her brother and leave Albrecht. The artist begins to work on a project with a new model immediately after her disappearance, which speaks to his transformation as an artist as well. The abandonment of the clay group reflects not only Albrecht's changed interests and conservative turn, but also his failure to realize his idea. In contrast to other relationships between artists and their muse-model, in which the artist creates his own image of the woman that also leads him to his apotheosis, Albrecht does not complete his work. Porges-Bernstein does not conclude the drama with a completed work of the artist, and presents Mirjam, to a certain extent, as resistant to his idea and the dismemberment of her body while struggling with her dedication to the artist and his work. More importantly, however, the author shows that the conventional artist-model/muse relationship does not necessarily lead to success for the artist as he has to resort to his sister, who offers herself as a model for his new project.

Elisabeth presents a nurturing female figure in the drama. In addition to having a very close relationship with her father, she also worked as his assistant by noting down his philosophical musings. In her thirties, she remains unmarried after turning down a marriage proposal from a pastor with whom she could not imagine to fall in love. Sarah Colvin remarks that she replaces Mirjam at the end not only as a model substitute but also as a purer muse.¹⁷⁶ In

¹⁷⁶ See Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 64.

the final scene, Elisabeth takes the role as model for Albrecht's creation of his father's gravestone and assists her brother in erecting a monument in their father's memory.

While the relationship between Mirjam and Albrecht shows traits of the conventional artist-muse relationship and their relationship with Siegmund brings up conflicts around bourgeois values, the female protagonist escapes the fatal endings of earlier texts considered as *Bürgerliche Trauerspiel* (Bourgeois Tragedy). Gail Hart defines the bourgeois tragedy as a drama that has "pretensions to middle-class virtue or morality and which depends on family relations, usually father-daughter relations, to generate conflict."¹⁷⁷ The different kind of ending also results from the family constellations in that Mirjam grew up without parents, and her brother, Siegmund, takes the role of the moral stakeholder. Albrecht loses his father, takes his role and re-establishes relationships with his mother and his sister. Besides the father-son conflict, which was common in dramas at the time, the family dynamics are focused on siblings. Curiously, the temporary exchange in women/sisters results in a entirely domestic and non-erotic end in that Albrecht uses his sister as the model for his father's gravestone, and Mirjam leaves the scene with her brother. The end of the drama as a family drama, in which both brothers take on roles as fatherly figures and symbolize continuity without progress, further supports a reading of this text as one that critiques the restrictions inherent in a conservative and traditional Wilhelminian Society.

¹⁷⁷ Gail Hart, *Tragedy in Paradise. Family and Gender Politics in German Bourgeois Tragedy, 1750-1850*. (Columbia, S.C: Camden House, 1996), xi.

Conclusion

With this drama, Elsa Porges-Bernstein has created a text that not only critiques gender conventions and deals with the cultural conception of the male artist and the consequences for artistically talented women, but also anticipates themes of the emerging expressionist movement. The author exposes the difficult role of women in German society at the turn of the century by contrasting a God-like artist and the prominence of a male community with the minor position of women. In addition, Porges-Bernstein exposes the stagnation inherent in rigid conventions and critiques the overbearing power of bourgeois values that leave little room for alternative developments within the given structures.

Within the early expressionist theoretical framework, women frequently inhabit a position that is defined in opposition to the role of man. Barbara Wright's (1987) analysis of the movement's theoretical texts notes that this sexual dichotomy translates to conceptions of art and the artist. Men are artists not only with regard to the creation of their work, but also in their creation of women "out of the medium of the girl."¹⁷⁸ She refers to Paul Hatvani's „Versuch über den Expressionismus" (1917), in which he writes:

Der Mann schafft—das Weib ist; der Mann beweist sich der Welt durch das Bewußsein—daß Weib wird von der Welt bewiesen. So erhält der Expressionismus eine sinnliche Bezüglichkeit zum Geschlecht.¹⁷⁹

Feminist literary criticism has noted the disregard for women artists (authors) and the typecasting of female characters in expressionist texts. In her analysis of Sternheim's *Die Hose*,

¹⁷⁸ Wright, "New Man, Eternal Woman," 594.

¹⁷⁹ My Translation:

Man creates—woman is. Man proves his existence to the world with his consciousness; woman is proven to the world. This way, expressionism achieves a sensual reference to gender.

Wright, "New Man, Eternal Woman," 594.

Maike Leffers describes expressionism as an era that shows little interest in women.¹⁸⁰ Marion Adams notes the recurring presentation of female characters as dedicated student, overly eroticized women, or as the pure sister, who tends to appear as idealized in sacral scenes.¹⁸¹ Barbara Wright refers to women in German Expressionism as intimate strangers; she laments the lack of feminist literary criticism with regard to the presentation of female characters, the re-discovery of women writers, and the theoretical analysis of the movement's characteristic concepts and themes.¹⁸² The "new man," born out of an encounter with "Kant and Neo-Kantianism" sets himself apart due to his spirit or intellect (*Geist*) and his will (*Wille*).¹⁸³ Wright also points to the gender dichotomy:

Whereas the New Man is the bearer of *Geist and Wille*, women (with few exceptions, for instance Ernst Toller's female protagonists) are the embodiment of earth, nature, physicality, and carnality. In other words, women represent precisely the forces that the New Man must conquer if he is to create a new reality.¹⁸⁴

She describes this new man as an ambiguous persona who is drawn to modern society with its freedom and its decadence, but ultimately rejects society to embrace his "spiritual-intellectual community." He rejects his father but embraces his own status and power; he opposes "religious orthodoxy" but embraces "aesthetic dogmatism."¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ See Maike Leffers, „Die Maske als Ausdruck der Herrschaftskrise, Carl Sternheim, Die Hose, der Snob“ in *Expressionismus und Kulturkrise*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1983,131-145), 145.

¹⁸¹ See Marion Adams, "Der Expressionismus und die Krise der deutschen Frauenbewegung" in *Expressionismus und Kulturkrise*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1983,105-130), 106.

¹⁸² See Barbara Wright, "Intimate strangers: women in German Expressionism" in *A companion to the literature of German Expressionism*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (Rochester, N.Y. : Camden House, 2005, 287-313), 288.

¹⁸³ Wright, "New Man, Eternal Woman," 584.

¹⁸⁴ Wright, "Intimate Strangers," 292.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

The male artist-protagonist at the center of this drama undergoes a transition in his approach to work and his self-understanding as a male artist, and he gives up his former lifestyle to follow his father's notions. The female protagonist, in contrast, remains in her position as model/muse, determined by the idea and imagination of the artist as well as by social convention represented by her brother. Porges-Bernstein points to the gender disparity in the world of art by providing no opportunities to her female figures and instead presenting them as facilitators regarding the work of the male artist or intellectual. To further emphasize the discrepancy between the male artist and his female companion, the author uses Auguste Rodin as a point of reference and employs discourses on redemption and rebirth that stress the significance of a male community and disconnect the import of women from the artist's work.

Elsa Porges-Bernstein traces a male lineage of the artist and his art, but not without insinuating a lack of development for the descendant and a turn toward conservative approaches to art. Ulrike Zophoniasson-Baierl sees Porges-Bernstein as part of a generation of bourgeois intellectuals caught between a critique of and return to conventions:

Diese gesellschaftliche Gruppierung, die von ihrer soziologischen und ökonomischen Konstellation her an sich der ideale Vermittler des Neuen gewesen wäre, wurde, je mehr sie sich aufspaltete und absetzte von der aufsteigenden Arbeiterklasse, zum Bewahrer von Tradition und Konvention.¹⁸⁶

Critics have read this play as the author's return to conventions and an affirmation of the male-dominated world of art. When taking into consideration that Porges-Bernstein has already shown a different form of engagement with discourses on the artist in her drama *Wir Drei*, written about a decade prior to *Johannes Herkner*, the stark gender disparity at the core of this text cannot be

¹⁸⁶ My Translation:

Based on their sociological and economic constellation, this social group would have been the ideal agent of the new, but the more it split and set itself apart from the working class, the more it became the preserver of tradition and convention.

Zophoniasson-Baierl, *Elsa Bernstein alias Ernst Rosmer*, 131.

set aside as a lack of reflection on the side of the author. Instead, her decision to create such discrepancies between her male and female protagonist and the perception of their creative potentials shows the author's critical stance toward women's marginal position in the gender dichotomy around the turn of the century.

After centuries of stagnation, Georg Simmel announced a change in the world of sculpture initiated by the modern genius, Auguste Rodin. It appears that Porges-Bernstein's fictional Rodin accentuates the continued stagnation regarding women's access to the creative realm and suggests that the narratives of the life and work of the artist are resistant to change, and work to maintain a male dominated artist community.

Chapter Two

Discourses on Money, Consumption, and Prostitution in Marie Itzerott's *Hilde Brandt*

Among the most public female artists are the actress and singer on stage, and they have long inspired the imagination of their audiences by serving as a projection of cultural desires and fears. This chapter, as well as the following chapter, presents a female stage-artist who experienced success and recognition for a short moment before ending her career. In both cases, the termination of her life as an artist relates closely to the construction of femininity and masculinity in discourses honor, money, and prostitution. Marie Itzerott's *Hilde Brandt* (1905) shows how the female actress has to interact with, react, and subject herself to theater agents and directors, double standards of the audience, and to gender norms. Enmeshed in a variety of discourses that create and perpetuate gender conventions, the female artist struggles to develop and sustain her work and identity as artist. Her artistry, however, spans only a short time before she submits to the pressures of discourses that impede female independence, self-sufficiency, and self-expression.

Synopsis

Marie Itzerott (1857-?), like many other women writers in the genre of drama was intimately familiar with the theater of the time and with its customs and traditions behind the

curtains due to her own experience as an actress.¹⁸⁷ *Hilde Brandt* tells the story of an unrecognized tragedienne who finally gets a chance to play the role she has been waiting for, but the price she has to pay for this role, leads to mortal agony and a desperate decision by the end of the play. When Hilde has the opportunity to play the character of Thusnelda, a role she has aspired to throughout her career, the theater director informs her that she will have to find money to purchase the various costumes required for the historic figure. Felix Leuck, an acquaintance who overhears the conversation, offers Hilde money for the costumes but expects to be (sexually) accommodated in return. Facing the choice between forfeiting the role or accepting Felix Leuck's offer, Hilde decides to pay the unbearable price, to give herself in exchange for money, and to compromise her art.

Following her performance of Thusnelda with which she deeply impressed the audience due to her outstanding beauty and talent, Hilde's life as an actress is about to take a turn for the better. Her acting skills and stage presence convince not only the King, who happened to be in the theater, of her talent but also the theater director as well as the general audience. Accordingly Hilde is overwhelmed with offers, inquiries, and gifts after her performance. While her ailing mother recognizes Hilde's changed attitude and behavior and consternates a lack of gratitude and enthusiasm on Hilde's part, she envisions the carefree lifestyle she and her daughter have been waiting for since the death of Herr Brandt. Hilde, however, knows the price she paid for her success. She believes to have compromised the purity of her art and ends her life at the moment of her biggest achievement.

¹⁸⁷ See Kord, *Hinter den Kulissen*, 22. See Kara Wheeler, "Editor's Introduction" to *Sophie Literature: A Digital Library of Works by German Speaking Women*, BYU Department of Humanities, n.d. Web. 27.10.2009. (<http://sophieold.byu.edu/literature/index.php?p=text.php&textid=833>) This website also contains a digital version of the drama.

The drama *Hilde Brandt* critiques the overlap and interaction between discourses on consumption and money and discourses on prostitution and femininity. Hilde, the artist-protagonist of the drama, tries to pursue a career as an actress, but finds herself in the midst of discourses that turn her into a consumer and a desirable object and present her as virgin and prostitute while she struggles for a life as a woman with bourgeois values and as an artist. The financial struggles of the female performing artist are closely tied to discourses on prostitution, masculinity, and the developing capitalist market. Just like her work, the female artist is perceived as exchangeable, purchasable, or as available—sexually as well as for public entertainment. In addition, the conditions and customs at the theater routinely force female performers into prostitution and a lifestyle that further complicates the existing double standard and binary opposition between women’s perception as prostitute and virgin. Besides focusing on the impact of the assumed availability of the female artist and the discrepancy in expectations between Hilde’s private and artistic life, I argue that the role and conduct of the male characters, who offer money in exchange for the artist, not for her art, need consideration as well. Money becomes a key element in the cultural performances of gender, yet it retains its perception as a gender-neutral element. The drama exposes a close connection between money and the contemporary construction of masculinity and further offers a critique of this interference with the creative potential of the female performer. Hilde’s struggles show that a new obsession with consumption around the turn of the century impacts the actress severely, and money’s assumed dissociation from the body affects the female artist in financial need in ways that preclude creative work.

In order to understand the discourses that turn Hilde into a commodity while forcing her to be a consumer at the same time, this chapter first provides an overview of developments regarding the German stage in the nineteenth century before concerning itself with the exploitative practices and contracts at the theater, as well as with the issue of consumerism and its capitalistic motivations and desires. In addition, this chapter analyzes the role of the “economic man,” represented by Felix Leuck, and his relation to the female artist. As a former actress, Marie Izterott offers much insight into common theater practices, and the author critiques the marginal position of the actress as artist and points to her complicated performance due to the interrelatedness of discourses on sexuality and economics.

German Theater

Throughout the nineteenth century, the theater underwent critical changes that not only affected approaches to performance but also the performers themselves. While the early part of the century was marked by distinguished stage personalities or virtuosos,¹⁸⁸ the last three decades of the century saw innovations concerning the overall production of a play, which brought about the end of the virtuoso period. The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, Georg II, was central to the development of the German theater in the latter part of the century. His company, the Meininger, initiated a new conceptualization of stage performances, which he directed between 1866-1890 and continued to influence until his death in 1914. By introducing detailed and realistic historical costumes and scenery, presenting rehearsed crowd-scenes on stage, and stressing the overall

¹⁸⁸ See Carlson, Marvin. *The German Stage in the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1972), 5.

composition of a stage performance, as well as the role of the stage director,¹⁸⁹ the Meininger Theater contributed significantly to the beginning of a new era of stage-performances. Writers such as Henrik Ibsen and Georg Hauptmann felt inspired by and worked closely with the Duke,¹⁹⁰ whose visions supported the new demands of naturalist dramas. The Duke passed a law according to which performances on stage were to be truthful or faithful to the original text in order to convey its full aesthetic impact. This law dictated that directors refrain from deleting passages from original texts for their stage production, performers would rehearse and play any assigned roles, and the stage setting and costumes present the historical and social setting of the drama.¹⁹¹

Besides conceptual changes, a new Trade Law, representative of an attempt to increase economic growth, was passed in 1869 and allowed for almost unrestricted construction of new theaters and “within a year and a half ninety new houses had opened in North Germany.”¹⁹² The new visibility and accessibility of theaters, however, also meant a new form of competition for audiences and economic survival. In addition, the new Meininger approach put an even bigger financial burden on theaters as they had to ensure a wide variety of requisites and also take more time for rehearsals.¹⁹³

Following Germany’s unification in 1871, Berlin established itself as the political and cultural center with Munich as its rival. The *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin, founded by Adolph

¹⁸⁹ See Carlson, *The German Stage in the Nineteenth Century*, 176.

¹⁹⁰ See DeHart, Steven. *The Meininger Theater 1776-1926* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1979), 60.

¹⁹¹ See Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*. (Tübingen, Basel: Francke Verlag, 1993), 218.

¹⁹² Carlson, *The German Stage in the Nineteenth Century*, 164.

¹⁹³ The productions of the Meininger sparked a conversation about the contrast between the artistic and economic value of the theater. Duke Georg’s intentions to emphasize the artistic value of the theater contrasted with the need of many new independent theaters to be cost-effective and lucrative. See Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 232ff.

L'Arronge in 1883, was modeled in many ways after the Meiningen Theater¹⁹⁴ and continued to follow and develop their style in the early twentieth century. The *Freie Bühne* (1883-1894) in Berlin was the first private theater founded by a group of writers chaired by Otto Brahm. ¹⁹⁵ It provided a space for dramas that were not performed at the *Deutsches Theater* due to censorship; issues of censorship were circumvented by private performances for a closed circle of paying members.¹⁹⁶ Both of these stages in Berlin were indebted to Duke Georg's Meiningen Theater in that the stage setting provided historically accurate details and realistic props.¹⁹⁷

The financial situation of theaters affected those who worked on stage, and debates concerning the theater often focused on issues regarding finances and the actress:

Es sind vor allem zwei Aspekte, unter denen sich die Debatte um Schauspielkunst im ausgehenden 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert neu entfacht: die ökonomische Misere und das gesteigerte Interesse an der Schauspielerin als Frau.¹⁹⁸

Susanne Kord points to the different conditions for women working in the theater in terms of their contracts as well as contemporary social and moral perceptions of female performers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Not only were women paid lower wages and faced more personal expenses, but their work was also accompanied by moral scrutiny of their conduct on and off stage.¹⁹⁹ Women's role on stage had long been part of debates concerning the theater and prostitution, and they were banned from performances on the European/Christian stage until the

¹⁹⁴ See DeHart, *The Meiningen Theater*, 60.

¹⁹⁵ See *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁹⁶ See Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 237.

¹⁹⁷ See DeHart, *The Meiningen Theater*, 63.

¹⁹⁸ My Translation:

Above all there are two aspects that ignite debates on acting anew in the late 19th and early 20th century: the economic situation and the increased interest in the actress as woman.

Renate Möhrmann, ed., *Die Schauspielerin. Zur Kulturgeschichte der weiblichen Bühnenkunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1989), 92.

¹⁹⁹ See Susanne Kord. *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen : deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert.* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992), 35f.

latter half of the sixteenth century with their (re)appearance in the Commedia dell'Arte.²⁰⁰ Women's performances and their pretense of love and desire on stage, as indicative of their potential to seduce the audience, was often compared to prostitution by Christian clerics. It was not until the eighteenth century that women could claim their place on German stages.²⁰¹ The association of the female actresses with prostitution, however, continued:

[...] aber ebenso unbestreitbar ist, dass zunächst—und mit längster Nachwirkung—der große künstlerische Fortschritt, der durch die Frau auf der Bühne gewonnen wurde, begleitet war von einem Sinken des Theaters im Sinne der bürgerlichen Moral, weil die Frau auf dem Theater eben vom Anfang an, und selbst vor dem Gesetz, als Dirne erschien.²⁰²

Women's experiences on stage have been quite different from their male colleagues. However, little attention has been paid to these differences other than referring to their sexuality and biological determination.²⁰³ According to Möhrmann, struggles with sexuality have been central characteristics of women's work at the theater as public performers because "the woman is at stake" ("Es steht die Frau auf dem Spiel").²⁰⁴ The difficulties to emerge or dissociate from a role and to differentiate between the woman on stage and off have come to define the dilemma of many actresses.

Women, however, have also held important positions at German theaters. Caroline Neuber (1697-1760), Charlotte Ackermann (1757-1775), Karoline Jagemann (1777-1848), Julie

²⁰⁰ See Möhrmann, *Die Schauspielerin*, 10.

²⁰¹ See *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰² My Translation:

But it is equally undeniable, that at first—and with lasting effects—the considerable artistic progress achieved due to women on stage was accompanied by a decline of the theater in terms of bourgeois morals, because the woman on stage appeared from the beginning, and even before the law, as prostitute. Max Martersteig, *Das deutsche Theater im neunzehnten Jahrhundert : eine kulturgeschichtliche Darstellung* (Leipzig : Breitkopf und Härtel, 1904), 147.

²⁰³ See Möhrmann, *Die Schauspielerin*, 18.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

Rettich (1809-1866), Sophie Schröder (1781-1868) and her daughter Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient (1804-1860), and Charlotte Wolter (1834-1897) were influential women on the stage or behind the stage.²⁰⁵ In the eighteenth century when most actors and actresses, as part traveling theater groups, lived at the margins of society, Caroline Neuber contributed to a beginning transformation of the theater. As head of a travelling group, her goal was to make performances more attractive to audiences from higher classes, and she demanded punctuality, rehearsals, dedicated work, and honorable conduct from the members of her troupe.²⁰⁶ In the end, Neuber did not succeed in settling her troupe and eventually had to give up due to an ever increasing amount of debt. Becker-Cantarino notes that Neuber was the last female head of a traveling troupe; and as troupes began to settle the role of women changed dramatically in that they became professional actresses, i.e. divas, artists, or mistresses.²⁰⁷ Julie Rettich²⁰⁸ and Charlotte Ackermann represent above all moral virtue and take the role of the heroine on and off stage in different generations.²⁰⁹ Charlotte Wolters and Karoline Jagemann show a new kind of actress who is defined by her erotic appeal and often plays the role of diva and mistress in her life off

²⁰⁵ See Franz Rapp, „Die drei großen Tragödiinnen des Burgtheaters im neunzehnten Jahrhundert“ in *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht* (Vol. 37, No. 4/5, Apr. - May, 1945, 161-170). Barbara Becker-Cantarino, „Von der Prinzipalin zur Künstlerin und Mätresse. Die Schauspielerin im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland“ in *Die Schauspielerin. Zur Kulturgeschichte der weiblichen Bühnenkunst*, eds. Renate Möhrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1989, 88-113).

²⁰⁶ See Becker-Cantarino, „Von der Prinzipalin zur Künstlerin und Mätresse,“ 96f. Neuber also wrote and revised dramas in order to stage performances that would reflect the values (“aufklärerisch-bürgerliche Moral”) of the aristocratic audience.

²⁰⁷ See Becker-Cantarino, „Von der Prinzipalin zur Künstlerin und Mätresse,“ 100f.

²⁰⁸ Julie Rettich also performed Thusnelda. More archival research is needed to see if there could be a reference in Izterott's Hilde Brandt to Julie Rettich. Franz Rapp mentions Rettich's performance in „Die drei großen Tragödiinnen des Burgtheaters,“ 166.

²⁰⁹ See Rapp, „Die drei großen Tragödiinnen des Burgtheaters,“ 164-166. See Mary Helen Dupree, „Ein Geschöpf der Einbildung unseres Herrn Leßing:“ Fictions of Acting and Virtue in the Postmortem Reception of Charlotte Ackermann (1757–1775),” in *Goethe Yearbook* (Vol. 16, 2009, 135-160).

stage.²¹⁰ Following her career as singer and actress at the Weimar Court Theater, Jagemann held positions as theater and opera director.²¹¹ Becker-Cantarino emphasizes the difficulty of negotiating life as woman and actress not only due to social and legal restrictions for women but also due to the contrast between the sexual connotations of the actress on stage and bourgeois morals.²¹²

The constant rumors about the lifestyle of the actress are reflected in fictional works, and the fictional actress has been part of the literary imagination since women entered the world of the theater. Most fictional texts that address the woman as actress present her as glorified and successful,²¹³ and even as forerunners of women's emancipation. For example the stereotypical fictional actress of the Vormärz era, according to Möhrmann, lost her parents at a young age and had to make a living on her own. Since the theater provided an opportunity for women to earn money, this woman begins to perform on stage and reaches success and stardom enjoying public recognition and a luxurious lifestyle.²¹⁴ A further commonality amongst these fictional actresses lies in their quest for love, a longing for which they will eventually abandon the stage:

Und so sind alle Schauspielerinnengestalten in erster Linie große Liebende mit weiten, edlen Herzen. Sie können Passionen erliegen, aber niemals Affären haben. Zumeist sind sie außerdem "Erstliebende." Die unordentliche, dem Glanz abgewandte Seite des Berufs bleibt unerzählt.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ See Rapp, „Die drei großen Tragödiinnen des Burgtheaters,“ 166-169. See Becker-Cantarino, „Von der Prinzipalin zur Künstlerin und Mätresse,“ 105ff.

²¹¹ See Becker-Cantarino, „Von der Prinzipalin zur Künstlerin und Mätresse,“ 113.

²¹² See Ibid., 111f.

²¹³ See Möhrmann, *Die Schauspielerin*, 154, 160.

²¹⁴ See Ibid., 160.

²¹⁵ My Translation:

And therefore all actress-figures are above all lovers with open and noble hearts. They can succumb to passions, but never to affairs. Additionally, in most cases, they are in love for the first time. The messy and unglamorous aspect of their occupation remains untold.

Möhrmann, *Die Schauspielerin*, 161.

Many texts, then, show the tendency to turn into stories about a woman's love and her desire for a bourgeois life and forsake an exploration of the artistic talents and potential of their female protagonists.

More realistic depictions of the life and work of actresses surface in the 1840s in French Literature, such as Honore de Balzac's *Illusions Perdue* (1839) and later with Edmond and Jules de Goncourt's texts *Les homes de Lettre* (1860) and *La Faustin* (1882).²¹⁶ Actresses' struggles with beauty and age, with money and new engagements, but also with questions concerning their sincerity off stage emerge as more prominent aspects in fictional stories. The drama *Hilde Brandt*, and also *Helene*, fall into the latter tradition and engage with the challenges of the actress as woman. Money, virtue, and their position as woman at the turn-of-the-century are at the core of these dramatic inquiries into the discourses that surround women as public performers.

Playing a Double Role: The Female Artist on Stage as Consumer and Commodity

Hilde Brandt's need for money and her personal conflict concerning her beliefs as an artist constitute the core crisis of the drama. Issues related to money and economic interests leave their mark on Hilde's body, soul, and art and present the actress as both consumer and commodity. While Hilde is able to decline Felix Leuck's money in the first act, the second act brings the offer of performing Thusnelda, which is accompanied by the immediate need for money to purchase the costumes required for the role. In her conversation with the director who

²¹⁶ See Möhrmann, *Die Schauspielerin*, 164f.

considers her an actress with a lack of talent, Hilde, in contrast, presents herself as an artist whose talents have been unrecognized, and she sees this role as her chance to showcase her skills. She believes her talent is yet to be awakened by a challenging role and a performance that can and will be recognized. The crisis related to this opportunity becomes clear when she understands that taking Leuck's offer means to give herself in exchange for money. The dramatic conflict culminates as Hilde begins to realize that playing the role will also mean compromising the purity she sees in art and preclude her from becoming the artist she aspires to be.

The desire for recognition of her talent and genius concur with traditional narratives of artists' desires and imaginations of their apotheosis. Many dramas concern themselves with the male artist waiting for his chance to capture the audience with his masterpiece. Though he sees himself confronted with misrecognition, his apotheosis usually stands at the end of his work or at the end of his life. If the male artist dies, he does so before becoming aware of his recognition or he is recognized only after his death.²¹⁷ Indeed, Hilde shows the same aspirations and similar problems as most artists – the need for financial support that will provide her with an opportunity to unleash her talent and present her skills:

Hilde: Herr Direktor! Was wissen Sie denn von mir und meiner Kunst! Was weiß den die Welt von ihr! Masken habe ich ja getragen bis jetzt! Auf Stelzen bin ich gegangen. Glauben Sie: wie glühende Lava liegt es in meiner Brust und stöhnt nach Befreiung. Der Quell höchsten Könnens ruht mir unversehrt und unberührt im Busen. Lassen Sie die große Stunde der Befreiung erlösend daran schlagen – und die Fluten werden sich entfesseln, und meine Gebundenheit wird von mir fallen, und meine Schüchternheit wird mich nicht mehr kennen. Wie Asche wird

²¹⁷ Goethe's artist dramolets *Des Künstlers Erdewallen* (1774), *Des Künstlers Vergötterung* (1774) and *Des Künstlers Apotheose* (1788) are considered founding texts of the genre of the artist drama. They show for the first time the struggles of the artist as the main conflict of the drama. *Des Künstlers Erdewallen* concerns itself with the artist's distance to the world and explores the question if recognition and happiness are possible for the genius, an idea further developed in the short second text. In the *Artist's Apotheosis*, the departed artist witnesses the late recognition of his work and bemoans the lack thereof in the futile struggles during his lifetime.

sie zerrieben, die Fessel, die mich behindert und beschränkt hat, und ich werde zu der Höhe aufsteigen, die mich mein Genius in meinen kühnsten Träumen hat schauen lassen!²¹⁸

The solution of Hilde's crisis, however, plays out very differently than the conventional narrative of the poor male artist. While Hilde is aware of her recognition by friends and family as well as by "the King" after her performance of *Thusnelda*, she cannot accept any appreciation of her work because it was made possible by an unbearable exchange that has compromised her womanhood and, in consequence, the purity of her art. In Hilde's case, the need for financial support appears inextricably linked to the discourses on the developing capitalist market that distance her from the creative process and turn her into a consumer as well as a commodity on stage. Implicated in this is that her involvement with the demands of an economic mentality and its intimate connections to bourgeois masculinity led to her death.

Hilde's conversation with the director, which follows the offer of playing the leading part, discloses her responsibility to purchase the costumes required for the role. This discussion resembles what many actresses encountered in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century and describes the often unspoken but well-known assumption and expectation that female performers prostitute themselves in order to receive professional and financial support from directors, critics, or patrons. In addition, directors and audiences agreed in their expectations that any performance demands a beautiful actress on stage to inspire and uphold the desires of the

²¹⁸ My Translation:

Hilde: Director! What do you know about me and my art! What does the world know about it! I have worn masks until now! I have walked on stilts. Believe me: it lies in my chest like glowing lava and is groaning for liberation. The source of my highest ability rests untouched in my bosom. Let the finest hour of liberation strike to free it- and the floods will be unleashed, and my bondage will fall from me, and my bashfulness will not know me anymore. Pulverized like ashes will be the chain that constrained and confined me, and I will rise to the heights that my genius has let me see in my boldest dreams.

Marie Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt* (Strassburg: Heitz, 1905), 36.

spectators. The following exchanges between the director and Hilde show Hilde's desperation as well as her naivety contrasted with the director's bold suggestions and expectations:

Direktor: Aber seien sie schön! Schön! Schön! Der jedesmalige Toilettenwechsel in den fünf Akten kommt uns dabei gut zu statten. Das blendet die Zuschauer! Nimmt sie für Sie ein. Und es hilft einmal nichts: da ich nicht für den inneren Wert ihrer Leistung einstehen kann, muß ich mich umso mehr an die Form derselben halten. Diese aber muß tadellos sein! Und wenn Sie die Rolle noch so schlecht geben sollten – Ihre Erscheinung in den ersten Akten, Ihre Kostüme am Hofe zu Rom – es werden ja Damen genug im Theater sein, die nur Kleiderstudien machen wollen – müssen einen gewissen Erfolg ihrerseits außer Frage stellen.

Hilde: Die Kostüme - - fünfmaliger Wechsel - - was soll ich? - - woher werd' ich?²¹⁹

Hilde: Aber das Geld! Mein Gott! Ich kann ja nicht - - fünf Kostüme! Das sind ja tausende! Ich kann ja nicht - - woher...

Direktor: Ja--woher Sie Ihre Toilette nehmen, mein liebes Kind--das weiß ich allerdings nicht! Das ist Ihre Sache.²²⁰

He then adds:

Direktor: Mein liebes Fräulein, ich bin selbst kein Millionär, und die Kassenberichte unseres Theaters bestätigen Ihnen, daß ich keine Vorschüße machen kann. Aber - verzeihen Sie, liebes Kind! Es tut mir sogar leid, es Ihnen sagen zu müssen: mit

²¹⁹ My Translation:

Director: But be beautiful! Beautiful! Beautiful! The costume changes in the five acts will work to our advantage. It blinds the audience! It will win them over. It is of no avail: Since I cannot vouch for the value of your performance, I must attend more so to its form. But the form must be flawless! And no matter how badly you will perform the role—your appearance in the first acts, your costumes at the court in Rome—there will be enough women in the audience whose only concern will be fashion—this must guarantee a certain success.

Hilde: The costumes - - changing five times - - what should I - - Where will I?

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 37.

²²⁰ My Translation:

Hilde: But the money! My God! I cannot - - five costumes! That amounts to thousands! But I cannot - - where.

Director: Well—where you will get your costumes, dear, that I do not know! That is your business.

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 38.

solcher Gestalt, mit solchem Gesicht findet man immer jemand, der gibt, der leiht!²²¹

Similarly, Frau Lungenbühl, a neighbor of Hilde and her mother, implies that women have to make themselves available to patrons to enhance their career or at least their chances at a career:

Frau Lungenbühl (to Frau Brandt): Wer weiß, Frau Pastor! Unter uns gesagt – glauben Sie mir nur, wenn das Fräulein nicht so streng und stolz wäre und sich kaum ohne die Mama auf der Promenade sehen ließe, und keiner auch nur wagen dürfte ihr die Hand zu drücken, so wäre die Sache vielleicht schon ganz anders gegangen. Die Stufen, die zu Ruhm und Ehre führen, sind nicht allemal die reinsten.²²²

Both Frau Lungenbühl and the director note that the way to fame and glory cannot be pure if one depends on the attention of an audience, and Frau Lungenbühl believes Hilde’s career could have taken a different turn had she left the side of her mother and attracted a wealthy man willing to support her. The director expects Hilde to take advantage of her appearance to attract a wealthy supporter who is inspired by her beauty, not her talent, and willing to lend her money. However, the willingness to support is not an altruistic one. Though art patronage²²³ has often meant public

²²¹ Director: My young lady, I am not a millionaire myself, and the balance sheets of our theater confirm that I cannot offer you any money in advance. But—excuse me, dear! I am even sorry to have to tell you: with such stature, with such a face, someone can be found, who gives, who lends!

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 39.

²²² My Translation:

Frau Lungenbühl: Who knows, Frau Pastor! Between you and me—just believe me, if the young lady would not be so strict and proud and would hardly be seen to promenade without her mother, and nobody could dare to touch her hand, maybe things would have already taken a very different shape. The steps that lead to fame and honor are not the purest.

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 11.

²²³ The term patron stems from the Latin “Pater” (father) and “Patronus” (Protector of Clients); Marjorie Garber in *Patronizing the Arts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008) notes that the connection to patriarchy is “not incidental but central” (2). She describes the patron in medieval and early modern times as a donor, whom the artist (painter) often inserted into his pictures. With the changing political and market structures of the eighteenth century, artists had to learn and negotiate the rules of supply and demand. Judith Huggins Balfe defines patronage as: “the deliberate sponsorship of the creation, production, preservation, and dissemination of the so-called fine arts”. Marjorie Garber, *Patronizing the Arts*, 1.

recognition for both patron and artist, for female artists, the male patron oftentimes shows not only interest in public recognition for his support but also in a direct exchange with the female artist.

At the time of the play, female actresses, probably more than other artists, depended on a patron for financial support. Unable to pay for their wardrobe by means of their salary alone, it was common to be acquainted with wealthy men whose willingness to provide money in return for sexual favors or for a sense of ownership during performances facilitated their careers. The director's responses emphasize the general expectation that young performers will have to take advantage of their appearance to support and render possible a career on stage. Lily Braun, a German feminist and strong supporter of the socialist movement at the end of the nineteenth century, provides an insightful comment in her essay *Hinter den Kulissen*²²⁴ (*Backstage*, 1894) when she points to the fact that the support of patrons is also in the interest of the director:

Their "patrons" not only support them [actresses] but also quite frequently pay the directors for hiring them, in order to give them public status.[...] The lady in question lures the most affluent men into the theater and lends it a certain glamour—and she costs nothing.²²⁵

Directors and patrons work hand in hand to meet their mutual interests in the actress whose public performance, which above all displays her beauty, reflects back on the men supporting her. In short, the actress on stage showcases his financial well-being, and thus becomes an object to be purchased to present the status of the patron.

The female performer is subjected to three different forms of sexual and emotional exploitation: she undergoes the examination by the agent or middleman to be hired by a theater

²²⁴ Lily Braun, "Hinter den Kulissen," in *Ethische Kultur* 2 (No. 46, 1894) and *Ethische Kultur* 3 (No. 14, 1895).

²²⁵ Lily Braun, „Backstage,“ in *Selected Writings on Feminism and Socialism*, trans., ed. Alfred G. Meyer (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 36.

director, she has to deal with the theater director to negotiate her roles, and she has to please the audience when she finally makes it on stage. Peter Lorenz extends the discourse on the actress as a commodity in his article *Die Prostitution in der Kunst* (1893) in which he concerns himself with the relationship between actress, agent, and director, and he points to the problematic hierarchy between theater director and performers. The use of slavery metaphors stands out in his description of the relationship between director, agent, and female performer. In comparing the process of hiring or that of the application process, respectively, to slave trade, he exposes the strong hierarchy that leads to the treatment of young actresses as slaves on a market:

Die erfahrenen Bühnenlieferanten beschnüffeln die „Anfängerin“ gerade so, wie die Sklavenhändler ihre lebende Waare beschnüffelt haben müssen. Wenn sie leidlich hübsch ist und namentlich über einen schlanken Wuchs und angenehm rundliche Formen verfügt, so wird zur näheren Prüfung geschritten.²²⁶

The experienced agents who sniff at the young and inexperienced actresses appear both animalistic and as slave traders. Describing the beginning of their examination as sniffing at these young women, stresses the close proximity and bodily contact of this first examination. If, however, the young woman is beautiful, slender, and at the same time curvy enough, the next step involves even more scrutiny. The question here is not one of talent but of potential for self-sufficiency in terms of the ability to provide for her costumes. Lorenz adds: „Die Hauptsache bleibt immer: ob die angehende Künstlerin schöne Toiletten oder wenigstens Aussichten solche zu erwerben, aufweisen kann.“²²⁷ He describes any mentioning of poverty, parental support, or

²²⁶ My Translation:

The experienced agents sniff at the „novice“ just like slave traders must have sniffed at their living goods. If they are beautiful and show a slender figure and appreciable curvy forms, one can continue to a closer examination.

