

DIMENSIONS OF *BILDUNG* IN THE NOVELS *EINE JÜDISCHE MUTTER, NACH MITTERNACHT, AND KINDHEITSMUSTER*

by

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Abstract

In my dissertation I analyze the three novels *Eine jüdische Mutter* by Gertrud Kolmar, *Nach Mitternacht* by Irmgard Keun, and *Kindheitsmuster* by Christa Wolf within the paradigm of the genre of the female *Bildungsroman* and female anti-*Bildungsroman*. Ideas of belonging to an imagined community, perceived gender norms, and the power of the state play a critical role in determining the outcome of the protagonists' *Bildung*, as does the status of the female protagonist. The theories of Benedict Anderson, Judith Butler and Giorgio Agamben provide a useful theoretical framework for this analysis. In *Eine jüdische Mutter*, set during the Weimar Republic Martha Wolg is deemed an outsider because of refusal to adhere to certain gender norms and her Jewish identity. She is unable to find a compromise with her society because she refuses to incorporate her experiences into her *Bildung*. In contrast, Sanna Moder does incorporate her experience in *Nach Mitternacht*, but goes into exile because she does not want to belong to a society in the Third Reich. In *Kindheitsmuster*, set in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic, the protagonist Nelly Jordan is an accepted member of the imagined German community, but she too faces difficulty in her *Bildung*. The outcome of my research shows how racism, sexism, narrowly defined gender norms, and the type of political state have a profound impact on the *Bildung* of the protagonists.

Preface

Parts of chapter three have been published. "Re-Imagining Daily Life in Third Reich: Irmgard Keun's *Nach Mitternacht*." *Culture as Text, Text as Culture*. Ed. Elodie Lafitte, Christina Wall and Mary Cobb Wittrock. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Research Goals	1
1.2 History of the Genre of the <i>Bildungsroman</i>	3
1.3 Method and Critical Framework	13
1.4 Structure of Dissertation	31
Chapter 2 <i>Eine jüdische Mutter</i> by Gertrud Kolmar: The Anti-Bildung of Martha	35
2.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	35
2.2 Dissimilation of German Jews	43
2.3 Self-Isolation as Barrier to <i>Bildung</i>	49
2.4 Martha Wolg's Role as a Mother	56
2.5 Ambiguities of Racism	63
2.6 Conclusion	71
Chapter 3 <i>Nach Mitternacht</i> by Irmgard Keun: A Process of De-evolution	75
3.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	75
3.2 Fear-Induced <i>Bildung</i>	81
3.3 Gendering in the Third Reich	99
3.4 Impact of Nazi Racial Policy on <i>Bildung</i>	110
3.5 Conclusion	114
Chapter 4 <i>Kindheitsmuster</i> by Christa Wolf: <i>Bildung</i> from a Position of Power	117
4.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	117
4.2 Orchestration of Power	129
4.3 <i>Bildung</i> of the German Girl	141
4.4 Creating a Nazi Racial Identity	152
4.5 Conclusion	159
Chapter 5 Conclusion	163
Works Cited	169

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Research Goals

I examine three novels within the parameters of the genres of the female *Bildungsroman* and female anti-*Bildungsroman*: *Eine jüdische Mutter* by Gertrud Kolmar, *Nach Mitternacht* by Irmgard Keun and *Kindheitsmuster* by Christa Wolf. These novels are set in three different political states: the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic. The *Bildung* of the female protagonists will be analyzed to show the conflicts and partial resolutions some of the protagonists reach with their societies. My analysis will reveal that factors such as nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism play influential roles in the creation of self-identities of the protagonists, as do the socio-political settings of the novels. A close examination of these three novels sheds new light on the process of identity formation within particular socio-economic and political environments. I show that the *Bildung* of the female protagonists neither necessarily proceeds in a linear pattern nor even has a positive outcome. My analysis shows how the novel *Eine jüdische Mutter* can be read as a female anti-*Bildungsroman* because the protagonist is unable to find a compromise between her rigid belief system and her society. *Nach Mitternacht* has elements of being both a *Bildungs-* and anti-*Bildungsroman* with the protagonist choosing to reject her society. *Kindheitsmuster* can be read as a female *Bildungsroman* in that the female protagonist is able to achieve a compromise between her beliefs and her society.

I chose these three novels because they demonstrate an evolution in the ideas of belonging and being an outsider from the Weimar Republic, to the Third Reich and finally to the German Democratic Republic from the point of view of female protagonists. Each novel has a protagonist with a very different status in their given societies. The main character of *Eine*

jüdische Mutter is a widowed Jewish mother who does not have any friends or family and is living in Berlin during the Weimar Republic. Martha Wolg alienates people through her aggressive behaviour and outsider status. Her self-development can be treated as a failure or anti-*Bildung* because she is unable to find a place for herself in her society, an idea which her suicide at the end of the novel reinforces. The protagonist of *Nach Mitternacht*, Sanna Moder, has more success than Martha Wolg in her self-development because she has a supportive circle of family and friends. She tries to remain apolitical, but this does not protect her or her boyfriend, Franz, from the oppression of the National Socialist regime. The *Bildung* of the character can be described as being successful because she incorporates her experiences into her self-development. Sanna Moder knows that her attempts to protect herself, such as remaining silent, will not protect her and her decision to go into exile reflects this understanding. With help from her stepbrother and sister-in-law, Sanna Moder acquires a passport and money to be able to flee, underscoring once again the support she has, which Martha Wolg did not have. The protagonist of *Kindheitsmuster* achieves the most positive outcome in her *Bildung*. Nelly Jordan does not have to question the legitimacy of her place in society, as she belongs to a middle-class family with strong ties to their community. This element of belonging plays a crucial role in her successful *Bildung*. The novel demonstrates how the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion affect the *Bildung* of characters. Unlike Martha Wolg or Sanna Moder, Nelly Jordan enjoys a level of inclusion and acceptance that is not available to the others. A comparison of the protagonists of the three novels demonstrates the complex nature of *Bildung* and reveals the important roles the socio-political environment plays.

This chapter provides first a short summary of the history of the genre of *Bildungsroman*. I show how the genre was linked to the definition of the German nation and why literary works

by women authors were frequently excluded. Thereafter, I show how feminist scholars in the 1970s used the genre of the *Bildungsroman* to examine literature by women authors. Then, I will examine how the genre was used specifically in German literature, and emphasize the importance of the *Bildungsroman* and female *Bildungsroman* in the German Democratic Republic. Finally, I will provide my definition of the female *Bildungs-* and *anti-Bildungsroman*. Section 1.3 outlines the method and critical framework of this dissertation. My focus is on three theorists: Benedict Anderson, Judith Butler and Giorgio Agamben. Their theories on nationhood, gender performance and the power of the state provide the critical framework to discuss the *Bildung* of the female protagonist of each novel. In section 1.4 I will outline the structure of the dissertation and highlight the points to be analyzed in chapters two, three and four.