Peter Lorenz, „Die Prostitution in der Kunst,“ in *Die neue Zeit. Revue des Geistigen und Öffentlichen Lebens* (Vol. 1, No. 12, 1893, 375-382), 377.

²²⁷ My Translation:

of salary as fatal mistakes during the application process as these would attest to the novice's naivety—asking for too much of an effort on the side of the director could potentially result in a premature loss of the new hire. Instead, the new performer has to present herself as:

[...] dreist und mit vielversprechendem Lächeln von “reichen Protektionen” [sprechend] so wird sie mit einer gewissen Achtung behandelt und sogar endlich auf das Vorhandensein des “Talents” examiniert, das ja zwar zur Bühnenkarriere in unserer modernen Gesellschaft nicht gerade notwendig ist, aber immerhin eine angenehme Zugabe zu den schönen Toiletten bilden könnte.²²⁸

Once the young actress has proven her familiarity with the practice and expectations of patronage, the last part of the examination—that for talent—concludes the process. In case agents approve of her, they will send a notice to the director: „Darauf schicken die fleißigen Sklavenhändler kleine Kaufeinlandungen an die verschiedenen Theaterdirektoren.”²²⁹ The agents, in their role as slave traders, provide theater directors with women deemed capable of supporting themselves through patrons. Like Lorenz, Lily Braun uses slavery metaphors to describe the situation of actresses:²³⁰

The most important aspect always remains: if the prospective artist can prove she owns the needed equipment or at least has good prospects of securing such.

Lorenz, „Die Prostitution in der Kunst,” 377.

²²⁸ My Translation:

[...]bold and with a promising smile speaking of “wealthy protections”, that way, she will be treated with a certain respect and will finally be examined for her talent, which is not necessarily required for a career on stage in our modern society, but could be a nice addition to her appearance.

Lorenz, „Die Prostitution in der Kunst,” 377f.

²²⁹ My Translation:

Afterwards, the busy slave traders send purchasing invitations to the different theater directors.

Lorenz, „Die Prostitution in der Kunst,” 378f

²³⁰ Magrit Stange describes White Slavery literature as a recurring theme around the turn of the century. She argues that it was motivated by the perception of woman as commodity. She describes women's loss of freedom due to their dependence on husbands who used their wives as public consumers to show their own wealth. She also analyzes the Market in Women in terms of their exchange value. See *Personal Property. Wives, White Slaves and the Market in Women* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1998).

The actresses themselves, however, are groaning under the yoke of the worst kind of slavery without being able to shake it off by their own effort alone; every single attempt to do so results in its becoming ever more repressive.²³¹

The actresses' subjection to the desires of agents, directors, and the audience create a complex intersection of sexuality, consumer desires, and gender hierarchies. Braun also points to the voyeuristic desires of the audience and indicates that voyeurism is part of the theater, especially the desire to observe the actress backstage "with prying and lascivious eyes" or to speculate about her scandalous lifestyle.²³² The actress assumes the role of a commodity before she ever sets foot on stage.

After the female stage performer signed a contract, she would likely face financial hardship due to exploitative paragraphs and customs at the theater that perpetuate her commoditized status. Hilde's crisis reflects a practice common at the time in that most theaters required women to purchase their own wardrobe. A common theater paragraph, i.e. a clause in theater contracts of the time, committed actors and actresses to pay for their own costumes, a convention that affected women much more gravely than men. In the case of Hilde Brandt, it meant the purchase of five historical costumes, unaffordable to an actress of her status. Müller-Guttenbrunn, in his review of the drama, acknowledges the problematic effects of this paragraph but states at the same time that female performers on stage are motivated by their desire for attention and the continuously changing fashion.²³³ The theater director brings up a second issue related to the costume paragraph—the practice is motivated and perpetuated not only due to actresses' craving for attention, but also due to the audience's desire to see beautiful and fashionable women on stage:

²³¹ Braun, "Backstage," 33f.

²³² See *Ibid.*, 33.

²³³ See Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, „Moderne Schauspiele,“ (Review of Hilde Brandt) in *Die Gesellschaft* (1906, 98-101), 101.

Man kann auch die mittleren Theater zwingen, ihren Damen die Kostüme zu stellen, gewiß. Aber es wird immer welche geben, die das nicht nötig haben und die dann besser und luxuriöser aussehen, als die vom Direktor bekleideten. Und dem Publikum werden diese überall besser gefallen. Das ist nicht zu ändern.²³⁴

He concludes that women compete not in terms of their performance but with regard to their wardrobe, and the more luxurious the wardrobe the more support is to be expected from the audience and potential patrons. In the end, however, the reviewer concludes that Hilde did not die as a result of the costume paragraph in her contract but because of her desire to perform: “Ihr Wille hat sie umgebracht, nicht der schnöde Paragraph von den weiblichen Kostümen.”²³⁵ Müller-Guttenbrunn uses an argument often referred to with regard to the motivation and artistic intentions of the female artist: the notion that the desire for attention motivates women to pursue a public career, not their talent or artistic interests.²³⁶ He thus justifies the problematic paragraph as an aspect of the theater that arises out of women’s own desires, and he ignores other cause-effect relationships that emphasize appearance over talent.

By representing actresses’ financial needs as closely linked to a gender hierarchy and by implying issues of consumption, the drama concerns itself with a contemporary conversation in the theater community. In spite of the acute awareness of the costume struggles female performers were facing at the time, it was not until the end of the century that women began to organize themselves and offer costume rentals for an annual membership fee. The fashion

²³⁴ My Translation:

One can force theaters of medium size to provide costumes for their women, of course. But there will always be some who will have no need for that and who will look better and more luxurious than those dressed by the director. And the audience will have a preference for the former. It cannot be changed.

Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, „Moderne Schauspiele,“ 101.

²³⁵ My Translation:

Her volition killed her, not the disdainful paragraph about women’s costumes.

Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, „Moderne Schauspiele,“ 101.

²³⁶ See Helen Fronius, *Women and Literature in the Goethe Era (1770-1820): Determined Dilettantes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

industry, however, continued to exert considerable pressure. Charlotte Engel Reimers' *Die deutschen Bühnen und ihre Angehörigen. Eine Untersuchung über ihre Wirtschaftliche Lage* (1911) minutely analyzes the expenses for actors and actresses and lists costumes as the main item. She states that the wardrobe and the associated expenses depend on the genre, the character of the theater, and the preferences of the audience, but leaves no doubt that the expenses for performers surmount their income and easily exceed expenses of other occupations.²³⁷ Male performers were provided with the historic costumes needed for their roles, and only had to purchase the "kleine Kostüm" which consisted of shoes, socks, tie, and undergarments.²³⁸ Reimers does not hesitate to point to the accepted hardship of these women artists: "Man erinnert sich, wie riesenhaft die Summen, die auf die Ausstattung verwendet werden, gewachsen sind, und man wird die oft unerträgliche Last begreifen, die den Schauspielerinnen aufgebürdet wird."²³⁹ The need to renew their wardrobe periodically, and the director's requests for a variety of costumes at the expense of the performer constitutes a considerable challenge, particularly for female performers:

Das gilt in noch weit höherem Maße von dem weiblichen Bühnenmitglied. Wie schon im bürgerlichen Leben der Frau die Aufgabe zufällt, in das gesellschaftliche Bild Farben, Abwechslung und Freude hineinzubringen, um wieviel mehr noch auf der Bühne. Die Pracht der Kostüme ist integrierender Bestandteil der Ausstattung.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ See Charlotte Engel Reimers, *Die deutschen Bühnen und ihre Angehörigen. Eine Untersuchung über ihre Wirtschaftliche Lage* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1911), 498.

²³⁸ Engel Reimers, *Die deutschen Bühnen und ihre Angehörigen*, 500.

²³⁹ My Translation:

One remembers how immensely the amount spent for the wardrobe has increased, and one will understand the unbearable burdens laid upon actresses.

Engel Reimers, *Die deutschen Bühnen und ihre Angehörigen*, 499.

²⁴⁰ My Translation:

This is true even more so for female members of the theater. As in the bourgeois setting where women are expected to contribute color, variety and enjoyment to the bourgeois world, how much more do they have to do so on stage. The splendor of their costumes is an integral part of their equipment.

Engel Reimers, *Die deutschen Bühnen und ihre Angehörigen*, 499.

Engel-Reimers points to the desires and expectations of the audience and notes that the costumes and overall appearance of female performers plays the most important part in attracting an audience to the theaters. In addition, due to the practice of demanding performers to pay for their own wardrobe, directors have little interest in changing the attitude of the audience. The situation becomes more problematic when considering that while female performers were paid less than their male colleagues, they were required to spend more money on their costumes, especially with the developing trend for a wide variety of required historic costumes, an idea promoted by the Meininger Theater.²⁴¹

The costumes of the actresses on stage are much more than functional apparel; they represent the expectations and desires of an audience, which, at the turn of the century, has become obsessed with consumption. Besides material or pecuniary constraints for the actress, clothing too, and maybe even more so, needs to be seen with regard to its symbolic and social implications. In *Eroticism of Clothes* (1906), Karl Kraus states that once clothes are more than functional garments, they can be artistic and erotic, and a fetish. He argues that while appearing at times like a means to masquerade, cover, or hide the body, clothes reveal our inner self and our culture at that moment in time.²⁴² Similarly, Engel-Reimers concludes that:

[...] die Kunst sich zu kleiden [ist] ein wichtiger Bestandteil ihres Gewerbes, daher Lebenszweck, und so wird sie auch für die Darstellerin zum Teil der Rolle, ohne welche die Verkörperung bei genialstem Spiel unvollkommen wäre. [...] Und so waren der größten aller Virtuosinnen, Sarah Bernhardt, die fabelhaften Preise ihrer

²⁴¹While historic costumes, such as required for Hilde's Thusnelda performance, demand much work and money, the modern wardrobe for other roles presents itself as equally challenging as women on stage were supposed to represent or even set the latest fashion standards. This also means that dresses and costumes could only be worn for one season before new fashion trends required a new wardrobe. Small theaters are even more problematic as performed plays change more frequently, and women have to have a wide variety of costumes available. Therefore, performers spend their time off stage making changes to their dresses and appearance to create the illusion of a new dress for their next role.

²⁴² See Karl Kraus, "The Eroticism of Clothes" (1906), in *The Rise of Fashion. A Reader*, ed. Daniel L. Purdy (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 239-244).

Toiletten so gut Reklamemittel wie ihr Löwenkauf in England oder ihre sonstigen Exzentrizitäten. Ihre Kleider waren Kompositionen, deren Entstehungsgeschichte die Zeitungen lebhaft beschäftigte [...] So trug das Virtuosenstum auch wesentlich dazu bei, den übergroßen Toilettenluxus zur Ingredienz dieser Rollen zu machen; denn keine spätere Darstellerin der “Kameliendame”, kann, wenn sie als etwas besonderes gelten will, hinter dem zurückbleiben, was die Bernhardt oder die Duse als Typen geschaffen haben.²⁴³

In this way, clothing is not only an integral part of the performance but also a marketing strategy that attracts an audience and shows the wealth of the patron, theater, or, in some cases, of the actress herself. As Engel-Reimers states with reference to Bernhardt and Duse, this public interest in the actress’s costumes extended far beyond the space of the theater.

The discourses on clothing need to include a look at the developing consumer culture of the nineteenth century, which presents women as consumers and establishes “conspicuous consumption”²⁴⁴ (Thorstein Veblen) as an activity that links money, fashion, and gender. Rita Felski notes that “consumer demand is not simply a passive reflection of economic interests, but is shaped by a variety of independent cultural and ideological factors, of which gender is one of the most significant.”²⁴⁵ Women became important consumers in the nineteenth century; their purchases had potential for affecting the market and their new role prompted them to leave the

²⁴³ My Translation:

The art to dress constitutes an essential part of the occupation, thereby a means and end in life and the dress becomes part of the performer’s role; any personification without the dress would be imperfect, no matter how genius her performance. [...] And so were to the most renown of all virtuosos, Sarah Bernhardt, the prices of her toiletries as much a means of advertising as her purchase of a lion in England or other such eccentricities. Her dresses were compositions whose stories occupied the newspapers. [...] The life and conduct of these virtuosi contributed to the development that made luxurious toiletries an ingredient of these roles. Later performers of the *Kameliendame* who want to count for something, cannot fall short of the luxuries created as types (standards) by Bernhardt or Duse.

Engel Reimers, *Die deutschen Bühnen und ihre Angehörigen*, 506.

²⁴⁴ See Thorstein Veblen, “Conspicuous Consumption” and “Dress” as an Expression of the Pecuniary Culture,” (excerpt from *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899) in *The Rise of Fashion. A Reader*, ed. Daniel L. Purdy (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 261-288).

²⁴⁵ Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 61.

house and mingle in department stores.²⁴⁶ Obsession with the garments of the actress reflects both the desires of consumers and the supporting role the performer's art in the context of consumer culture. The actress's struggle of being an artist is subjugated to her role as fashion model and as a symbol of her patron's wealth. Thus attention to the art of performance is overshadowed by the patron's and audience's craving for consumption and their own public presentation. The female artist on stage acts in intimate reciprocity with an audience, whose commercial and sexual desires have to be stimulated in order to advance her career on stage. The theater became one of the prime locations to showcase affluence in public. Besides the importance of the actress's costume, women of the upper classes showcased their husbands' prosperity in their consumption, most effectively through clothing. Veblen's text *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) analyzes the spending behavior of the middle and upper classes and points to the new importance of public consumption and presentation of wealth. This theory assumes women as the new consumers, which also transfers to the role of the actress, who besides being seen as a commodity, turns into a role model for consumption due to the appeal of her ever-changing wardrobe. Veblen writes that "expenditure on dress has this advantage over most other methods that our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at the first glance."²⁴⁷ The role of the actress was not only to keep up with new fashion standards but also to be trend-setters, whose costumes reflect on the economic standing of their patrons.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ See Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, 65ff; Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire. The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 23.

²⁴⁷ Thorsten Veblen, "Conspicuous Consumption" 278.

²⁴⁸ In contrast to this, the notion of the all-consuming woman developed. According to Felski, women's consumerism also constituted a potential threat to masculinity as their ever increasing desires became more and more difficult to meet. "In other words, the promotion of hedonism brings significant economic benefits for the individual male capitalist, but its effects on intimate relations between the sexes and the

In the late nineteenth century, women become important consumers, on behalf of their husbands, and thereby complicate the situation of the actress in that she turns into a commercial as well as sexual commodity having to play to the desires of women and men. Veblen's analysis becomes particularly interesting in terms of gender when he describes the situation of the lower middle class, in which the husband could not present himself entirely in terms of leisure but had to transfer this representation to his wife. The male head of the middle-class household, in contrast to the leisure class, had to hold an occupation and could only emulate upper classes through their wives' leisure and public consumption. According to Veblen's theory, in order to understand the situation of the actress, the desires of men as well as women in the audience need to be taken into consideration. The actress at the forefront of consumerism increases her dependency on patrons. Further, Margit Stange's analysis of the bourgeois wife who consumes to represent the prosperity of her husband appears even more relevant for the actress: "The excessive need and desire that consumer culture incites in women intensify their dependency; and, unless already accommodated by a protector, this consumerism makes the woman available to be acquired as property."²⁴⁹ The double bind here consists of the fact that the actress is caught in both roles; she is considered a commodity by theater directors, agents, and at times even by patrons and the audience while she is also presenting herself as a consumer by wearing the outfits that set new trends and serve as a model for bourgeois women's conspicuous consumption.

Not only the actress plays a double role in her performance on stage, the theater itself takes on multiple roles and becomes a place for culture, entertainment, capitalist consumption, as

structure of the patriarchal family are destabilizing and potentially destructive. See Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, 74.

²⁴⁹ Stange, *Personal Property. Wives, White Slaves and the Market in Women*, 10.

well as for prostitution. Peter Lorenz bemoans the expectations of the audience toward art in the theater. From his perspective, the theater has turned into a tailor workshop since customers seem less interested in the performance than in the costumes of the performers. The appearance is supposed to blind and impress the audience and draw less attention to the content or performance. Similar to Karl Kraus, Lorenz states his disapproval of imbalanced newspaper reviews that focus more on the dress of the main actress than on the performances itself. He sees this also as a sign of change in the theater, which has essentially become a seamstress's workshop but is also on the verge of becoming a brothel for wealthy men.²⁵⁰

The increasing consumerism of the developing capitalist society draws more and more attention to fashion and appearance as well as to the desire to own and be able to purchase whatever is desired. The actress on stage falls into the trap of being forced to present the latest fashion in her costumes and becomes a model for consumerism. This in turn makes her more dependent on patrons and turns her into a commodity for fashion as well as sexual desires of the audience, patron, and director. Her performance plays a minor role and her creative art disappears behind her required obsession with costumes. Hilde's decision to compromise her art and herself as a woman provides the only opportunity to showcase her talent. Implicated in discourses on fashion and consumerism, Hilde's access to the theater as well as her opportunity to showcase her talent, can only occur through the financial support of a wealthy patron. Becoming a commodity or being treated as such renders possible a performance, while the role as a consumer becomes the performance itself and leaves little room for the actress to define herself outside of these powerful discourses.

²⁵⁰ Lorenz, „Die Prostitution in der Kunst,“ 376.

The Economic Man

Hilde's crisis comes out of her need for money to purchase the dresses required for her performance of Thusnelda. This section analyzes Itzerott's critique of masculinity represented by the "economic man" and its effects on the female artist-protagonist. While the exchange appears simple in that Hilde needs money and Leuck expects a favor in return, a closer look at the discourses hidden behind the capitalist mentality of Leuck exposes the gendered conceptualization of money and the "economic man," both of which impede Hilde's artistic aspirations as a woman.

Felix Leuck, a well-known, married, and affluent business man knows of Hilde's aspirations as well as of her financial situation. He has shown personal interest in Hilde ever since he has seen one of her performances, and he endears himself to her by sympathizing with her situation at a small theater without much hope for big roles. Having overheard the conversation between Hilde and the director about purchasing the costumes, Leuck is determined to provide the money—but expects Hilde herself in return. After confronting Hilde about her futile situation and the amount of debt she already owes due to the long illness and death of her father, he offers a "healing" to her "suffering":

Felix: Nein! Hilde! Nein! nur um eine Wunde bloß zu legen, die ich heilen möchte!²⁵¹

Felix Leuck wants to expose a wound in order to heal it; the "healing," he suggests, consists of monetary support to which Hilde reacts overjoyed until she realizes that he has no interest in lending her the needed money, that in fact Leuck's giving is not altruistic but a calculated exchange.

²⁵¹ My Translation:

Felix: No! Hilde! No! Only to uncover a wound I would like to heal!
Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 18.

Hilde's suffering as a female artist appears compulsively reassigned to the body, a female body marked above all by its sexuality. Equating the suffering from a lack of money to a bodily suffering from a wound corresponds to the imagined incapability of women to encounter abstract conflicts or struggles unrelated to the body, or to conceive of abstract ideas altogether. Accordingly, the healing does not consist of monetary support but implies a bodily healing, a penetration of her body and the insertion of a healing male liquid(ity)—her lack of cash flow will be filled by Felix Leuck's liquid(ity). The female wound as a reference to castration implies here not only a lack of money but, more importantly, a lack of male potency in an artistic as well as sexual sense. Hilde refuses his money, his healing, and complementation of her, and she dismisses his questionable offer, prompting Leuck to respond that every exchange is based on a calculation. Leuck, however, says much more than the words of the economic man. He provides connections between money and the body or money and masculinity, respectively.²⁵²

Leuck: Nein, Hilde! Nein! nicht so -- erst warten Sie... sehen Sie! (er ergreift ihre Hand und hält sie eisern fest) laßen Sie mich sprechen, Hilde: nicht umsonst kann ich's tun! Nicht allein der Gebende will ich sein! Nein! nein! Sehen Sie, Fräulein Hilde - - ich bin nicht großmütig – nein! Mein Leben war zu hart.... so habe ich rechnen gelernt, Hilde: eins für eins! Zehn für zehn! Ich kann nicht anders. Sehen Sie meine starken Fäuste an, meinen breiten Nacken, Hilde – so sieht ein Mann aus, der nicht verschwendet, nein! der mit Zinsen anlegt, der nur gibt, wenn er weiss, warum.²⁵³

He continues:

²⁵² Felski points out that texts of the nineteenth century frequently use economic metaphors to describe sexual activity. See *Gender of Modernity*, 77. See also: Berkner Benfield, "The Spermatic Economy: A Nineteenth Century View of Sexuality," in *Feminist Studies* (Vol. 1, No. 1, 1972, 45-74).

²⁵³ My Translation:

No, Hilde not in that way, first you have to wait...understand! (he grabs her hand and holds it tightly) let me speak, Hilde: I cannot do it for nothing! I do not want to be the sole giver! No! No! See, Ms. Hilde- I am not noble! No, my life was too hard, so I have learned to calculate, Hilde: one for one! Ten for ten! I cannot help it! Look at my strong fists, my strong neck- this is what a man looks like who does not waste, no! Who invests to yield interest, who only gives, when he knows, why.

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 22.

Leuck: Alles würde ich für Sie thun, Hilde, alles! Ich könnte es, mein Wort wiegt schwer, mein Name ist allmächtig bei vielen. Aber dich will ich dafür, Hilde! Dich! Dich!²⁵⁴

Foreshadowing the impact of such an exchange, Hilde responds:

Hilde: Sie wollen mir helfen – Sie! Und wissen nicht, daß eine Kunst, die sich ihre Reinheit nicht bewahrt, sich ihrer Lebenswurzeln beraubt! Und wäre es nicht also – höben Sie sie selbst zu den Sternen - - tausendmal lieber grab' ich ihr das Grab, ehe ich mich selbst verliere! Hinweg! Ich lache – lache – lache über Sie!²⁵⁵

Multiple references in Leuck's statement point to his interests (Hilde) and his position; he emphasizes his masculinity by stressing his physical strength, which for him symbolizes the fact that he not only does not waste, but only gives when he can expect something in return. Again, his giving refers to the giving of money as well as to that of himself; his monetary and bodily affluence is not wasted but only spilled for a valuable cause. Besides his physical strength, he stresses the effect of his powerful words and name, which can provide access to resources for Hilde. While Felix Leuck's focus remains on a direct exchange and a direct recognition of and return for his support, Hilde responds to his offer by emphasizing her concern for her art. Her reaction presents a conviction that art needs to be pure; thus, as a performer, she has to abide to certain standards and cannot compromise her art by selling herself in return for money, liquid(ity), or the words and name of a recognized patron.

When Hilde reacts surprised and shocked at the recommendations of the theater director, he continues to suggest that she do what is common in the field: find a wealthy patron willing to

²⁵⁴ My Translation:

I would do anything for you, Hilde, anything! I could do it, my word carries a lot of weight, my name is powerful with many. But I want you in return, Hilde! You! You!

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 23f.

²⁵⁵ My Translation:

You want to help me—you! And you do not know that art which does not protect its purity, extracts the roots of its life! And would it not be that way—you would raise it to the stars yourself. Much rather would I dig its grave, before I lost myself! Go! I laugh—laugh—laugh at you!

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 24.

support her—which often means to prostitute herself for money. The drama unfolds and her fate becomes more inevitable as Leuck discloses that he overheard the conversation with the director and knows of her dilemma. Hilde begs for the money and hopes for a loan so that she can return her pecuniary debt. Leuck's indispensable support makes it possible for him to insert his own interest while relying on Hilde's dependency. Humiliated by her futile situation, Hilde begs for his understanding:

Hilde: Nein! Bei Gott, nein! Leihen Sie mir das Geld Herr Leuck! Sie glauben an mein Talent – an meinen Erfolg. Nun wohl: so wissen Sie auch, ich kann's Ihnen, ich werd' es Ihnen zurückgeben! Leihen Sie's mir!

Felix: Hilde! Was ist mir mein Geld! Sie will ich! Sie - nur Sie. Sie sind das einzige, was mein Leben mir bis jetzt versagt hat. Ich muss Sie mir erringen. Ich werde Sie mir erringen! Hilde! Nein! Ich leihe Ihnen nicht! Ich gebe! Ich schütte auf Sie herab. Ich will Sie in eine Pracht hüllen, um die eine Kaisertochter Sie beneiden soll! Aber Sie will ich dafür! Sie, Hilde! Einmal im Leben Seligkeit! Ich laße nicht mit mir handeln! Nein! Ich bin nicht der Mann, der mit sich handeln läßt (42f)!²⁵⁶

The sexual imagery continues; he will not lend but give; not only give but spill. The splendor which will cover her body originates from his liquid(ity) and symbolizes his potency; what she will receive from him will be envied by others. At this point, Hilde's qualities and talent as a performer are of no interest; instead, her conflict becomes an opportunity for a patron to showcase his masculinity and potency and express his sexual desires. Felix Leuck's patronage appears less as a means to support her art than his own desires and needs for recognition. He is

²⁵⁶My Translation:

Hilde: No, In God's name, no! Lend me the money, Herr Leuck! You believe in my talent—my success. As well: you also know that I can, I will pay it back! Lend it to me! (My translation)

Felix: Hilde! What does my money mean! I want you, only you! You are the only thing, life has denied me until now! I must capture you! I will capture you! Hilde! No! I will not lend you. I give! I spill over you. I want to cover you in such splendor that even an emperor's daughter will envy you. But I want you in return, you, Hilde! Blessedness, once in a lifetime! There will be no negotiation. I am not the kind of man who negotiates.

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 42f.

aware of his self-centered interests and cannot help but follow his desires: „Ich fühle mich teuflisch, indem ich Sie quäle, aber ich kann nicht anders [...] und ich werde Sie schön machen den Abend wie die Feen des Paradieses.“²⁵⁷ Driven by fascination with the actress and her ability to reflect and stimulate the desires of her audience, Leuck represents the rational and calculating (economic) man who cannot give without receiving in return. He will, as Veblen implies in his theory of “conspicuous consumption,” make Hilde look as beautiful as fairies in paradise to increase his own standing. Though he knows of the torturous effects of his demands on Hilde, he is driven by his economic and sexual desires and follows through.

Although Leuck’s monetary support not only affords Hilde’s costumes but, according to him, also increases her self-esteem and unleashes her talent, this exchange actually constrains her creative potential. His imagination of her as “Königin der Frauen, Königin des Talents”²⁵⁸ is based on the potential of his money. Even though he describes himself as “zu ihren Füßen mit all meinem Golde,”²⁵⁹ he sees himself as the one enabling her career, recognition, and beauty through his money. From this perspective, she receives not only financial support, but with it and through him she conceives the potential to perform.²⁶⁰ His giving is a taking over, a claiming of

²⁵⁷ My Translation:

I feel vicious by torturing you, but I cannot help it! [...] But I will make you beautiful that evening, like the fairies in paradise.

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 43.

²⁵⁸ My Translation:

Felix: Queen of women, queen of talent.

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 43.

²⁵⁹ My Translation:

Felix: At your feet with all my gold.

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 43.

²⁶⁰ In *Hilde Brandt* money appears as a nexus between art and the body of the female artist. Bettina Mathes points to the sacrifice and castration of the bull in Mithraic myths that initiate the idea of mental or spiritual fecundity that later turns into male conception of ideas or birthing metaphors. She describes the mithraic myth according to which the semen of the later castrated bull becomes the center of a new creation myth. Creation, however, is no longer sexual but mental or spiritual and thereby avoids issues of

her on and off stage. Her performance cannot be dissociated from him as he has inserted himself into her work. The financial transaction speaks not only to the notion of the actress as a sexually available woman but also to an assumed gendered hierarchy of creative potential.

Hilde Brandt as the female artist-protagonist does not sell her art but in the words of Lily Braun, she herself becomes the merchandise: “Most of the time, moreover, directors have a regular business arrangement with certain agents so that they procure their “merchandise” only through these middlemen.”²⁶¹ An essential aspect that needs to be considered for a better understanding of the conflicts of the female artist, then, concerns the discourses related to the

mortality and biology. The male has the power to create out of himself. See „Vom Stieropfer zum Börsentier: Die Fruchtbarkeit des Geldes,“ in *Geld und Geschlecht Geld und Geschlecht. Tabus, Paradoxien und Ideologien*, ed. Brigitta Wrede (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 2003 14-31). Eva Boesenberg points out that money also needs to be seen in relation to the male body and the idea that this body, like money, produces or creates out of nothing—which stands in contrast to models of conception and fertility concerned with the female body. See “Männlichkeit als Kapital,“ in *Geld und Geschlecht. Tabus, Paradoxien und Ideologien*, Brigitta Wrede, ed. (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 2003, 32-45), 35. The notion that money symbolizes fertility which is then equated with male virility, makes money as the link between women and their art an even more interesting connection as it stresses the prevalence of gender in relation to conceptions of creativity. Prostitution as the exchange of sex (the female body) for money is, as Mathes points out, also a way for men to ensure that their symbolic potency, which is based on money, has not affected their sexual potency (29). Proof of sexual potency is then enabled through prostitution, i.e. through the exchange of money for sex. The exchange of money deludes the notion that castration lies at the core of the discourse on money. In her essay “Das Geld und die Prostitution,“ Christina von Braun also points to the connection between discourses on money and the body in that money was a substitute for the physical sacrifice. See „Das Geld und die Prostitution,“ in *Verhandlungen im Zwielficht. Momente der Prostitution in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, eds. Sabine Grenz and Martin Lücke (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2006, 23-42). The sacrifice changed from the giving of a human being to that of an animal and finally to the symbolic sacrifice of money, a process which seemingly divorced money from the body. Von Braun argues, however, that this process in fact demanded a return to the material, and prostitution constitutes this corporeal aspect. The etymology of the German term for money “Geld” refers back to both sacrifice and castration, and the memory of the wound remains connected to money, according to von Braun (28). The wound Felix Leuck exposes in Hilde stems, besides from her castration, from her lack of money. He offers to “heal” this wound through his money and his complementation of her through him, thereby reinforcing his masculine virility through his financial potency.

²⁶¹Braun, „Backstage,“ 35.

changing economic structure of society, which includes the constructions of masculinity and femininity. The nineteenth century established binary gender expectations that manifested themselves not only in role behavior and appearance but also in the division of labor and access to money.

The newly gained independence of the artist at the end of the 18th century brought with it a dependence on a market that limited the freedom of artists in that they had to sell their work. The relative dependency on the market led at times to a production of work solely for the market, often referred to as the mental (Geistige) prostitution²⁶² of artists. This kind of symbolic prostitution refers to the willingness of artists to produce whatever is demanded by the market without upholding any artistic standards. Lu Märten, a writer, sociologist, and art theorist, analyzed the economic situation of artists in *Die Wirtschaftliche Lage der Künstler (The Economic Condition of the Artist, 1914)* and points to the alienating effects of the new market:

Da der Künstler den Markt braucht, damit sein Werk zu irgendwelcher Bestimmung gelange, ihm zugleich den notwendigen materiellen Entgelt bringe, so unterliegt er hier Gesetzen, die mit dem Wesen seiner Kunst und seiner individuellen Produktion nicht das geringste zu tun haben.²⁶³

In her Marxian analysis, Märten sees artists, especially writers, as an intellectual proletariat, which, similar to the conflict between labor and capital, deals with the conflict between capital and intellectual ideas.

While the economic developments deeply affected the life and work of the male artist and may have caused a sense of alienation for some, it appears that the sexual, physical, and

²⁶² See Karl Stock, „Geistige Prostitution,“ in *Der Türmer Monatschrift für Gemüt und Geist* (Vol. 20, No. 1, 1917/18, 340), 340.

²⁶³ My Translation:

Since the artist depends on a market, in order to have some sort of destination for his work, which would also provide the necessary monetary consideration, he is subjected to laws, which have nothing at all to do with the essence of his art and its individual production.

Lu Märten, *Die Wirtschaftliche Lage der Künstler* (München: G. Müller, 1914), 6.

psychological exploitation of the female artist has not yet been fully considered. Although Märten provides an insightful description and analysis of the changing financial situation for artists, it becomes clear that she, for the most part, has a male artist in mind. She describes Marx's notion of alienation in relation to the artist whose work becomes a commodity, even if it is a luxury. As part of the market, the artist also has to promote his work and either exhibit it publicly or hire agents to do so. With all these demands, however, the body of the male artist remains separate from the work, and Märten's interest lies with the ambiguous character of the work of art as both an individual product and as merchandise that can be exchanged for money.

Considering *Hilde Brandt* and the experience of female performers at the time, it is important to remember that physical prostitution, as a by-product of capitalism, was a reality. More importantly though, female artists experienced alienation from their art differently from the male artists described by Märten—not only due to the pressure to sell their performance to attract a market/audience, but even more so due to the intrusion of male capital into their work—which turned the performer herself into a commodity. In the case of *Hilde Brandt*, the dependence on a patron for the creative process affects and alienates the female artist from her work and the final product and changes the dynamic between the female performing artist and her work. The overpowering demand of a market and the intrusion into the creative process, inevitably changes the process as well as the relationship to the finished work.²⁶⁴ Märten remains focused on the

²⁶⁴ Lu Märten describes the struggles of the male artists in a way that contrasts with Hilde's experience. The male artist suffers from too much abstraction of his person from the finished work due to the functioning of the market. He thus began to write himself into his work to establish a permanent connection to his work in a time when the intrusion of the market into the production and sale of art troubled many critics. The signing of works by the artist, which emphasized his role and presence, also increased the market value of the work, in this case of paintings: "In dem Augenblick, wo das Kunstwerk auf dem Warenmarkt seinen Qualitätswert durch seine Signatur verkündet, ist seine Verwertungsmöglichkeit gesichert. Da aber diese Verwertungsmöglichkeit von der Person des Künstlers abstrahiert wird, da der Kauf oder Verkauf durch eine Gruppe von privaten Geschäftsleuten erfolgt, ist

male artist and the alienating effect of distance between artist and work in the new market environment.

In this drama, money does more than turn women into consumers and merchandise; it highlights the relationship between the economic man and the male artist and draws attention to the gendered performances as well. Werner Sombart, a German sociologist and economist, published *Der moderne Kapitalismus (The Modern Capitalism)* in 1902, a work that attempts to understand the relationship between social and economic development. In 1913, he published *Der Bourgeois. Zur Geistesgeschichte des modernen Wirtschaftsmenschen (The Bourgeois. About the Intellectual History of the Modern Capitalist)*, in which he analyzes the mentality of the modern bourgeois based on contemporary facts and historical material—strewn with references to male characters from eighteenth and nineteenth century literature. Both works presume the economic man as the agent of the evolving capitalist society, and Sombart suggests seeing the economy itself as an organism with body and mind, indicating a gendered conception not only of the economic being (man) but also of the economy itself. The body is represented through all activities and general conditions on which the economy depends and under which it functions, which could include the female consumer as well. The mind of the economic organism, however, includes:

Alle Äußerungen des Intellekts, alle Charakterzüge die bei wirtschaftlichen Strebungen zutage treten. Ebenso aber auch alle Zielsetzungen, alle Werturteile, alle Grundsätze von denen das Verhalten der wirtschaftenden Menschen bestimmt und geregelt wird.²⁶⁵

hier der unpersönliche Warencharakter auch des höchst persönlichen Kunstwerks deutlich.²⁶⁴ My Translation: At the moment when the artwork presents its qualitative value on the market, it secures its use value. But because the use value is abstracted from the artist as a person, since the purchase or sale is conducted through a group or through private business men, the highly impersonal character, even of the most personal work, becomes obvious. Märten, *Die Wirtschaftliche Lage der Künstler*, 106f.

²⁶⁵ My Translation:

Characterizing the mind of the economy through activities related to economic agency foreshadows Sombart's assumptions about the bourgeois citizen as the capitalist entrepreneur.