1.2 History of the Genre of the *Bildungsroman*

The genre of the *Bildungsroman* gained an influential status within the German literary tradition and has been the subject of research since the late eighteenth century, focusing on novels such as Christoph Martin Wieland's *Die Geschichte des Agathon* and Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. It should be remembered that these novels were not viewed as *Bildungsromanen* at the time of their publication, but were later categorized as such. In 1820 Karl Morgenstern published "Ueber das Wesen des *Bildungsromans*" and defined the *Bildungsroman* as the following:

Bildungsroman wird er heißen dürfen, erstens und vorzüglich wegen seines Stoffs, weil er des Helden Bildung in ihrem Anfang and Fortgang bis zu einer gewissen Stufe der Vollendung darstellt; zweytens aber auch, weil er gerade durch diese

Darstellung des Lesers Bildung, in weitem Umfange als jede andere Art des Romans, fördert. (64)

Morgenstern's definition of the genre argues for a level of completion, meaning the protagonist arrives at a destination in his self-development. The reader is able to follow each stage of *Bildung* to the final outcome. It is important to emphasize that for Morgenstern the *Bildungsroman* not only showed the evolution and development of the main protagonist, but it also contributed to the development of the reader. His definition of the genre, which emphasized the development of the reader, continues to play a role in the ongoing discussion of what is considered high or low literature. This aspect, the development of the reader, was later omitted from the definition of the genre, focusing exclusively on the male protagonist.

Wilhelm Dilthey's definition of the genre, which would become widely accepted, described the genre of the *Bildungsroman* as:

A regulated development within the life of the individual is observed, each of its stages has its own intrinsic value and is at the same time the basis for a higher stage. The dissonances and conflicts of life appear as the necessary growth points through which the individual must pass on his way to maturity and harmony. (qtd. in Swales 3)

For Dilthey, each stage of development is essential in the overall development of the male protagonist. Each stage in development is important in itself and at the same time, each stage is necessary for the continuing evolution in his *Bildung*. Martin Swales emphasizes the significance of the different stages of *Bildung* and shows how the genre emerged in a specific historical period. In *the German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* he writes:

I want to argue that the *Bildungsroman* genre was born in specific historical circumstances, that is, within the *Humanitäts* ideal of late eighteenth-century Germany. It is a novel form that is animated by a concern for the whole man unfolding organically in all his complexity and richness. *Bildung* becomes, then, a total growth process, a diffused *Werden* or becoming, involving something more intangible than the acquirement of a finite number of lessons. (14)

Swales' definition of the genre emphasizes the overall growth of the male protagonist as an individual. The male protagonist evolves to a stage of completion when he could be described as a "whole man" in every sense: physically, psychologically and even spiritually. The development of the individual is supposed to be more than just going through a series of experiences. The young male character at the centre of a *Bildungsroman* acquires an understanding of himself, society and his place within that society, which reveals his interconnectedness with other citizens. Todd Kontje writes in *The German Bildungsroman* that, "From its beginnings in the late eighteenth century, the history of the genre has been closely tied to the process of canon formation in German literature, a process which in the nineteenth century contributed to the shaping of national identity" (x). The genre was viewed to have a specific "German" character to it, which in turn influenced the definition of the German nation. The genre attained an elevated status within the German literary tradition, which emphasized writings by male authors. It is not surprising then that literature by women was often omitted and not viewed to be worthy of the genre. The *Bildungsroman* was seen as more than a literary genre, in that it focused on the development of not just the individual, but of the individual as the representation of society and the nation at large. Although the genre of the *Bildungsroman* began in a specific German socio-economic, gender and religious context, it has been expanded to other literatures.

The number of dissertations published on the genre of the female *Bildungsroman* shows the topic to be of immense interest. The self-development of female protagonists covers many different studies, such as Wendy Alexia Rountree's *The Contemporary African American Female Bildungsroman* (2001) or Olga Bezhanova's *The Female Bildungsroman in Twentieth-Century Spain: The Trajectory of the Genre* (2008). The genre of the female *Bildungsroman* has been adopted in other literatures, most notably in English, Spanish and American. The expansion of the genre was made possible in part by research conducted by feminist scholars in the 1970s. The 1970s witnessed a development of feminist literary criticism, which began exploring previously neglected literature written by women. Ulrike Growe, in her study *Erfinden und Erinnern*, explores how the history and experiences of women hardly ever appeared in the official writing of history (1-2). She argues that the extraordinary outpouring of writings by women writers, such as Christa Wolf, showcase the experience of female protagonists, albeit never in an isolated or valorised position (8). The experiences of female protagonists were meant to be understood within the larger socio-economic and political sphere of society. Feminists challenged the traditional canon, which emphasized writings by men, as being the standard bearer of high or quality literature. They worked to expose misogynistic depictions of women in these writings, as well as the disparaging treatment of women writers, which had excluded their writing from the canon. Elaine Showalter points out in her essay, "The Feminist Critical Revolution," how these critics began an analysis of literature which exposed the exclusion of women from literary history (5). In the process of this criticism, established genres were re-examined to show how they could be applied to women's literature. It is in this vein that the genre of the *Bildungsroman* was appropriated by feminist scholars and critics, who used it to examine the development of female protagonists in terms of class and race.

Scholars such as Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland argued that the genre of the *Bildungsroman* could be applied to women's literature in an anthology of essays titled *The Voyage In*:

Our purpose requires that we first re-examine and revise generic definitions, beginning with the assumptions underlying the earliest examples of the form. Second, in order to understand the individual's relation to society, an interaction fundamental to the genre, we clarify the gender bias inherent in traditional accounts of this relationship. Next we examine the psychological conventions that have defined the goals of development and discover their failure to account for specifically female experience. (5)

This approach looked at the definition of the genre and examined the status of the female protagonist in her society to understand how her *Bildung* would be successful or a failure. Abel, Hirsch and Langland want to present an alternative model and expand the definition of the *Bildungsroman* (5). In the anthology, the various authors re-examine female authors from the nineteenth century to the end of the 1970s and try to situate their literary output within a tradition of the female *Bildungsroman*. This research, however, was not without controversy, leading some scholars to challenge the existence of this genre.

Todd Kontje addresses this problem in *The German Bildungsroman*, wherein he refers to John H. Smith's essay "Sexual Difference, *Bildung*, and the *Bildungsroman*" (103). For Smith, *Bildung* is not an organic, but rather a social phenomenon which constructs male identity and offers him a place "in the patriarchal Symbolic order" (qtd. in Kontje 103). Therefore, the idea of *Bildung* for women did not make sense for Smith, as he argues that women in the eighteenth and nineteenth century did not have a public role. Furthermore, critics cite the specific bias the genre

had in favour of male protagonists and questioned the use of a genre which, they argued, was patriarchal at its core. Carol Lazzarro-Weis examines this aspect of criticism in her essay “The Female *Bildungsroman*: Calling it Into Question,” and comes to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a female *Bildungsroman* (34). Nevertheless, she goes on to argue that the genre will continue to be used by women writers and critics: “...since the questions surrounding the relationship between experience, subjectivity, and social structures are far from being resolved” (34). Other scholars argue that the genre of the female *Bildungsroman* did not exist before the twentieth century.

Esther Labovitz argues in her study *The Myth of the Heroine* that the *Bildungsroman* of the nineteenth century focuses solely on the development of a male protagonist, not female. In her study, she covers writings by Dorothy Richardson, Simone de Beauvoir, Doris Lessing, and Christa Wolf, where she focuses on the novel *Nachdenken über Christa T.* For Labovitz, these authors wrote true female *Bildungsromanen*, which she claims did not emerge until the twentieth century, when women gained a more public role in society. Labovitz writes, “Arguing for the ‘careful tending’ of the growth potential of the female youth as latter-day phenomena, I expect to demonstrate that this new genre was made possible only when *Bildung* became a reality for women, in general, and for the fictional heroine, in particular” (6-7). For Labovitz it is important to focus on women’s public role in society as a crucial element for the development of the literary genre of the female *Bildungsroman*. However, other scholars take a different perspective in regards to the genre.

Todd Kontje argues in his essay “Socialization and Alienation in the Female *Bildungsroman*” that the genre of the female *Bildungsroman* began simultaneously with the traditional male *Bildungsroman*. He examines the novels of four female authors from the

eighteenth century and he chooses these works because they were written and published at the same time male authors began to write what would come to be called the *Bildungsroman* (221). Kontje shows how all the initial authors included in the genre of the *Bildungsroman* were exclusively male, as women were excluded from higher education and professional activity (222). He maintains that the exclusion of women authors from the genre must be examined through the historical development of the genre. He shows that the exclusion of women was deliberate, as the genre was viewed to create a cultural identity in the course of the nineteenth century, which was increasingly nationalistic (224). Women's writings, in contrast, were viewed to be trivial literature at best and not to be the subject of serious scholarly work. However, in recent years scholars have begun to examine writings which had previously been dismissed or ignored.

Jeannine Blackwell examines literary works by a number of women authors, as well as two male authors, from the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century in her dissertation *Bildungsroman mit Dame* (1982). The different types of novels that Blackwell discusses in her dissertation show *Bildung* in its many different forms. For example, she examines the spiritual autobiography, showing it to be part of the development of the genre of the *Bildungsroman*. In a spiritual autobiography the female protagonist moves from one type of religious belief to doubt and, finally, to acceptance of a new belief system. The large time span and number of works in her dissertation provide an analysis of how the genre evolved and developed. Cauleen Suzanne Gary also analyzes the genre in her 2008 Ph.D. dissertation entitled *Bildung and gender in nineteenth-century bourgeois Germany: A cultural studies analysis of texts by women writers*. She looks at how gender affects the *Bildung* of the female protagonists and what effect it has on the creation of their identity. Other researchers have concentrated on writers in the twentieth

century and shown how the female protagonists evolve. Virginia Steinhagen examines the evolution of female protagonists in her dissertation *Educating Rita and her "Sisters": The Female Bildungsroman in the German Democratic Republic* (1996), which focuses on novels by Christa Wolf (*Der geteilte Himmel* and *Nachdenken über Christa T.*), Brigitte Reimann (*Franziska Linkerhand*), and Volker Braun (*Unvollendete Geschichte*). She argues that the protagonists' bodies are sites of resistance to the patriarchal order. By limiting the number of authors and remaining within a particular socio-political structure, Steinhagen is able to focus on the development of the protagonists within a particular socio-political framework.

Steinhagen's dissertation explores how the genre of the *Bildungsroman* was used by the state and leading writers to eliminate the vestiges of Nazism from German society and pave the way for the creation of a socialist society. The novels she includes deal with two topics: coming to terms with the Nazi period and the role the main protagonist played. In the early novels she asserts that the vast majority were written by men who had fought in WWII, had seen the horrors of war and had become disillusioned with Nazism. The core theme is the development of the male protagonist from a Nazi to a reformed socialist. Gender is a key factor in the relationship between the writer and the state, which is framed in the form of a father-son relationship. The female characters remain one-dimensional and are employed to be supportive of the male protagonist. It is not until the 1960s, with more women writing, that this depiction of female characters begins to change. The female protagonist becomes a multi-dimensional character, whose journey to self-discovery situates her within the public sphere of society.

The process of *Bildung* and the genre of the *Bildungsroman* reflect the evolution of both the individual and the nation. As Kontje writes in *The German Bildungsroman*:

If the *Bildungsroman* is the genre that portrays historical change, then recent studies of the genre show an interest in new ways of defining that change: in terms of the transformation of the public sphere; the restructuring of the family; and the codification of gender roles, the making of sex. (111)

As an extension of these perspectives, I want to show a development in the definition of the German nation and the German citizen in the twentieth century through a reading of the three novels, *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht*, and *Kindheitsmuster*, as female *Bildungsromanen*. I define female *Bildungsroman* as a novel which shows the female protagonist developing an understanding of herself through her engagement with her society. Here I refer to “female” not as an essentialized but rather as a contextualized concept. Each of the protagonists is defined by their society through appearance and behaviour as female. Hence, the definition of gender plays an important role in the *Bildung* of the protagonists. As Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland emphasized in *The Voyage In*: “...the sex of the protagonist modifies every aspect of a particular *Bildungsroman*: its narrative structure, its implied psychology, its representation of social pressures” (5). The gender of the protagonists in the novels I am analyzing plays a central role in their overall development. It provides the reader with a different perspective of how different political states defined gender norms and showed how they are not static, but continually changing.