Sombart describes the entrepreneur as the center of any capitalist enterprise and as the one who conceives of a plan and carries it out. He sees *Unternehmergeist* or entrepreneur mentality as part of the capitalist system that is always based, to some degree, on exploitative relationships. The three main characteristics of the entrepreneur show him as conqueror (Eroberer), organizer (Organisator), and tradesman (Händler).²⁶⁶ As a conqueror, the entrepreneur needs the freedom to develop ideas and has the will, ability and determination to realize them or to bring them to life—"seiner Erfindung [...] Leben verleihen"²⁶⁷ The discourse on the economic man emphasizes the ability to create and invent combined with the ability to bring their creation to life. Both skills relate the economic man to financial virility, which then transfers to the conception of masculinity and male potency. The will, ability and determination of the entrepreneur strike as immensely powerful and reminiscent of the Pygmalion myth in which the male artist creates the perfect woman as a marble statue, which is then brought to life by Venus. Interestingly, Sombart excludes artists from this group of bourgeois entrepreneurs since one of the important characteristics for him consists of the entrepreneur's ability to include others in his plan and its realization.²⁶⁸ The ability to bring their creation to life, however, appears as a shared skill of the economic man and the (male) artist, although the artist works

All expressions of the intellect, all character traits that come forward in economic pursuits; likewise all goals, all value judgments, all principles that determine and govern the conduct of economically active people.

Werner Sombart, *Der Bourgeois. Zur Geistesgeschichte des modernen Wirtschaftsmenschen* (München and Leipzig, 1913), 2.

²⁶⁶ See Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 70.

²⁶⁷ My Translation:

To bring his invention to life.

Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 70.

²⁶⁸ See *Ibid.*, 67.

independently of others. In addition, the appropriation of the birthing metaphor and its application to the conception and birthing of ideas or mental creations, all implied in the concept of the conqueror, further foregrounds the connection between creative ability and male (economic) agency. The characteristics of the male conqueror are his mental as well as physical strength: „Ein Eroberer aber muß er sein auch in dem Sinne des Mannes, der viel zu wagen die Kraft hat. Der alles einsetzt, um für sein Unternehmen Großes zu gewinnen.“²⁶⁹

Since the entrepreneur cannot necessarily attain his goal by himself, he needs to be an organizer and take control over those working for him to carry out his plan and maximize his gains. Last but not least, the entrepreneur needs to be a tradesman who negotiates to affect the actions of others. Sombart sees an important aspect of the entrepreneur mentality in bourgeois virtues. „Darunter verstehe ich alle diejenigen Ansichten und Grundsätze (und das nach ihnen gestaltete Verhalten und Sichbetragen), die einen guten Bürger und Hausvater, einen soliden und “besonnenen” Geschäftsmann ausmachen.“²⁷⁰ The term *Bürger* does not necessarily only refer to class or socio-economic standing but also to a type of person with certain characteristics and virtues. The bourgeois as entrepreneur abides to business ethics such as delivering and paying on time, and working with dedication, i.e. he has an interest in gaining from transactions or trades. He is thus a person already deeply embedded in the capitalist market and knows of its principles and demands. He also has to present himself in a certain way by living in moderation and

²⁶⁹ My Translation:

He must be a conqueror also in terms of being a man who has the strength to risk a lot. Who puts everything at stake to make a profit for his enterprise.

Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 71.

²⁷⁰ My Translation:

[...] which I understand as those principles (and the code of conduct and behavior based on them) that constitute a good citizen and head of the household, which make for a grounded and level-headed business man.

Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 135.

showing a certain code of conduct or moral code to remain a respectable public person. The modern capitalist is further characterized by his accountability, by an urge to calculate and to understand the world in terms of numbers: „[...] die Neigung, die Gepflogenheit, aber auch die Fähigkeit, die Welt in Zahlen aufzulösen und diese Zahlen zu einem kunstvollen System von Einnahmen und Ausgaben zusammenzustellen“²⁷¹ Curiously, the work of the bourgeois capitalist consists in an artful production.

Returning to the drama, Felix Leuck embodies the persona of the bourgeois who cannot help but calculate and shows an obsession with gaining a profit from every transaction. Leuck's conversations with Hilde show a mentality determined by economic interests and an attitude of consumerism underscored by the ability to purchase what is desired. Sombart's notion that the economically inclined man can turn the world into a construct of numbers refers back to the ability to create abstractly in a way that is seemingly dissociated from the body. The notion that numbers will be turned into an artful system provides yet another link to the creative talent of the economic man. In his description of the capitalist bourgeois, Sombart shows that man has a certain fascination with his skills as well as with the potentially life or world-altering power and the potential to create—based on creativity and money. Sombart warns, however, of the side effects of a lifestyle centered on economic gain and calculations in that it affects body and mind and takes over the sense of purpose and being. In addition, it interferes with the ability to engage in relationships with women due to a lack of time and passion. He describes relationships as

²⁷¹ My Translation:

[...] the tendency, the habit, but also the ability to dissolve the world into numbers and to use those numbers to create an artful system of revenues and expenses.

Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 164.

either apathetic or as lasting only for short period of passion; capitalist bourgeois men either do not care about women at all or use their money to pay a prostitute.²⁷²

While Sombart attempts to exclude artists from his analysis of the entrepreneur, he asserts that the artist shows characteristics that emphasize the difference and the skills of the bourgeois. As shown above, Sombart's understanding of the bourgeois economic man cannot, in fact, be dissociated from discourses on the artist. He uses literary texts from the fourteenth century on to show a deep concern for money, wealth, and the development of the capitalist mind. The prime example of the economic man for Sombart and others²⁷³ is Faust, who he describes as the classical entrepreneur: "Der klassische Unternehmer ist der alte Faust."²⁷⁴ As an entrepreneur he conceives of an idea and organizes his men to carry it out:

[...] im Innern wohnet helles Licht;
Was ich gedacht, ich eil' es zu vollbringen;
Des Herren Wort, es gibt allein Gewicht.
Vom Lager auf, ihr Knechte! Mann für Mann!
Lasst glücklich schauen, was ich kühn ersann!
Ergreift das Werkzeug, Schaufel rührt und Spaten!
Das Abgestecke muss sogleich geraten.
Auf strenges Ordnen, raschen Fleiß
Erfolgt der allerschönste Preis;
Daß sich das größte Werk vollende,
genügt ein Geist für tausend Hände.²⁷⁵

²⁷² See Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 229.

²⁷³ See Hans Christoph Binswanger, *Money and Magic. A Critique of the Modern Economy in the Light of Goethe's Faust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Binswanger analyzes Faust as an alchemist and also considers the economic development at Goethe's time as well as his personal financial knowledge based on his work at the court of Weimar.

²⁷⁴ My Translation:

The old Faust is the typical entrepreneur.

Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 75.

²⁷⁵ The light within continues ever bright, I hasten to fulfill my thoughts designing; the master's world alone imparts his might. Up, workmen, man for man, arise anew! Let blithely savor what I boldly drew. Seize spade and shovel, each take up his tool! Fulfill at once what was marked off by rule. Attendance

Other characters, especially those from Goethe's texts, such as Werner and Wilhelm Meister, or Tasso and Antonio, provide the opposition or differences Sombart is trying to work out.²⁷⁶

In contrast to the desirable money-earning potential of men stands the negative perception of self-sufficient women. Peter Lorenz, who takes up the discourse of female performers and prostitution, establishes a connection to money by presenting money-earning women as both greedy and ambitious. He avoids a clear statement about the situation of the actress by simultaneously blaming the practices at the theater as well as the performers:

Interesse, Erwerbsgier oder Berufsehrgeiz sind die einzigen Götter, die in der "Damengarderobe" anerkannt werden. Für Geld oder gute Rollen ist jede—oder so gut wie jede—Schauspielerin zu kaufen, wenn sie durch ein paar Jahre Theaterleben erst mürbe gemacht ist. Was soll sie auch von der mehr oder weniger schön gefärbten Prostitution abhalten?²⁷⁷

Lorenz presents the morals and virtues of money-earning actresses as more than questionable. Driven by their greed and ambition, he asserts, most women can be bribed by money or good roles, thus opening the doors for prostitution.

Hilde's description of the purity of her art correlates with societal expectations regarding women's purity. The implication that female artists and their developing works of art need to

prompt to orders wise achieves the most alluring prize; to bring to fruit the most exalted plans, one mind is ample for a thousand hands.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Faust," *A Norton Critical Edition*, trans. Walter Arndt, ed. Cyrus Hamlin (New York, Norton, 1976), 11500-11510, 292. Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 75.

²⁷⁶Sombart, *Der Bourgeois*, 261f.: Wilhelm Meister und sein Freund Werner: jener redet wie einer, „der Königreiche verschenkt“; dieser, „wie es einer Person geziemt, die eine Stecknadel aufhebt.“ Tasso und Antonio. My Translation: Wilhelm Meister and his friend Werner, the former talks like someone who gives away kingdoms, the latter how it is appropriate for a person picking up a needle. Tasso and Antonio.

²⁷⁷ My Translation:

Interest, greed, ambition are the only gods that are recognized in the women's room. Every woman—or almost all- can be bribed (or purchased) by money or good roles, if she has been tired by a few years of life at the theater. What should keep her from (...) prostitution anyway?

Lorenz, Lorenz, „Die Prostitution in der Kunst,“ 381.

keep their integrity in the creative process points to a stark difference between women and men. The social and cultural expectations concerning women can only rarely be ignored by female artists who will, according to Hilde's understanding, not only compromise themselves but also their work. Interestingly, the process receives here a different kind of attention than in the traditional artist drama in which the process of creation is often of minor concern once the audience has seen the final product. For Hilde, the emphasis does not only lie with the actual performance on stage but with her preparation and life off stage, an aspect that stresses the pervasive nature of her career and that demonstrates her understanding of her work as not only concerned with the final product (or masterpiece) but even more so with her existence as an artist. Until after her performance, however, her talent and creative potential is of little interest to the director, audience, or patron.

The business man Felix Leuck plays a key role in the development of the drama as he holds the money Hilde needs. Leuck's obsessions with calculations and economic planning open the drama to contemporary discourses on the developing capitalist market. This market demands and enables certain gender performances and stresses the masculinity of the "economic man" in his physical as well as mental strength. Hilde appears excluded from discourses on money and her agency reduced to exchanging herself as an object of desire. In this highly problematic part of the drama, Hilde's actual performance literally disappears from our view.

***Hilde Brandt* as Cultural and Institutional Critique**

Marie Itzerott's drama stages a cultural and institutional critique of the role and condition of the female performing artist and of culturally constructed gender performances. The drama comments not only on the cultural function of the double role of women as prostitute and saint but also on equating the female actress off stage with her role on stage. In contrast to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre* (1795), which, as Becker-Cantarino points out, begins in the bedroom of the actress who contributes to Wilhelm's interest in the theater and presents the new kind of eroticism associated with actresses,²⁷⁸ Hilde Brandt offers a different view of the experience of the actress behind the scenes. The play stages a critique of the theater and of the contradictory performances expected from the protagonist in her life on and off stage. The figure of Thusnelda,²⁷⁹ played by Hilde Brandt, exemplifies the audiences' interest in the Roman drama (Römerdrama),²⁸⁰ which often served to present the victory of morality: "vermeintlich unbezweifelbare Siege der Moral über die Verderbtheit."²⁸¹ Issues of morality and virtue take center stage in this text, and Hilde draws a connection between her own purity and that of her art.

In a review of *Hilde Brandt*, Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn reacts in a somewhat disgruntled manner to Hilde's fatal conflict and finds it "mehr verstimmend als erhebend."²⁸² He admits that

²⁷⁸ See Becker-Cantarino, „Von der Prinzipalin zur Künstlerin und Mätresse,“ 88.

²⁷⁹ Other Thusnelda dramas Marie Itzerott could have been familiar with are: Friedrich Halm's *Der Fechter von Ravenna* (1857), Heinrich von Kleist's *Hermannsschlacht* (1808), and Roderich Benedix *Die Zärtlichen Verwandten* (1900).

²⁸⁰ See Georg Blochmann „Der Tod der Messalina. Burgschauspielerinnen und Gründergeist,“ in *Die Schauspielerin. Zur Kulturgeschichte der weiblichen Bühnenkunst*, Renate Möhrmann, ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1989, 210-227), 215.

²⁸¹ My Translation:
seemingly un-doubtable victories of morality over depravity.

Blochmann, „Der Tod der Messalina,“ 215.

²⁸² My Translation:

[...]more irritating than uplifting”

Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, „Moderne Schauspiele,“ 101.

the drama shows a sincere and deep knowledge of the contemporary world of the theater, but he feels little sympathy for Hilde's decision to perform the role of Thusnelda instead of marrying Paul: "Hilde Brandt hatte unrecht, einen glänzenden Heiratsantrag abzulehnen, und sich zu verkaufen, nur um eine gute Rolle spielen zu können."²⁸³ It can be assumed that Marie Itzerott, who was intimately familiar with the theater, writes this drama as a critique of the theater in terms of its treatment of the female artist and its brutal contracts that drive actresses into prostitution. While the reviewer acknowledges this critique, he considers it inappropriate to challenge the institution of the theater through its own medium. He worries that staging such a drama would bring women's unbearable situation before the audience's eyes and trouble their entertainment. Performing this drama would mean a critique of the stage on stage and in the theater:

Die Selbsterniedrigung des Theaters auf dem Theater ist unerträglich für alle Teile. Weder der Zuschauer (den das gar nichts angeht, denn er hat sein Billet bezahlt) noch die Schauspielerin, die sich in der Darstellung dieser Rolle prostituiert, kann eine Freude haben, an dem sonst sehr talentvollem Stück.²⁸⁴

The audience does not want to be troubled in their voyeuristic consumption and though the theater is filled with conversations about the actress and speculations about the ways in which she earns the money to pay for her costumes, the desires of the attendees rule out a sincere concern for the conditions of the actress behind the scenes. In *Backstage*, Lily Braun recalls a story in which an actress committed suicide due to the rumors fabricated based on speculations.

²⁸³ My Translation:

Hilde Brandt was at fault to decline a good proposal, and to sell herself only to perform a good role. Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, „Moderne Schauspiele,“ 101.

²⁸⁴ My Translation:

The self-humiliation of the theater in the theater is unbearable for all participants. Neither the spectator (who should not be concerned since he paid for his billet) nor the actress who is supposed to prostitute herself in this role, can enjoy this otherwise talented piece.

Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, „Moderne Schauspiele,“ 101.

She recounts the death of a comedic actress who allegedly agreed to appear naked in front of the theater director to negotiate a new role. In addition, it was told she consented to let others secretly witness the scene. She killed herself after rumors became public that presented her as a promiscuous woman and compromised her work as an actress.²⁸⁵ The story was rectified only after her death and she was then celebrated for her purity. The important aspect here is also the imagination of the public in that the actress is a woman onto which desires and fantasies are projected. She entertains her audience not only through her performance but also provides a platform for rumors and speculation that create her as simultaneously desirable and despicable.

Hilde's concern with purity is, then, both a display of her naivety and a reference to the changed status of the actress in the German theater. Itzerott's decision to let her female protagonist stumble naively into the arms of an interested patron, allows the author to present Hilde's struggles in detail to her audience. The reader thus sees the issues at the theater in Hilde's experience. The recurring concern with purity points to the contrasting expectations toward bourgeois women and actresses, and the difficulty to bring those opposing discourses together. Mary Helen Dupree notes that Charlotte Ackermann, who died after one of her performances in 1775, was probably the (first and) last actress who was remembered for her talent and her virtue.²⁸⁶ Ackermann was known for her performances of virtuous heroines in bourgeois tragedies, and her roles in these plays motivated and enforced society's perception of her as a bourgeois woman.

²⁸⁵ See Braun, „Backstage,“34.

²⁸⁶ See Mary Helen Dupree, „Ein Geschöpf der Einbildung unseres Herrn Leßing“: Fictions of Acting and Virtue in the Postmortem Reception of Charlotte Ackermann (1757–1775),” in *Goethe Yearbook* (Vol. 16, 2009, 135-160).

While Hilde Brandt's suicide is reminiscent of the bourgeois tragedy and its attempts to save a woman's virtue through death,²⁸⁷ it functions to highlight the insurmountable differences she encounters in discourses on the bourgeois woman and the actress. In the private life of her familial setting, Hilde is a perfect example of chastity—which she considers a prerequisite for her art. As an actress, Hilde is confronted with practices at the theater that stand in sharp contrast and seem to make it impossible for a woman to live by her bourgeois standards and be a successful actress at the same time. Hilde's death, then, addresses the exiting cultural tensions in her performances on stage and off stage. She can neither perform the role of the bourgeois virtuous daughter nor the role of the actress-mistress. Although her performance as Thusnelda is seen as a success by the audience, Hilde feels that she has compromised her art with this performance. The failed performances suggest that the conflicts presented in this drama cannot be resolved. Hilde refuses to abandon her bourgeois notions and, consequently, the discourses on virtue and sexuality and the related interdependency in the constructions of masculinity and femininity make visible the cultural schisms and leave Hilde without a choice.

By introducing discourses that present the impossibility of Hilde's goal to become a recognized tragedienne and remain a pure woman, the drama demonstrates the contrast between talent, purity, and money, and illustrates that the image of the virgin on stage is closely connected to its counterpart, the prostitute. The drama offers Hilde, as a last way out of the hopeless situation, a marriage proposal that would provide a comfortable lifestyle—away from the theater. After rejecting the offer from her uncle to marry his son and soon-to-be successful physician Paul, Hilde withdraws from her environment and retreats to the world of art, unable to

²⁸⁷ See Britta Hempel, *Sara, Emilia, Luise: Drei Tugendhafte Töchter. Das Empfindsame Patriarchat im bürgerlichen Trauerspiel bei Lessing und Schiller* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006), 33-40.

think of anything but her art. Her uncle and mother doubt a future success in her acting career, furthering her feelings of being an unrecognized artist.

One of the conventional conflicts of artist-protagonists involves self-doubt and the doubt of others, which, most of the time, is eventually resolved in the production of the masterpiece against all odds. While *Hilde Brandt* fits with some of the traditional aspects of the artist-drama concerning the unrecognized and doubted artist, the ending features no such resolution to the conflict. Though she achieves recognition through her praised and final performance, she cannot personally consider her recognition a success since she compromised her purity and thereby the purity of her art:

Hilde: Ich Wahnsinninge, daß ich auch nur einen Augenblick hoffen konnte, daß er Erbarmen haben werde! Doch nun - - doch nun - - gibt es denn keine Möglichkeit, sich mit dem Geschehenen abzufinden! Ja! Mein Gott, ja! Ich muß – ich will tapfer sein! Hilf mir! Hilf mir!²⁸⁸

Hilde: [...] Wohin vor mir selbst?²⁸⁹

After the performance of her lifetime, Hilde cannot find a way to cope with the price she paid for her performance; and she cannot find a place to hide from herself. It becomes clear that Leuck had claimed his debt from Hilde and though his absence after her performance could indicate that he realized his unreasonable demands, it comes too late for Hilde. In the end, she jumps out of a window, and the drama closes with her corpse being carried into the room by the neighbors. Hilde's compliance with Leuck's cruel transaction compromised her purity as both woman and

²⁸⁸ My Translation.

Hilde: Madwoman, I, how could I have hoped for his mercy. But now—but now, is there no way to cope with what happened! Yes! My God, yes! I must—I will be brave! Help me! Help! Help!
Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 78.

²⁸⁹ My Translation:

Hilde: Where to go to hide from myself?
Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 82.

actress, and, as others have argued, the purity of the dramatic genre: “Itzerott studies the deep connection between purity and art, questioning whether fine drama can survive in an environment of tainted morality.”²⁹⁰ Sparing any passage of Hilde’s performances from the actual text of the drama, i.e. from the stage, implies that the central conflict involves more than the issue of unrecognized talent. Instead, the drama highlights the conflict behind the scenes and away from the stage.

Hilde faces the conflict of being seen as mistress and artist or as virgin and prostitute, and both roles play a crucial part in her life at the theater. The drama presents the pervasive double standard for female performers by referring to the two discourses that represent her as virgin and prostitute and which determine her value on and off stage.²⁹¹ The director, the agent, as well as the audience know of the plight of the female actress who has no means to pay for her costumes. They know of her need to engage in dangerous liaisons with patrons or wealthy men less interested in the performance on stage than in the female performer herself. In contrast to the circumstances behind the scenes, the actress also has to keep up the illusion of innocence, virginity, and pureness, an ideal that Hilde desperately tries to abide by as well. Economically speaking, her appearance of chasteness constitutes an essential part of her marketability; it constitutes both economic and social value. This well-known conflict, however, inspires the

²⁹⁰See Wheeler, “Editor’s Introduction”

(<http://sophieold.byu.edu/literature/index.php?p=text.php&textid=833>)

²⁹¹ Heinrich Mann’s drama *Schauspielerin* (1911) presents a similar fate of the famous actress-protagonist Leonie Hallmann who wants to end her career on stage and experience the real world without a masquerade. She gets engaged to a relatively wealthy factory owner and makes an effort to integrate herself into his somewhat hostile family. Leonie discovers the lies and intrigues that are part of bourgeois life and appear in fact closer to her performances on stage than to what she imagined as the pure bourgeois life based on honor and values. She poisons herself at the end to which one reviewer reacts with incomprehension: “Da Heinrich Mann in Deutschland der verehrendste Erzähler ist, möchte ich ohne Nörgelung, und auch ohne Vorsatz, sachlich und wie privatim mich erkundigen, weshalb seine Schauspielerin das Gift nehmen musste.“ Kurt Hiller, „Der Selbstmord der Leonie Hallmann,“ in *Der Sturm* (1911, 678) 678.

fantasy of the audience, and upholding this myth behind a double standard appears as key to any potential for success. After her performance of Thusnelda, Hilde is being praised for her purity as a “makelloser Stern” (Immaculate Star)²⁹² and the King addresses his letter to her to “dem Genie, der Schönheit, der Reinheit”²⁹³ reinforcing the myth of the virgin on stage against all odds. The messenger of the King praises her purity and her perseverance as he acknowledges the difficulty for actresses to resist temptations. Frau Lungenbühl, the neighbor, calls her a Madonna when she walks across the street: “Sieht sie nicht aus wie die Madonna, wenn sie über die Straße geht?”²⁹⁴ Further, the contrast between the expectations of the King, who emphasizes the merit of her virginity, and of Leuck and the theater director, who assume her sexual surrender and frame it as an economic value, present the contrasting perceptions and value systems.²⁹⁵

Hilde’s situation and the exchange of herself for money resonates with the contemporary discourse on prostitution as a manifestation of cultural moral codes. This discourse surfaced not only in literary texts, journals, and newspapers, it also concerned the legislative branch of the government that attempted to create laws (Lex Heinze) to introduce harsher censorship with regard to the display of sexuality. Further, Betty Kurth’s text *Eine für Viele. Aus dem Tagebuch eines Mädchens* (1902), written under the pseudonym of Vera, deals with the different moral

²⁹² Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 76.

²⁹³ My Translation:

To genius, to beauty, to pureness.

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 75.

²⁹⁴ My Translation:

Doesn’t she look like Madonna when she crosses the street?

Itzerott, *Hilde Brandt*, 7.

²⁹⁵ The notion of the innocent woman as a woman who does not encounter sexuality before marriage and can only preserve an image of purity through marriage and motherhood, dominated discourses on female sexuality in the late nineteenth century. Female innocence and monogamy play an essential role in the gender binary of the time. The discourse on the sexual double standard for women occupied the different fractions of the women’s movement which was in agreement about the problem of the double standard that required women to be chaste until marriage and allowed men to explore their sexuality. There was, however, little agreement about an alternative new ethic in terms of sexuality.

standards for women and men. Vera, the writer of the diary, finds out that her soon-to-be husband already has sexual experience, whereas she has educated herself only based on reading. While the protagonist abides by the norms, she, in contrast to other texts, worries about her future family based on her husband's conduct. In contemporary society, only a woman's "misconduct" could endanger the purity and future of a marriage or family. Vera, however, worries about the consequences of her fiancé's behavior for their common future. Yet, in the end the solution remains the same in that Vera takes her own life.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ Oskar Friedländer's response to this book shows a different perspective on the text and presents the over-determination of female sexuality that has become omnipresent in the mind and imagination of nineteenth-century society. He sees this text as proof of women's constant concern with sexuality and eroticism. See Oskar Friedländer, „Eine für Viele,“ in *Die Gesellschaft* (1902, 161-164), 161. Friedländer, an Austrian philosopher dismisses Vera's concerns as well as the fact that she feels degraded to a prostitute and like one of many in her fiancé's arms after learning about his extensive sexual experience. Friedländer sees abstinence before marriage as a woman's moral obligation, and considers Vera's demands more as a sign of her sexual desires than a critique of a problematic double standard. From his perspective, women with pre-marital sexual experience, women who suffer from physiological disabilities and are unable to give birth, and women who for other reasons never became mothers are most prone to become prostitutes. See Friedländer, „Eine für Viele,“ 164. He concludes that women should have no interest in the abolition of prostitution as it allows men to gain sexual experience before marriage from which their future wives will then benefit. Besides the argument that men needed opportunities to gain sexual experience before marriage, the reasons for becoming a prostitute remained focused on the woman herself (often presenting her as morally degenerate or as over-determined by her sexual desires) until arguments related to the labor market and its lack of opportunities for women were inserted into the discourse. In contrast to Friedländer, Robert Hessen states that: “Sie fallen, weil wir sie nicht halten. Sie werden das, was wir aus ihnen machen. Wir drängen sie in den Kampf ums Dasein, wir geben ihnen die unvollkommensten Waffen für diesen Kampf und werfen schließlich mit Steinen auf die “Verlorenen”. Oskar Friedländer considers prostitution a necessary evil due to women who were born for prostitution, i.e. whose body and physiology is meant for this trade. He strictly opposes explanations based on social milieu studies, such as those of August Bebel, and sees only a weak if any connection between society and individual in contrast to strong determining individual characteristics, such as sex and physiological characteristics. See Robert Hessen, “Der gefallene Mann,“ in *Die Wochenschrift* (1890).

The prostitute fulfills another critical function; she constitutes the foil to the virgin and thereby increases and emphasizes the cultural value of the virgin over that of the prostitute.²⁹⁷ The female prostitute becomes what Shannon Bell called “the other of the other. The other within the categorical other, “woman.”²⁹⁸ Friedländer, in his critique of Betty Kurth’s text, recognizes the underlying motivation for the construction of the prostitute as the fallen woman and describes in the language of the economic man:

Der Kontrast steigert die Wirkung und erhöht den Marktpreis einer Tugend, die bloß in beschränkter Menge disponibel sein darf, wenn sie nicht ganz zur Alltagsware herabsinken will.²⁹⁹

Young women without any sources of income or whose income is too low to support themselves, turn to prostitution as a way to earn money. Nancy McCombs notes that the four main groups of women who tend to work officially or unofficially as prostitutes are waitresses, servants, factory workers, and actresses.³⁰⁰

Hilde Brandt has to combine both identities; she needs to appeal to an audience as both sexually provocative (available) and virtuous (immaculate) woman. As an actress, she needs to attract an audience and, more importantly, wealthy men willing to support her. At the same time,

²⁹⁷ An argument also supported by William Lecky in his *History of European Morals* (1869) in which he describes the effects of this efficient binary of vice and virtue, prostitute and virgin in that the status of the bourgeois wife was created in opposition to the prostitute and needed the prostitute to enforce the constructed virtues.

²⁹⁸ See Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 2.

²⁹⁹ My Translation:

The contrast increases the result as well as the market value of a virtue, which can only be dispensed in a limited amount if it does not want to turn into an everyday good.

Oskar Friedländer, „Eine für Viele,“ 161.

³⁰⁰ See Nancy McCombs, *Earth Spirit, Victim or Whore: The Prostitute in German Literature 1880-1925* (New York: P. Lang, 1986), 15. She also refers to the Cabaret and Tingel-Tangel theaters of the 1920s as those most prone to sending their female employees into prostitution. This is due to the low income as well as to the male audience’s expectation of the sexual availability of women working in the vaudeville or Tingel Tangel.

she has to keep an image in her appearance and conduct that reflects her virginity. In doing so, however, her art begins to play a minor role and her virtue as woman takes the lead role instead. Hilde loses herself in this double standard that she sees as incongruent with her understanding of art. Last but not least, she serves as a role model for consumerism while at the same time she represents a foil for the virtuous, yet voyeuristic, bourgeois wife. Considering the varying paradoxical and opposing identities and functions Hilde assumes, the text hyperbolizes the role of the actress to draw attention to its cultural and institutional critique of the role and condition of the female artist as well as of the interdependencies in the constructions of masculinity and femininity.

Some actresses managed to manipulate these expectations to their advantage. Nineteenth-century actresses such as Eleonora Duse, Sarah Bernhardt, or Charlotte Wolters set themselves in scene, and controlled their patrons and audiences not only with their beauty and talent but also with their wit and ability to market themselves in these discourses. While it appears that Hilde could have done the same and enjoyed the fame and recognition following her performance, she chose to end her life as an expression of her philosophy of art. The expectations of the audience and of the director are mostly concerned with the surface and champion appearance over talent. The director and patron assume that Hilde's motivation to be an actress stems from her interest in appearance and her desire for attention. Hilde, however, has a deeper interest in her art, she is less concerned with appearance and more with her talent. On one level, then, the drama focuses on telling a story about an actress who falls victim to her own naivety and to cultural practices at the theater. On a deeper level, the drama critiques the superficial perception of and interest in the actress and also critically assesses the ramifications of the performance of masculinity on the female protagonist.

Conclusion

Marie Itzerott's drama exposes the relationship between masculinity, money, and creativity and presents the fatal attempts of a female artist to avoid becoming a sexual commodity. It critically assesses the situation of female artists on stage by dealing with the double bind of being perceived as virgin and prostitute and with the immense burden of being defined by male desire and cultural double standards. Hilde Brandt sees herself as an artist driven by her desire for a life on stage and the role of her life: Thusnelda. The author, Marie Itzerott, points in this drama not only to the well-known misery of female performers but also to their exclusion from and exploitation by discourses on money that are controlled and performed by men.

At the core of the conflict of the female artist who exchanges herself for money lies an assumption of sexual availability or perversion of the publicly performing woman. Her performance on stage emphasizes her body and her beauty and often overshadows her talent. Her aura of sexual availability carries on off stage; it is again the confusion of the artist with her art and the notion that woman cannot abstract from herself and can thus only play herself.

Itzerott points to the over-determination of female sexuality and to the neglect of women's creativity. She stages the overbearing presence of hidden discourses and external factors in the life of the artist-protagonist by eliminating any kind of stage performance of the female protagonist from the drama. She thus presents a drama about an actress without ever letting her perform as such in the drama. Hilde's conflicts keep her in a stage of preparation for most of the drama and once she reaches her performance, she already knows that she cannot live and continue to perform. She performs Thusnelda, briefly reaches the pinnacle of her career and

decides to take her life at the end without taking notice of the recognition she finally gained as an actress.

In a world that becomes more and more abstract, a world in which the economic man creates a second world based on numbers and money, women appear as placeholders for materiality or corporeality. It seems impossible for Leuck to see Hilde's suffering as unrelated to her body and womanhood. In turn, he wants to heal her suffering through his sexual potency expressed by his financial liquidity. The focus on money and economic interests also turns Hilde herself into a consumer in that she becomes a fashion model on stage. She has to purchase and present the latest fashion to an audience equally determined by their own conspicuous consumption. Hilde's problematic position as consumer and commodity, as virgin and prostitute and as excluded from an active participation in discourses on money, constrain her independence and her creative and personal freedom.

The drama *Hilde Brandt* has hardly been noticed in secondary literature and only Sonja Dehning, who concerns herself with novels on female artists, comments briefly on the text but reads the drama as less concerned with a female artist than with a woman's quest for love. Dehning's claim that Hilde's fatal choices are guided by a quest for love rather than her artistic impulses and talents leaves unnoticed the complexity of factors involved in her decisions including the fact that a social and cultural morality based on double-standards contributed much to her death at the end of the play. Though she only mentions the drama in passing and compares it to Laura Marholm's *Karla Böhning*, she states that:

Für diese Frauenfiguren gilt jedoch, dass sie den Freitod nicht wegen der Unvereinbarkeit von Kunst und Liebe wählen, sondern wegen unerfüllter Liebe zu

einem Mann. Weibliches Kunstschaffen spielt hier eine der Liebe untergeordnete Rolle.³⁰¹

While Dehning's work presents an invaluable contribution to a better understanding of the representation of fictional female artists, she brushes off the complexity of *Hilde Brandt* too easily. It appears problematic to approach the lives and work of female artists in the context of their assumed heterosexual desires and to impose canonical notions of the artist. What might be true for Karla Bühring, who kills herself because she regretted an affair, seems an almost demeaning judgment of Hilde Brandt's fate in this drama.

Hilde's creative potential is buried under Leuck's need to assert his masculinity, virility, and financial power. The reader is kept from her performance and only knows of her success through the well-wishes and offers following the performance. The drama ends with Hilde's suicide and may leave the reader wondering what she could have achieved in her future. For Hilde, however, there was no future after she paid her debt to Leuck and gave herself in exchange for his money. Although her suicide at the end displeased critics at the time, we can re-read the ending in a more empowering way through today's feminist lens. While the discourses and practices impede, and maybe at times render impossible, to appreciate and recognize Hilde as an artist, she herself never doubts her identity as an artist. Hilde preserves her determination to perform *Thusneldea* in spite of all the struggles she encounters. She works toward her performance, even though she has already decided that it will be her last one. She cannot imagine

³⁰¹ My Translation:

However, it holds true for these female figures that they choose to end their lives not because of the incongruity of art and love but because of their unfulfilled love for a man. Women's artistic creations play a subordinate role in these cases.

Sonja Dehning, *Tanz der Feder. Künstlerische Produktivität in Romanen von Autorinnen um 1900* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 69.

her life at the side of Felix Leuck as a life without the theater. While taking Leuck's money means that she has to give herself in exchange, the transaction also makes it possible to perform the role she has aspired to all her life and to realize her moment of artistic apotheosis before taking her life and escaping a marriage that would preclude her from performing.

Chapter Three

A Singer's Inquiry into Autonomy: Discourses on Marriage, Employment, and Male Honor in Mathilde Paar's *Helene*

Dich schmerzt, daß sich in deine Rechte
Ein zweyter theilt? – Beneidenswerther Mann!
Mein Weib gehört dem ganzen menschlichen Geschlechte.
[...]
Ihr erster Blick fällt—auf Recensionen
Das schöne blaue Auge! – Mir
Nicht einen Blick! Durchirrt ein elendes Papier.
(Laut hört man in der Kinderstube weinen),
Sie legt es endlich weg und fragt nach ihren Kleinen.³⁰²
[...]
(Excerpt from Friedrich Schiller, *Die Berühmte Frau*)³⁰³

The notion that women's public presentation of their intellectual or artistic work is not only comparable to prostitution but also unnatural, was already established by the time Friedrich Schiller wrote his poem *Die Berühmte Frau* (*The Celebrated Woman*) in 1788. The epistle tells of an exchange between two men, one is married to a famous female writer; the other has been betrayed by his wife. The former considers his situation to be worse since his wife engages in public prostitution: "Mein Weib gehört dem ganzen menschlichen Geschlechte."³⁰⁴ The woman, who has a public presence as a writer, emerges out of, or leaves behind the sphere of the house

³⁰² It pains thee that a Second shares/ thy rights?/ How truly enviable thy case!/ My wife belongs to the whole human race/[...] The first that they [her eyes] meet are—The Reviews/ her fair blue eyes for me has not one look,/ a trump'ry paper's all that it can brook./ Soon from the nursery comes a roaring cry/ and, asking for the little ones, she lays it by.

Friedrich Schiller, "The Celebrated Women," in *The Poems of Schiller*, trans. Edgar A. Bowring (New York: Thos. Y. Crowell & Co, 1870, 95-99), 95f.

³⁰³ Friedrich Schiller, „Die berühmte Frau. Epistel eines Ehemanns an einen andern,“ (1789) in *Schillers Werke. Nationalausgabe*, eds. Lieselotte Blumenthal und Benno von Wiese, Bd.1 Gedichte (Weimar 1943, 196-200), 196f.

³⁰⁴ My wife belongs to the whole human race.

Schiller, „Die berühmte Frau,“ 196; Schiller, "The Celebrated Women," 95.

and presents herself in public, insinuating sexual availability. The husband asserts that now his wife belongs to all of humankind, i.e. to all men. Schiller implies the problematic position of women writers, who through their work become public and thereby can be appropriated by all men. The problem is twofold, the woman compromises not only her duties as wife but also as mother, thus, her actions affect both her children and her husband. Her husband laments her shift of interest that diverted from him and was re-directed toward herself—she now spends time on her outward appearance, shows concern for her public reception, and appears self-absorbed.

The first husband concludes that an unfaithful wife is better than a famous wife who not only betrays her husband with another man but with all of humankind. Others can intrude, penetrate into the house—and thereby also assume his position. This betrayal and her public status not only affect her life as mother and wife, but curiously turn her into a hermaphrodite:

Ein starker Geist in einem zarten Leib,
ein Zwitter zwischen Mann und Weib,
Gleich ungeschickt zum Herrschen und zum Lieben.
Ein Kind mit eines Riesen Waffen,
Ein Mittelding von Weisen und von Affen!
Um kümmerlich dem stärkern nachzukriechen,
Dem schöneren Geschlecht entflohn,
Herabgestürzt von einem Thron,
Des Reitzes heiligen Mysterien entwichen,
Aus Cythereas goldnem Buch gestrichen*
Für – einer Zeitung Gnadenlohn!³⁰⁵

This poem points to the paradoxes encountered by female artists and their desire for recognition: they are over-sexualized and asexual, prostitute and virgin, woman and monster.