The public sphere is a crucial element in the *Bildung* of the female character; she does not function in a political or cultural vacuum. The protagonist of the female *Bildungsroman* comes to an understanding and acceptance of and by her society. The female anti-*Bildungsroman* is in contrast to the female *Bildungsroman* and it depicts the inability of the female protagonist to reach any type of agreement with or acceptance by her society. In the female anti-*Bildungsroman*

the reader witnesses the slow disintegration of the protagonist, who is incapable of or unwilling to reach a compromise with her society. Whether that can be viewed as being entirely negative or positive depends on the evolving socio-political situation in which the protagonist exists. The female protagonists of *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht*, and *Kindheitsmuster* are aware of their socio-political environment and their status within it, which influences the process of *Bildung* or *anti-Bildung*.

From an earlier perception as an exclusively German literary genre, focusing only on the development of a male protagonist, the genre of the *Bildungsroman* has evolved to include the development of female protagonists. The increased prominence of women in society substantially changed the self-understanding of the German nation. The novels *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* reflect the unease and insecurity of shifts in the political situations in Germany in the twentieth century, from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich and then the German Democratic Republic. The novels show the development of the female protagonists, as well as the different German states. New opportunities and the right to a public role gave women more power to define themselves in the twentieth century. Women were able to access spheres of society which they had previously been denied, such as universities. At the same time, however, marginalization continued to occur, preventing women from particular religions, racial or social classes from reaching their full potential. I will discuss anti-Semitism in depth later in this dissertation, but here I would like to mention the marginalized status of German Jewish women. The novels show both the successes achieved, as well as the difficulties faced by the female protagonists.

1.3 Method and Critical Framework

The three novels focus on the development of the German nation and female protagonists in the twentieth century together. In order to understand this development, it is important to examine the evolution in the definition of the nation-state. Benedict Anderson outlines in his study, *Imagined Communities*, how the nation-state was defined and posits that there was nothing “natural” about it. In fact, he explores the different elements which gave the definition a type of “naturalness,” but which upon closer examination reveal a process of construction. Similarly, Judith Butler examines in *Gender Trouble* how definitions of women are asserted and maintained through performances of the definition. An analysis of the three female protagonists will show that both their racial and gender identity were imposed on them by their specific societies. The attempt by the different protagonists to assert their own gender and racial identity was met with a variety of reactions, both positive and negative. A crucial element which affected all three female protagonists was the modern state. Giorgio Agamben argues in *Homo Sacer* that the power of the modern nation state and the elimination of private life presented challenges for the individuals, which can be seen in all three novels, but is especially significant in *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster*. The evolution in the protagonists’ *Bildung* reveals the impact and importance of the socio-political environment they live in. Depending on their status within their given societies, the female protagonists achieve *Bildung*, partial *Bildung* or anti-*Bildung*.

In *Imagined Communities* Anderson asserts, “In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (5-6). For Anderson, it is important to emphasize the imaginary element, because no matter how small the state is, it is impossible for all the fellow-members to meet each other. Yet, through their common symbols, imagery, myths and language,

there is a belief that a connection exists between the members of a state (6). To understand how the bond is believed to be real, Anderson points out the example of individuals willing to die for their country:

Finally, it is imaginary as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. (7)

Anderson is investigating a crucial element, one of supposed comradeship that holds the state together. When he points out the cultural roots of nationalism (7) and combines them with the concept of racial purity, it becomes clearer how the members of a given state may feel connected to one another. Here I want to focus on the example of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, because it demonstrates on the one hand how a definition of a state is formed and, on the other, it is his definition of the German nation which emerged as the most influential.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte held a series of lectures in Berlin in the winter of 1807-1808, later published as *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, focused on the idea of creating a unified German nation. Fichte viewed the German nation as a pile of mud that needed to be shaped and brought to life like the Golem (31). In order for this to occur, two elements were very important for Fichte:

...ein energischer Aufschwung in jedem Einzelnen--ein Anlauf zum Schein, der sich in dem Vorsatz bekundet, mit sich selber einen unbedingten Neuanfang zu machen; und die Verstärkung dieses Aufschwungs durch eine inspirierende

Totenbeschwörung, durch die die Vorfahren eingeladen werden, sich in den heute Lebenden gewissermaßen zu reinkarnieren. (32)

The attachment to the past provides a type of legitimacy for the new German nation, which requires a renewal on the part of the citizens. Fichte is challenging individuals to remake themselves, in order to be able to reconnect with their ancestors. The element of magic in communicating with the dead (*Totenbeschwörung*) emphasizes a mystical connection to the past. The magical and organic construction of the German nation led Fichte to argue that the people living in the different German states and principalities shared common cultural elements that fused them together in a manner that was perceived to be more “natural”. The magical element plays a crucial role in the evolution of the definition of the German nation state in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Benedict Anderson has shown how definitions of nation-states are constructed or imagined into being. Fichte’s emphasis on a magical quality, including memory, which united the German people, can be seen as a type of imaginary community. His definition gained widespread acceptance in the nineteenth century. Anderson examines the evolution of the print media in the nineteenth century and shows how it disseminated the idea of a magical unity within the community.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the circulation of newspapers, books and pamphlets had increased and more individuals were receiving the same information. Anderson argues that it was through the widespread circulation of print media whereby a sense of community was created between individuals, even if they never met face to face. At the same time these ideas of community and nation were spreading, another equally important phenomenon was taking place: the standardization of national languages. Language is important because it is through this medium that ideas of nationhood can be transmitted to a larger audience: “For it shows that from

the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be ‘invited into’ the imagined community” (Anderson 145). Anderson lists the example of Saint Martin baptizing Quecha-speaking Indians as Peruvians as evidence for his claim. More importantly, he shows how the process of *naturalization* is an invitation for individuals to enter a new community (145). In the late nineteenth century, however, language was being used to discriminate and exclude individuals from the community. It is through language that Germans and German Jews became separate racial groups, precisely at the time when all legal discrimination against German Jews had been removed.