³⁰⁵A spirit strong within a body weak,/hermaphroditic so to speak;/ Alike unfit for love or mystery—/a child, who with a giant's weapon, rages/ a cross between baboon and sages!/ One that has fled the fairer race,/ to gain among the stronger a vain place,/ hurl'd headlong from a throne eternal,/ flying the mysteries by Charm controll'd—/ Eras'd from Cytherea's [Aphrodite, my comment] Book of Gold *[the Golden Book is the Roll in which, in some of the Italian Republics the names of noble families were inscribed, Editor's comment],/ to gain a corner –in a Journal.
Schiller, „Die berühmte Frau,“ 200; Schiller, “The Celebrated Woman,“ 99.

In response to the poem, Sophie Ludwig wrote a letter to Schiller about her literary work as a woman. She refers to the poem as “ein Gedicht [...], das mit der innigsten Wehmuth auf mich wirkte, auf mich, die auch ich mit einigen schriftstellerischen Versuchen mich vor das Publikum wagte.”³⁰⁶ She claims that writing is a way for her „den müßigen Geist in Thätigkeit zu versetzen.”³⁰⁷ However, as Ludwig points out, she did not only write for her own sake but even more so to help others by giving voice to their needs and their suffering, such as the discrimination against Jewish families at the end of the eighteenth century.

The justifications for women who created artistic work usually ranged from defining their work as a meaningless pastime meant solely for their own enjoyment to charitable or philanthropic work produced to show their concern for others. Silvia Bovenschen and Naumann point to the fact that *Blaustrumpf-Satiren*, i.e. satires about women-dilettantes were common at the time and constructed women with intellectual or artistic ambitions as unattractive and unnatural.³⁰⁸ The discourse on women’s creative productions, as part of their leisure activity and as meaningless work, is closely tied to opposing discourses on women’s gainful employment and their positions as daughters and wives. This chapter on Mathilde Paars’s *Helene* deals with the implications of women’s artistic work; it investigates the ramifications of their artistic labor in

³⁰⁶ My Translation:

An epistle, which deeply affected me, me, who also dared to present my writing-attempts to an audience. Ursula Naumann „Für einer Zeitung Gnadenlohn? Schillers Gedicht „Die berühmte Frau“ und Sophie Ludwigs Buch „Juda oder der erschlagene Redliche,“ in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* (Vol. 109, Sonderheft, 1990, 16-26), 17.

³⁰⁷ My Translation:

To exercise the idle mind.

Naumann, „Für einer Zeitung Gnadenlohn?“, 21.

³⁰⁸ See Silvia Bovenschen’s discussion of Schiller’s poem: *Imaginierte Weiblichkeit: Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu kulturgeschichtlichen und literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 220-223. Naumann, „Für einer Zeitung Gnadenlohn?“, 18.

relation to men, i.e. to crippling honor codes, as well as with regard to its relation to legal discourses of the time.

Synopsis

Mathilde Paar's³⁰⁹ (1849-1899) drama *Helene* gained recognition as a runner-up in the 1882 Mannheimer Räuber-Preis competition. At the core of the drama lies the shame associated with the public performance of an aristocratic woman. After Helene is divorced from her husband, she is subsequently also abandoned from the house of her father due to the shame associated with her divorce. In order to financially support herself, she follows her talent and passion and takes singing lessons to become a performer. In the drama, both her father, Fortmeister A.D. von Lengen, and her former husband, Baron von Warbek, offer her money to quit her work on stage—which would also disburden the men from potential public shame that could affect their honorable status. First, Helene refuses the money and is determined to pursue her career as a singer. The plot becomes more complicated, however, when she learns that her former stepson, Ewald, gambled and now faces a dishonorable discharge from the military due to his unpaid debt. His father, Warbek, binds the payment of his son's debt to his departure from the military in favor of the family-owned agricultural business—a condition that leads Ewald to consider suicide. Helene senses his desperate situation and offers to pay his debt without revealing to him that she will use the money Warbek offered her for terminating her own career.

³⁰⁹ She also wrote under the pseudonym of Josef Trieb. See Susanne Kord, *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen: Deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992), 413.

She transfers the money to Ewald, gives up her career and aspirations, and agrees to return to the house of her father and sister. Her plans to relocate to her father's house fall through, however, when Warbek and Lengen happen upon a seemingly amorous scene between Helene and Lothar Graf Schönburg, a well-known art patron and friend of her former husband. Helene has to move in with artist-acquaintances, the Kaiser siblings, until the misunderstanding is resolved and Warbek and Lengen find out that Helene acted in the best interest of Ewald and used the bribe money to save the life of her former stepson. The drama concludes with what may seem like a happy ending in the liaison between Helene and Lothar.

This text offers insight into the gender conventions of the latter half of the nineteenth century by presenting a female protagonist who, as an independent and divorced woman, not only establishes a life as an outsider, i.e. outside the patriarchal constraints of marriage, but also challenges the rather strict gender and honor code of the upper classes. Helene celebrates her newly gained freedom and reflects on the burden and limitations that were associated with her life as a married woman. The drama leaves the reader with a somewhat unexpected, yet ultimately conventional kind of happy ending. It engages in discourses on masculinity and marriage as well as on women's work, exposes the struggle of a female artist whose striving for creative and personal freedom intersects with these discourses that reflect societal and cultural conventions of femininity. Sarah Colvin dedicates several pages to an interpretation of Paar's drama and suggests that "[...] it is a play about female creativity, but also—and, in the end, perhaps even more importantly—about who owns a woman's body and her creative energy."³¹⁰

While I fully agree with Colvin's interpretation, the play's rich discourses and criticisms cannot

³¹⁰ Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 52.

be understood without considering how the female artist is positioned in cultural conversations concerning marriage and divorce, masculinity, and the male honor code.

The Constraints of Marriage and Divorce

Helene enters the stage as a divorced woman. Although she has established a career and self-sufficient life, her past catches up to her, and she finds herself once again overwhelmed and controlled by discourses that hinder her work as an artist and impede her recognition as such. Helene's marriage to Warbek, whom she met as a young and inexperienced girl, ended in a divorce in which she was determined as the guilty party. The drama introduces him as the owner of an agriculture-business, i.e. as part of the ruling class and landowning aristocracy but also with ties to the military. While Helene accompanied her husband on his business trips at the beginning of their marriage, Warbek asked her to stay home as she gained more life experience and began enjoying herself on these trips. As her interest in social gatherings and her appearance increased, Warbek brought her to remote property, far away from the capital and its vibrant life and culture. By focusing on Helene's and Warbek's recollections of their married life, the drama presents the differences in power during their marriage that resulted in Helene's increasing discontent and unhappiness.

Recent research on gender relations within marriage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has pointed to the potential power and influence of women regarding their husband's business as well as to the important, and often undervalued, role of women in the house in terms of their overall representation of the family and their economic responsibilities. In *Property*,

Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870, David Sabean found that in a rural town in Southern Germany, many marital relationships in the earlier part of the nineteenth century showed a strong interdependence of men's and women's work.³¹¹ His work, however, mostly includes small agricultural or other family owned and run businesses. Similar to Nancy Armstrong³¹² whose work focuses on England, he points to a socio-sexual contract between men and women. Armstrong emphasizes the role of gender, sexuality, and class for a deeper understanding of the novel and domestic fiction in the nineteenth century. She claims that women held a considerable amount of power due to their role in the house, which included representative functions as well as financial planning. In analyzing *Helene*, it has to be taken into consideration that Warbek comes from an upper class background; in addition, at the point of separation, their marriage had been childless, and there is no mention of Helene's responsibilities in the house. While there is no doubt that by the 1880s, many marriages were based on love and companionship, and women were gaining more rights and responsibilities, it also has to be taken into account that the law still represented a stark gender hierarchy and that cultural norms often hampered independent decisions and movements of women inside and outside of marriage as well. The drama can be read as a commentary on the problematic access of higher class women to labor or independent commercial activities, and on the power dynamics of gender relations in marriage and, in Helene's case, after a divorce.

The power hierarchies within marriage present a major point of contention, a point often brought on stage through the characters' recollections of the marital relationship or expectations

³¹¹ See David Warren Sabean, *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³¹² See Nancy Armstrong, *Domestic Desire and Fiction. A Political History of the Novel*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

thereof. Conceptions of gender and natural hierarchies between the sexes define the wife as subordinate and passive. Ewald describes his father (Warbek) as a man of principles—one of which concerns the subordinate position of the wife:

Ewald: Er hatte auch den Grundsatz, daß in der Ehe der Mann vom Weibe unbedingte Unterwerfung zu fordern berechtigt sei.³¹³

Warbek displays a general mistrust regarding women and believes that he should have known better than to believe that Helene would be the kind of wife he imagined for himself:

Warbek: Es geschah mir recht! Warum unternahm ich zum zweiten Male das Wagnis einer Ehe! Ich hätte mir an der ersten genügen lassen können und wäre dann mit einer ziemlich guten Meinung vom Weibe aus der Welt gegangen! Aber Helene Warbek erschien so sanft—so unterwürfig [...].³¹⁴

His frustration with Helene relates to her development from a seemingly soft and rather submissive young woman to a woman with her own interests and talents. Warbek considers women in general as self-centered because he believes their actions focus on themselves and their seeming lack of principles to be based on their constantly changing mood. In their marriage, Warbek perceived Helene's interest in music as negative or even as a flaw and as something that would have deterred him from a lasting liaison had he known the extent of her passion. According to the contemporary discourse on women's artistic work as part of leisure or as driven by their desire for attention, he sees Helene's interest in music as part of women's desire for attention.

³¹³ My Translation:

Ewald: He also believed in the principle that in a marital relationship, the husband has the right to demand absolute submission from his wife.

Paar, *Helene*, (Berlin: Luckhardt, 1882), 2.

³¹⁴ My Translation:

Warbek: I deserved it! Why did I take on the venture of marriage for a second time! The first one could have sufficed and I would have departed from this world with a somewhat positive opinion on women. But Helene Warbek seemed so soft—so submissive [...].

Paar, *Helene*, 8.

Warbek: “[...] Geist, Talent—Alles dient ihnen nur als Stütze ihrer Gefallsucht!—O, ich könnte Bücher vom Weibe schreiben, und der Gesang würde auch ein Hauptkapitel einnehmen!“

Lothar: War deine Frau musikalisch?

Warbek: Leider! Ich merkte diesen Fehler erst nachdem ich sie geheiratet hatte!³¹⁵

Reminiscent of Schiller’s poem, Warbek laments about the artistic interests of his wife and asserts that he would have never married her had he known about her flaw, i.e. her interest in music.

Helene’s perspective on marriage presents the counterpart to Warbek’s recollections. She emphasizes that the subordinated role of women results in a lack of freedom and room for personal development. In a conversation with Lothar, Warbek’s friend, she speaks of her former husband as one who controlled and tortured her:

Helene: [...] einem Manne, der mich an seine Seite fesselte, um mich zu quälen—zu vernichten!

Lothar: Gnädige Frau!

Helene: Ja vernichten!—Oder nennen Sie es anders, wenn man einem Menschen verbietet, das zu sein, wozu sein innerstes Wesen ihn unwiderstehlich treibt?—Einem Baum kann man nicht wehren, seine Aeste dem Licht entgegen zu breiten, und eine zum Lichte strebende Menschenseele will man verdammen im Finstern zu leben!³¹⁶

She leaves no doubt that Warbek did not allow her to pursue her interest in music, and the reader discovers later in the play that Helene’s music played in fact a key role in their divorce as it

³¹⁵ My Translation:

Warbek: Intellect, talent—all of this serves them to support their desire for attention! O—I could write books on women, and their singing would make for a central chapter. Lothar: was your wife musical? Warbek: Unfortunately! I only realized this flaw after I had married her!

Paar, *Helene*, 9.

³¹⁶ My Translation:

Helene: a man, who constrained me to his side to torture me—to destroy me. Lothar: Madam. Helene: Yes, to destroy me!—Or how would you call it if you prohibit a person to be what the inner nature irresistibly drives on to be?—One cannot refuse a tree to extend its branches toward the light but one will condemn a human soul aspiring toward the light to darkness!

Paar, *Helene*, 23.

incited what would become their final argument as husband and wife. She emphasizes that in contrast to Warbek's notion of women's desire for attention as the main motivation for public performances, her singing feels to her as natural as the growth of a tree toward the sun.³¹⁷ Her musical talent and potential artistic ambitions stand in contrast to her former husband's expectations of his wife. Helene alludes to his desire for control when she describes his ideal wife as a puppet—a woman who neither develops nor shares her own thoughts, nor questions his orders.³¹⁸

Singing as an expression of individuality and as a creative form of communication, indecipherable to the unmusical ears of the patriarch, prompted many marital disputes. Helene's ability to escape the hierarchical and controlling world and language of her marriage through her art poses an immediate threat to her husband's demand for control over his wife. When Helene speaks to Lothar after he extended Warbek's monetary proposition to her, she offers her perspective on the causes that led to the end of their marriage. In Helene's recollection of the final fight, a close connection between their frequent arguments and her dedication to music becomes clear. Warbek states his dislike for women who are willing to argue and adds his disappointment about Helene's development from a quiet girl to a woman aiming to take control through her conscious choices of speech and silence. Helene's choice of non-verbal expression is a form of communication that causes a sense of helplessness and exasperation for Warbek.

After he decides to isolate Helene from her social interaction on a remote property, she finds even more solace in her music, which in turn contributes to the demise of their relationship:

Helene: [...] Er sah in meinem Spiel und Gesang nichts weiter als eine Auflehnung in Tönen, die ihn, den völlig Unmusikalischen, fast noch mehr als Worte reizten.

³¹⁷ See Paar, *Helene*, 25.

³¹⁸ See *Ibid.*

She continues to offer her recollection of the final argument:

Helene: Einst, als ich mich nach einer heftigen Scene wieder an das Klavier geflüchtet hatte, kam sein Zorn zum Ausbruch! Er stürzte in das Zimmer zurück, riß mir die Hände von den Tasten—schloß das Instrument ab und schleuderte den Schlüssel zum Fenster hinaus!—Seit jenem Tage habe ich in seinem Hause keinen Ton mehr gesungen, aber auch mein guter Geist war von mir gewichen—ein wilder Trotz bemächtigte sich meiner. Ich fühlte, daß ich so nicht weiter leben konnte, daß ich untergehn oder frei werden mußte—und ich machte mich frei! [...].³¹⁹

The violent metaphors Helene employs to describe her marriage extend and intensify when it comes to her pursuit of art. Warbek feels threatened by her ability to express herself in a language he neither speaks nor understands and can only react by using his physical power to take her hands off the piano and lock the instrument, thus regaining control over her voice. She comes to understand that only the decision to end the marriage would help her to regain her freedom and her voice; a strife for survival and independence that will ultimately cost Helene her music nonetheless.

In the aftermath of this final argument, Warbek uses Helene's decision to leave the house to his advantage by filing for divorce based on malicious abandonment:

Warbek: [...] Ich hütete mich, ihr gute Worte zu geben, sondern klagte auf *böswilliges Verlassen* (my emphasis)!—Die Schuld lag zu klar auf ihrer Seite, als daß die Trennung Schwierigkeiten verursacht hätte.³²⁰

³¹⁹ My Translation:

Helene: He saw in my play and singing nothing more than an act of revolt in tones, which aggravated him, the completely unmusical, almost more than words. One time when I escaped to the piano after a tempered scene, there was an outburst of fury. He returned into the room, jerked my hands off the keyboard—locked the instrument and threw the keys out of the window. Ever since that day I have not sung a single note in his house but also my good spirit had left me—a strong sense of severe defiance took over. I felt that I could not continue to live in this way that I had to go under or become free—and I freed myself!

Paar, *Helene*, 25.

³²⁰ My Translation:

According to the regulations in the *Allgemeine Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten* (Prussian Common Law),³²¹ which were the basis for the new Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*), “böslisches Verlassen” occurs if one partner is absent (with malicious intent) for at least one year against the will of the other.³²² Sylvia Möhle, however, points to the fact that even a woman’s decision to move into a separate room of the house could lead to a claim of abandonment.³²³ In addition, the cohabitation legislation required women to live with their husbands unless otherwise decided, which meant that men could much easier claim abandonment than women since they were able to extend business trips, or claim to do so. From Warbek’s point of view, symptomatic of Helene’s disregard for his status, the conflict escalated because she continued to argue with him. Thus, due to her act of malicious abandonment, Helene was determined as the guilty party in the process of the divorce. As the guilty party, she could not claim the financial support it would take to live independently from her former husband. Furthermore, being determined as the guilty party also brought with it a notion of shame for her father who based his refusal to offer her a place in his house on the fact that she abandoned her husband.

With the unification in 1871, the demands for a new legislative foundation of the nation began to arise. Evans notes that by 1873 it was clear that the government had to codify a new Civil Code and presented proposals sparked many debates in the 1870s.³²⁴ The debates about the

Warbek: I took care not to have good words for her, but filed for malicious abandonment! It was too obvious that she was the guilty party for this separation to cause any trouble.

Paar, *Helene*, 25.

³²¹ See Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Der Lange Weg zur Mündigkeit. Frau und Literatur (1500-1800)* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987, 58-66) for a discussion of the Prussian Common Law with regard to women and their role as wives and mothers.

³²² See Reichstag, Dokument Nr. 8 1895/97,9, p. 548 (Entwurf eines Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuchs, Draft of the Civil Code.)

³²³ Sylvia Möhle, *Ehekonflikte und sozialer Wandel, Göttingen: 1740-1840* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1997), 170.

³²⁴ Möhle, *Ehekonflikte und sozialer Wandel*, 25.

institution of marriage as it existed during and after the debates and drafting of the new Civil Code, bring more light to Paar's presentation of her artist-protagonist and the cultural discourses that impede her life as an artist. On the one hand, the institution of marriage certainly provided security for women, especially those of the bourgeoisie and upper classes, who were often not expected to make a living outside the house. If the husband was determined as the guilty party or if the couple divorced based on a mutual agreement (which was possible under Prussian Law but did not become part of the new Civil Code), the law clearly offered support for women in that they were entitled to receive financial support from their former husbands for the rest of their lives or until their next marriage.³²⁵ On the other hand, matrimony limited the mobility of these women, whose actions always implied their husband and his public status. Dirk Blasius lists *bösliche Verlassung* as one of the most prevalent reasons for separation in his study on divorce in Germany between the late eighteenth and the mid-twentieth century.³²⁶ Aware of the consequences of this claim for women, a Berlin court suggested in 1821 that former husbands should financially support their ex-wives, a proposal that received little approval. According to Blasius, a defense of the rights of husbands showed that "In dieser Argumentation ist vom hohen moralischen Stellenwert der Ehe nicht mehr die Rede, der hohe soziale Stellenwert der Scheidung steht ganz im Vordergrund."³²⁷ The social ramifications of divorce become more

³²⁵ Barbara Becker-Cantarino notes a tendency in the eighteenth century (esp. in Prussia) to simplify the process of divorce. In addition to cases of mutual agreement, but also due to insurmountable differences, a couple could get divorced. See Becker-Cantarino, *Der Lange Weg*, 56ff.

³²⁶ Dirk Blasius, *Eheschließung in Deutschland 1794-1945: Scheidung und Scheidungsrecht in historischer Perspektive* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1987), 117.

³²⁷ My Translation:

In this line of argumentation there is no mentioning of the status of marriage, the main focus shifted to the high social status of divorce.

Blasius, *Eheschließung in Deutschland*, 118.

prominent and more consequential for women with an increasingly conservative attitude toward the end of the century.

In 1896, the Reichstag debated the institution of marriage and the different roles of husband and wife once more. As the person who would be able to make the final decisions in disputes, the husband was considered the head of the household; in addition, the new Civil Code returned to the principle of the guilty party—except for cases in which one partner was proven to be mentally insane. August Bebel, one of the founding figures of the social democrats and of the working class movement, defends the notion that not only the act of marriage needs to be easily accessible, as achieved by civil marriage and the ban on financial barriers, but that divorce needs to be an available option in the same way. Bebel argues that divorce laws need to be more accessible and less punitive for women as the number of divorces filed by women, despite the legal and financial implications, speak to broader societal issues:

Zweifellos ist, daß bei Ehescheidungen in der Regel die Frau die Benachteiligte ist. In zahllosen Fällen bedeutet die Ehescheidung für die Frau eine Art sozialer Ächtung. [...] Meine Herren, man kann, im Durchschnitt genommen, sagen, dass, wenn eine Frau zu einem Ehescheidungsantrag schreitet, sie nicht nur einfältige sondern zehnfältige Ursache hat, diesen Antrag zu stellen im Vergleich zum Mann. [...] wenn die Statistik uns dann lehrt, dass trotz alledem die Ehescheidungsanträge von Seiten der Frauen weit zahlreicher sind als von Seiten der Männer, so ist das doch ein Beweis, daß die sozialen Übel unter denen die Frauen auch in der Ehe leben, oft außerordentlich schwerwiegende sein müssen, um zu dem Antrag auf Scheidung zu schreiten.³²⁸

³²⁸ My Translation:

There is no doubt that women are at a disadvantage in a divorce. In countless cases divorce brings with it a form of social ostracism for the woman. [...] Gentlemen, one can say that on average compared to a man if a woman decides to file for divorce, she has not only one, but ample reason to file this motion. [...] When the statistics then shows us that in spite of everything, the number of women filing for divorce is considerably higher, we have to consider this as evidence that the social conditions of women in their marital relations are extraordinarily amiss to make the motion for a divorce.

August Bebel, Reichstag, Protokoll der 114. Sitzung. June 25, 1896, 114.

He makes this argument to plead for more lenient divorce laws that would make it easier to file for divorce by allowing for more diverse reasons for ending the marital bond and changing the current legislation concerning the guilty party in divorce cases.³²⁹

Throughout the proposal and drafting stages as well as during the hearings in the Reichstag between the late 1870s to the late 1890s, members of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein* such as Helene Lange and Henriette Goldschmidt joined debates about the legal ramifications of marriage in the *BGB* (Civil Code) as well as discussions on the legal status of women including the right to property and income.³³⁰ Although the General Association was actively involved in debates and submitted petitions to the Reichstag, overall the group tended to avoid conflict and too much public presence of these issues.³³¹ Following the third reading of this new piece of legislation in the Reichstag in 1896, Lange provided a devastating summary of women's role in marriage under the existing as well as the new law, which manifested society's perception of women's inferiority. Women continued to be considered as a minor in terms of their rights concerning their estate, their children, and their ability to make independent

³²⁹ Bebel, Reichstag, Protokoll der 114. Sitzung, June 25, 1896, 114.

³³⁰ See Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, 25.

³³¹ See Ibid. 25f. Evans provides a very critical summary of the effectiveness and determination of the General German Women's Association: "The General Association did not protest at the rejection of its petition, nor did it enclose the dossier of evidence it had gathered on the harmful effects the existing law often had on women. The evidence, wrote Louise Otto-Peters, should not be published 'because our pen declines to dip into this filth, and it's impossible for us to overcome our shame, repulsion and disgust to such an extent as we would have to if we wanted to publish what, after all, has been confided to us as women by women.' Nor when the publication of the first draft of the Civil Code in 1888 revealed the petition to have been in vain, did the General Association do any more than repeat its performance of 1876 and send a similar petition to the Reichstag, with predictably identical results. Nor did the General Association dare even to mention, let alone tackle, the various kinds of discrimination that were exercised against women in practice and precept by the Criminal Law." (25f) Ute Frevert, however, points to the fact that after the failed 1848 revolution women activists made a conscious decision to keep a certain distance to overt political statements. See Ute Frevert, *Frauengeschichte. Zwischen Bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 115. In addition to this, one has to keep in mind that women did not have the right to join parties or freedom of assembly, officially until 1908. See Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, 11. Frevert, *Frauengeschichte*, 115.

decisions.³³² In contrast to the role of women in marriage, unmarried women's status shows much more independence and stands in contrast to the assumptions made about wives' abilities and skills:

Daß nicht etwa Zweifel an der Geschäfts-und Verfügungsfähigkeit der Frau den Anlaß zu dieser unerträglichen Stellung der Ehefrau gegeben haben, zeigt der Umstand, daß man die unverheiratete Frau von allen Schranken befreit hat.³³³

With women's increasing participation in the labor market and new notions of independence, the patriarchal model of marriage that more often than not left women in a subordinate position, was doomed to fail. Helene's position as a divorced woman, though it entailed public shame and financial difficulties, brought with it a new kind of freedom and independence that was hard to find for many women in marriage.

The nineteenth century is thus marked by ample debates about the legal conditions of marriage and divorce. Although the ban on marriages based on different class backgrounds of the spouses was lifted early in the century, the importance of the socio-economic status of bride and groom to-be could not be underestimated.³³⁴ In addition, an increasing secularization eventually turned marriage into a civil matter, a decision that was again heavily debated during the drafting phase of the new Civil Code in the last two decades of the century. The increasing distance from

³³² Helene Lange, „Das Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch und die Frauen,“ (August 1896) in *Kampfzeiten Aufsätze und Kampfzeiten aus vier Jahrzehnten* (Berlin, Herbig, 1928), 176.

³³³ My Translation:

The fact that all barriers have been removed for the unmarried women shows that the intolerable position of the married woman has not been due to concerns regarding her disposition or legal capacities.

Lange, „Das Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch und die Frauen,“ 177.

³³⁴ Dirk Blasius refers here also to the Bürgerrecht (in southern states and also in Prussia before 1842), which means that new citizens of a town had to register and could be refused the right to live in a town if they were of low socio-economic status. However, in order to marry, the couple had to be registered as citizens. Town-citizenship was usually inherited or acquired through a monetary contribution. This legal aspect did not change until 1871. See Blasius, *Eheschließung in Deutschland*, 82ff. At the same time, however, it was illegal for unmarried couples to live together due to a law (wilde Ehe) often ignored in working class relations.

the church in legal terms, however, did not mean that Christian moral codes lost their cultural presence and force. The new Civil Code, which took effect on January 1, 1900 and was the first new legal code of unified Germany, was marked by strong reforms in some areas, especially property rights and taxes, but did not represent progressive changes with regard to the institution of marriage. Blasius comments that with regard to laws governing divorce, the *BGB* did not reflect the social and cultural reality but maintained a conservative standpoint that considered marriage as a bond for life that should not be easily separated: “Gerade beim gesellschaftlich so bedeutsamen Scheidungsrecht vertiefte sich der Graben zwischen Rechts- und Lebensverhältnissen. [...] Dadurch aber verlor es Anschluss an die sich gesellschaftlich ändernden Wertvorstellungen.”³³⁵

Helene’s career as a singer provided her not only with the opportunity to pursue her talents, but with an income, too. Yet, she cannot enjoy the newly gained independence as her former husband continues to see himself and his masculinity implicated in her actions. Similar to Schiller’s poem in which the husband laments his position as he waits for his wife to take care of the children or to even look at him, Warbek considered Helene’s music as a threat in that it affected a “natural” gender order. In an analysis of marriage and divorce in England, James Hammerton presents the close connection between changes in the institution of marriage and negotiation of gender roles. Though Hammerton’s analysis concerns itself with England’s working and middle-class, some observations apply to marital issues in Germany as well. He notes that the dissatisfaction with the marital relationship was closely related to ideals of masculinity and male behavior:

³³⁵ My Translation:

Particularly with regard to the socially prominent divorce legislation, [the new Civil Code] deepened the divide between legal positions and real life conditions.

Blasius, *Eheschließung in Deutschland*, 117.

[...] by the end of the nineteenth century the exposure of marital misconduct among men of all social classes had brought an unprecedented amount of attention to proper ideals of male behavior in marriage, so that one result of the long marriage debate was a challenge to prevailing concepts of masculinity. The manliness of husbands was tested increasingly by their marital conduct, and not only by their breadwinning capacities, which could not help but encourage more intense questioning of their family authority.³³⁶

In his study of divorce cases in the nineteenth century, he adds that men from the upper-class associated themselves even more with traditional as well as aggressive concepts of masculinity that were constructed in contrast to the domestic realm of their wives.³³⁷ An explanation, according to Hammerton, could lie in the employment and recreational activities of these men who often engaged in competitive behavior on their hunting trips or during social gatherings for the purpose of gambling. In the case of England after the Divorce Act of 1857, divorce could be based on cruelty which included emotional as well as physical abuse. Based on these changes, Hammerton sees more social scrutiny of male conduct and more challenges to concepts of masculinity. While Germany also legitimized physical or verbal abuse as reasons for divorce, it also maintained the rule of the guilty party. In the case of Germany, the tightening of divorce regulations at the end of the century needs to be seen in relation to conceptualizations of gender as well. Women's audible voice in the political sphere and their increasing visibility clearly contributed to the deeply felt need to hold on to the institution of marriage as a space with a traditional gender order. Sylvia Möhle states that men based their divorce claims on women's conduct that they perceived as crossing lines or literally as crossing the borders of their territory. She refers here to women who used their husbands' permission to visit relatives for excursions to

³³⁶ James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth Century Married Life* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), 3.

³³⁷ Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, 107.

other places of their own personal interest.³³⁸ The symbolic crossings of the invisible border between the house and the outside were due to women's increasing pursuit of individual interests outside the house, pointing to the close relation between space and gender.

Warbek continuously considers Helene's actions in relation to himself, which implies the interdependence of the existing binary gender code. Curiously, Warbeck considers her performance as a singer as both an attack against him and as a way to take revenge for the divorce. In this way, his main objection to Helene's work as a singer relates to his honor and masculinity as well as to the honor of her father:

Warbeck: Derartige Theatercoups spart sich das Weib mit Vorliebe auf, um uns dann mit einem Schlage moralisch zu vernichten—und besonders ein Weib wie diese Helene!—wenn du ahntest welcher Dämon sie beherrscht!

Lothar: (gedankenvoll) O ja, die mag wohl eine Balandinne [Teufelin- my addition] sein!

Warbeck: Freilich, nur ein Teufel vermöchte sich, so wie sie es thut, an mir zu rächen! Ein Mann mit seiner ganzen Klugheit würde nicht gerade auf den Streich verfallen sein, den sie mir spielt! Sie weiß, daß mir die Gaukeleien jeder Art verhaßt sind—daß ich etwas Entwürdigenden in dem öffentlichen Auftreten der Frauen sehe. Jeder Schurke darf ihnen schmeicheln und darf sie beleidigen.³³⁹

Warbek's words point to several prominent issues with regard to their marriage and his expectations. From his perspective, Helene's actions still relate to him in a certain way or could be associated with him. Though Helene made sure to change her name to avoid easy recognition of her former status as the wife of a member of the agrarian elite, Warbek feels implicated and

³³⁸ Sylvia Möhle, *Ehekonflikte und sozialer Wandel, Göttingen: 1740-1840*. (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1997), 145.

³³⁹ My Translation:

Warbek: Women prefer to save such theater-coups, to morally destroy us with one strike—and especially women such as Helene!—if you know what kind of demon controls her! Lothar: O yes, she may well be a devil. Warbek: Of course, only a devil would be able to take revenge in the way she does. A man with all his wit would not fall for the kind of pranks she is playing on me. She knows that I hate escapades of any kind—that I see something degrading in the public performance of women. Any rascal may flatter and insult them.

Paar, *Helene*, 13f.

sees her work at the theater as a form of revenge to affect his honor. The upper-class wife-turned-artist appears to him as a devil in that she disguises herself to outwit him. Most importantly, her performance, as indicated in Schiller's poem at the beginning of this chapter, seems degrading. The humiliation he sees in her public performance affects both of them, however; she appears sexually available to other men, which would compromise her status as a woman, and he appears incapable of protecting as well as controlling the actions of his (former) wife.

Helene's father, Lengen, signals public disapproval of the divorce and of his daughter as the guilty party by not allowing Helene to come back into his house. In a conversation with Ewald, Olga sums up the thought process that motivated Lengen's decision to banish his daughter:

Olga: Vielleicht ist Papa's Strenge daran Schuld! Trotz meiner flehenden Bitten, nahm er sie nicht wieder in unserm Hause auf, weil er die Ehescheidung für eine große Sünde hält und den strafbaren Schritt meiner Schwester durch ein Zusammenleben mit ihr vor der Welt nicht sanktionieren wollte!³⁴⁰

For Lengen, Helene's decision to leave Warbek was a "Vergehen gegen Warbek"³⁴¹ and a sin that he had no intentions to legitimize. Warbek and Lengen share similar notions about the role of women in society as well as in marriage, and both agree that she has to subordinate herself to her husband and honor their marriage. Lengen feels ashamed that his daughter left Warbek, since her actions reflected negatively on him as her father. In order to show that he did not support her

³⁴⁰ My Translation:

Olga: Maybe father's strictness has to be blamed! In spite of my begging, he did not allow her to return to our house because he considers divorce a serious sin and refused to sanctify her culpable actions for all to see by cohabiting with my sister.

Paar, *Helene*, 4.

³⁴¹ My Translation:

An offense against Warbek.

Paar, *Helene*, 37.

decision, he could not allow her back in his house. When Warbek and Lengen meet for the first time after the divorce, Lengen offers an apology for the behavior of his daughter. Warbek assures that he understands and appreciates Lengen's position and lays the blame for Helene's conduct on the influence of society, books, and art:

Lengen: [...] die Gesellschaft—die Bücher!—fügen Sie allenfalls noch hinzu: die Kunst! Dann haben Sie das pädagogische Trio zusammen."³⁴²

Both Warbek and Lengen represent the aristocracy as a group trying to defend the status quo and resisting aspects of modernization that affect family values. In addition, the drama implies strong patriarchal notions of family. Helene's mother does neither appear in person nor is she ever mentioned throughout the drama, instead Lengen appears as a representative of a patriarchal society.

The issue of marriage and independence also plays a central role in the interaction between the two female artists of the drama: Melitta Kaiser, a portrait painter, and Helene. Melitta's first appearance in the drama occurs when she attends Helene's performance, which leaves her deeply impressed with Helene's talent and beauty. As a second female artist, Melitta takes on a more prominent role when she opens her house to the homeless Helene later on in the drama. The stage directions for her appearance state that she has to look emancipated with lively movements, which, however, may not be overstated to avoid a ridiculous appearance.³⁴³ As a marginal character, Melitta not only provides shelter for her female artist colleague but also wants to paint and use her as a model. Furthermore, she provides Helene with a different perspective on the self-conception of women as artists, as both of them are positioned as

³⁴² My Translation:

Lengen: Society—the books! If need be add to it: art! Then you have the pedagogical trio assembled.
Paar, *Helene*, 39.

³⁴³ See *Ibid.*, 10.

outsiders, mostly due to their marital status. Helene's divorce renders her unwelcome in her father's house, and Melitta, having made the conscious decision to remain unmarried, lives with her brother and is convinced that she has to remain unmarried as a female artist:

Melitta: Künstlerinnen müssen ledig bleiben.³⁴⁴

While the two women continue to talk about the freedom inherent in pursuing one's art, Helene expresses her fear of losing this freedom again. Melitta, who appears as a rather emancipated woman, defines herself fully as an artist and offers her experience to Helene:

Melitta: Ich will dich lehren, wie schön ein freies Künstlerleben ist.³⁴⁵

These conversations reflect not only discourses on the oft-experienced constraints within marriage, but they also contrast the two female artists. Melitta's determination and self-confidence as an unmarried woman who pursues her art contrast with Helene's lack of confidence in her independence and self-sufficiency. Interestingly, the very stage directions that present Melitta as an emancipated character also stress the fine line between appearing emancipated and ridiculous, thus implying a culturally problematic gender performance. Melitta runs the risk of being perceived as a caricature of an emancipated woman, as overly masculine and void of femininity, and she intensifies this perception with her decision to remain unmarried. Helene, in contrast, cannot detach herself from her aristocratic background and its expectations concerning marriage and womanhood. Her singing constituted a threat to the absolute control of her husband during their marriage, and it continued to implicate him after their divorce. She was

³⁴⁴ My Translation:

Melitta: Female artists need to remain unmarried.

Paar, *Helene*, 31.

³⁴⁵ My Translation:

Melitta: I will teach you about the joys of a free life as an artist.

Paar, *Helene*, 32.

only able to establish a certain independence as a singer for as long as she distanced herself from her family and her role as daughter and wife.

Invisible Strings: Tied up in Questions of Honor

The discourse of male honor pervades the drama and affects many of Helene's decisions and actions. Not only is Helene concerned about the effects of her new career on her former husband and on her father, but the two men also talk amongst themselves about potential consequences of their own actions for each other's status and honor. The male honor code of the nineteenth century, which Evans describes as "hostile to female emancipation,"³⁴⁶ deeply affects Helene's opportunities and shows how mutually dependent the constructions of the two genders were, no matter how diametrically opposed the expectations were for upper-class men and women.