The emancipation of the Jews in 1869 gave the Jews within German territory full legal rights and privileges. 1871 marked the founding of Germany as a “Second Empire” with the unification of disperse states and principalities into a single, centrally controlled nation. This period was marked by rapid change in the socio-political and economic status of individuals living in Germany, intensified by industrialization and urbanization. Although this period started off strongly, the economic crisis resulting from the crash of the European Stock Exchange in 1873, and a continuation of problems to the mid-1890s, revealed many internal rifts within German society. According to Shulamit Volkov, anti-Semitism soon became a simple answer to complex socio-economic problems (*Germans, Jews, and Antisemites* 97). By turning the Jews into the scapegoats for all of the difficulties facing the newly founded nation, it was possible to attack the system without inciting revolution or class warfare (*Germans, Jews, and Antisemites* 97). Volkov shows that a wide variety of public figures, from politicians to academics, used anti-Semitism to further their own causes.¹ By incorporating Anderson’s analysis of the rise of the print media, the ideas of anti-Semitism could spread to a larger group of individuals. From this

¹ Volkov points to Heinrich von Treitschke’s speech from November 15, 1879 entitled “Die Juden sind unser Unglück” (*Germans, Jews and Antisemites* 99).

analysis, it is clear that anti-Semitism affects the public discourse in terms of the definitions of Germans and Jews. The outcome of this discourse created barriers which prevented German Jews from being accepted as full members of German society. The consequences of treating German Jews as a separate racial category will be shown in the analysis of *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster*.

The idea of Germans and Jews as being identified as two separate racial groups was repeated by many writers such as Houston Steward Chamberlain in the nineteenth century. By defining the Germans and Jews as separate racial groups, a division was created which could not be overcome through assimilation or conversion. Dietz Bering shows in his study *Der Name als Stigma* that the Prussian authorities passed laws preventing Jews from changing their names. At first this might not appear obviously discriminatory against Jews, but rather somewhat strange. Why should it concern the Prussian authorities how members of a particular faith should name themselves? Closer inspection shows that Jews were being targeted and marginalized through their names. Bering analyzes how certain names were considered to be Jewish, such as Cohn; by preventing individuals from changing their names, the Prussian authorities continued the marginalization of Jews within German society (124). The motivation is made clear in the law from 1894, which stated that anti-Semitism could not be used as a reason to change one's name (Bering 124). German Jews would continue to be discriminated against through new markers of Jewishness, when older markers such as clothing or confinement to a particular part of a city had been eliminated. This law amounts to a reformulation of the anti-Semitic mindset that Jews were defined as the other or an alien race.

Klaus Holz's *Nationaler Antisemitismus* shows that modern anti-Semitism is marked not only to its attachment to nationalism (12-13), but that it could in fact be viewed as a

Weltanschauung in which the Jews are not only foreign in one nation, but could be defined as the foreigner to all nations (29). According to Holz, it can be argued that Jews were seen to be the binary opposite of all racial groups, effectively defining them as being a race and not a religious group. Holz argues further that this division helped create the ‘us versus them’ relationship. The presentation of the Jews as the other helped define the identity of Germany and the Germans. Holz suggests that: “Wir-Gruppen bieten einen sozialen Anhalt für die Konstruktion einer Ich-Identität” (41). Anti-Semitism in this regard is a powerful tool in constructing the identity of individuals. Holz writes:

Was Georg L. Mosse für den Rassismus feststellt, gilt ebenso für den Antisemitismus: Der Rassismus wies jedem in dieser Welt einen festen Platz zu, indem es ihn selbst definierte und ihm die verwirrende neue Welt durch eine klare Unterscheidung in ‚gute‘ und ‚schlechte‘ Rassen erklärt. (41)

By belonging to a specific constructed group, the individual would in turn take on elements considered to define that particular group as personal qualities within themselves. The creation of race is for Sander Gilman a construct, which influences a subject’s identity much more than they assume. He writes in *The Jew’s Body*:

We belong to a race and our biology defines us, is as true a statement for many groups, as is the opposite: you belong to a race and your biology limits you. Race is a constructed category of social organization as much as it is a reflection of some aspects of biological reality. Racial identity has been a powerful force in shaping how we, at the close of the twentieth century, understand ourselves – often in spite of ourselves. (170)

Race is a constructed concept, designed to make sense of the world, meaning, individuals belonging to one particular race would be attributed with certain qualities lacking or different from another race.

It is important to understand that the concept of race, as with gender, is not static, but changes over time. For example, Gilman points out in his book that Jews were considered to be black in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (171). The idea of the blackness of the Jews was determined not only to be a racial category, but also describe the moral nature of the Jews. The blackness of Jews was not only a marker of their inferiority, but was also an indicator of their diseased nature (Gilman 172). Jews were in essence being placed in a category, in which they were not only racially, but morally inferior to the Germans. It is clear that the two groups were clearly constructed and assigned specific physical and moral qualities, even if individuals did not possess them.

Since the German nation was identified as the nation inhabited by the Germans, and Jews were considered a separate racial group, they could theoretically never be considered “real” Germans. Many German Jews, however, did not see themselves as distinct from German society or as foreigners. They believed that their religion was a private matter which should not influence how they were treated by the larger Christian population. Nevertheless, Jews were being confronted with anti-Semitism, to which there were a number of different reactions, as listed by Shulamit Volkov in *Germans, Jews and Antisemites*:

Jews reacted to the waves of anti-Semitism in the last quarter of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in four major ways. Many reasserted their faith in the values of universal liberalism and emancipation while usually adhering to the dominant nationalism in the society in which they lived. Others, feeling as strangers indeed

within liberal Europe that so repeatedly disappointed them, were loath to adopt any nationalism, including the Jewish one. Many of them opted for the international, socialist solution. Yet another group, accepting the need to uphold a national distinction as Jews, still looked for ways to do so within the existing European framework. And finally, there were those who transferred their hopes to what could then be considered “the Jewish Utopia,” to Zionism. (30)

The different reactions reveal the level of threat German Jews felt in regards to anti-Semitism and exclusionary practices they entailed. Those who believed in universal liberalism believed it was a matter of time before anti-Semitism would be overcome, whereas those opting for Zionism no longer saw a future for Jews in Germany. The consequences of these exclusionary practices can be seen in the *Bildung*, both in terms of gender and race, of the female protagonists of the novels that will be analyzed in this dissertation.

The creation of nation-states in the nineteenth century derived their legitimacy from an idea of historical destinies. However, as shown in the example with the unification of the German nation in 1871, rapid urbanization and economic change led to upheaval within society. The political elites in Germany used the Jews as a scapegoat to blame for their troubles in order to maintain their legitimacy. The outcome of this process was to tie German nationalism to anti-Semitism. For Anderson, the link between nationalism and racism is crucial to understand. He writes:

The fact of the matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history. Niggers are, thanks to the invisible tar brush, forever niggers; Jews, the seed of Abraham, forever

Jews, no matter what passports they carry or what languages they speak and read.

(Thus for the Nazis, the Jewish German was always an impostor.) (149)

Racism and anti-Semitism as exclusionary practices prevent individuals from gaining acceptance or moving away from their outsider status. They preclude the outsider from being able to integrate or be accepted by a society. In all three novels, *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* it is accepted that Germans and Jews belong to different racial categories, which leads to an acceptance of exclusion, even when characters reject racism. Anderson's theory of the imagined community helps to understand how identities based on race and gender gain acceptance and that these categories are not neutral. Gender identity is also a construct that employs certain linguistic elements to create gender identities, which are then upheld through performative acts.

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that subjects are defined through an external source, but are then maintained by the subjects themselves through performative acts. She defines gender as the following: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (43). Butler demonstrates how identity is imposed onto a subject and that the subject maintains this imposition by performing the given identity. However, since the identity is maintained through performative acts, it can be subverted and disrupted to allow for a new identity to form. It allows for transformation to occur because there is no fixed quality which guarantees that actions will always be repeated. Butler writes:

The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a

parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction. (179)

The point at which an action is not repeated is crucial because in that moment, change can and will take place. Since “Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived” (*Gender Trouble* 180), the possibilities for different identities are numerous. A key aspect of Butler’s argument is that gender can be constructed and defined differently, because there is no original that a person is trying to copy or parody. Similarly ideas of being German or Jewish are not stable identities, but rather ones which shift, change and merge. She actively wants the naturalness challenged, to create “gender trouble” and destroy the illusion of stability, and to challenge masculine hegemony and heterosexist power (*Gender Trouble* 44). A crucial factor in the construct of genders identity is power, which is political and originates outside of the subject. Butler argues: “As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained” (*Gender Trouble* 5). She shows that gender as a construct is difficult to understand in isolation. However, because gender is a construct it is possible to challenge and even construct new definitions. Butler posits: “Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (*Gender Trouble* 179). The development in the gender identities of the female protagonists reveals how identities can rupture and change, if there is a rupture in performance.

Because there is neither an “essence” that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no

gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis;
(*Gender Trouble* 178)

The idea of gender as a construct is central to Butler's argument and the three novels are examples of this "constructedness." In this dissertation I demonstrate how the gender identities of the three protagonists are not stable, but have to be maintained through rigorous vigilance. That is to say, the gender performances of the female protagonists are consciously repeated by them. In *Eine jüdische Mutter*, which is set in the Weimar Republic ca. 1930, Martha Wolg refuses to stop or modify her performance as a strong woman, even when she realizes that it is not bringing her any benefit. In *Nach Mitternacht*, set in the Third Reich ca. 1936, Sanna Moder continues to play the sweet innocent girl long after she has experienced the violence of the NS state. Nelly Jordan maintains her performance of the well-behaved German girl in *Kindheitsmuster* participating in the BDM, even when she is afraid of her fellow members. Each character holds onto their performance until they are absolutely forced to change. The three protagonists perform versions of gender identity that have some similarities, but are ultimately different.

The novels present three female protagonists with different identities, but similar gender concepts. The analysis of Martha Wolg, Sanna Moder and Nelly Jordan will demonstrate how their gender identity is constructed and how each character tries to challenge the definition. Each novel is set in a different political state: Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and the German Democratic Republic and it becomes clearer how the gender identities of the female protagonists is dictated by their respective societies. In chapters two, three and four, I will analyze and show how gender identity can be better understood when the socio-political parameters are made visible. It is not by chance that the Martha Wolg's assertion that she is a strong woman and her

performance of a particular type of strong woman is met with suspicion. Being a German-Jewish woman, Martha Wolg must endure the anti-Semitic presumptions of herself and behaviour. By contrast, Nelly Jordan's performance of a strong German girl is admired and accepted, as she fits the proper definition of a German as determined by NS ideology. The status of the female protagonist in her society determined how her gender performance would be interpreted. That is to say, a strong position would lead to acceptance of the performance, but marginalized status would lead to rejection. This is especially evident when the female protagonist's sexuality is discussed.

As a German Jewish woman, Martha Wolg is forced to confront stereotypes of her sexuality, which is described in negative terms. By contrast Nelly Jordan does not have a negative definition of her sexuality because she fits the NS ideal. In *Nach Mitternacht*, Sanna Moder comments on her friend's relationship with a German-Jewish man, which has been made illegal with the passage of the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935. In each case, the protagonist or secondary character must confront the controlling mechanism surrounding their sexuality. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler writes:

In this sense, then, "sex" not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce--demarcate, circulate, differentiate--the bodies it controls. Thus, "sex" is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. (1)

I will demonstrate how the sexuality of the three protagonists is regulated by formal and informal practices, which regulates and defines their identity and *Bildung*. In each case, the protagonists

confront a complex set of rules and practices, which determine how they perform their identity and how their performance is received by others. In terms of sexuality, Martha Wolg, Sanna Moder and Nelly Jordan showcase in varying ways the importance of the socio-political environment and their status within their respective societies. This aspect leads to a third element in creating the theoretical framework for this dissertation, and that is Giorgio Agamben's argument that in the modern era "bare life" has been politicized.

Giorgio Agamben begins his analysis by contrasting the two words for life in ancient Greek, *zoē* and *bios*. *Zoē* is defined as the simple fact of living common to all creatures, whereas the *bios* form of living is political (*Homo Sacer* 3). *Bios politikos* refers to the public life of citizens of ancient Athens, but to speak of *zoē politikē* of the citizens of Athens would not make sense. These two forms of life were viewed as separate and distinct from one another. In fact, belonging to the *polis* was a crucial element for the man to lead what Aristotle referred to as the good life. "The man who is isolated--who is unable to share in the benefits of political association, or has not need because he is already self-sufficient--is no part of the *polis*, and must therefore be either beast or a god" (qtd. in Norris 3). The separation between the two forms of life underscored the idea that there was in fact a private sphere. "In the classical world, however, simple natural life is excluded from the *polis* in the strict sense, and remains confined--as merely reproductive life--to the sphere of the *oikos*, "home" (*Homo Sacer* 2). This separation has been lifted in the modern era in which there is no separation between *zoē* and *bios*. Agamben argues that the modern era is marked by the politicization of bare life or *zoē*: "...the entry of *zoē* into the sphere of the *polis*--the politicization of bare life as such--constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought" (*Homo Sacer* 4). The shift resulted in a profound effect on Western society

and according to Agamben, the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century and the concentration camps could only arise in a society in which all life was political (*Homo Sacer* 4). To understand how politicization of bare life could lead to such destruction, it is important to understand the power of the sovereign and his relation to *homo sacer* or the sacred man.