Helene takes on multiple identities in this play to protect those related to, or potentially associated with her. She is introduced in the play under her stage name Helene Altheim. She grew up as Helene von Lengen and changed her name to Helene von Warbek when she married. The only surname not related to men is her artist name, and while she considers this name as representative of her identity, she cannot detach herself from her former names and identities. In act two, Lothar comes to bring Warbek's offer, and an interesting confusion of identities occurs. When Helene sees her former husband Warbek after her performance, she faints, and Lothar later confronts her about the fainting of "Baroness Warbek". Helene responds that the moment of

³⁴⁶ See Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, 8

unconsciousness at the theater affected only Helene Alheim, not the Baroness Warbek. Lothar, however, objects and claims that it was indeed the Baroness who fainted when unexpectedly coming face to face with her former husband. Helene's fainting in view of Warbek comments on the incompatibility of her identities as Helene Alheim and Baroness Warbeck. She could not be Helene Alheim in the presence of Warbek and faints into a moment of helplessness and desired invisibility.

Even though Helene adopted a new name, there is much concern about the effects of her work if she is recognized as Helene Lengen or as Baroness Warbek respectively. Ewald is concerned about his father's reaction to Helene's new career path, a concern she had already taken into consideration. She was aware that her public performances as a divorced woman could affect the name and status of her former husband, as well as of her father. Olga, Helene's sister, and Ewald happen to meet before Helene's performance and talk about her life after the divorce from Ewald's father:

Olga: Um ihn nicht zu kompromittieren änderte sie ihren Namen; und auch um Papa's willen!—Ach Ewald, wenn du wüßtest, welche Szenen ich erlebt habe, dann würdest du begreifen, daß mir die Widerstandskraft fehlt, um mein eigenes Glück zu erzwingen.³⁴⁷

Olga refers here to the difficult consequences Helene faced following her divorce. Since she was found to be the guilty party of the divorce, and neither Warbek nor Lengen were willing to provide enough monetary support for her to be able to survive, Helene developed her career as a singer, ultimately alienating her father due to both her divorce and her career on stage. As a publicly performing singer, Helene showcases her skills as much as she presents her body on

³⁴⁷ My Translation:

Olga: In order not to compromise him, she changed her name; and also for dad's sake!—Oh Ewald, if you knew what kind of scenes I had to witness, you would understand that I lack the strength to resist, the strength to enforce my own happiness.

Paar, *Helene*, 4.

stage, a body that, in the nineteenth century, insinuates sexual availability. The shame that comes with the public performance of a former upper class woman refers to this assumed sexual availability that Schiller noted in his poem. Behind this lies the notion that the men in her life cannot afford to pay for her and have to expose her to this sort of performance so she can earn a living.

Immediately after the divorce, Helene's father announced that he could not allow her to live in his house and that his only support would consist of a minimal amount of money. In a conversation with Warbek, Lengen explains his decision to abandon Helene from his house with reference to his honor:

Lengen: Ich wollte nur meine Ehre Ihnen und der Welt gegenüber rein erhalten, indem ich das sündhafte Weib von ihrer Familie ausschloß, die sie kompromittiert hatte!³⁴⁸

Lengen regrets his decision, however, not due to the fact that Helene had to struggle for survival, but because the refusal to take her back into his house opened up the way for her to become a singer. Lengen now wants to convince his daughter to end her career in order to save Warbek's honor as well:

Lengen: [...] Ich kam hierher, um meinen Fehler wieder gut zu machen—um ihr die Rückkehr in mein Haus wieder anzubieten—damit ihr Name, Warbek, nicht noch mehr dem Gerede der Welt preisgegeben wird—aber meine Anstrengungen waren vergebens.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸My Translation:

Lengen: By expelling the sinful shrew from the family she had compromised, I wanted to keep my honor intact in front of you and the world.

Paar, *Helene*, 39.

³⁴⁹My Translation:

Lengen: I came here to redress my mistake—to offer her a return into my house—so that your name, Warbek, will not be exposed more to the tattle of the world--but my efforts were in vain.

Paar, *Helene*, 40.

Both men are under the impression that Helene's actions undermine their honor, and accordingly, they make an attempt to end her career. Since both consider her decision to become an artist as an act of desperation or revenge, they see monetary offers as the potential solution. Helene's career as a singer is perceived as a misguided choice motivated by her need for money as well as her desire for attention. Since a public performance on stage provided ample opportunity for the audience to speculate about her sexual availability and implied that she was unmarried or not supported by a former husband or family, Lengen and Warbek feel the need to intervene.

Although Helene's identity in relation to Warbek and Lengen had not been made public, the question of honor is explicitly raised by both. The male honor code appears here as closely linked to both Helene's work as a public performer and to the fact that she earns a living on her own. These two aspects, when related to female sexuality and independent work, constitute pivotal points in the construction and perception of gender. The topic of honor appears in many texts of the nineteenth century in which the conflicts are caused by sexual desires or a wide variety of other transgressions (usually between men) that lead men to duel to rehabilitate their own honor as well as that of their wives.³⁵⁰ Mathilde Paar addresses the topic of male honor from a different perspective here in that the men are not competing against each other for a woman but rather sharing their concern about a woman's public performance. Instead of rehabilitating honor by means of a duel, Helene's art and the emasculating effects of her public performance need to be terminated in order to safeguard their status.

³⁵⁰ According to the Prussian Common Law, the husband was to defend his wife's honor inside and outside the courtroom; outside the courtroom this duty was often performed in form of the duel—at least for bourgeois and aristocratic men. See Gerhard Dilcher, „Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts. Von der frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart,“ in *Die Ordnung der Ungleichheit. Haus Stand und Geschlecht*, ed. Ute Gerhard (München: Oscar Beck, 1997, 55-72), 70.

The question of honor also points to the close connection between the private and public life of Helene. Jeffrey Schneider suggests in his article on Fontane's *Effi Briest* that "Effi Briest exposes the impossibility of making marriage an essentially private sanctuary from the honor code's demands on male identity and behavior."³⁵¹ Similar to his argument that Effi's sexual relation to Crampas is not only a private matter but turns into a public one in the form of a duel between her husband Innstetten and Crampas, Helene's divorce and her sexuality become a public issue when the honor of her father and her former husband are concerned. Schneider extends his argument to the issue of male autonomy in that the assumed autonomy of men appears indeed impossible in a society or, more specifically, a class so obsessed with honor. Lengen clearly sees his own actions in relation to Warbek and decides not to allow Helene back in his house so that he could secure Warbek's honor as well as his own. Thus, the notion of honor creates a certain mutual dependency among men that not only challenges autonomy, but, according to Schneider, potentially destabilizes relations and trust amongst men.³⁵² In addition, honor concerns the person as well as the entire class or caste ("Standesehre");³⁵³ thus when the honor of a man was in question, the honor of an entire group was in question as well.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ Jeffrey Schneider, "Masculinity, Male friendship, and the Paranoid Logic of Honor in Theodor Fontane's *Effie Briest*," in *The German Quarterly*. Vol. 75, No. (Summer 2002, 265-281), 266.

³⁵² Schneider refers here to the friendship between Innstetten and Crampas in *Effi Briest*. The friendship between the men lay the foundation for the relation between Crampas and Effi thus the line between friend and enemy becomes blurred in relations amongst men. Schneider claims that: "honor's logic redefines the spaces of male friendships as public relationships and transforms even private exchanges between friends into threats to one's honor." Schneider, "Masculinity, Male friendship, and the Paranoid Logic of Honor," 268.

³⁵³ Kevin McAleer, *Dueling: The Cult of Honor in Fin de Siècle Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 35.

³⁵⁴ Ute Frevert addresses the difference between bourgeois men and army officers by presenting several case studies in which bourgeois men compromised the honor of officers. Though civil laws began to take a stance against duels early in the nineteenth century, they remained part of the military honor code until the end of the century. See *Ehrenmänner. Das Duell in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1991), 90-99.

This drama points to the interdependence of several factors with regard to male honor. On the one hand, men consider the effects of their decisions and actions on other men. On the other hand, the public appearances of Helene as a singer also affect the honor of men even though she had been dissociated from them for several months. Further, Helene takes honor into consideration when she changes her name to avoid not only any association with her former husband's surname but also with her maiden name. In these ways, the text presents a close connection between female honor, mostly reliant on a woman's sexual conduct, and male honor as first and foremost based on control over one's wife—which also establishes honor as a core component of masculinity.³⁵⁵ Helene loses her honor once again during the play when Warbek and Lengen see her in the arms of Lothar Schönburg and assume a sexual relationship that would reaffirm their notions regarding Helene's questionable sexual conduct. This time, Schönburg's honor is under siege as well, Lengen and Warbek again turn their backs toward Helene, and her father once again refuses to offer her a home. Concerning the issue of honor, Schneider provides an insightful analysis when he speaks of a paranoia that seems inherent to male honor. Both Lengen and Warbek intend to act pre-emptively, as neither one has publicly been associated with Helene, which means that her gainful employment has not yet reflected negatively on them. In addition, Helene shows a considerable concern for the public's perception of her sexual availability and does not appear to depend on a patron at this point in her career. Yet, the concern with male honor leads both men to take serious steps toward terminating her career as singer.

³⁵⁵ Schneider "Masculinity, Male friendship, and the Paranoid Logic of Honor," 266; McAleer, *Dueling: The Cult of Honor*, 161.

Helene's Career as an Excursion

The decision to pursue a career on stage has changed Helene's life immensely, and she acknowledges and appreciates the freedom this lifestyle has allowed her. While she understands herself as an artist, her family and her former husband consider her career a personal downfall and do not associate it in any way with artistic talent. This section concerns itself with Hilde's self-conception as an artist, the perception of her career by others, and with the discourses that surround upper-class working women and their money-earning potential. A closer analysis of the perception and presentation of Helene's work as an artist demonstrates its close connection to issues of upper class women's work and independent income.

In a conversation with her somewhat sheltered and naïve sister, Helene tries to explain her motivation as an artist while Olga counters with arguments that demonstrate the gap between a woman's private and public lifestyle. After Helene refuses her father's offer to return to his house and end her career, Olga deplors her desire for public admiration and emphasizes the private harmony her return would bring:

Olga: [...] bedenke, wie glücklich wir miteinander leben würden, wenn Du zu uns zurück kämest! Bedarfst Du denn des rauschenden Beifalls der Menschen? Dein Gesang würde unser stilles Dasein erheitern und verschönern. Du würdest Dich in diesem Bewußtsein befriedigter fühlen, als wenn Du gegen den Wunsch der Deinigen Triumphe feierst!

Helene: Ach wenn es nur die Triumphe wären! Was Du mir nehmen willst, ist die mühsam errungene Freiheit und Selbständigkeit [...].³⁵⁶

After Olga leaves the room, Helene continues her thought:

³⁵⁶ My Translation:

Olga: Consider how happily we would live together if you were to come back into our house. Do you need the rapturous applause of an audience? Your singing would enliven and enrich our quite existence. You would feel more satisfied in your conscience than when you celebrate triumphs against the will of your family. Helene: If it only were for the triumphs! What you want to take from me is a painfully achieved freedom and independence.

Paar, *Helene*, 18.

Helene: Nein! Ich kann, ich darf nicht zu ihnen zurück! Es wäre kein Glück für sie und für mich ein Elend! Ich bin gleich einem Wanderer, der mit unsäglichen Anstrengungen einen steilen Berg hinangestiegen ist—ermattet von der Sonnengluth—blutig geritzt von Dornen!—endlich liegt der Gipfel vor mir, von dem ich einen freien, schönen Blick in das Leben erhoffe—aber plötzlich winkt mir eine liebe Hand am Fuße des Berges, daß ich wieder hinunter kommen soll in das dumpfe beschränkte Thal! Alle Mühe soll vergeblich gewesen sein—ich soll dem Ziel meiner Wünsche den Rücken kehren—jetzt, wo es zum Greifen nahe liegt!—und um welchen Preis? Daß sie mich zu Hause mit schonender Liebe wie eine reuige Sünderin behandeln?—Das könnte mein Stolz ertragen?—nein! Mögen sie mich verdammen, aber zum zweiten Male lasse ich mich nicht freiwillig in Ketten schmieden!³⁵⁷

Whenever Helene's family tries to understand her motivation for becoming a public artist, they tend to return to the issue of money and desire for admiration or attention. The notion of freedom, in a personal as well as intellectual and creative sense, does not enter the conversation among her family members. Helene's description of a life with her family stands in stark contrast to Olga's perception of harmony; instead, it resembles the violent vocabulary Helene used to describe her marriage. She perceived her marriage to Warbek as destructive and a life with her family as a life in chains. In both cases, Helene stresses the lack of freedom or independence, the unwillingness of others to comprehend her artistic inclination, and the denial of her talent or aspirations.

³⁵⁷ My Translation

Helene: No, I cannot, I must not return to their house. It would not mean happiness for them and it would be misery for me. I am like a wanderer, who climbed a steep mountain under unimaginable exertion—exhausted by the blazing heat of the sun—scratched bloody by the thorns!—Finally, the peak from which I expect a free and beautiful view over life, lies in front of me—but suddenly, a welcoming hand signals me from the foot of the mountain that I should come down again into the dull and limited valley! Can all my efforts have been in vain? Should I turn my back toward the goal of my desires, now that it is so close that I can almost touch it! At what cost? To be treated at home with the gentle love for a remorseful sinner? Could my pride endure that?—No! May they ban me, but I will not let them out me in chains for a second time.

Paar, *Helene*, 19.

After Helene freed herself from the bonds of family and marriage, she took a painful path that she describes as a steep climb during which she had to endure thorns scratching her skin in the blazing heat of the sun.³⁵⁸ Presenting her artistic development as a painful and exhausting experience, and invoking the image of the wanderer appears reminiscent of the notion of *Bildung*, which typically involves traveling, emancipation from the family, and learning from experiences. The *Bildungsroman*, whose development coincided with the development of the nuclear family in the latter part of the eighteenth century,³⁵⁹ usually features a male protagonist and his experiences and development. While women can take influential positions in their roles as mothers and wives within the setting of the nuclear family and can educate their children also with regard to art,³⁶⁰ they tend to remain in the position of the nurturer. Helene's development seems to follow the storyline of the male artist's *Bildungsreise*, yet, her experiences are framed as physical struggles. Tellingly, her emancipation appears less concerned with artistic development or apprenticeship than with bodily experiences. Helene's journey ends, however, when she is asked to descend the mountain she climbed before reaching the top. The image of descending the mountain that was to open her view over the valley also serves as a foreshadowing of Helene's future, in which she in fact abandons her artistic endeavors (descends the mountain) to re-marry.

Both her career and her development as a singer are met with a sense of pity and remorse by her sister, her father, her former step-son, and her former husband. When the different characters discuss Helene's work as a singer, their word choice represents the negative

³⁵⁸ See Paar, *Helene*, 19.

³⁵⁹ See Friedrich Kittler, „Über die Sozialisation Wilhelm Meisters,“ in *Dichtung als Sozialisationsspiel: Studien zu Goethe und Gottfried Keller*, ed. Friedrich Kittler and Gerhard Kaiser (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978, 13-124.).

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

connotations they associate with Helene's occupation. In the following quote from a dialogue between Ewald and Olga, he wonders how it could have happened that Helene chose this sort of occupation or, put differently, what drove her to pursue this kind of work:

Ewald: Theure Olga!—Aber sage, wie kam es, dass Helene auf diesen Beruf verfiel?³⁶¹

Olga explains to Ewald that Lengen did not allow Helene to return to his house and did not know of her new profession and her apprenticeship as a singer. Helene's father and sister learned about Helene endeavors through a letter in which Helene informed them about her upcoming performance. When Olga describes Lengen's reaction to Helene's announcement, she also insinuates the negative connotations and stresses that her father in fact blames himself for Helene's choices:

Olga: [...] Statt Helene anzuklagen, machte er sich die bittersten Vorwürfe, daß er sie durch seine Verstoßung aus unserm Hause auf einen solchen Weg gewiesen habe!³⁶²

Warbek regrets Helene's decision to become a singer, and he sees her occupation motivated by her desire for appearance and entertainment. While Helene's interests in social gatherings had already disgruntled him during their marriage, at that time he was able to control and distance her from the vibrant life of the capital by moving her to an isolated estate. Warbek does not believe in intrinsic motivation for a career such as Helene's and determines that besides

³⁶¹My Translation:

Ewald: Dear Olga!—But tell me, how did this [her occupation] happen to her?

Paar, *Helene*, 4.

³⁶²My Translation:

Olga: Instead of accusing Helene, he blamed himself for driving her down such a path because he banned her from his house.

Paar, *Helene*, 5.

women's desire to be admired, the need for money to afford expensive cloths and amusement, serves as a motivation for a life on stage:

Warbek: Sie hat den Schritt vielleicht aus Noth gethan!—Das heißt, ich meine, was ein Weib Noth nennt: wenn sie nicht Geld genug besitzt, um es für unzählige überflüßige Nichtigkeiten zu verschwenden!—Der Alte, ihr Vater hat selbst wenig und ich bin nicht dazu verpflichtet gewesen, sie zu erhalten;—also wird sie das Verlangen nach Putz—nach Vergnügen—nach Gott weiß was—in diese Laufbahn getrieben haben!—Geh zu ihr, Lothar—sage ihr, daß ich sie pekuniär vollkommen sicher stellen will, biete ihr 20, 40, ja 100,000 Mark unter der Bedingung, daß sie nicht wieder öffentlich auftritt, und verlaß sie nicht eher, bis du ihre schriftliche Versicherung in den Händen hast.³⁶³

As shown in the previous section, Warbek's offer serves above all his own interest in that putting an end to Helene's career allows him to regain control and safeguard his honor. Helene is highly aware of the misconceptions and dangers regarding her career as a singer. In order to avoid any perception of desire for admiration as a motivation for her career, she refuses to see male visitors in her room. When Lothar Schönburg arrives with Warbek's offer, she denies him entry at first, stating that she cannot see men as she wants to avoid public attention. Helene's conscious decisions concerning her public appearance and performance from changing her name to avoiding male attention relates to discourses on gender roles. Helene's statements and conversations with the other characters refer to problems concerning the development and apprenticeship of female artists, the public perception of the underlying motivation for a performance, and, as mentioned earlier, to issues of male honor. Another aspect of these

³⁶³ My Translation:

Warbek: Perhaps she took the step out of mere necessity!—that is, I mean, what a woman would consider necessity: if she does not have enough money to waste for innumerable dispensable trivialities. The old man, her father himself does not have much and I was not obligated to support her;—so her desire for appearance—for entertainment—for God know what—will have driven her down this career path!—Go to her, Lothar—tell her that I will provide her financial security, offer her 20, 40, even 100,000 Mark under the condition that she will never again perform publicly, and do not leave her until you hold her signature in your hands.

Paar, *Helene*, 15.

discourses that also feeds into the negative associations with Helene's career choice is the issue of gainful employment for upper-class women.

The negative associations attached to an upper-class woman's public performances and her independent work as an artist deeply affect Helene's choices. For a better understanding of these negative associations, discourses on upper-class women's work need to be taken into consideration. Women's lack of independence manifests itself in the legal situation that grants women the right to work, but their husbands the right to end their contract at any point in time if they can prove to a judge that their wife's work negatively affects their marriage.³⁶⁴ Similar to the debate about equality within marriage, a Member of the Reichstag, Herr Stadthagen, points out that the notion of male superiority makes possible the creation of paragraphs such as §1341, which describes the husband's superior rights. His motion to erase the paragraph from the new Civil Code was rejected as it was argued that the insertion of a judge reflected considerable progress in this area. Dr. Bachem, a member of the Reichstag, concluded that women should be able to work to the extent that it is appropriate and necessary:

Das wesentliche von dem, was Herr Stadthagen wünscht, ist erreicht, nämlich die Frau in dem berechtigten Streben nach eigenem Erwerb, soweit das nothwendig und angebracht ist, nach keiner Richtung zu hindern. Darüber hinauszugehen, scheinen mir aber doch ganz erhebliche Rücksichten zu verhindern.³⁶⁵

While women of lower classes have been working in factories for decades at this point, German politicians and intellectuals still hesitate to provide truly unrestricted access to the labor market for upper-class women, particularly for married women. During the marital relationship of

³⁶⁴ See Reichstag, Protocol of the 114th meeting, June 25, 1896, 2918.

³⁶⁵ My Translation:

The essential aspect of that which Mr. Stadthagen demands, has been achieved. To the extent that it is necessary and appropriate, women's justified pursuit of an income is not prevented in any way. Significant concerns, however, avert transcending the current legislation.

Reichstag, Protocol of the 114th meeting, June 25, 1896, 2918.

Helene and Warbek, he controlled her mobility and activities in that he relocated her and locked her piano, thus controlling her access to music. After their divorce, Warbek lost this power and the right to control the actions of his wife. Helene's independent decisions, particularly her decision to become a public performer and to earn an income, stand in contrast to their marital relationship; and Warbek's attempts to bribe Helene represent his attempt to regain control.

In her political letters collected as *Für und Wider die Frauen* (1870), Fanny Lewald discusses women's right and current access to education and labor, and she propagates the need for equal access to education to enable women to secure an income. She dedicates Letter Nine, written in 1869, to questions around women's emancipation since the revolution in 1848. While she sees a clear progress over the decades, she also points to still existing problems particularly with regard to the question of femininity and work for upper-class women:

Dabei war es aber auffallend genug, daß alle diese Anforderungen an eine besondere Weiblichkeit sich nur auf die Töchter und Frauen der wohlhabenden und der mehr oder weniger gebildeten Stände bezogen.³⁶⁶

Lewald concludes that working-class women worked out of necessity and that this necessity did not affect the gender conception of these women. In 1869, there is still a fine line that separates the more and less wealthy in their degree of mobility, the choice of occupation, and the expectations concerning femininity. In the subsequent letter, Lewald³⁶⁷ reveals the link between gender and work:

Es ist lächerlich und widerwärtig, wenn man jene reichen und müßigen Frauen immer wieder davon sprechen hören muss: „daß mit der Gewerbe-und Erwerbstätigkeit der

³⁶⁶ My Translation:

But it was noticeable enough that all requirements for a certain femininity only concerned daughters and women of the wealthy and the more or less educated classes.

Fanny Lewald, "Neunter Brief," in *Für und Wider die Frauen* (Berlin: Ojanke, 1870), 166.

³⁶⁷ Louise Otto-Peters dismisses the same argument concerning a potential loss of femininity due to gainful employment. See *Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb. Blicke auf das Frauenleben der Gegenwart* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1866).

Frauen der wahre weibliche Nimbus von den Frauen abgestreift würde“; und ebenso widerwärtig ist es, wenn man Männer behaupten hört, Frauen die etwas Ordentliches gelernt hätten, die selbst etwas Rechtes wären, verlören die Fähigkeit der wahren Hingebung an den Mann.³⁶⁸

Upper-class women's work had to maintain the impression of a leisure activity and was not supposed to be associated with gainful employment since women who pursue a career, even a respectable one, potentially lose their desire for men. Many female artists, such as Sophie Ludwig in her response to Schiller, held on to the claim that their writing, painting, or singing is nothing more than a leisure activity and neither meant to be considered artistic work nor produced to be sold or exhibited. A female artist's success could challenge gender expectations, and let her appear as less attractive and less feminine.³⁶⁹ Many late nineteenth-century caricatures concerned with publicly recognized women present deformed and extremely masculine women and thus link their intellectual and artistic achievements to their body and their gender performance.³⁷⁰ Lewald relates the link between femininity and work to the notion that women have to be first and foremost dedicated to their husband. While men can find honor and respect in their income and in their work, upper-class women have to find the same things in their leisure activities. Lewald concludes: “Und für die Frauen dieser selben Stände sollte die Arbeit etwas Erniedrigendes sein? Welch eine Logik!”³⁷¹ Fanny Lewald experienced the social

³⁶⁸ My Translation:

It is ridiculous and abominable to have to hear these rich and idle women say “that women's commercial activities and gainful employment, women are stripped off their truly feminine nimbus”, and it is equally abominable to hear men claim that women who have learned something and who have become something proper, would lose their ability of true devotion to their husband.

Fanny Lewald, „Zehnter Brief,” in *Für und Wider die Frauen* (Berlin: Ojanke, 1870), 170.

³⁶⁹ See Renate Berger, *Malerinnen auf dem Weg ins 20. Jahrhundert. Kunstgeschichte als Sozialgeschichte* (Köln: DuMont, 1982), 135.

³⁷⁰ See *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁷¹ My Translation:

And for women of the same class, work is assumed to be degrading? What a logic!

disdain of women's gainful employment when she felt the veil of secrecy that covers the work of upper-class women for herself. Her ill and dying father asked that she secretly make a living on her own, while at the same time keeping up the appearance that she was supported by her father so that their public status could remain unaffected.³⁷²

The founding of the *Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenverein* in 1865 and the *Bund deutscher Frauenvereine* in 1894 also spoke to the need for compensated work since an increasing number of middle-class women remained unmarried and in need of an occupation outside the house. Louise Otto-Peters and Helene Goldschmidt amongst others were at the forefront of this movement and also made education one of their main concerns. Both associations attempted to emphasize women's issues across class divides but came to recognize later that the question of class and work was in fact essential. Making public the need for an income would not only be problematic for an aristocratic woman but also, or even more so, for her family. Renate Berger discusses the shame related to a woman's attempt at an income and its effects on the class standing that could turn women into a "femme déclassée":

Nichts offenbart die Bindung dieser Frauen an ihre Herkunft eindringlicher als die Scham vor dem öffentlichen Schein des Erwerbs. Jede für Lohn arbeitende Frau des Adels und des Bürgertums lief Gefahr, zur femme déclassée zu werden.³⁷³

The pervasiveness of discourses on women and work has to be seen in relation to economic and social changes in that men and women married later in life and an increasing number of unmarried women (including divorced and widowed women) had to make a living on

Lewald, „Zehnter Brief,” 172.

³⁷² Fanny Lewald, „Zweiter Brief,” in *Für und Wider die Frauen* (Berlin: Ojanke, 1870), 111.

³⁷³ My Translation:

Nothing exposes the connection between women and their class more strikingly than the shame associated with the public appearance of gainful employment. Any woman of the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie who worked for a salary was at risk to become a femme déclassée.”

Berger, *Malerinnen auf dem Weg ins 20. Jahrhundert*, 40.

their own. One of the seminal works concerned with women's work is Louise Otto-Peter's *Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb* (1866). Similar to Fanny Lewald's experience of secret work or gainful employment, she writes about the importance of appearance for the upper-class family that is so intimately connected to issues of honor and public status. Husbands and fathers have to deny for their own sake that their daughters have to work; mothers deny their daughter's work so that it will not affect their chances to get married.³⁷⁴ She also points to the misconceptions of femininity with regard to employment, and argues that in fact women will only be able to retain their femininity if they can be independent and can free themselves from the despotism that limits not only their choices of employment but also the freedom of their mind:

Bei den Bestrebungen dem weiblichen Geschlechte zum Rechte der jedem Wesen zukommenden Selbständigkeit zu verhelfen, kommt es gerade darauf an, das wahrhaft Weibliche zu retten, nicht es zu vertilgen oder zu unterdrücken, sondern es frei zu machen von einem einseitigen Verstandesdespotismus, wie er nach und nach von den Männern ausgebildet worden und worunter nun das weibliche Geschlecht nicht allein, sondern der ganze bessere Teil der Menschheit leidet.³⁷⁵

The art sector takes a curious position with regard to women's work. While it constitutes the main option for upper-class women to pursue acceptable work, these women are also often considered as dilettantes and are at high risk of exposing themselves too much in public. The work environment is thus both a place for women to earn a living but also a place to lose their reputation and honor. Louise Otto-Peters, as the chairwoman of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher*

³⁷⁴ See Otto-Peters, *Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb*, 41.

³⁷⁵ My Translation:

With the efforts to help the female sex to gain the right of all beings to autonomy, it is essential to save the truly feminine, not to erase or deny it, but to free it from the one-sided reason-despotism as it has been developed step by step by men and from which not only women but the entire better part of humankind suffers.

Otto-Peters, *Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb*, 72.

Frauenverein, lobbied at the association's first conference to free women's work from the chains of prejudice and to consider women's work as one of the main concerns of the association.³⁷⁶

Controlling women's public appearance and especially their gainful employment appears as a central theme in the drama. The text not only links Helene's independent career to the issue of honor, but it also stresses the importance of money in the discourses on women's work. Helene understands that the offer Warbek extends relates not only to the fact that she was his wife but also, and even more so, to notions of power and gender hierarchies within marriage that are expressed in monetary terms. When Lothar tells her about the amount of money Warbek offers, she knows immediately that there is also a price to pay on her part:

Lothar: Daß sie dem Beruf entsagen, welcher mit so vielen Demüthigungen für die stolze Aristokratin verbunden ist.

Helene: [...] Graf, was Sie mir mit so gefälligen Worten sagen, übersetze ich mir in die rauhere Sprache meines ehemaligen Gatten! Es heißt: Ich will Dir so viel Geld geben, wie du brauchst; denn am Gelde liegt mir nichts, aber dafür sollst Du Dich auch jetzt noch meinem Willen unterwerfen und allem entsagen, was Dir lieb ist!—Sie wollen mir glauben machen, seine Großmuth träfe mich, weil er ein ungerechtes Gesetz korrigieren will?—es geschieht nur um seiner aristokratischen Vorurteile willen.³⁷⁷

From Helene's perspective, Warbek's intent to terminate her career by monetary means manifests his aristocratic prejudices. In addition, she refers to money as a tool to convey and

³⁷⁶ Louise Otto Peters, *Das erste Vierteljahrhundert des Allgemeinen Deutschen Frauenvereins*, (Leipzig, 1890), 93.

³⁷⁷ My Translation:

Lothar: that you abdicate the occupation that is associated with so much humiliation for the proud aristocratic woman. Helene: Count, what you are telling me in such pleasing words, I translate into the rougher language of my former husband! It means: I will give you as much money as you need; because I do not care about money, but in return you have to subordinate yourself to my will even now and have to refrain from what you love!—You want me to believe he targets me with his generosity to correct an unjust law?—it only happens due to his aristocratic prejudices.

Paar, *Helene*, 22.

enforce his power in that it is not only a means for her to survive but simultaneously a way for him to control her actions, or more specifically, her career choices.

Helene resists the offers of her father and Warbek until she finds out that her stepson, Ewald, is about to take his life because he owes money for his gambling debt. Since he has no way to pay his debt, and Warbek refuses to support him, he is about to be dishonorably discharged from the military—a shame he could not endure. Helene understands his fatal intentions when Ewald asks her to say goodbye to Olga on his behalf. She begins to interrogate him about the reasons for this final goodbye, and he admits his suicidal plans. Shocked by the revelations, Helene decides immediately to take both offers, which means that she will receive a considerable amount of money that she can give to Ewald, but she will have end her career to do so. Helene, however, does not reveal the source of the money to Ewald, and to keep this transaction a secret, she makes Ewald promise not to tell anybody that she paid his debt. As seen earlier in the drama, Helene again shows an almost compulsive obsession in her concern for Warbek's honor:

Helene: Frage mich nicht!—es sei Dir genug, daß ich sie (Summe) Dir verspreche!
Aber eine Bedingung knüpfe ich daran! Du mußt mir schwören, Niemandem zu
verraten, woher du das Geld empfangen hast!—am wenigsten deinem Vater!—Es
würde wie eine Demüthigung aussehen, die ich ihm zufügen wollte, und Gott
weiß, daß es nur eine Sühne gegen Dich und Deine arme Olga ist.³⁷⁸

Since her monetary support of Ewald could be perceived as a humiliation against Warbek, Ewald has to remain silent about the transaction. In this passage, Helene also expresses her regret for the separation of Olga and Ewald that had to follow her separation from Warbek as Olga was

³⁷⁸ My Translation:

Helene: Don't ask me!—it shall be enough that I promise it to you! But there is one condition! You have to swear not to tell anybody how you received the money!—least of all you're your father!—it would appear as if I would intend to humiliate him, and God knows that it is only in expiation of you and your Olga.

Paar, *Helene*, 36.

implied in Helene's actions at the time, and Warbek was unwilling to allow a relationship between his son and Helene's sister.

Following this decision, Helene tears apart the contract the impresario had offered and realizes that this means that Warbek and her father attained their goals; she will sell herself, end her career, and move back to her father's house. Act two ends with Helene's most desperate moment of the play:

Helene: Nun haben sie doch erreicht, was sie wollten. Ich werde mich Warbek verkaufen! Dann will ich meinen Vater aufsuchen und ihm sagen, daß ich mit ihm nach Hause gehe. Mein Unrecht ist gesühnt! Der Traum von Künstlerthum, Ehre und Wonne ist zu Ende! Es war eben nur ein Traum!³⁷⁹

After rejecting both offers and showing strong determination to pursue her career and value her independence, Helene changes her mind in order to save her former stepson's life and reputation. Though the money was intended as an incentive to end her career, it is a former family member who influences that decision.

Helene's change of mind surprises Lothar, who previously had a conversation with Helene about the freedom and independence she gained through her art. Though he seemed to accept Helene's decision not to take Warbek's money, he convinced her not to sign the contract with the impresario, which would have taken her to North America. Helene had considered emigration in order to keep her freedom and pursue her career as a singer. After receiving offers from both her father and Warbek, she knew that she would not find recognition or even acceptance as an artist among her loved ones. A career in a distant place, however, would allow her to keep her freedom. Following Helene's decision to take Warbek's offer, Lothar returns to

³⁷⁹ My Translation:

Helene: Now after all they have achieved what they aimed for. I will sell myself to Warbek! Then I will look for my father and tell him that I will go home with him. My mischief is avenged! The dream of artistry, honor and blissfulness is over. It was only a dream after all.

Paar, *Helene*, 36.

her room with the money, confronts her, and tries to influence her decision once again, this time by using her own rhetoric and reasoning:³⁸⁰

Lothar: Denken Sie, daß Sie Warbek dafür auf's neue Ihre Freiheit verpfänden, die Sie sich erst eben um so hohen Preis errungen haben.

Helene: Ich habe alles bedacht—geben Sie!

Lothar: Nein!

Helene: Geben Sie!

Lothar: (überreicht ihr stumm das Päckchen, Helene steckt es in ihre Kleidertasche)

Lothar: (nach einer kleinen Pause) also wirklich verkauft? Die Freiheit war Ihnen wohl doch nicht so teuer, wie Sie mich glauben machen wollten?³⁸¹

Lothar, as an art patron, admired Helene as a singer from the beginning and he understood Helene's rejection of Warbek's financial offer. He acknowledges that by accepting the offer, she allows Warbek to take control over her life once again. The scene ends with Helene fainting in Lothar's arms in the exact moment as both Warbek and Lengen enter the room. The result is devastating: Lengen leaves his daughter behind again, and Lothar does not publicly admit his own feelings for Helene, who now reaches her lowest point in the drama. She sold herself as an artist, gave away the money, was rejected by her father again and has to take sanctuary at a friend's house. In the following three months, Helene lives with Melitta Kaiser before she considers relocating to America, not as a singer but as a teacher.

In the final act, Helene becomes increasingly dissatisfied with her living situation and her lack of an artistic outlet (she agreed not to perform as an artist anymore and cohabits with

³⁸⁰ Lothar returns to a metaphor, Helene had used when she first talked to him about her marriage to Warbek. She had described it as a "bitteres Getränk," Lothar now returns to this by describing her career as a "berauschendes Getränk".

³⁸¹ My Translation:

Lothar: Keep in mind that once again you surrender your freedom, for which you paid such a high price, to Warbek. Helene: I have thought it all through—give it to me! Lothar: no! Helene: Give it to me! Lothar: (Hands her the package silently, Helene puts it in her pocket). Lothar: (after a short pause) sold, indeed? It seems that after all freedom was not as valuable as you tried to make me believe.

Paar, *Helene*, 48.

Melitta Kaiser and her brother). After having sent a letter to her father, in which she informs him that she used the money to pay Ewald's debt. She also explains the seemingly amorous situation with Schönburg and reassures her father that she did not intend to take the money and marry Lothar Schönburg. Soon after, Olga visits Helene to tell her that her father had passed away, but had read her letter on his last day and forgiven her. In addition, he had sent Warbek a check for the amount of money he had given to Helene in exchange for her career.