The power of the sovereign over the “sacred man” cannot be underestimated, because it has an all-encompassing influence on the very life and death of the sacred man. “The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life--that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed--is the life that has been captured in this sphere” (*Homo Sacer* 83). The sacred man has been placed outside the law, banned, by the sovereign, and put into a very vulnerable position. The question arises: who would become the sacred man and why? Which factors would lead someone to be designated as the sacred man in the modern era? To answer these questions one needs to understand how the conflation of *zoē* and *bios* increased the power of the sovereign. The politicization of bare life in the modern nation-state, in fact, exposed the individual to more violence than had been possible in the past.

The attempt to protect rights of citizens paradoxically led to a situation that was far more dangerous for the individual. Agamben examines the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen from 1789 and writes:

Declarations of rights represent the originary figure of the inscription of natural life in the juridico-political order of the nation-state. The same bare life that in the ancient regime was politically neutral and belonged to God as creaturely life and in the classical world was (at least apparently) clearly distinguished as *zoē* from

political life (*bios*) now fully enters into the structure of the state and even becomes the earthly foundation of the state's legitimacy and sovereignty. (*Homo Sacer* 127)

The politicization of bare life meant that the individual could no longer have a private existence that was outside the purview of the sovereign. The paradoxical nature of the declaration was that if rights could be given, they could also be taken away, rendering the individual a sacred man. That is to say, discriminatory laws could be enacted to persecute religious and racial groups.

It is almost as if, starting from a certain point, every decisive political event were double-sided: the spaces, the liberties, and the rights won by individuals in their conflicts with central powers always simultaneously prepared a tacit but increasing inscription of individuals' lives within the state order, thus offering a new and more dreadful foundation for the very sovereign power from which they wanted to liberate themselves. (*Homo Sacer* 121)

After the Nazis came to power in 1933, Hitler issued the Decree for the Protection of the People and State and suspended all articles of the Weimar Constitution related to personal liberties. In his essay "The State of Exception," Agamben argues that the declaration of a state of emergency played a critical role in how totalitarian states function. He writes:

Modern totalitarianism could thus be defined as the establishment by means of a state of emergency of a legal civil war that results in the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but also of whole categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system. Since then, the willing creation of a state of perpetual emergency seems to have become one of the essential tasks of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones. (285)

Rights which are enshrined in the constitution, protecting civil rights, can be suspended, reinstated, or ignored by the sovereign. The novels *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* show the marginalization and oppression of characters by the state. *Eine jüdische Mutter* has a protagonist who is marginalized by her society, but this marginalization is not state-sanctioned. In fact, it is Martha Wolg who has the strongest constitutionally protected civil rights of the three protagonists. Agamben underscores how easily rights can be awarded and taken away in the modern nation-state, on account of political, religious or racial affiliation. Nazism is viewed by Agamben to be a biopolitical movement (129), which radically redefines who is and is not a German. Both Benedict Anderson and Agamben point out that for the Nazis, the German Jews were not Germans. To understand the racial beliefs, Nazism must be seen in the context of the social and biological science which had begun in the nineteenth century and extended into the twentieth.

The ideas of racial purity, degeneration, euthanasia and social engineering were widely accepted at the beginning of the twentieth century within the scientific field, as well as social movements, such as the women's movement.² The novels *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht*, and *Kindheitsmuster* examine the effects of these beliefs on the *Bildung* of the characters. Anti-Semitism, racism and violence play a defining role in the identity formation of characters. The explicit bio-political imagery of anti-Semitism in *Eine jüdische Mutter* is shown in the description of the daughter's appearance. In *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster*, it could be argued that the bio-political ideas of National Socialism in defining a German identity, which explicitly excluded the Jew, could only lead to violence. Agamben quotes a Nazi publication:

² Susan Orman demonstrates in her study how the leaders in the women's movement accepted racial stereotypes of Jewish women as being degenerates.

“The National Socialist revolution,” one reads in the introduction to *State and Health*, “wishes to appeal to forces that want to exclude factors of biological degeneration and to maintain the people’s hereditary health. It thus aims to fortify the health of the people as a whole and to eliminate influences that harm the biological growth of the nation.” (qtd. in *Homo Sacer* 147)

If Jews are determined to have a “harmful” effect on the German nation, it follows then that this harm must be neutralized or removed. Both in *Nach Mitternacht* and especially in *Kindheitsmuster*, the emphasis on racial purity and health are repeated and are an integral part of the protagonists’ identity. The bio-political movement of Nazism led to the exclusion of and violence towards citizens who were not deemed to be worthy of life or accepted as a German. Agamben argues that the Holocaust, in fact, is the most extreme case of the sacred man.

The wish to lend a sacrificial aura to the extermination of the Jews by means of the term “Holocaust” was, from this perspective, an irresponsible historiographical blindness. The Jew living under Nazism is the privileged negative referent of the new biopolitical sovereignty and is, as such, a flagrant case of homo sacer in the sense of a life that may be killed but not sacrificed. His killing therefore constitutes, as we will see, neither capital punishment nor a sacrifice, but simply the actualization of a mere “capacity to be killed” inherent in the condition of the Jew as such. The truth which is difficult for the victim to face, but which we must have the courage not to cover with sacrificial veils is that the Jews were exterminated not in a mad and giant holocaust but exactly as Hitler had announced, “as lice,” which is to say, as bare life. The dimension in which the extermination took place is neither religion nor law, but biopolitics. (*Homo Sacer* 114)

Agamben focuses his attention on the fact that Jews could be killed simply for being Jews and this continued until the end of WWII. In fact, the Nazis forced prisoners onto death marches to prevent them from being liberated by the Allies. Agamben's theories of the sacred man and state of exception underscore the devastating consequences for individuals excluded in the modern nation-state. The Jews living in the Third Reich and Europe could not retreat to a private sphere to avoid the violence of the Nazi regime. In *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht*, and especially in *Kindheitsmuster*, Jews are portrayed repeatedly with negative biological images. The anti-Semitism in the novels underscores the misuse of science to define, discriminate against and marginalize characters.

The novels also show that the anti-Semitic images of Jews did not originate with the Nazis, but were based on a longer tradition, going back to the nineteenth century. The original discrimination could be theoretically overcome through conversion to Christianity, but anti-Semitism, based on discriminatory bio-political ideas, could not. In my work, I will show how the three theorists can be seen as a triad, as they examine the power of the socio-political environment to define the identities of individuals. This dissertation will incorporate the theories of Anderson, Butler, and Agamben in terms of identity formation for the subject and use them to examine how the protagonists' *Bildung* evolves. Each protagonist functions within the parameters of her society and the theories of Anderson, Butler and Agamben help to establish the framework within which each female protagonist can be analyzed in depth. The narrative and definition of a state, gender identities and the power of a regime play a crucial role in the *Bildung* of Martha Wolg, Sanna Moder and Nelly Jordan and exemplify the complexity of the process. The levels to which the protagonists are accepted or rejected reflect the attitudes and beliefs held by their societies. Discussed within this framework, I will demonstrate how the three novels

show how the different forms of political statehood affect the *Bildung* of female protagonists in the twentieth century.