Helene also learns that Lothar had been looking for her ever since their unfortunate moment that looked like an affair to Helene's father and Warbek. When Lothar saw Melitta's portrait of Sappho at an exhibition, he knew immediately that Helene sat as model for her painting and tried to locate her at Melitta's house. As he enters the house, he recognizes Helene's voice as she sings a song that was originally Mignon's song in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, a song that, according to Sarah Colvin, foreshadows that she is about to be silenced.³⁸² A footnote to the drama provides another insight into Paar's understanding of Helene: the author states in a footnote to Melitta's painting, that depending on the actress who plays Helene's role, Sappho could be substituted by Gretchen. In the published version of the drama, Paar chooses Sappho but it surprises that she considers this an unproblematic substitution. Sarah Colvin notes that it appears as an "ironic joke, for a transformation from Sappho to Gretchen would reflect all too bitterly on the domestication, and in some senses destruction, of Helene that is imminent in this point in the play."³⁸³ The fact that Paar chooses Sappho but considers Gretchen a suitable substitution also refers to Helene's life as a woman and her futile position as an artist—neither Sappho nor Gretchen foreshadow a positive solution for Helene's dilemma.

³⁸² See Colvin, *Women in German drama*, 55.

³⁸³ Ibid.

The drama finds its resolution as Helene, Olga, Warbek, Lothar and Ewald all find their way to Melitta Kaiser's house. The secret transaction between Helene and Ewald is revealed, and Warbek has to forgive Helene as well as his son after learning that Ewald considered to take his life when he refused to pay for his son's debt. Ewald summarizes the transaction:

Ewald: [...] um mich zu retten, verkaufte Sie an Dich (Warbek) ihr Glück—ihren Ruhm!—Noch an demselben Abend empfing ich aus ihren Händen 50,000 Mark, und konnte meine Schulden bezahlen.

Warbek reacts to Helene's deed by stating that:

Warbek (nach heftigem inneren Kampf): Das ahnte ich allerdings nicht, gnädige Frau, daß Sie sich durch einen Akt unerhörter Großmuth an mir rächen würden! Wer kennt die weiblichen Waffen jemals aus?!³⁸⁴

Even in the final moments of the drama, Warbek refers to Helene's career as an act of revenge, as a weapon she used to defeat him. Though he admits his high respect for Helene's decision, he cannot help but see her acts in relation to himself. Helene asserts that she will abide by their agreement, but emphasizes that now it is her free will and not any form of pressure that enforces her decision. Warbek promises to take care of Olga who will marry Ewald and also expresses his support for a liaison between Lothar and Helene. The play ends with Helene's final statement to Lothar and her agreement to become his wife:

Helene: Bestimme Du, wo wir leben sollen. Ich habe keinen Willen mehr als den Deinigen.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ My Translation:

Ewald: [...] in order to save me, she sold her fortune—her fame—to you!—In the same night I received 50,000 Mark from her and was able to pay me debt. Warbek: (following an immense inner struggle): Admittedly, I did not suspect that you, madam, would take revenge through an act of unprecedented generosity! Who ever knows all of women's weapons?!

Paar, *Helene*, 66.

³⁸⁵ My Translation:

Helene: You decide where we will live. I do not have a will but yours.

Paar, *Helene*, 67.

Conclusion

It seems hardly an overstatement to say that the dramas' resolution moves rather quickly and that Helene's final statement takes the reader somewhat by surprise. At the end, Helene gives up her art and decides to remarry. Sarah Colvin's reading of the drama's end implies frustration with the author's decision for a quick and seemingly happy ending:

Paar's "happy ending" provides a recognizable, culturally established form of closure to the play: she pops a large and sticky candy—romantic love—into her audience's collective mouth. Its sweetness disguises the distasteful violence that has been done, for the second time, to Helene.³⁸⁶

The violence is also implied in the painted representation of Helene as Sappho or Gretchen as neither figure finds a happy ending but instead meets violent death. As Colvin points out, while Sappho remains an artist figure in our cultural memory; it is all the more troubling that, according to the stage directions, she can easily be substituted by Gretchen. This potential substitution reflects Helene's character in that she moves between her commitment to art and the development of her skills as reflected in her self-presentation as wanderer, and her return to the domestic sphere at the end.

Helene's decision to accept the pecuniary offer at the end appears is tied to guilt about her divorce, which ended the relationship between Ewald and Olga. Accordingly, she uses the money for a completely different purpose than the men intended; instead of supporting her own life, she saves Ewald's life. The end of her career thus has to be seen in relation to her life as stepmother and wife. While Helene can resist the proposition, she cannot detach herself from her family, and her guilt about the forced separation of Ewald and Olga. Morally, Helene stands far above the other characters at this point, but she gave up her independence to do so.

³⁸⁶ Colvin, *Women in German Drama*, 55.

Constantly caught in discourses that tie her to her life as the daughter of a conservative aristocrat and as the wife of an equally patriarchal man, Helene finds little space for independent development. As a female artist, she experiences the profound effects of discourses on honor, marriage and divorce, and financial independence on her career. Together these discourses play a pivotal role in the termination of her toilsome journey as an artist and in her return to the domestic. Helene cannot successfully dissociate her work as an artist from her former life and family. Paar's presentation of these intertwined discourses critiques the immense difficulty, if not impossibility, of either combining or completely separating both identities. Although, saving Ewald's life is a moral act, it implies her role as former stepmother, a role whose intersection with her life as an artist marks the beginning of the end of her career.

The drama presents the interdependency of constructions of masculinity and femininity and its deep effects on the female artist-protagonist. While Helene's husband controlled her access to culture as well as to music during their marriage, after their divorce she appears to temporarily succeed in an independent and mostly self-sufficient life as an artist. Once her career is noticed by her aristocratic father and former husband, both show their determination to end her career. Helene experiences the constraints of discourses that construct the ideal upper-class woman and wife in an inferior position; Warbek's ideal wife neither argues, nor has too much social or intellectual ambition. Barbara Becker-Cantarino considers constructions of ideal femininity as both the most subtle catalysts of domestication and the most restricting barriers to women's emancipation.³⁸⁷ At the same time, both men feel implicated in her public appearance, and discourses of honor that are intimately linked to the construction and perpetuation of upper-class masculinity inform their stand against Helene's occupation. The discourse on honor takes a

³⁸⁷ See Becker-Cantarino, *Der Lange Weg zur Mündigkeit*, 347.

central role in the drama and alludes to the mutual dependency of the two genders in their social construction. Thus, Helene's actions and her challenges to the construction of upper-class femininity call into question her husband's masculinity and also his authority. Her performance as well as the fact that she manages to make a living contrast with her inferior position in her marriage to Warbek, which further motivate him to regain control, and point to the social construction of power differences and gender hierarchies.

The selling of her voice, in a literal and symbolic way, brings with it Helene's compliance with all of Lothar's wishes. Her return to the domestic at the end points to the subliminal forces of the discourses that naturalize an inferior position for women and that complicate her public appearance as an artist. However, the ending also presents the pivotal role of femininity in the construction of masculinity in that Ewald, Lengen, Warbek, as well as Schönburg are all implied in Helene's decisions since their honor is continuously jeopardized by her actions. While her decision to remarry and to abandon her art undoubtedly points to underlying power structures, it also critiques the difficulty to combine the construction of an ideal femininity with cultural conceptions of the artist. The dissatisfying end that Colvin alludes to, should not be read as simplistic or too conventional, but as Paar's critique of discourses aiming to produce and manifest gender conventions that cannot support constructions of femininity or of masculinity outside the binary .

Chapter Four

Freedom, Friendship, and Frail Masculinities in Anna Croissant-Rust's *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* (1896)

Anna Flora Barbara Rust was born in Dürkheim in 1860 and died in Munich at the age of eighty-two in 1943. In 1884, after the death of her father, Anna, her four siblings,³⁸⁸ and her mother moved to Munich where Anna soon after began to work as a music and language teacher. Four years after her arrival in Munich, she married her early love Hermann Croissant, who began his professional career in the military but became an engineer after suffering from serious injuries due to an accident.³⁸⁹ Anna provided an income for the young couple by giving private piano lessons and teaching English while her husband finished his studies. In 1895, Herman Croissant took a position as an engineer, and the couple relocated to Ludwigshafen. For the next nine years, Anna Croissant-Rust did not produce much writing and often felt disconnected and isolated from her former circles in Munich; they finally returned to their former hometown in 1904. Throughout her career as a writer, her husband proved to be an active supporter of her writing and negotiated with publishers on her behalf.³⁹⁰

A versatile writer, Anna Croissant-Rust published in different genres; she wrote novels, short stories, dramas, as well as poems. Her first publication in 1893 was a collection of poems followed by the never-performed drama *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* in 1896.³⁹¹ The drama is one

³⁸⁸ Her sister Lina later became a painter, Agnes a sculptor. See Bernhard Setzwein, *Käuze, Ketzer, Komödianten. Literaten in Bayern* (München: W. Ludwig Verlag, 1990), 116.

³⁸⁹ Setzwein, *Käuze, Ketzer, Komödianten. Literaten in Bayern*, 120.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁹¹ See Colvin, *Women and German Drama*. 58.

of only two dramas Croissant-Rust published.³⁹² While her early texts present a realism that brought her recognition amongst colleagues, they also provoked objection due to seemingly unwomanly writing.³⁹³ Croissant-Rust was also active in different artist- or intellectual groups, and she was the only female member of the *Gesellschaft für Modernes Leben*, which was founded in 1890 by Michael Georg Conrad. As a proponent of the naturalist movement, the association published a journal (*Moderne Blätter*) which focused on literature and theater. While Croissant-Rust's writings often present brutal portrayals of reality, she is much more than the naturalist writer that scholarship has made her out to be at this point. *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat*, her only artist-drama, presents her as a critical writer who challenges the norms and boundaries of genre and gender. Like many of her other texts, this drama concerns itself with the experiences of a female protagonist, in this case a writer.

Even before her death, some critics were mourning her disappearance from the public's interest. Today, little is known about this much too soon forgotten writer, and it seems that her work was as quickly and inaccurately categorized as she was forgotten. Few critics have concerned themselves with her life and work at this point. In a printed supplement that accompanied an exhibition on the author, sponsored by the *Kunstverein Ludwigshafen* (1963), Croissant-Rust's disappearance is acknowledged:

³⁹² The drama *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* shows correlations to her own life. Following her father's death, the artist protagonist and her mother relocate. Anna Rust's father died when she was twenty four years old, and she, her mother, and her siblings relocated to Munich. Similar to her artist protagonist in *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, Anna Rust also worked as a music teacher. In the text, Johanna and her mother move to a bigger city, and Johanna enjoys the life and environment of a bigger place. Anna Croissant-Rust experienced the opposite in her own life when her and her husband's relocation from Munich to Ludwigshafen negatively affected her creative work as she felt isolated and distanced from her former community. See Rolf Paulus and Bruno Hain, eds. *Anna Croissant-Rust. Lebenswege. Geschichten und Erzählungen*. (Dachau: Pfälzische Verlagsanstalt, 1987).

³⁹³ Setzwein, *Käuze, Ketzer, Komödianten. Literaten in Bayern*, 117.

Die Schriftstellerin Anna Croissant-Rust schied jetzt vor 20 Jahren in München unbemerkt aus der völlig in Aufruhr und Bruch geratenen Welt, ihre Bücher und die Menschen in ihnen hatte man schon 10 Jahre zuvor beiseite geschoben und wollte jene Wirklichkeit nicht sehen.³⁹⁴

Rolf Paulus and Bruno Hain have published the only book length work on this writer. Their text *Anna Croissant-Rust. Lebenswege. Geschichten und Erzählungen* (1982) provides samples of her writing as well as an overview of her work and life. By interspersing plot summaries of her texts with short analytical statements and Croissant-Rust's own comments on her work and life, their texts offers a first comprehensive and insightful introduction to Croissant-Rust.

When it comes to her writing, Wilhelm Weigang, in an article published in honor of Croissant-Rust's seventieth birthday in 1930, supports the idea that she cannot easily be categorized as a naturalist. Even though she offers detailed descriptions and paints dark and realistic pictures of the misery of working-class or middle-class lives, he asserts that:

Sie gestaltet das, was sie sieht, mit unbestechlichen Augen, aber dabei entfaltet sie zuweilen eine Eigenschaft, die man bei den doktrinären Naturalisten vergebens sucht: sie stammt aus dem Weinland und sie hat Humor.³⁹⁵

Weigang contends that Croissant-Rust combines tradition with path-breaking notions, and she does so with a compelling humor and sense of cynicism.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴My Translation:

“The writer Anna Croissant-Rust departed twenty years ago in Munich. She left this world that had gone astray unnoticed; her books and their people had been stashed away ten years before in order not to see that reality.”

Kunstverein Ludwigshafen, *Anna Croissant-Rust. Katalog zur Ausstellung*, 1963

³⁹⁵ My Translation:

“She creates what she sees with her unerring eyes, but in the process she develops a capacity, for which one looks in vain in other naturalists: she comes from the wine-growing region, and she has humor.”

Cited in Kunstverein Ludwigshafen Kunstverein Ludwigshafen, *Anna Croissant-Rust. Katalog zur Ausstellung*, 1963

³⁹⁶ Weigang is Cited in Kunstverein Ludwigshafen Kunstverein Ludwigshafen, *Anna Croissant-Rust. Katalog zur Ausstellung*, 1963.

Still, in 1990, Bernhard Setzwein dedicates a chapter in his book on Bavarian literature *Käuze, Ketzer und Komödianten* to Croissant-Rust and entitles this chapter “Naturalistin im Biedermeierhäuschen.“ While he provides insightful information on the author, his characterization of her work appears too narrow. I suggest that the drama under consideration in this dissertation chapter forces literary critics to broaden their perspective on the work of Anna Croissant-Rust. The writer describes her own writing clearly in contrast to the way she has often been perceived and categorized:

[...] ich liege nicht etwas auf der Lauer und beobachte fortwährend, gehe auch nicht auf Studien aus, um das Eingheimste daheim im Kämmerlein zusammenzupappen, und zu kleistern. Ich habe gar nicht den Drang nach einer bloßen Wirklichkeitsdarstellung. Was häuft sich im Leben alles im Unterbewussten an! Ich sauge die Dinge in mich ein, ich lege etwas in sie, ich gebe sie mir auf diese Weise selbst, verwandle sie, verknüpfe sie. Sie mögen vielleicht erst nach Jahren, in anderer Form, als ein von mir Erschaffenes kommen, als etwas, das möglicherweise da sein könnte, aber jetzt eigentlich erst durch mich da ist.³⁹⁷

Whereas Croissant-Rust’s novels have received critical attention from researchers, the drama *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* has hardly been noted as this point. Sarah Colvin (2003) and Heike Schmidt (2000)³⁹⁸ are the exception and both offer astute analyses of the drama, stressing its radical moments with regard to her criticism of gender conventions. This chapter adds to Schmid’s and Colvin’s analysis by examining the discourse of freedom and its relation to women’s creative conflicts in more depth. In addition, the text’s position within the genre, and

³⁹⁷ My Translation:

“I am not couching and constantly observing, I am not trying to conduct studies in order to cobble and past the collected. I don’t even have the desire to just represent reality. All the things that accumulate in the unconscious during our lives! I suck these things in, I put something into them, in that way I give them to myself, change them, connect them. They may appear, in a different form, only years later, as something I created, as something that could have been but now is only because of me.” Kunstverein Ludwigshafen, *Anna Croissant-Rust. Katalog zur Ausstellung*, 1963.

³⁹⁸ See Colvin, *Women and German Drama*. Heike Schmidt, *Gefallene Engel. Deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2000).

the author's references to Hans Christian Andersen's tale *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* have not been discussed in detail secondary literature. I argue that the discourse on freedom suggests a potential alternative for women artists to combine their lives as women and artists, and that Croissant-Rust's manipulation of the genre constitutes crucial aspects of the drama's criticism of gender conventions and gender relations.

Synopsis

Anna Croissant-Rust wrote the artist-drama *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat*, which she dedicated to her husband,³⁹⁹ in 1896. Although the title refers to a male figure in the drama, the text presents more female than male characters. In contrast to texts analyzed in earlier chapters, such as *Johannes Herkner*, this drama presents women's voices in a much stronger way. Besides playing with the limitations of the genre, the text deals with gender issues and explores the intersections of women's creative work with the demands of marriage. My analysis works with and expands Heike Schmid's notion (based on Ernst Brausewetter's suggestion from 1897), which asserts that the text explores how much freedom and personal attachment artists require for the development of their identity:

Es geht um die Frage, welchen Freiraum und wieviel Bindung an einen anderen Menschen eine Künstlerindividualität für ihre Entwicklung braucht.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ See Heike Schmid, *Gefallene Engel, 187*, she points to the autobiographical aspects of this text. Not only was Croissant-Rust's husband a former soldier, but she also earned an income for both of them by giving piano lessons.

⁴⁰⁰My Translation:

“It is about the question, how much freedom and how much connection to other people an artist needs for the development of their identity.”

Rolf Paulus and Bruno Hain describe the drama as dealing with the personality of the female artist, and he sees Croissant-Rust's text as part of, as well as in contrast to, the tradition of the artist drama.⁴⁰¹

Two female artist-protagonists and their relationships to their husbands stand in the foreground of this dramatic inquiry into the lives and conflicts of women artists. The writer-protagonist Johanna Rüder (later Griese) and her mother move to a bigger city and live with Fräulein Nothnagel, the sister of her late father. Following the death of her father, Johanna earns an income for the family by giving piano lessons. Her partner, and later husband, Ernst Griese, had to give up his job due to an eye condition that increasingly affects his ability to see. In the midst of this, Johanna, who is highly aware of her need for her own space, secretly writes and publishes her first novel. As his eye condition worsens, Ernst Griese conceives of a plan to commit suicide before his illness will leave him completely blind. Part of this plan, however, consists in taking Johanna with him. At the end, Johanna does not join in his fatal plan and is left a widow.

Johanna is complemented and contrasted by a second female artist, the singer Ernestine von Bornheim, who is also a married mother. Ernestine has a troubled marriage and engages in an affair with Heller, a writer who lives off his rich wife. Eventually, she decides to leave both Heller and her husband to pursue a new career as an actress. In the end, her approach to women's liberation and the pursuit of her creative talents does not lead to success and leaves her a divorced woman.

Schmid, *Gefallene Engel*, 181.

⁴⁰¹ See Rolf Paulus and Brunow Hain, ed. *Anna Croissant-Rust, Lebenswege. Geschichte und Erzählungen* (Dachau: Pfälzische Verlagsanstalt, 1987).

Anna Croissant-Rust employs two female artist-protagonists to present two approaches to negotiating life and work as a female artist—neither one leads to success in the long term. In order to understand the failure of their approaches as well as an implied alternative, my analysis points to the theme of freedom and its relation to personal, domestic and conjugal relationships as one of the main recurring concerns in the drama. In addition, as a comment on contemporary gender roles and stereotypes, Croissant-Rust presents a world full of comparisons, contrasts, and contradictions that allows her to reflect on ambiguities and uncertainties inherent in the existing gender dichotomy. I argue that she challenges the genre itself by crossing its traditional boundaries and integrating allusions to other genres in her text. This drama complicates gender relations in its presentations of male characters and its intertextual allusions. The author's play with gender conventions and approaches to negotiating space and time for creative work, then, creates a complex network of (inter)dependencies among the characters and invites a more critical look at opportunities for and limitations of women's freedom as artists.

Germany's Women's Movement

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, many cultural and political debates concerned themselves with women's rights. An increasingly visible women's movement resonated with those who called for more equality and an end to oppression. But this visibility caused others to be more skeptical about women's changing role in society. Some began to fear for the status of Germany's high culture as well as for the impact of these developments on Germany's men.

Theobald Ziegler (1899), August Bebel (1901), and Georg Simmel⁴⁰² (1902) belonged to those who anticipated drastic changes and improvements of women's status. In contrast, precursors of the *Bund zur Bekämpfung der Frauenemanzipation* (Association for the Fight against Women's Emancipation), founded in 1912, feared a detrimental effect of women's emancipation on society. As Frevert (2000) and Planert (1998)⁴⁰³ point out, this association reflects a larger antifeminist sentiment during the Wilhelminian era.⁴⁰⁴

Although associations concerned with women's emancipation and an institutionalization of women's interests already gained more public visibility in the 1860s and 1870s, the Wilhelminian era marks an increasing awareness of the woman question in journals and public speeches as well as in the political realm. Girls' secondary schooling and access to higher education and the legal ramifications of women's work continue to remain two of the most widely debated issues. It was, however, not until the turn of the century that, in addition to being able to work, women were granted more access to schools, and in some places access to lectures at universities. The debates around girls' access to education were at the core of the women's movement in the 1890s.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Theobald Ziegler, *Die Geistigen und Socialen Strömungen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Berlin 1899); August Bebel, „Die Aufgabe des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts“ (1901). *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* (Vol. 15, 1973); Georg Simmel, „Weibliche Kultur“ (1902) in *Weibliche Kultur. Schriften zur Philosophie und Soziologie der Geschlechter* (Frankfurt 1985).

⁴⁰³ See Ute Frevert, „Die Zukunft der Geschlechterordnung. Diagnosen und Erwartungen an die Jahrhundertwende,“ in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Vol. 18. *Das Neue Jahrhundert. Europäische Zeitdiagnosen um Zukunftsentwürfe um 1900* (2000, pp. 146-147, 149-184). Ute Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich. Diskurs, Soziale Formation und Politische Mentalität* (Göttingen, 1998).

⁴⁰⁴ In *Die Zukunft der Geschlechterordnung* Ute Frevert points to similar anti-feminist and anti-suffragist movements in the US and England. In fact, she claims a transnational connection and collaboration in that the movements shared not only common arguments but also circulated common documents.

⁴⁰⁵ See E.G.O. Müller „Betrachtungen eines Mädchenschullehrers“ *Preußische Jahrbücher* (Vol 72. 1893, 229-246). Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich*, describes the journal as renowned and recognized amongst those supporting constitutional liberalism (34). Müller describes his experiences at a girls' school. Based on his familiarity with girls' education, he argued that girls and boys are indeed a very

In general, Germany's women's movement falls into two sections, the bourgeois women's movement and the working-class or social-democratic movement.⁴⁰⁶ Louise Otto-Peters and Auguste Schmidt mark the beginning of the organized women's movement in Germany with their founding of the Allgemeine Deutsche Frauenverein (General German Women's Association) in 1865; Otto-Peters remained the president of this organization until her death in 1895. The ADF was closely associated with working men's associations⁴⁰⁷ as well as with the Lette- Association;⁴⁰⁸ and it promoted (middle-class) women's education and new labor laws that would expand women's the right to gainful employment (Otto-Peters 1866). Otto-

different part of the human species (229). While E.G.O. Müller observes that girls' performances tend to be weaker, he also recognizes that external factors, such as lack of support and expectations from parents, play a crucial role in girls' education (232).

⁴⁰⁶ The proletarian women's movement holds an interesting position in the debates around women's emancipation as it enters the discussion from a very different vantage point and considers the woman question more as a social issue. By mid-century, proletarian women had long worked in factories, at times at almost equal numbers to men. See Florence Hervé, *Geschichte der Deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Köln: Papy Rossa Verlag, 1990), 13ff. In contrast to many bourgeois women, it was vitally important for them to earn an income in order to support their families. Based on the working conditions for women and the effects on families, but also due to an increased competition with men, some parts of the labor movement even advocated banning women's employment. See Hervé, *Geschichte der Deutschen Frauenbewegung*, 20. It was not until 1866 that the General German Labor Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein) pronounces the protection of women workers. Due to the depression of 1878 and the decreasing demand for labor, the proletarian women's movement found itself in an even more difficult position. In general, it tended to be organized on a local level, and, especially from the 1880s onward, more or less part of the overall labor movement and organizations that included men and women.

⁴⁰⁷ Ute Frevert, *Women in German History. From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 1989), 115.

⁴⁰⁸ The Lette-Association, founded in 1866 in Berlin, also promoted women's rights to work and promoted access to occupations in science, craftsmanship, and in the arts. See Hervé, *Geschichte der Deutschen Frauenbewegung*, 18.

Peters had already been an active supporter of women's rights during the 1848 movement⁴⁰⁹ and continued to advocate these with the founding of the ADF⁴¹⁰.

The notion of freedom is integral to the bourgeois women's movement. The motto of Otto-Peters' journal *Frauen-Zeitung (Women's Journal)* "Dem Reich der Freiheit werb' ich Bürgerinnen" (To the kingdom of freedom I recruit women) and some of her early poems, such as *Freiheit für Alle (freedom for all)* emphasize the importance of the notion of freedom.⁴¹¹ Helene Lange became an additional prominent proponent of this section of the women's movement. While Lange as well as Otto-Peters actively promoted women's education and access to the medical profession and to teaching, they also supported more conventional gender roles for women (i.e. the importance of motherhood and their role as care takers) prescribed by the reigning ideology in Imperial Germany. Thus, they upheld the idea that access to education as well as an occupation in a medical or educational field would best prepare women for their role as mothers.⁴¹²

Hedwig Dohm was one of the leading figures of the more radical part of the bourgeois women's movement, though her position is by no means settled on immutable beliefs. Similar to the moderate wing, she demanded more access to education and changing labor laws. In contrast to Lange and Otto-Peters, she does consider these demands as related to women's role in society, i.e. she does not consider education and work as preparation for women's future role as mothers.

⁴⁰⁹ Carol Diethe, *Towards Emancipation. German Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 147.

⁴¹⁰ While the demand for women's suffrage was a key aspect of the 1848 revolution, it was not articulated as part of the new bourgeois women's movement (or the Lette-Association) in the 1860s See Hervé, *Geschichte der Deutschen Frauenbewegung*, 18f.

⁴¹¹ In the women's journal, she published essays that addressed the issue of freedom in terms of the right to work. The poem *Freiheit für alle*,⁴¹¹ written in 1847, was inspired by the political uprisings around the 1848 revolution and speaks to the exclusion of women from the fight for political freedom.

⁴¹² Richard Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933* (London: Sage Publications, 1976), 28.

Particularly the more radical wing of the bourgeois women's movement saw the patriarchal power structure at the core of women's oppression and wanted to free themselves from the repercussions inherent in the system. Karin Hausen summarizes the expectations of the bourgeois women's movement as a strife for independence from oppressive familial structures:

Frauen verlangten befreit zu werden von dem Zwang eine vom Vater arrangierte Ehe einzugehen und sich innerhalb der Ehe der Vormundschaft und Disziplinargewalt des Ehemannes fügen zu müssen.⁴¹³

Dohm underpins this in her text *Die Antifeministen* (1902), in which she demands economic self-sufficiency for women. Although she does not necessarily provide a consistent argument or clearly articulate her own position in this text, she effectively summarizes some of the major differences between the opposing wings of the women's movement.⁴¹⁴

Ich faße kurz zusammen, worin sich die Radikalen von den Gegnerinnen à la Ellen Key and Lou Salomé unterscheiden. Beide Frauengruppen fordern dieselben Bildungsmöglichkeiten, dieselben Rechte und Freiheiten, wie sie das Gesetz dem Manne gewährleistet. Die Repräsentantinnen der Reaktion verlangen diese Rechte aber nur—entweder zur privaten Daseinslust der Frau, oder in so weit sie ihrer Mütterlichkeit zu Gute kommen. Und die knüpfen daran die Bedingung, daß der Gebrauch der Freiheit ihre weiblichen Eigentümlichkeiten nicht schädige, welche Schädigung bei einem Broterwerb zu befürchten sei.

Die Radikalen fordern alle Freiheiten und Rechte unbedingt und uneingeschränkt, in der Meinung, daß aus lauter Bischen (ein bischen Freiheit, ein bischen Beruf) doch nur etwas An-und Zusammengeflicktes wird, und ihr Hauptgesichtspunkt dabei ist die

⁴¹³My Translation

“Women demand to be liberated from any coercion to marry according to their father's arrangements, and within marriage to have to submit themselves to the custody and the disciplinary power of their husband.” Karin Hausen, „Liberalismus und Frauenemanzipation,“ in *Liberalismus und Emanzipation. In-und Exklusionsprozesse im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*, eds. Angelika Schaser and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010, 39-54), 46.

⁴¹⁴ Her use of Ellen Key and Lou Salomé seems problematic, it has to be noted that especially Salomé's position with regard to the women's movement was rather ambiguous. While she herself lived a quite emancipated life and presents relatively emancipated women in her text, she public promoted the more conservative attitudes of the women's movement. Similarly Ellen Key co-habited with a man without being married and lived a lifestyle far from conservative notions. See Frevert, “Die Zukunft der Geschlechterordnung,” 131.

ökonomische Selbständigkeit der Frau, ohne welche ihrer Meinung nach (es ist auch meine) alle übrigen Rechte illusorisch sind.⁴¹⁵

The polemical nature of the text allows Dohm to avoid committing to one position. Her strategy appears to be to take a position in-between the opposing wings by attacking and supporting both sides. Instead of getting caught in the paradoxes and inconsistencies of either side of the bourgeois women's movement, she manages to defer her final answer.

The many diverse associations in Germany founded the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (*Federation of German Women's Associations*)⁴¹⁶ in 1894, with Auguste Schmidt as the first president. Motherhood was one of its prominent themes and contributed, especially around the turn of the century, to a categorization of women into those who were deemed self-centered due to their aspiration to work (not because of financial needs) and those, who supported the nation's welfare by taking care of their husband and family.⁴¹⁷ Among the artist-narratives that deal with motherhood and marriage, is Elsa Porges-Bernstein's artist-drama *Wir Drei* (1893). In this text,

⁴¹⁵ My Translation:

"I will summarize briefly in what regards the radicals differentiate themselves from opponents such as Ellen Key and Lou Salomé. Both groups demand the same access to education, the same rights and the same liberties, granted to men by law. The reactionary representatives, however, only demand these rights—either for the sake of women's enjoyment or in as far as it would benefit their role as mothers. And they tie it to the condition that these rights and liberties do not interfere with their femininity, a harm which may be expected due to their breadwinning. The radicals demand all rights without conditions or limitations, with the belief that many small pieces (a small piece of freedom, a small piece of work) can only lead to a patchwork, and their main argument lies with the economic independence of women. An independence without which, in their opinion (and I agree), all other rights are illusory."

Hedwig Dohm, *Die Antifeministen. Ein Buch der Verteidigung* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1902), 118f.

⁴¹⁶ This association also proved central to international collaborations with women's associations in the US, France, and Britain. See Frevert, "Die Zukunft der Geschlechterordnung," 154.

⁴¹⁷ Especially the *Kunstwart* published several articles that dealt with the effects of working women on men and on the nation's welfare. The article „Mannesfürsorge“ ((1909/10) Nr. 3 212-214) commends women who see their vocation in taking care of their husband and not in finding work outside the house.

the female artist-protagonist defers the male protagonist's (an artist-apprentice) desire for her to another woman in order to keep her own independence and to avoid motherhood⁴¹⁸.

Johanna and Ernestine: Freedom and Friendship

While the female artist-protagonists and their different approaches to freedom and independence allude to the two sections of the bourgeois women's movement, the text also suggests that the two women show an alternative route to emancipation by using their friendship as a space in which they can find freedom. The drama, then, operates on two levels: it compares and contrasts the piano teacher and writer Johanna Rüder with the actress and singer Ernestine von Bornheim, and it also focuses on their relationship with each other. The text moves through a variety of relationships and investigates the opportunities and limitations for the female artist protagonists inherent in each of these personal connections. It shows Johanna and Ernestine in

⁴¹⁸ This drama offers many insightful comments on the position of the female artist-protagonist and shows several parallels between the fictional female artist and the author of play, Elsa Porges-Bernstein. It is also particularly interesting because it presents a male and female artist-protagonist. Both Sascha and Richard are writers, and he admires her writing and her approach to writing. Their interaction presents her as the more experienced and established writer, and she encourages him to be less studious and to experience life more. As a result, Richard takes to a (ultimately unsuccessful) *Bildungsreise* to Italy to meet with his publishers but also to experience life and to grow as a man and a writer. Sascha sees art as a way to articulate criticism and to say what the world does not want to hear (39). Although both he and the second main female character, Agnes, desperately fall in love with Sascha, she remains convinced that she needs to preserve her independence. Sascha manipulates Richard and Agnes to continue their relationship and it could be argued that Agnes serves as a surrogate (mother) for Sascha so that she can keep her lifestyle as a writer. At the end, Sascha distances herself from the group of three and with it from any kind of family structure. This play is interesting for several reasons: similar to Croissant-Rust's play, it deals with gender conventions and presents a more successful woman; it also addresses questions of freedom but from the perspective of motherhood—which only plays a marginal role in the *Steadfast Tin Soldier*—and could be read in response to the women's movement.

relation to her domestic and familial environment, in their personal bond with each other, and it also stages both women in relation to their male partners.

Croissant-Rust's drama presents female artist-protagonists who articulate their need for space, independence, and also voice their desire for creative work. As has been indicated by Heike Schmid (2000), Johanna Rüder appears to stand for a more moderate approach to the women's movement. In contrast, Ernestine von Bornheim represents a radical attempt to liberate herself and could be seen in relation to the more radical part of the bourgeois women's movement.⁴¹⁹ Both women, however, are driven by their artistic desire and struggle to find a way to free themselves from, and to negotiate the restrictions inherent in the patriarchal system.

From the beginning, and already inherent in the 1848 revolution, the women's movement frequently referred to *Freiheit* (freedom, liberty) as one of its overarching goals.⁴²⁰ The bourgeois women's movement with Louise Otto-Peters as its leading figure first refers to freedom in terms of political liberty. As an important theme in the emancipatory discourses of the women's movement, it usually referred women's strife to gain the freedom to work, to vote, and to access secondary education. Later on, both wings of the movement suggest that freedom is inherent in access to education as well as in the right to work. While the issue of freedom also surfaced in previous chapters of my dissertation, Croissant-Rust addresses this discourse as a conflict concerning female artists. She approaches this theme in a more abstract way in that her text deals with relationships and the freedom to follow one's talents and desires. For her female protagonists, freedom consists in an ability to pursue one's desires. The drama does not directly attend to issues of inequality and women's demands for equal rights; instead, on a much more

⁴¹⁹ Schmid, *Gefallene Engel*, 182f.

⁴²⁰ Louise Otto stated in 1847 that this is the time for women's voices to be heard. Other women such as Fanny Lewald and Bettina von Arnim increase women's visibility and point to existing grievances See Hervé, *Geschichte der Deutschen Frauenbewegung*.

subtle level, it discusses perceptions and expectations of gender and genre in an attempt to uncover, and maybe, unsettle existing conventions.

The drama opens with a confrontation between Johanna and her aunt in a conflict that concerns her need for space and time, an argument for women's creative needs that predates Virginia Woolf's renowned *A Room of One's Own* by three decades. For Johanna, to be free and independent would mean to become dissociated from expectations toward her as a woman but also to find the time and space to follow her own desires. She earns money by offering private piano lessons and secures an income for herself and her mother. After her father's death, she and her mother relocated to her aunt's house, a place (and time) that gives her little room for freedom. In her free-time, she wants to withdraw from the people around her and dedicate her time to writing. Fräulein Nothnagel, her late father's sister, shows little respect and understanding for Johanna's work and her demand for her own space. Her name "Nothnagel" implies that Johanna and her mother had to turn to her as a last resort, consequently it is not long before a conflict between her and Johanna ensues. When Johanna does not join the women in the living room in the late morning, Fräulein Nothnagel knocks on her door to confront her:

Fräulein Nothnagel (klopft wieder, da sich nichts rührt, öffnet sie die Thüre):
Sooo?—So macht mer's? Da sitzt sie un schreibt! Bin ich kei Antwort wert? Und das Geschreibsel in der kalten Stub! Für was denn? Nemm en Strickstrumpp.
Aber da! Gewirkte! Gewirkte natürlich!

Johanna (Johanna unter der Thüre, tritt ein): Wenn Du etwas von mir willst, dann komm bitte nicht in mein Zimmer, wenn ich nicht „herein“ sage. Ich will auch einmal ungestört sein und wenn's in der kalten Stube ist.

[...]

Ich hab's nötig einmal allein zu sein.⁴²¹

⁴²¹ My Translation:

Fr. Nothnagel: (knocks again and because she does not hear a response, she opens the door) Sooo? That's how we do it? There she sits and writes! Am I not worthy of a response? And the scribbling in the cold room! What for? Do your knitting. But there! Knitted fabric! Knitted Fabric, of course! Johanna: (to the

Johanna feels imprisoned by her life and circumstances as well as the expectations toward her as the family's breadwinner.⁴²² Fräulein Nothnagel, who probably represents an unmarried bourgeois woman obliged to make a living on her own, expresses her disrespect for Johanna's attitude; implied is the notion of appropriate bourgeois women's labor as needle work, knitting, or teaching. Her niece's pursuit of creative talents appears to her as an unproductive past-time for a woman. Johanna, however, clearly articulates her desire to work and her need to seclude herself and to be undisturbed. Their argument continues when Johanna stands up for her longing for independence and freedom.

Johanna: In Zukunft laß ich mir einfach gar nichts mehr von dir dreinreden. Gar nichts! Ich danke. Ich verdiene, was ich brauche; die Sklaverei hört auf. Ja, schau' mich nur an, ich mache deinen Sklaven nimmer, ich lasse mich nimmer quälen, mich nicht und Mama nicht. Die paar Wochen, die wir hier sind, waren die Hölle. In der kleinen Stadt gab's weniger Anlaß. Aber hier? Wenn ich mich nur frei machen könnte!—ich thät's heute. Hätt' ich nur Geld genug—hoffentlich kommt noch einmal die Zeit--⁴²³

Ernst, in contrast to his fiancé's aunt, overall seems to support Johanna's creative work and, like her, refers to the need for freedom as a prerequisite for her writing. He realizes that the circumstances under which Johanna lives are not conducive to her creative productivity. His deteriorating eye condition, however, makes him more and more dependent on her income, and

door, steps in) If you want something from me, please do not come into my room, if I do not ask you to come in. I want to be undisturbed for once and even if it is in my cold room. ... I need to be alone. Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 10.

⁴²² See Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 13.

⁴²³ My Translation:

From now on, I will not let you interfere. Not at all. I thank you. I deserve what I need; the slavery will stop. Yes, look at me, I am no longer your slave. I will not let you torture me or my mother. The few weeks that we have been here, have been hell. There was less motivation in the small town. But here? If I could only free myself, I'd do it today. If I had enough money—hopefully that time will come. Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 12.

he recognizes that there is little he can contribute to alleviate the situation that he considers poisonous for her creative work.

Ernst: Wenn ich sie nur herausreißen könnte. Das ist ja Gift für sie—Gleich jetzt!
[...]⁴²⁴

The theme of freedom also recurs in Ernst's conversations with Johanna, in which he links freedom to happiness and to liberation from an oppressive state in which she can hardly breathe.

Ernst: [...] Ich möchte dich forttragen aus der Luft, die du nicht atmen kannst, Dich frei machen—Du kannst nur glücklich sein, wenn du frei bist.⁴²⁵

Moving a step further, Johanna describes a feeling of intoxication when she can be by herself or experience life on the streets around her. In contrast to this stands her current situation that feels painful and oppressive.

Johanna: [...] Was weißt du, wie es bei mir ist. Eine Gier, sage ich Dir, nach allem Schönen, ein Lechzen—wenn ich nur durch die Straßen gehe das brandene Leben um mich, oder draußen allein bin im Wald, im Freien, da fühle ich mich so reich—ich kann's dir ja nicht sagen, wie es ist; es ist zu viel, es schmerzt, und ich möchte das alles hinaus schreien, fortgeben, es ist wie ein Rausch.

Ernst (hebt ihren gesenkten Kopf in die Höhe und sieht ihr in die Augen): Mein Lieb ist ganz anders geworden hier, das ist eine Entwicklung im rasendsten Tempo, ich denke ja Tag für Tag daran. In der Nacht quält's mich oft—immer denke ich an dich, wie du drin steckt's und solltest heraus—

Johanna: Das ist all das Neue und das ist es, was mich zu Frau von Bornheim zieht, ihr Schönheitsgefühl, ihr feines Verständnis, ihre breite Denkweise, sie versteht das, versteht mich; so viel, so viel hab ich von ihr, ich hab' sie so lieb—warum sagst du nichts? Ist es dir nicht recht? Du hast sie doch gebracht.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ My Translation:

Ernst: If only I could pull her away. This is poisonous for her. Now—immediately.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 15.

⁴²⁵ My Translation:

Ernst: [...] I would like to carry you away from an air that you cannot breathe, to set you free—you can only be happy if you are free.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 17.

⁴²⁶ My Translation:

Even as Johanna and Ernst imply financial independence as part of freedom, they also refer to private time and space, as well as to the pursuit of her creative talents as an aspect of freedom.

Ernst: Damals, wie es gar so schlimm wurde mit den Augen, nach der Operation, erinnerst du dich. Da hattest du nichts als das Krankenzimmer und deine Stunden. Glaub' nur, ich fühlte deine Sehnsucht, wenn du auch tapfer warst. Meinst du, ich fühlte nicht, was in deinem Schreien lag, wenn du wieder in den Wald hinauskamst? Ein Betteln war's—um Freiheit!⁴²⁷

Curiously, Johanna links the feeling of intoxication and her yearning for freedom to the second female artist in the drama, Ernestine von Bornheim. In a suffocating environment, Frau von Bornheim serves as an inspiration to Johanna. Fräulein Nothnagel disapproves of the friendship between these two women since Johanna's behavior toward Ernestine appears reminiscent of her relationship with Ernst.

Fräulein Nothnagel: [...]Wie macht's denn die Johanna mit der Bornheim? Is des Maaß ge'halte? Is verliebt in sie wie in ihren Bräutigam. Und warum? Weil sie immer gerennt kommt, weil se schmeicheln kann, geh' mer ewegg; ich kenn mich aus.⁴²⁸

Johanna: What do you know about how it is for me. A lust, I tell you, for all that is beautiful; a greed—whenever I walk through the streets with vibrant life around me; or outside in the forest, outside in the free that is where I feel so rich—I cannot tell you, what it is like; it is too much, it hurts, and I want to scream, give away, as if I am intoxicated. Ernst(lifts his lowered head and looks into her eyes): My dear has changed here, it is a rapid development, I think about it day after day. It tortures me during the night—I am always thinking of you, how you are stuck and should get out. Johanna: It is all the new things that draw me to Frau von Bornheim, her sense of beauty, her sophisticated understanding, her broad way of thinking, she understands it, she understands me; so much, I have so much from her, I hold her so dearly –why aren't you saying anything? Do you not like it? You brought her after all.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 19f.

⁴²⁷ My Translation:

Ernst: Back then, when it became so bad with my eyes, after the surgery, do you remember? You had nothing but the sickroom and your lessons. Believe me, I felt your desires even though you were brave. Do you think I did not feel what lay in your screams when you went into the woods? It was a begging—for freedom.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 74.

⁴²⁸ My Translation:

Croissant-Rust's play with names by calling Johanna's fiancé and later husband Ernst and her close ally, and later alienated friend, Ernestine, implies a strong connection between these two characters in their relation to Johanna. At the beginning of the play, Ernestine in some ways becomes her closest confidant, she understands what it is like for Johanna to be a female artists. In turn, Johanna is intrigued by Ernestine's knowledge and her determination. In many ways, Ernestine takes the role of mentor for Johanna. Johanna, however, turns away when Ernestine decides to end her affair with Heller, divorce her husband, and start a new career as a singer. As the dynamics between the two women change, so does the relationship between Ernst and Johanna, and the writer finally agrees to marry Ernst. Thus, Johanna transitions in the play from a close relationship with Ernestine to a marriage with Ernst. The two relationships appear at some point almost mutually exclusive; her interaction with Ernestine keeps her focused on her development and motivation as an artist, while her marriage to Ernst brings to light again the issues that restrict her freedom.

The friendship between these two women serves as intellectual stimulation and emotional support. Eventually, their debates and disagreements on the role of men in their lives as women artists and on their overall approach to the meaning of art alienate the two women from each other and results in a termination of their friendship. But for as long as it lasts, their friendship motivates both of them to aspire to more artistic work and to make an effort to combine their daily tasks with their desire for creative work. As part of their interactions, they discuss issues closely related to their identities as women and artists.

Fräulein Nothnagel: How is Johanna doing it with this Bornheim? Isn't it enough? She is in love with her like with her groom. And why? Cause she always comes running, cause she can schmooze her, I can't stand it; I know what I am talking about.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 8.

An important aspect of the relationship between Johanna and Ernestine consists in their conversations about art and women's relation to creative work. Frau von Bornheim realizes that Johanna is limited in her creative work due to the demands of her everyday life. She believes, however, that women of their kind (artists) will never be satisfied by just fulfilling the routine of their daily life. Ernestine suspects that Johanna has been secretly working or studying, and she pressures her to share the secret by pointing to the intimacy of their friendship.

Frau v. Bornheim (zutraulich): Also jetzt gestehen sie mir's? Sie treiben irgend ein Studium, irgend etwas Heimliches. Ich merk's schon lange. Nein?—Sagen sie's doch! Mir, ihrer Freundin! Frauen unseres Schlages muessten eigentlich immer was zu thun haben nebenbei, sonst geht die Sache schief. Man kann doch nicht sein ganzes Leben damit zubringen einen Mann zu lieben? Gelte ich denn nichts mehr bei Ihnen? Ich habe sie doch lieb!⁴²⁹

This relationship inspires and drives their move toward freedom in that Ernestine von Bornheim inspires Johanna and is in turn motivated by Johanna's success.

Besides the concerns of their daily lives, Frau von Bornheim continuously initiates conversations about the role of men in the life of a female artist. She contrasts the needs of non-artists and artists when she insists on women artists' need for independence and for a certain amount of "brutality." For her, brutality relates to the necessity for creative women to focus on themselves without feeling required to pay constant attention to their partner's needs and demands. In Johanna's case, however, the situation is complicated due to the illness of her husband and his increasing dependence on her:

⁴²⁹ My Translation:

Frau v. Bornheim (trustingly): So admit it to me? You are engaged in some kind of study, something secretive. I've been noticing it for a while. No?—Admit it! To me, your friend. Women of our kind should always be doing something on the side, otherwise things go wrong. You cannot spend your entire life loving a man? Do I not count for anything in your life? I am fond of you.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 25.

Frau v. Bornheim: [...] Sie sind ja das reine Lasttier geworden—wenn Sie so weiter machen!—Sie haben ja nicht schlecht eingesetzt als Künstlerin, aber jetzt-- -- Nichts, gar nichts mehr.⁴³⁰

Frau v. Bornheim: [...] Ihr Mann ruiniert sie! Sie werden das natürlich brutal finden von mir—so etwas auszusprechen. Aber hat er denn ein Recht dazu, so eine Selbstverleugnung von Ihnen zu verlangen? Es ist ja unerhört.

Johanna: Er verlangt nichts. [...] Soll ich ihn wohl allein lassen?

Frau v. Bornheim: Ja, ohne jede Frage. Das ist man sich schuldig, wenn's auch weh thut. Ein Künstler, der nicht brutal ist, wird nie in die Höhe kommen, nie, und das ganze Geheimnis ist, in die Höhe zu kommen. Habe ich geschwankt?⁴³¹

Of course, Bornheim's relationships with men are not as simple as it appears in this statement, and her romantic interactions are affected by her artist-identity. In fact, both female artists have to negotiate the demands and turmoil of their domestic life with their artistic aspirations. Ernestine von Bornheim is married to Rudolf but has an affair with Heller, who is married himself and lives off his wife's money. Heller, even though he admires Ernestine and her strong attitudes, holds rather misogynistic views:

Heller: Wird doch Nichts mit den Weibern allein, brauchen immer den Mann.

Frau v. Bornheim: Da sind wir ja beim richtigen Thema. Sie gestehen der Frau wohl gar nichts zu! Sie kann ja auch in der Kunst nichts leisten!

Heller: Auskunftsmittel, Koketterie—leisten was! Ist danach. Wenn sie nur Weiber bleiben wollten.

Frau v. Bornheim: Schöne Laune heute! Ich mache ja nicht allzugroßen Anspruch auf meine Kunst als Sängerin, ich wehre mich aber doch Ihnen gegenüber, wie wenn die Frau... (28)⁴³²

⁴³⁰ My Translation:

Frau von Bornheim: [...] You've turned into a beast of burden—if you continue like this!—You did not start out bad as an artist—but now. Nothing, absolutely nothing anymore.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 81.

⁴³¹ My Translation:

Frau von Bornheim: Your husband ruins you. Of course, you will find this a brutal thing to say for me. But does he have a right to demand such self-denial from you? It is outrageous! Johanna: He demands nothing. [...] Should I leave him to himself? Frau von Bornheim: yes, without a question. One owes it to oneself, even if it hurts. An artist, who is not brutal, will never make it high up, never, and the whole secret is to make it high up. Did I ever hesitate?

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 82.

Many exchanges in this drama expose characters' attitudes toward women's role in society. Far from pointing to simplistic statements, the female figures negotiate the underlying meanings and consequences for their own lives as artists. Croissant-Rust, however, also provides a glimpse of her cynicism in her presentation of the male figures. When Heller attacks Ernestine for what he generally perceives as women's dependence on men, it turns out that he himself is financially dependent upon his wealthy wife. Thus, Frau von Bornheim fights back his remarks by pointing to his own circumstances:

Frau v. Bornheim: [...] Also sie leben mit dieser Frau, leben vom Gelde dieser Frau und zu mir kommen sie und gehen den „erhabenen“ Geistesbund ein. Sie feiern mich in Gedichten, Sie beten mich in Briefen an—(zorning) ich will mit diesem Mann nicht verkehren, der unfrei ist, unfrei und unwahr.⁴³³

Even though Ernestine attacks Heller and discloses his financial and emotional dependence, she nonetheless begins to doubt her own creativity and talent as a singer. Heller contributes to this by making her believe that she needs his guidance to be successful. Yet, Bornheim uncovers not only his attitude toward women artists, but also his intentions to make her his wife, i.e. his housewife. This recollection of Heller's statement is reminiscent of conceptions promoted by the moderate wing of the bourgeois women's movement in that woman's role in society ultimately lies with their tasks as mothers and wives.

⁴³² My Translation:

Heller: It won't work out anyway with women by themselves, they always need a man. Frau von Bornheim: Here we are at the right topic. You concede nothing to women! She cannot achieve anything in art! Heller: Means of expression and coquetry achieve something. It's fine. If they would only want to remain women. Frau von Bornheim: Great mood today! I am not making big claims to my art as a singer, but I defend myself against you, as if women...

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 28.

⁴³³ My Translation:

Frau von Bornheim: [...] so you are living with this woman, live off the money of this woman, and you come to me for a "sublime" spiritual relationship. You celebrate me in poems, you worship me in your letters—(angry) I don't want to interact with this man who is unfree, unfree and untrue.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 31.

Johanna: Ja, wenn Sie keine Befriedigung finden, Sie, als Künstlerin--?

Frau v. Bornheim: Ach, die Singerei! Keine produktive Kunst, sagt Heller, und der muß es doch wissen. (Lacht erregt). Er meinte, ja, wenn ich mich von ihm führen ließe! Damit ist's nun aus, jetzt kann ich einpacken. So denkt Er—und daran wird er sich wohl in die Höhe ranken. Gott, wenn sie ihn kennen würden wie ich! Er schaut von seinem Sinai auf uns Gewürm herunter, hauptsächlich auf uns Frauengewürm, wie der Herrgott in Gnaden. Mir hätte er sogar die höchste angedeihen lassen.

Johanna: Was wollt er denn?

Frau v. Bornheim: Mich zu seiner Hausfrau machen, zur traditionellen deutschen Hausfrau.⁴³⁴

Implied in this statement is Bornheim's concern about the difficulties of negotiating her life as an artist with traditional gender expectations.

Frau v. Bornheim: [...] Ich als besorgte, schaffende Gattin, zu dem Genie des Gatten in Bewunderung aufsehend; dabei hätte ich sogar auch noch ein wenig Muse spielen dürfen, unbeschadet eines guten Schweinebratens mit Sauerkraut am Sonntag. Es ist ja zum lachen, wenn's nicht so lächerlich traurig waere. Die Mischung bringt wahrscheinlich nur ein deutscher zu Stande. Gott sei Dank, daß ich englisches Blut in den Adern habe. Verzeihen Sie, liebe, kleine, deutsche Braut.

Johanna: Ich wollte, ich hätte auch etwas davon. Etwas mehr Rücksichtslosigkeit, etwas mehr Selbstbehauptung.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁴ My Translation:

Johanna: Well, if you do not find satisfaction, you, as artist--? Frau von Bornheim: Ach, the singing! Not a productive kind of art, says Heller, and he must know. (Laughs agitatedly) He thinks, if I would let him guide me! That is over, I am done! That is what he thinks—and that's what gives him a feeling of superiority. God, if you knew him the way I do! He looks down on us vermin from his mount Sinai, mostly on us women-vermin, like God in mercy. He would have granted me the highest form of mercy. Johanna: What did he want? Frau von Bornheim: To make me his housewife, a traditional German housewife.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 51f.

⁴³⁵ My Translation:

Frau von Bornheim: I as the concerned, laboring wife, who, looking up in awe to the genius of her husband; I would have even been allowed to play somewhat of a muse, without doing harm to a good pig roast with Sauerkraut on Sundays. One would love if it would not be so ridiculously sad. Probably only a German can create that kind of a mixture. Thank God that I have English blood flowing through my veins. Apologies dear, little German bride. Johanna: I wish I had some of it as well, a bit more recklessness and a bit more assertiveness.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 52.

Johanna and Ernestine represent different approaches and attitudes to women's role. For Ernestine, taking on traditional gender seems unimaginable. Her children are mentioned only once in passing by her husband, and her main focus remains on her work as an artist and on her attempts at a new career. She believes independence to be a prerequisite for artistic women to follow their talents and desires. In contrast, Johanna recognizes her hesitation, and wishes she were more assertive when it comes to defending her need for freedom as an artist.

Ernestine von Bornheim resist the notion of women's dependence on men and, even though she is married and also involved in a relationship with Heller, she criticizes Johanna's decision to marry Ernst and remains convinced that she would be more successful by herself:

Frau v. Bornheim: [...] Und jetzt scheinen Sie dermaßen in Liebe versunken, daß die Kunst bedenklich in den Hintergrund gedrängt wird.

Johanna: Laßen Sie das! Muß man denn immer davon reden?

Frau v. Bornheim: [...] Jedenfalls würden Sie allein mehr leisten, das steht fest für mich. Ich bin gespannt, wie Sie um die Ecke kommen werden.⁴³⁶

Concerns voiced by Frau von Bornheim in these conversations refer to discourses occurring in the sciences as well as in socio-cultural conversations that present women in their role as wife and mothers and often as intellectually inferior. Heller represents the belief that women should have access to education and work as it will aid them to become better mothers for their own children and for the nation as well. The German woman as wife and mother follows not only her inner nature but supports her husband and her entire social environment. She then reaches the peak of her development as a woman through her husband and children's father:

⁴³⁶ My Translation:

Frau von Bornheim: [...] And now you seem so drowned in love, that art takes a precarious push to the background. Johanna: Let it be! Must one always talk about this? Frau von Bornheim: [...] Either way, you would accomplish more on your own, that is a fact for me. I am curious to see how you will come around the corner.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 54.

Frau v. Bornheim: [...] Mit seiner ewigen Theorie: Das Weib gelangt erst durch den Mann zur vollen Entwicklung (53).⁴³⁷

Heller's attitude is reminiscent of what Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres describes as the often encountered dismissive approach to the women's movement and to women's work toward emancipation.⁴³⁸ She refers to Constantin Rößler's article "Hingeworfene Gedanken zur Frauenfrage" (Sketchily Developed Ideas about the Woman Question) published in 1893 in *Preußische Jahrbücher*, in which he strongly opposed women's intellectual work. The resistance against the emancipatory movement and the equality was then accompanied by a fear for men's status.⁴³⁹

After Johanna's success in publishing her first novel, Ernestine von Bornheim decides to change her career and to become an actress. This time the inspiration appears to work the other way round, and Ernestine wants to explore new opportunities and even goes so far as to suggest to her husband that he give up his position if he is concerned about his reputation. Her approach differs dramatically from Johanna's, and her husband's reaction is far from Ernst's support for his wife's work. Rudolf von Bornheim strongly opposes her plans and threatens with divorce in case she stands by her decision.

Rudolf v. Bornheim: [...] Du konntest Dir vorher sagen, daß ich dazu meine Einwilligung nicht geben werde. Das geht nicht.

Frau v. Bornheim: Das geht nicht?—Warum geht das nicht?—Dann werd' ich's ohne deine Einwilligung thun.

⁴³⁷ My Translation:

Frau von Bornheim: [...] With his constant theory: Every woman needs a man to develop her full potential.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 53.

⁴³⁸ Ruth Ellen Boetcher Joeres "Scattered Thoughts on Current Feminist Literary Critical Work in Nineteenth-Century German Studies." *Women in German Yearbook* (Vol 17, 2001. Pp. 225-244), 225.

⁴³⁹ Lorenz worries about the changing relationship and states in his 1902 article that the different position of women as specifically female will change in relation to men "eine veränderte Stellung der Frau als spezifisch weiblichem Wesen zum Manne." Cited in Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich*, 38.

Rudolf v. Bornheim: Das thust Du nicht. Du weißt, es geht nicht. Meine Stellung als Privatdozent—

Frau v. Bornheim: So gib eben Deine Stellung auf!

Rudolf v. Bornheim: (schaut sie mit seitwärts geneigtem Kopf augenzwinkernd an):
Wie witzig Sie heute ist, diese Frau! Wie kommst Du nur auf diese Idee? (Lacht aus vollem Halse) Ich—meine Stellung aufgeben!

Frau v. Bornheim: Mich befriedigt die Herumsingerei in Konzerten nicht. Ist das auch ein Grund zum Lachen?⁴⁴⁰

Ernestine indicates that she finds fulfillment in her work and boldly compares her work to that of her husband. Her drive for artistic self-expressions motivates her plan to begin a new career as an actress. Similar to the drama *Helene*, Ernestine reaches the limits of what can be reconciled with perceptions of male honor. Her attempt to change her career and to find fulfillment in working as an actress goes awry during her first performance. Her husband's pride and concern with male honor prohibits him from allowing her back in his house. At the end, Ernestine's attempt to free herself and to find and develop her creative talents, leaves her without a husband, a career, and an income.

In a conversation with Johanna's husband, Ernestine articulates this rather bold question in a different version by asking Ernst whether he agrees (and he does) that the person who is less recognized should make a sacrifice in a relationship. She stops short of asking him if he would agree that sex should not be the decisive factor when it comes to supporting a spouse's career.

⁴⁴⁰ My Translation:

Rudolf v. Bornheim: [...] you could have told yourself that I will not agree to this. It is impossible. Frau v. Bornheim: It is impossible? Why is it impossible? In that case, I will do it without your consent. Rudolf v. Bornheim: You will not. You know it's impossible. My position as private lecturer—Frau v. Bornheim: Then give up your position! Rudolf v. Bornheim: (looks at her with this head tilted, winking): How funny she is today, this woman! How did you come up with that idea? (laughs loudly) I—giving up my position! Frau v. Bornheim: I am not satisfied with this kind of singing in concerts. Is that a reason to laugh as well?

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 61.

She begins her question with that scenario, but then realizes immediately that needs to rephrase her question:

Frau v. Bornheim: [...] Wenn ein Weib bedeutender ist als ein Mann, muß da nicht der Mann—nein so geht's nicht. Wenn jemand geopfert werden muß, soll da nicht der weniger Bedeutende das Opfer bringen?

Griese: (reicht Johanna die Hand, die sie kurze Zeit hält, sehr erstaunt, etwas unsicher): Ja, meine Gnädige,--ich meine allerdings, es wird mehr die Bedeutung als das Geschlecht entscheiden⁴⁴¹ (64)

Curiously, Ernst agrees that a person's sex should not determine who makes a sacrifice in a relationship. Johanna reacts surprised and unsure of the implications, but she will soon find out that he is indeed willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in their relationship.

Isaiah Berlin developed the notion of “negative” and “positive” freedom in 1958 and defined the barriers to freedom as external and internal obstructions to freedom.⁴⁴² According to him, negative liberty exists when there are no external barriers to one's liberty, i.e. one's options are not externally restricted. In contrast positive freedom refers to internal barriers such as “fears, addictions, or compulsions.”⁴⁴³ Thus, in order to be free, external as well as internal barriers need to be overcome. Nancy Hirschmann takes Berlin's notions a step further and argues from a social constructionist and feminist perspective that the external/internal dualism cannot be upheld as mutually exclusive but in fact demonstrates related problems. From a feminist perspective, it can be argued that internal barriers are also externally constructed before they are internalized as “natural” gender performances (which also holds true for men). At the same time, however, feminists must find an opportunity for agency within the social construction of external and internal, or better internalized, barriers. Hirschmann considers an awareness of the interaction

⁴⁴¹ My Translation

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 64.

⁴⁴² Nancy Hirschmann, “Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom,” in *Political Theory* (Vol. 24 No.1 February 1996, 46-67), 48.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 49.

between external and internal(ized) barriers as crucial to women's access to free choice. She cautions to create an "abstract ideal" of woman, her desires, and choices that would generalize internal barriers. In addition, internal barriers cannot be so rigid as to neglect any opportunity for women's agency under patriarchy.⁴⁴⁴ Instead, patriarchal discourses have gaps in them that provide opportunities for feminist breakthroughs. Hirschmann refers to those inconsistencies as aporia, i.e. the moment in which a discourse reaches an impasse that opens an alternative discourse (such as: Women should be worshipped, but men have the right to discipline their wives),⁴⁴⁵ which then reveals the constructedness of the original discourse. One of the key components to realizing the construction of internalized barriers lies in relationships with other women who share the same realization.

A group of Italian feminists at the University of Verona and at the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective have developed a theoretical approach to women's freedom that takes women's relationship as its core element.⁴⁴⁶ In contrast to the second wave of feminism, which emphasized the difference between men and women and promoted notions of women's groups and networks for the sake of being among women, they believe that women need to entrust themselves to other women with more authority in order to liberate themselves. They move beyond second wave arguments such as Nancy Hartsock's original standpoint theory that argues for the different experiences and knowledge(s) of men and women. Their theory makes a case for the differences among women, similar to Teresa de Lauretis⁴⁴⁷ and Sandra Harding,⁴⁴⁸ but

⁴⁴⁴ Hirschmann, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom," 56.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁴⁶ Libreria delle donne di Milano. *Wie Weibliche Freiheit entsteht. Eine Neue Politische Praxis* (1988), Trans. Traudel Sattler (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1999).

⁴⁴⁷ Lauretis de, Teresa, ed., *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

⁴⁴⁸ Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

stresses that instead of acknowledging and appreciating these differences, women need to actively draw on the differences between them. This group around the Milan Women's Collective assumes that existing differences between women such as differences in power, talent, experience, or goals can inspire other women to change their own perceptions and aspirations. Thus, women who feel that other women have what they would like to have themselves, befriend these women and learn from them. In turn, women who have what others aspire to serve as friends and mentors and gain new or unexpected insights from these interactions. If women become aware of their differences, articulate them, and work together, they develop something more and work toward freedom.⁴⁴⁹ This idea moves beyond the notion of unconditional solidarity among women, it recognizes and is based on power differences, diverse experiences and backgrounds, and differences of race and class. According to these notions, freedom does not come with autonomy or equality, but, instead, results from actively formed and nurtured relationships.

Part of this concept postulates that women experience a desire in relationships with other women who have more of something that they strive for. The goal is not to model themselves after men or to strive for the exact same things. The underlying notion is that equality does not equal freedom, and women do not strive to become like men.⁴⁵⁰ Instead, the mediation among women who are different emerges as key to freedom. Freedom thus exists, when women can follow their desires when they interact in new ways, form new knowledge, or negotiate existing beliefs—often as part of a conflict.

It can be argued that one of the aporias Johanna and Ernestine uncover in this text relates to the double role of female artists as women (in contrast to the cultural imagination of the male

⁴⁴⁹ Libreria delle donne di Milano, *Wie Weibliche Freiheit entsteht*, 177ff.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 126f.

artist). While it is possible for both Johanna and Ernestine to perform their creative work, in the cultural imagination they cannot be seen as independent artists but remain in their roles as women, i.e. as wives. This impasse points to the cultural construction of the male artist, but at the same time it allows Johanna and Ernestine, however briefly, to find an alternative to this discourse in their friendship. Their experiences and conversations uncover the social structures which impede or even foreclose their work. As artists, their identities and demands differ from those of women in conventional roles as wives and mothers. With these differences also comes the necessity to negotiate marital relationships, domestic and familial responsibilities in different ways. As part of their friendship, Johanna and Ernestine talk about their everyday life as women with creative aspirations and address more specific problems they encounter in their particular situations. For a while, these conversations enable them to move toward their creative aspirations.⁴⁵¹ The conflict related to the termination of their friendship reveals, however, that the existing structures make it difficult for them to find freedom within their intimate friendship as married women and artists.

The notion of freedom also suggests an intersection of class and sexuality. In contrast to dramas analyzed in earlier chapters, *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* does not concern itself with restricting conventional bourgeois moral codes. Ernestine's husband, as his surname "von Bornheim" suggests, stems from an upper class, and Johanna's education also suggests an upbringing more typical for upper middle class women. Curiously, Ernestine's exchange of

⁴⁵¹ In the end, they do not manage to uphold their friendship due to their vastly different attitudes concerning their identities and expectations as women and artists. Even though Johanna knows that the existing structures and her personal situation hamper her work as an artist, she still holds on a certain idealism concerning the fulfillment to be found in art. Frau v. Bornheim shows a more pessimistic attitude based on her experience as a singer. She knows that success is based on personal connections and on appearance much more than on talent alone. See Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 54.

romantic letters with a married man, never leads to the scandal that one might expect. Instead, Ernestine resists notions of bourgeois morality concerning women's sexuality (including motherhood) and focuses on her own career as actress/singer. She defends notions of women's independence and creative work outside of a conventional marriage and encourages Johanna to remain unmarried. Ernestine demands equality as can be seen in her discussion with Ernst about sacrifice in a relationship; and this equality seems to extend to sexuality as well. The notion of freedom is removed from women's issues concerning the right to work or to gainful employment; instead, it deals with women's role and position in relation to men.⁴⁵² In contrast to Hilde, a pastor's daughter, whose fate is inseparable from bourgeois notions of women's sexuality, both Ernestine and Johanna are less restricted by issues concerning sexuality.⁴⁵³

Croissant-Rust's female artists work toward gaining independence and freedom. Johanna tries to achieve this by functioning within the structures and negotiating her role as care-taker, wife, and artist. She holds on to the idea that she can find space, time, and artistic freedom without abandoning her rather domestic setting. In contrast, Ernestine is convinced that she has to free herself from existing structures, and she is willing to lose her marriage for her career. While Johanna takes a somewhat moderate stance, Ernestine moves to the extreme, ultimately,

⁴⁵²Renate Möhrmann notes that the emancipatory interests of aristocratic women often concerned their intellectual equality. See *Die andere Frau. Emanzipationsansätze deutscher Schriftstellerinnen im Vorfeld der Achtundvierziger Revolution* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977), 92f.

⁴⁵³Eckart Conze and Monika Wienfort note that research concerned with aristocratic women is still a relatively new endeavor. So far, most of the work has focused on women's role in politics and social services as these were socially acceptable public arenas. See "Einleitung. Themen und Perspektiven historischer Adelforschung Um 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in *Adel und Moderne. Deutschland im Europäischen Vergleich im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2004, 1-16), 7. Wienfort points to the diversity within the group of aristocratic women, which includes women at court, nuns, as well as women who would care for and educate children in private households. See Monika Wienfort, „Gesellschaftsdamen, Gutsfrauen und Rebellinnen. Adelige Frauen in Deutschland 1890-1939,“ in *Adel und Moderne. Deutschland im Europäischen Vergleich im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2004, 181-203), 181.

however, neither approach is successful independently. The relationship between the two artists appears as a potential alternative, but is affected by their marital relationships—the text shows numerous hostile interactions between Ernestine and Ernst. The failure of their friendship points to the difficulties for these two artists to interact as artists and women within the existing structures.

The Drama's Soldiers: Discussing Gender and Genre

Hans Christian Andersen's tale *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* was published almost seven decades before Croissant-Rust's text in 1838. In a reflection on her life in *Die Brücke*, Anna Croissant-Rust remembers reading Andersen's fairy tales as a little girl:

Daneben verschlang ich die Märchen von Andersen und konnte mir nichts Lieberes denken, als an einem richtigen Schneetag an meinem kleinen Tisch auf dem kleinen Kindersopha zu sitzen und zu lesen.⁴⁵⁴

Using the title of a famous tale for her own drama comments not only on the author's familiarity with Andersen, but also provides further insight into her critical engagement with the genre of the artist-drama and issues of gender. Curiously, Maria Tatar notes that Andersen wrote this text at a time in which he was concerned with artists' struggles and the "conflict between life and art."⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ My Translation:

Besides that I indulged in Andersen's fairy tales und on a really snowy afternoon, I could not think of anything I held more fondly that sit and read at my little table on a small child couch.

Anna Croissant-Rust, „Rückschau,“ in *Die Brücke*. (December 1912, 71-77), 72.

⁴⁵⁵ See Maria Tatar, ed, *The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen*. (New York: Norton, 2008), 223
This conflict also surfaces in Andersen's novel *Only a Fiddler*.

In Andersen's tale, twenty-five soldiers are made out of tin, but while all have rifles and stand at attention on two feet, there is not enough tin left for the last soldier, and he ends up with only one leg. The young boy, who received the tin soldiers as a birthday gift, unpacks them from their box and lines them up on the table. On the table is also a castle, and in front of it stands a beautiful dancer made of paper. She draws the soldier's attention immediately as she stretches her arms and lifts one leg so high that the soldier cannot see it and assumes that she, just like him, has only one leg. The tin soldier admires the dancer and thinks of her as a perfect wife for himself. On the next day, the tin soldier is placed on the window sill, and a wind gust blows him out of the window. A journey begins in which he is placed in a boat made of newspaper and sent along in the rainwater, he is followed by a rat, almost drowns, is swallowed by a fish and then found in its stomach by a cook, and finally returned to his owner. Soon after, however, the boy picks up the tin soldier and throws him into the stove, where he begins to melt. When the stove door opens again, the dancer is blown in by wind and burns to ashes immediately. The next day, the housekeeper finds the remnants of the tin soldier in form of a tin heart, and a burnt bow that the dancer wore on her dress.

A look at the plot of the tale reveals Croissant-Rust's allusions to Andersen, and suggests her attempt to work with the artist-drama genre in a different way. The male protagonist, Ernst, who also had a brief career as a soldier, is nicknamed "der Standhafte Zinnsoldat" (The Steadfast Tin Soldier) by Ernestine von Bornheim, because he has been so patient and brave. Ernst, as the drama's steadfast soldier, has both of his legs but suffers from a serious eye condition. The romantic interests of the two steadfast soldiers make a comparison particularly interesting. The tale's soldier has only one leg and falls in love with a dancer who depends on her legs; in the drama, Ernst suffers from an eye condition and falls in love with a writer who depends on her

eyes. In both stories, the male figures suffer from a condition that is exactly opposed to the women's occupation. Comparing the relationship between male and female figures in both texts implies a deep disconnect between male and female protagonists, that is to say between female artists and their male companions. The tin soldier and the dancer never exchange a word and his attraction to her is, at least partially, based on his assumption that she has only one leg and would therefore make a good wife for him. A full understanding, recognition, and appreciation of the women's occupations and talents is lacking both in Andersen as well as in Croissant-Rust's text. As much as the tin soldier fails to acknowledge that the dancer would need two legs to dance, Ernst's blindness is a comment on his inability to fully grasp Johanna's talents and desires.

In the tale, however, there is a second layer of misconception in that the soldier thinks that the beautiful woman can dance, but, just like him, she is immobile. Thus for both the tin soldier and the ballerina, even though their occupations imply movement, both are incapable of moving on their own volition. Underlying here could be Andersen's own struggles with upward social mobility in a hierarchically organized country that appear in many of his tales.⁴⁵⁶ Jack Zipes points to the numerous discourses on domination in Andersen's tales as well as to the notion of essentialist ideology that resists shifting gender conventions or alterations to other existing power structures inherent in his contemporary society.⁴⁵⁷ Consistent with this is that the tin soldier is controlled by chance events (such as wind gusts or the arbitrary actions of the young boy) and accepts his fate without seeking help when he has a chance to do so. In the drama, Ernst does not accept his fate but rather decides to end his life instead of suffering from a deteriorating eye condition. The second layer of misconception in the drama lies in Ernst's

⁴⁵⁶Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion. The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (New York, London: Routledge, 2006 (2nd edition)), 83f.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

assumption that Johanna will agree to a double suicide. Johanna, however, resists his fatal plans and escapes a fate that her husband intended to impose on her life. In contrast to the tale in which the soldier assumes that the ballerina is a dancer, Ernst seems to assume stagnation in Johanna when she is in fact moving, i.e. trying to find the freedom to write and to follow her artistic aspirations.

The fairy tale ends with death. The child who owns the tin soldier throws him into the stove, and the dancer is caught by a wind gust and blown into the oven where she burns as well—leaving behind in the ashes, next to the soldier’s tin heart, a bow from her dress. Besides insinuating Johanna’s looming fate, Andersen’s story also refers to a different level that relates more ironically to the private life of the drama’s author. The male soldier, who is part of a tradition, leaves behind his heart, while the female dancer is made of paper and not meant to last—a parallel to Croissant-Rust as the much-to-soon forgotten artist, a parallel that she may have perceived as one that women artists all too often share.

The interesting intersections between Andersen’s tale and Croissant-Rust’s drama are accompanied and further enriched by a reference to a third genre and a third soldier. At the beginning of the drama, Johanna publishes her first novel with the title “Skaramuz”. Scaramuccia is one of the stock characters of the *Commedia dell’Arte*⁴⁵⁸ since its beginnings in

⁴⁵⁸ Tom Cheesman addresses the influence of the *commedia dell’arte* in Germany, and sees its initial influence around the late sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century when the original figure of Pulcinella appeared more frequently, it deeply affected the German Hanswurst figure. See “Performing Omnivores in Germany circa 1700” In *Studies in the Commedia dell’Arte*, eds. David George and Christopher Gossip (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993). Martin Green and John Swan in *The Triumph of Pierrot. The Commedia dell’Arte and the Modern Imagination* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986) see a revival of the *commedia* in Europe between 1890 and 1930 as part of the era of modernism (7). They consider the movement of symbolism as one of the driving forces that motivated new interest in the *commedia*. Around the turn of the century, Munich, close to Croissant-Rust’s hometown, was a cultural center of Germany, besides Berlin, and a place that attracted many artists and the idea of the *commedia* (Green and Swan 30). Green and Swan point to the recurrence

the middle of the sixteenth century. The character presents a bragging soldier who is at the same time a coward.⁴⁵⁹ The physical description of this stock character shares some features with Ernst and the tin soldier. Besides describing him as agile, Rudlin states that the figure is: “[...] short-sighted, deaf in one ear, and had one shoulder entirely withered. He was tall and very upright and remained so until extreme old age, and even then stooped but little. [...]”⁴⁶⁰ The play’s three soldier figures: Ernst, Andersen’s tin soldier, and Johanna’s Skaramuz provide more insights into Croissant-Rust’s presentation of masculinity, and her commentary on contemporary gender conventions as they draw on conflicting and ambiguous notions of masculinity and its effects on women around the turn of the century.

Numerous texts of the time allude not only to the changing role of women in society and culture but also, and even more so, imply a crisis of masculinity. Early best sellers of the new century were texts such as Otto Weiniger’s *Geschlecht und Charakter (Sex and Character)*, (1903) or Möbuis’ *Über den Psychologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes* (1900). Referring to biological and psychological differences, Weiniger attempts to inscribe intellectual as well as moral superiority into the male body and mind and warns of the impending deterioration in case of changing roles. It appears that absurd images of inversion or perversion of gender roles became more prominent⁴⁶¹ and reflected the fear that stronger and more powerful women automatically result in weaker and less powerful men—a development which would jettison not only national

of Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbine figures in literary texts of the time and see both the stylization as well as the inherent rebelliousness in some figures as reasons for their reappearance (32f).

⁴⁵⁹ John Rudlin, *Commedia dell’Arte. An Actor’s Handbook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 152.

⁴⁶⁰ Rudlin, *Commedia dell’Arte*, 152.

⁴⁶¹ The turn of the century shows this discourse of changing gender roles and the fears and insecurities associated with it in many satirical and humoristic approaches to the topic.

See G. Bötticher, ed., *Vom Über-Weiblichen. Heitere Glossen zur Frauenfrage* (Erlangen, 1906). *Preußisches Jahrbuch* (Bd 112, Juni 1903 pp. 407-413).

culture but even the nation itself.⁴⁶² In his collection of poems, satires, and short stories, Bötticher and others voice their distress with regard to women's emancipation, women's work, and the potential of men's loss of masculinity as part of these gender perversions. Both Ernst Engel and J. Trojan contribute poems in which they foresee a time when men will take care of the household, and, if nature keeps up with cultural changes, will also be the one who give birth.⁴⁶³ The title of Trojan's poem *Triumphlied der Frauenrechtlerinnen (The Feminists' Paean)* leaves no doubt about the effect of women's emancipation on masculinity and men's changing role in society. Along with this, the male body undergoes a new kind of scrutiny, and images of feeble and sick male bodies, often in relation to homosexuality or "sexual perversion," appear, and contrast the strong and virile man with the weak, sick, or decadent man.⁴⁶⁴

In contrast to the fears that are expressed in literature, satires, or medical treatises, stands a conception of masculinity related to the healthy man and soldier. As soldiers, men were supposed to represent a healthy and fit body. The integration of gymnastics into military training from the French Revolution onward, was mostly driven by the idea that strenuous exercise would prevent effeminacy and instead foster the development of masculine strength and perseverance.⁴⁶⁵ In addition, ideals of beauty based on Greek sculptures, such as self-control, power, virility, and proportion were introduced with lasting effects by Johann Joachim

⁴⁶² Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich*, 40.

⁴⁶³ Ernst Engel, "Den Frauen Heil" J. Trojan „Triumphlied der Frauenrechtlerinnen“ G. Bötticher *Vom Überweiblichen* (Erlangen, 1906) 118-121.

⁴⁶⁴ See Andrea Kottow, *Der Kranke Mann: Medizin und Geschlecht in der Literatur um 1900* (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag, 2006). Perceptions of decadence developed predominantly during the last decade of the century and stood in stark contrast to ideal conceptions of masculinity. Decadent men were seen as morally and physically sick, as degenerative, overly sensitive and nervous (hysterical), and as a challenge to masculinity and male sexuality. In addition, the increased visibility of androgyny drew more attention to the crossing of gender barriers by men as well as by women.

⁴⁶⁵ George Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 44f.

Winckelmann in the latter half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶⁶ The construction of an ideal modern masculinity was a reaction against countertypes, according to Mosse Jews or homosexuals.⁴⁶⁷ Women and femininity served as a foil and mediator in the construction of masculinity as well. On the one hand, women's love would drive men's development toward manliness; on the other hand their feminine characteristic set them apart. Mosse summarizes that:

[...] the construction of modern masculinity defined itself partly in contrast to woman, who was subordinate yet essential partner, with her quite different beauty and fundamentally passive nature. The demands she made upon man, moreover, were thought to strengthen his masculinity.⁴⁶⁸

The masculinity of the soldiers in Croissant-Rust's drama stands in contrast to the fit and virile ideal of masculinity and is presented as rather passive. Ernst depends on his wife due to his illness, Andersen's soldier repeatedly falls victim to fate and never gets to articulate his thoughts and desires, and Johanna's soldier is a coward and pretender. The drama thus points to the ambiguity inherent in gender conventions that becomes more and more visible in the last decades of the century.

The ambiguity of the soldier figures surfaces particularly in the presentation of Ernst in that this figure stages Croissant-Rust's play on gender stereotypes and conventions. His presentation as a man with a physical disability dependent on Johanna as the bread-winning and successful author results at some moments in an almost satirical reflection on gender performance that perverts the culturally constructed dichotomy. Fräulein Nothnagel stands for a clear gender dichotomy, in which Johanna's work and Ernst's inability to work due to his illness do not align. She introduces Ernst into the play and to the audience as a rather undesirable match.

⁴⁶⁶ See Mosse, *Image of Man*, 29.

⁴⁶⁷ See *Ibid.*, 56ff.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

Fräulein Nothnagel (nachspottend): „A scheener Herr“ und sieht nix! „a feiner Herr“ und hat kei Stellung! Den hat das Fräulein Nichte leicht fangen können!⁴⁶⁹

Ernst's eye condition keeps him from holding a full-time position. Johanna worries about him and also hesitates to marry him until the final act. By presenting him as the passive partner in this relationship, who was an easy catch for Johanna, Fräulein Nothnagel challenges his role in the drama from the beginning.

Frau von Bornheim conceived of the nickname for Ernst, whom she hardly seems to take seriously. In her presence, Johanna informs Ernst of his moniker:

Johanna: Weißt du Schatz, wie Dich Frau Bornheim getauft hat, weil Du so tapfer ausgehalten und gewartet hast?—Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat!⁴⁷⁰

This perceived patience also implies Ernst's passivity. In addition, while Ernestine suspects that Johanna is secretly working on her writing, she presents Ernst as naive and calls him a “clueless angel” whose opinion does not matter:

Frau von Bornheim: Ach Sie! Sie werden gar nicht gefragt. Sie sind ja immer der ahnungslose Engel! Ihnen würde es Johanna auch kaum sagen! Gestehen Sie's doch mir ein, Johanna.⁴⁷¹

There is, however, another side to Ernst. Although Ernst appears as rather weak for most of the play, Johanna recounts a dream, “as enchanting as a church service” that turns him into a Christ-like figure. In this dream, a powerful energy emanates from Ernst, while he quietly

⁴⁶⁹ My Translation:

Fräulein Nothnagel (scoffing after her): “A nice man” and can't see anything, a “sophisticated man” and has no job. Wasn't too hard for miss niece to catch that one.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 3.

⁴⁷⁰ My Translation:

Johanna: You know my dear, what Frau Bornheim christened you, because you have endured so bravely and waited—the steadfast Tin Soldier.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 23.

⁴⁷¹ My Translation:

Frau von Bornheim: oh you! You are not even asked! You are always the clueless angel! Johanna would hardly tell you! Admit it to me, Johanna.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 23.

endures a bleeding wound. This hyperbolic recollection of her dream connects back to allusions to the fairy tale genre, combined with allusions to a biblical story.

Johanna: Nicht lachen, Ernst. Mußt mich nicht auslachen. Es war so schön! (zögernd)—wie ein Gottesdienst. Wir waren in einem grossen Garten, ich und viele junge Mädchen. Und der Garten war ganz voll Sonne und Blumengeruch. Ich ging allein und die Blumen reichten mir fast bis zur Hüfte. Plötzlich standest du vor mir. Du warst gekleidet wie ein Priester,—ja es war ein langes Purpurgewand und ein Juwelenband lag um deine Stirn, und ein Glanz ging von dir aus, daß ich neiderknien mußte; die Blumen schlugen fast über mir zusammen. Da legtest Du mir leise die Hände auf und es ging ein Schlag durch meinen Körper, ein sausendes Glück, ein unendlicher Schmerz. Deine Worten klangen wie ein Schwur und aus deinem Herzen sickerten Blutstropfen. Da stand ich auf und küßte deine Wunde, Du nahmst mich bei der Hand und wir schritten still durch den schönen Garten. Deine Wunde blutete fort und fort—⁴⁷²

The dream begins with a charming image of Johanna, among other girls, in a beautiful garden full of flowers and sunshine, when suddenly Ernst appears in a priest robe. Ernst's presentation becomes more ambiguous in that his touch brings both unspeakable joy and unending pain. In addition, this recollection foreshadows a darker side of Ernst when his words sound like an oath and blood is dripping from an open wound. The fairy-tale-like beginning takes an unexpected turn when it is interlaced with Ernst's Christ-like properties and suffering. Johanna describes this final image of her dream as a fatal one in that Ernst keeps losing blood that is dripping from his heart. This later image of Ernst stands in stark contrast to his previously described

⁴⁷² My Translation:

Johanna: Don't laugh, Ernst. Don't laugh at me. It was so nice, like a (hesitant) service. We were in a big garden, I and many girls and the garden was full of sun and smelled of flowers. I walked by myself and the flowers almost reached up to my hip. Suddenly you stood in front of me, dressed like a priest.—yes, it was a long purple robe and a jewelry band across your forehead and a brilliance emanated from you that made me knelt down; the flowers almost closed above my head. Silently, you put your hands on me and a blast went through my body, a stirring joy, an unending pain. Your words sounded like an oath, and drops of blood dripped from your hear. This is when I stood up and kissed your wound, you took my hand and we strode through the garden. Your wound kept bleeding on and on—
Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 49.

characteristics. While this discrepancy creates on the one hand a somewhat comical effect that implies the exaggeration of both presentations, on the other hand it also implies that the relationship between Ernst and Johanna is doomed to fail.

Ernst begins to step out of his role as a steadfast tin soldier when he decides to take matters in his own hands. Aware of the effects of this illness on Johanna's freedom to work on her writing, Ernst plans a double suicide that will take his life and that of his wife. Not long after Johanna's dream, Ernst speaks to her about his own fatal plans that would end their lives. It appears that this lethal scenario is not new to Johanna since she knows exactly what he refers to—a description of their final night. During this night, he plans to kindle the lights, drink wine, and fill their room with flowers so that they will drown in their love before slowly “falling asleep”.

Griese: [...] Ich sehe Dich tapfer und so voll Liebe; ich weiß jetzt, daß du bei mir bleibst und mit mir gehst, auch durchs Ärgste. Ich kenne keine Sorge für die Zukunft, weil ich leben und glücklich sein will mit dir, jetzt. Verstehst du das?— (Leiser.) Und wenn es nimmer geht, dann kommt für mich die letzte Nacht, dann, Lieb, zünden wir alle Lichter an, der schwerste Wein muß funkeln und Blumen müssen das ganze Zimmer füllen, und wir lieben uns und Raum und Zeit und Sorgen versinken; es muß ein seliges Hindämmern werden, ein Schauen in unendliche Fernen, Musik und glühende Farben—es wird schön sein, Lieb, ein leises, liches Verlöschen (nimmt Johanna in die Arme.) Weißt du, was ich meine?

Johanna: ja, unsere letzte Nacht.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷³ My Translation:

I see you being brave and full of love; I know now, that you will stay with me even through the worst. No longer do I know any worries about the future, because I want to live and be happy with you, now. Do you understand that?—(more quietly) And if it cannot go on any longer, then the last night will come for me, then, my dear, will we kindle the lights, the darkest wine must glisten and flowers must fill the entire room, and we love each other und time and space and worries drown; it must blessedly drip off, a view of indefinite distance, music, and glowing colors—it will be beautiful, dear, a quite, light expiration (takes Johanna in his arms). Do you know what I mean? Johanna: yes, our last night. Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 48f.

The final act is set in a room in their house, indicating that the couple is now married. Ernst's eye condition has worsened, and he sits on a divan contemplating his situation and its consequences for Johanna. He returns to the theme of freedom, this time, however, freedom relates to death.

Griese: Deine Natur schreit nach Freiheit und du bist geknebelt. Meine Krankheit, ich, die Verhältnisse, all das hat dich unfrei gemacht, du hast geschwiegen.

Johanna: Ernst, ich bitte dich, nicht heute.

Griese: Laß mich, Hanna, gerade heute. Glaubst du, ich hörte dich nicht manchmal schluchzen des Nachts? Ich habe mit mir gerungen und gewünscht, ein anderer möchte kommen und dich lieben, den du liebst, der dich frei machen könnte, dich erlösen. [...] ⁴⁷⁴

Ernst's motives become more and more ambiguous in these final moments. He moves from using his illness as a motive for his death to suggesting that he is liberating her from her current situation. He has made up his mind that the time for his earthly departure has arrived. While Johanna is begging him to wait longer, he is determined to go and to take her with him:

Griese: [...]Erinnerst du dich (Geheimnisvoll) was wir von der letzten Nacht sprachen? Johanna?—Ich werde blind werden!—Nicht weinen, Lieb, nicht schreien, sei stark!⁴⁷⁵

[...]

Griese: [...]—willst du mein Weib? (Es wird fast ganz dunkel) Du zitterst? Komm! Ich erlöse dich!⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ My Translation:

Griese: Your nature screams for freedom and you are gagged. My illness, I, the conditions, all that has made you unfree, you remained silent. Johanna: Ernst, I beg you, not today. Griese: Let me Hanna, exactly today. Do you think I did not hear you cry some nights? I struggled und wished that someone else would come and love you, someone you love, who can make you free, release you.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 77.

⁴⁷⁵ My Translation:

Griese: [...] do you remember (secretively) when we talked about our last night? Johanna—I will be blind!—Don't cry, dear, don't scream, be strong.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 78.

⁴⁷⁶ My Translation:

Do you want to my wife (it turns almost entirely dark) You are shaking—come, I will release you!

In the end, he decides to kill himself and to accept her refusal to die with him. Following the previous conversation, he goes for a walk and commits suicide when he returns to the house. Johanna is with the Hellers when she finds her husband who suffocated himself with Chloroform. Earlier in the play Johanna had a conversation with Frau von Bornheim in which Ernestine talks about her numerous affairs and compares her former male lovers to corpses. She comments that although she has seen many men “die,” due her termination of affairs, she is starving for more corpses. Johanna takes this image literally and compares a burial of Ernst to an interment of her aspirations.⁴⁷⁷

Both Colvin (2003) and Schmid (2000) point to the presentation of Ernst as a Christ-like figure and stress his willingness to bring the ultimate sacrifice, his suicide. They read this as a reversal of male sacrifice for the freedom of a female artist. While I agree for the most part with their interpretation, it has to be taken into consideration that his original plan was a double suicide that would bring an end Johanna’s life as well. He did not conceive of this as the ultimate sacrifice for his wife but as salvation from his illness as well as from his dependence on his wife. His death, however, does not appear to bring the anticipated freedom, instead, it feels like a death sentence for Johanna.

Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 79.

⁴⁷⁷ See Croissant-Rust, *Zinnsoldat*, 50f.

Conclusion

The drama explores women artists' desire for freedom and independence and different ways to negotiate that freedom within friendships and conjugal relationships. By presenting two female artists and their husbands, Croissant-Rust introduces not only women artists' different approaches to their work, but also provides a glimpse of the effects and mutual interaction between women's public work, their friendship, and their male partners.

Ernestine serves as a foil to Johanna who desperately tries to reconcile domestic, familial, and conjugal responsibilities with her creative writing. In contrast, Ernestine believes more and more in the necessity of independence for the development and recognition of her creative potential and talents. Both artists suggest that freedom from the restricting expectations of gender conventions could lead to more productive work, and it appears that they find a space for this in and through their friendship. Hirschmann and the women of the Milan Bookstore Collective propose friendships and alliances amongst women as way to discover and realize freedom in that these interactions allow them to disassociate themselves from goals, experiences, and expectations defined by a male-dominated culture. Learning from and communicating with other women makes it possible for women to define their goals and to support each other in the process of working toward their aspirations. In the case of Johanna and Ernestine, this means mutual inspiration and conversations around the meaning of art and the significance of marital relationships. Johanna exerts herself in her attempts to follow her creative talents and passions within the existing structures; Ernestine decides to break free from those structures and to seek a new career outside the restraints of marriage. Croissant-Rust's text comments not only on the different approaches to women's emancipation put forward by the opposing wings of the women's movement, but also on their incompatibility with the needs and desires of women

artists. Neither solution proves sustainable. In contrast, both women found creative space and inspiration in their friendship. I argue that the drama suggests that this friendship is in fact the space in which the two creative women could find a space that provides them the freedom they need. Yet, ultimately, this relationship cannot function within the given social and cultural structures. I agree with Heike Schmid that Croissant-Rust wrote a rather courageous drama that questions and reflects on different forms of women artists' partnerships,⁴⁷⁸ but I would add that the author also reflects on barriers to freedom as well as on the genre of the artist-drama.

References to Andersen's tale and to the figure of Scaramuccia from the *commedia dell'arte* are curious aspects of this drama and add additional levels of complexity to this text. The artist-drama thus presents three soldier figures that appear rather counter-intuitive to cultural imaginations of the fit and healthy soldier. Croissant-Rust appears to employ these figures as a comment on constructions of masculinity and the anxiety around changing gender conventions of the time. These cultural ambiguities with regard to masculinity and femininity seem to make any negotiation of women's role in relation to men even more difficult. By presenting multiple rather passive male characters, one male suicide, and two, at least temporarily successful, women artist, Croissant-Rust insinuates that her drama is also a play on changing and unstable and gender expectations.

In the end, it seems that Croissant-Rust leaves room for interpretation, and one could argue that Ernst's suicide is as much a sacrifice for his wife as it is deliverance from a troubling gender performance. In turn, when Ernst equates death with freedom, the suicide that was supposed to bring freedom appears to terminate, or at least suspend, Johanna's work as a writer. While Schmid and Colvin suggest that the drama explores how much freedom and independence

⁴⁷⁸ Schmid, *Gefallene Engel*, 185.

a woman artist needs, I would add that it also explores a more essential issue by asking where, i.e. within what structures or relationships women can find freedom. It points to the potential of friendship among women artists as a space in which they can define their own and nurture each other's aspirations but simultaneously acknowledges the limitations of this model within a patriarchal society that first and foremost sees women in their roles as wives.

Conclusion

A celebrated pianist, Liv Stein had a long and successful career. Suddenly, she ends her career and finds herself depressed and lonely, mourning the death of her estranged son with whom she had bonded again during the last stage of his terminal illness. Until Henri's death, she had never hesitated to take on new engagements and now, buried under feelings of guilt and questioning her life as artist, mother, ex-wife, and friend, she distances herself from her music. Liv Stein is Nino Haratischwili's artist-protagonist in the drama *Liv Stein*⁴⁷⁹ that received the *Autorenpreis des Heidelberger Stückemarkts* in 2008. The public interest in and recognition of this drama in Germany is evident in current performances of the play in many theaters throughout the country. Similar to the texts analyzed in this dissertation project, the female artist-protagonist deals with her identity as artist, woman, wife, and mother. In contrast to the texts introduced here, the female artist-protagonist has abandoned her work by the time we meet her. Instead, she reflects on her career and her art, her current situation as an ageing woman, and on the consequences of decisions she made during her career, such as divorcing her husband and sending her son to a boarding school. With its many unanticipated turns and startling end born out of the relationship between Liv and a young woman who demands piano lessons in return for providing the mourning mother with information about her dead son, this drama touches on many topics analyzed in my research project. This dramatic piece provides not only evidence that the genre of the artist-drama remains current, but it also indicates that the woman artist continues to be a figure in our cultural imagination that struggles with relationships, marriage, motherhood and their interdependence with her life as an artist.

⁴⁷⁹ Nino Haratischwilli, „Liv Stein,“ in *Zwei Stücke: Georgia. Liv Stein* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 2008).

By the end of the eighteenth century, discourses on the artist became more prominent and proliferated in the nineteenth century. They incited not only the development of artist-dramas but of artist-novels and novellas and are also closely linked to the *Bildungsroman*. Tzvetan Todorov argues that recurring speech acts or discourses (and their transformations) and discourse communities produce literary genres.⁴⁸⁰ This is to say that the increasing interest in the life and work of the artist motivated the development of genres concerned with the theme of the artist.

From a feminist perspective, it is particularly interesting to consider the institutionalization of genres in that they create “‘horizons of expectations’ for readers and ‘models of writing’ for authors.”⁴⁸¹ The constructedness of genres thus provides opportunities to investigate their underlying belief structures. Todorov argues that “genres, like any other institution, reveal the constitutive traits of the society to which they belong.”⁴⁸² The developments of genres are thus not neutral but incorporate a culture’s discourses that transport value systems and belief structures. Amy Devitt’s review essay on genre refers to Mikhail Bakhtin’s⁴⁸³ contribution in the field of literary theory and asserts that the renewed interest in literary genre studies since the 1990s is driven by the notion that genres, due to their social nature, are not static and descriptive forms but dynamic, and that they not only represent something but also do

⁴⁸⁰ See Tzvetan Todorov, “The Origin of Genres,” in *New Literary History*. Vol 8, No.1 (Autumn 1976, 159-170), 165, 169.

⁴⁸¹ Todorov, “The Origin of Genres,” 163.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴⁸³ Bakhtin concerned himself with the social aspects of the genre and also with interactions between genres. He proposed that genres have two orientations. Their external orientation relates to the external world and particular culture within which a text finds its place. Their internal orientation relates to the genre’s conception of that world or its point of view of a cultural reality. Thus, genres are inherently social in that they develop out of a certain time and place but also form place and time. See Mikhail. M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text,” in *Soviet Studies in Literature*. Vol 14, No.1 (Winter 1977/78, 3-33).

something.⁴⁸⁴ In the case of the artist-drama, it can be argued that the institutionalization of the genre thus both reflects and produces cultural conceptualizations and expectations concerning the creative conflicts of artists. It generates an artist archetype based on narratives around the artist's struggle with life between the ivory tower and the sacred fount⁴⁸⁵ on narratives of the artist and his muse, and on his relation to society at large.

The intimate connection between a genre's obscured ideology and the social and cultural structures and contexts that promote and facilitate its manifestation become evident in the current approach to artist-dramas. Uwe Japp asserts that texts in this genre present an artist-protagonist and effectively stage a conflict concerning the creative protagonist.⁴⁸⁶ In addition, the conflict has to evolve out of the distinct characteristics of artists and their art.⁴⁸⁷ He considers the artist an exceptional being, setting himself apart due to talent. Although he acknowledges the need to include lesser known texts if they are interesting in terms of their interpretations of the artist-problem, their dramatic realizations, and their relations to other texts in the genre,⁴⁸⁸ his overview of German artist-dramas does not include women's texts. The exclusion of women from the genre cannot be ignored; it asks feminist literary critics to call the genre's ideological conceptualization and its production of knowledge into question.

This project, then, also aimed to investigate the current definition of the genre of the artist-drama. Highly aware of the limited sample of women writers' texts analyzed here as well as of the fact that the texts offer many more opportunities for critical readings, I refrain from

⁴⁸⁴ See Amy Devitt, "Genre, Genres, and the Teaching of Genre" (Review), in: *CCC* 47.4. (December 1996, 605-615), 606.

⁴⁸⁵ See Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 18.

⁴⁸⁶ See Japp, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama*, 2.

⁴⁸⁷ See *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁸⁸ See *Ibid.*, 15.

suggesting that women writers as such subvert or challenge the genre. However, while being equally mindful of the notion that genres and canons are constructed and in turn construct and reflect an ideology of gender (as well as other analytical categories such as race, class, or sexuality) and of gendered concepts (such as the artist), I assert that critical readings of the selected texts provide new insights and provoke a reconsideration of the genre's current conceptualization.

The texts analyzed in this dissertation produce a new kind of knowledge in that they present different artist-conflicts. Curiously, only Sarah Colvin (2003) has read *Hilde Brandt*, *Helene*, and *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* as artist-dramas instead of as women dramas. Japp's definition of the artist-drama develops out of the notion that the artist is an exceptional being struggling with his (or her) talent. My analysis of the dramas argues that women artists are confronted with many different struggles—less due to their talent and more due to the interdependence of gender constructions and gender conventions. The conflicts then, do not evolve out of their work as artists but out of their identity as women and artists.

Susanne Kord cautions that merely adding women's texts to a genre's canon could mean that they will be "analyzed in inappropriate contexts" resulting in "an analysis, which will invariably result in the judgment of women's literature as comparatively inferior."⁴⁸⁹ She contends that there is a "lack of neutral criteria for an evaluation of women's writing" and that the traditional valuing of texts as "good" or "bad" makes it easy to discard texts into the latter category.⁴⁹⁰ Thus, in order to argue for a renewed recognition of these texts, their contributions and alternative approaches to the genre have to be considered. In the case of these artist-dramas,

⁴⁸⁹ Susanne Kord, "Performing Genders: Three Plays on the Power of Women," in *Monatshefte*, Vol. 86, No.1 (1994, 95-115), 109.

⁴⁹⁰ See *Ibid.*, 104.

it can be argued that on a conceptual level, these texts put into question conventional artist-narratives about the artist's creative conflicts and point to a new set of conflicts and problems around women's artist-identity, or the lack of opportunity to develop one. With regard to the construction of gender, these dramas call attention to the interdependency of femininity and masculinity and stage the limitations of female artists resulting from this mutual reciprocity. The selected dramas deal with femininity as much as they deal with masculinity and its effects on the female artist. While they voice contemporary concerns that women could appear sexually available or unfeminine, they also convey the even bigger concern that women artists' actions could undermine or destabilize notions of masculinity.

By exposing and investigating discourses in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artist-dramas focused on conflicts that impede or interfere with women's creative work, my critical rereadings of the plays confronts the hidden ideology of the genre. Uwe Japp's comprehensive study of the German artist-drama (2004) postulates discussions about art, generational conflicts, lack of patrons, lack of or unrecognized talent, and the artist's personality, as typical aspects of the genre's repertoire.⁴⁹¹ The crisis often caused by this "disproportion of talent and life," as initiated by Goethe's *Torquato Tasso*, relates to the notion of the artist as exceptional. Curiously, Japp notes that the artist's talent affects life in unpredictable ways in that it can bring joy, endangerment, or obliteration.⁴⁹² Based on the analyses in this project, I argue that we have to look at women artists' conflicts or crises from a different perspective. The cause and effect relation between talent and life and their proportional relation is less clear. Oftentimes, we see "life" affecting talent and its development; the interdependence, then, of many factors that shape and impinge on the life of the female artist affect her talent and work in significantly

⁴⁹¹ See Japp, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama*, 263.

⁴⁹² See *Ibid.*, 2.

different ways. Sonja Dehning (2000) and Suzanne Jones (1991)⁴⁹³ have noted that fictional representations often point to the incompatibility of creative women's identities as woman and artist, an insurmountable incongruity that often results in a termination of her creative endeavors. In my analyses of the dramas, I hope to have shown that the conflicts that keep female artists from their work do not only arise from overt expectations related to motherhood and wifedom. Instead, my readings also uncover issues of masculinity as well as discourses on the male artist, the capitalist market, and prostitution as part of their futile situation. All four dramas allude to the interdependency of femininity and masculinity and its interference with women artists' capacity to follow their artistic ambitions or to continue their career paths. The texts assert that expectations and conventions of a patriarchal society limit or exhaust women's opportunities to develop their talents and to showcase them publicly.

Mirjam in *Johannes Herkner* is not an artist manqué; we cannot be sure that she even has the potential to be an artist. What becomes clear, however, is that the male dominated artist community and its androcentric discourses foreclose her access to the artist-community and to an artist-identity. Both female figures in this text remain in their roles as model, muse, and supporters of the male artist and intellectual. Elsa Porges-Bernstein employs this image of an exclusively male artist-community to suggest its stagnation and repetitiveness in that the son becomes a mirror image of his father and represents the next generation as a mere duplication of the previous generation. This stagnation helps to enforce not only a privileged access to the

⁴⁹³ See Sonja Dehning, *Tanz der Feder. Künstlerische Produktivität in Romanen von Autorinnen um 1900* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000). Suzanne Jones, *Writing the Woman Artist. Essays on Poetics, Politics, and Portraiture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

world of art but presents static gender roles and bourgeois values. As a result, the male artist appears as restricted in his position as the women in their roles as model/muse.

In contrast, *Hilde Brandt* presents an actress who is committed to her art, and though she has only experienced a mediocre career so far, she believes in her talent and eventually receives an opportunity to showcase her artistic aptitude. On her way toward the long-anticipated performance, Marie Itzerott's protagonist encounters a wide variety of overlapping discourses that affect her chances to realize her full potential. Discourses on contemporary theater practices intersect with discourses on consumption, money, and the economic man as well as with discourses on prostitution. The overwhelming presence of these discourses and their effects on the female artists are implied by the lack of any stage-performance by the actress. Therefore, we never see the artist at work and only get a glimpse of the issues that first impede her work and then bring her to commit suicide. Instead, the male patron's need to assert his masculinity takes center stage. What makes this drama so compelling is exactly this contrast between Hilde's unflinching determination, conviction, and belief in her artist-identity and Leuck's economic interest and willful ignorance of Hilde's aspiration.

Helene, who is also a stage-artist, sees herself confronted with her past as the wife of Warbek. Similar to *Hilde Brandt*, the discourses that Mathilde Paar introduces in this drama expose the strong underlying connection between the life and work of the female artist and issues of masculinity. She cannot escape her identity as daughter and ex-wife of men whose identity is deeply entrenched in a patriarchal system based on male honor and male authority. Money also plays a crucial part in this drama as the male figures intend to bribe the artist and exchange money for her voice, i.e. the termination of her career. At the core of this drama lies a critique of patriarchal power structures that impede women's independence.

Anna Croissant-Rust's drama *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat* explores questions of freedom and limitations inherent in gender conventions. Croissant-Rust's text is the only one that presents a successful female artist-protagonist, but it suggests a rather daunting future for its woman artist after the death of her husband. This drama is particularly interesting as it contrasts a successful woman artist with her husband who suffers from a disability, will become dependent on his wife, and takes his own life at the end. By alluding to the genre of the fairytale, to the Scaramuccia figure from the commedia dell'arte, and by providing a new kind of narrative on the female artist and on male figures, the text critiques gender conventions and attempts to transcend and transform the genre of the artist-drama. It poses the question where, that is in what spaces, women artists can find the freedom that they need to fully develop their talents and to follow their artistic aspirations as integral to the artist-struggle.

One of the goals of this dissertation project was to point to forgotten women playwrights and their texts. While feminist research has recovered many forgotten dramatists since the 1980s,⁴⁹⁴ much work remains to be done in terms of critical re-readings of these texts. Laura Rosenthal, even though she wonders if feminist literary research and criticism needs to "recover from recovery" asserts that "we still do not fully appreciate the place of women or the contribution of the women we regularly teach and write about," and she concludes that "we still have much to learn beyond those initial inquiries."⁴⁹⁵ Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres reminds feminist researchers, similar to Rosenthal, that feminist practice goes beyond recovery and includes a political aspect and a deep concern with historical analysis that deals with political

⁴⁹⁴ For Nineteenth Century dramas see: Dagmar von Hoff's *Dramen des Weiblichen* (1989); Susanne Kord's *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen* (1992); Helga Kraft's *Ein Haus aus Sprache* (1996); Heike Schmid's *Gefallene Engel* (2000).

⁴⁹⁵ Laura Rosenthal, "Introduction: Recovering from Recovery," in *The Eighteenth Century*. Vol. 50, No.1 (2010, 1-11), 10.

and social issues.⁴⁹⁶ Nancy Armstrong, Rita Felski, and Parveen Adams,⁴⁹⁷ amongst others, have convincingly argued that a feminist perspective needs to point to the work that is being done within texts. They contend that from a feminist perspective, women writers do not merely represent or reflect existing gender structures in their writings, but that their representations also produce gender. Adams and Armstrong show that femininity is in fact produced through the narratives in novels and that “the work of representation produces differences that cannot be known in advance.”⁴⁹⁸ The practice of cultural poetics or new historicism and feminist literary criticism help to make these differences that are produced visible through analyses of recurring and intersecting discourses. This practice encourages a close look at representations and discourses, and it promotes and advances the emergence and production of new insights. By linking diverse cultural conversations and representations, an analysis of these texts can show their creation of new knowledge about the cultural and social position of the woman artist. Such an analysis brings forward the political aspect of feminist literary criticism that Boetcher Joeres, Rooney, and Felski lament as missing in many critical approaches to women writers.

Assuming, with Sigrid Weigel, that women’s writings have a double focus in that they reflect a perceived reality but also envision new possibilities, and, following Armstrong’s argument that the writings produce differences or uncover the strategies by which differences are produced, it can be argued that these dramas produce a different kind of artist. They perform to a

⁴⁹⁶ Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, “Scattered Thoughts on Current Feminist Literary Critical Work in Nineteenth-Century German Studies,” in *Women in German Yearbook*, Vol 17 (2001, 225-244) 230.

⁴⁹⁷ See Nancy Armstrong, *Domestic Desire and Fiction. A Political History of the Novel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Felski, Rita. *Literature after Feminism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Parveen Adams and Jeff Minson, “The ‘Subject’ of Feminism,” in *The Woman in Question*, eds. Parveen Adams and Elizabeth Cowie (MIT Press, 1990, 81-101).

⁴⁹⁸ Ellen Rooney, “The Literary Politics of Feminist Theory,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Criticism* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 73-95), 88.

certain extend what Rooney refers to as a re-writing of the script.⁴⁹⁹ The genre's script has relied on the cultural imagination of the male artist and the conflicts related to his creative aspirations and productions. The texts by Bernstein-Porges, Itzerott, Paar, and Croissant-Rust re-write this script and challenge traditional notions inherent in this genre by adding experiences and discourses that point to different limitations and circumstances of the female artist.

The scarcity of women writers' artist-dramas imagining a female artist-protagonist remains. But the recovered texts offer an abundance of opportunities for feminist literary criticism to engage with the genre and with its potential to create a new kind of artist-protagonist. As a continuation of this project, I plan to broaden the scope of my investigation by both widening the time frame and considering texts in other genres concerned with artist-narratives. This project pointed to three areas that merit further investigation. One relates to deferred motherhood as a theme that lies at the core of two artist-dramas not analyzed here, Elsa Porges-Bernstein's *Wir Drei* (1893) and Nino Haratischwili's *Liv Stein* (2008). A second area relates to issues of class. I mention the women's movement as well as class differences in the fictional representation of women artists only in passing in the last chapter. It is clear from my analysis that class affects the self-understanding of the female characters tremendously, especially in the contrast of figures such as Hilde Brandt and Ernestine von Bornheim in *Der Standhafte Zinnsoldat*. Lastly, the narrative of the discovery and development of talent presents itself as a challenging topic. Prose texts such as Helene Böhlau's *Habltier* (1899) or Lou Andrea-Salomé's *Eine Ausschweifung* (1898) narrate life stories of female artists and provide a deeper insight into the development of conflicts, women artists' reflections, and their attempts at finding solutions and alternatives to issues related to romantic relationships, motherhood, or the narrative of their

⁴⁹⁹ See Rooney, "The Literary Politics of Feminist Theory," 91.

development. Read through the lens of the artist-drama or artist-narrative, these women writers' somewhat disruptive contributions provoke a re-evaluation of both the genre's boundaries and of cultural conceptions of the artist.

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