The theories of Benedict Anderson, Judith Butler and Giorgio Agamben provide a parameter to analyze the *Bildung* of the female protagonists of the three novels which is revelatory. By showing how definitions of nation-states and citizens are constructed, a better insight is gained into forces of inclusion and exclusion. Anderson outlines the importance of the print media in ideas being disseminated to large groups, which had a definite effect on the identity formation. Butler's theory of gender performance shows how, once again, identities are constructed and then maintained by the subject through performance. The acceptance or rejection of the protagonists' performances is understood by examining how close or distant they are to their respective societies' definition of what is appropriate. Agamben describes the power of the sovereign in the modern era and highlights the dangers of being excluded. Each of these theorists shows how the individual in the modern era is defined by their societies and that if the individual asserts their own identity they will be met with resistance, which is shown in the novels *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster*.

1.4 Structure of Dissertation

In chapter two, I will examine *Eine jüdische Mutter* starting with a brief biographical analysis of the author Gertrud Kolmar and the literature review of the novel. Kolmar's personal history is important because it sheds light on the main character Martha Wolg. In this section I will also analyze the publishing history of the novel, which highlights the main questions of the novel: gender and Jewish identity of the protagonist. The alteration of the title from the original *Die jüdische Mutter* to *Die Mutter* and finally *Eine jüdische Mutter* highlights the fears of

presenting a Jewish character who embodies certain anti-Semitic stereotypes. I will then present a brief historical analysis of the situation of Jews living in the Weimar Republic. The rise in anti-Semitic violence in the Weimar Republic led many Jewish scholars to rethink their identity as primarily German. For some, the Weimar Republic can be viewed as a time of Jewish dissimulation, since assimilation had not brought about the acceptance of Jews as Germans.

Next I will examine Martha Wolg's experiences as a wife and mother. Both in relationships with Friedrich Wolg and later with Albert Renkens, as well as her role as a mother, the quality which defines Martha Wolg is defiance and stubbornness. These aspects of her character serve to alienate and isolate her from her society. Finally I will look at the anti-Semitism faced by the protagonist and its effect on her *Bildung*. The protagonist defines herself as Jewish, but there are aspects of anti-Semitism in this definition which she has internalized. In chapter two, I will focus on the theories of Anderson and Butler as they help to explain the protagonist's self-definition and performance. The protagonist asserts a distinct identity of a strong Jewish woman through her performance, which is rejected because it does not conform to her society's rules. The constitution may have guaranteed Martha Wolg's civil rights, but it did not mean that she was accepted into the "imagined community." Her performance of strength is also rejected because it is viewed to be abusive and threatening.

In chapter three, I will begin with a presentation of the scholarly research of *Nach Mitternacht* and examine Irmgard Keun's biography. Then I will discuss how the NS regime created fear in society through denunciation and its effect on the protagonist's *Bildung*. In this section, Agamben's theory of the sacred man shows the dangers posed by a modern state towards its citizens. An analysis of the high level of denunciation which takes place in the novel shows why the characters fear each other so much. Although the motivation to denounce is manifold,

the novel reveals how the state of exception creates insecurity. I will then examine Sanna Moder's gender identity and show how she tries to protect herself. Butler's theory of using performance to challenge and destabilize the definition of gender is relevant to the novel. Sanna Moder uses her wit and performance as a young woman to challenge the identity the NS regime wants to impose on women. Then I will analyze the elements of anti-Semitism in the novel and reveal how Jews have become "the sacred man." While other non-Jewish characters had the potential to become the sacred man through denunciation, the Jews were defined by the NS as the sacred man through the Nuremberg Race Laws 1935 as their citizenship was revoked.

In chapter four I will examine *Kindheitsmuster* and the *Bildung* of its main character Nelly Jordan. I will present an outline of Christa Wolf's biography and the scholarly research done on the novel. Wolf's novel is often viewed as autobiographical and examined in terms of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In contrast I want to focus on how *Bildung* occurs in a society which is permanently in a state of emergency.³ I will examine how the Nazis orchestrated their power and performed their definition of the German nation through rallies and parades, which was done to create a stronger tie between the individual and the state. I will then analyze Nelly Jordan's gender identity, which will include a discussion of racial and sexual identity. The Third Reich was a totalitarian state which defined all aspects of life in racial terms. Thereafter, I will show how anti-Semitic images of Jews were absorbed by the protagonist and, in whose mind the connection between Jews and negative biological imagery was made. The protagonist is candid in reflecting on her own anti-Semitic attitude and how it was reinforced through her participation in the BDM. The novel *Kindheitsmuster* exemplifies Agamben's theory that in the modern era

³ Agamben argues in "The State of Exception" that since the Decree for the Protection of the People and the State was never repealed, that from the juridical point of view, the whole of the NS regime could be considered a state of emergency. (285)

the private sphere has been completely eliminated and that all aspects of life have become political.

The twentieth century saw an unprecedented number of changes in the political state of Germany, from the Wilhelminian Empire, to the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, the 1938 takeover of Austria and the *Sudetenland*. After WWII, Germany was divided into two states: the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. The 1991 *Beitritt* of the GDR to the FRG resulted in, for the first time in almost fifty years, a unified Germany. The upheaval involved many different political states and to find one single, static identity of the German nation would be impossible. Similarly, it is not plausible to expect that the definitions of individuals calling themselves German should remain static. Although a certain racial element continues to be the basis of defining a German, this notion has also been questioned. The analysis of the three novels will make it clear that, as the three main protagonists evolved or devolved, so too did the German nation. I want to say that literature in this case of the female *Bildungsroman*, can be seen as reflecting, creating and influencing various conceptions of German national identity over time.

Chapter Two *Eine jüdische Mutter* by Gertrud Kolmar: The Anti-*Bildung* of Martha Wolg

2.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Eine jüdische Mutter explores the difficulties faced by the female protagonist Martha Wolg in her attempt to represent herself as an assertive woman. The highly complex and ambivalent protagonist is, however, met with confusion and hostility. Instead of achieving respect and recognition through her performance of a strong woman, the character is marginalized even further. Martha Wolg's role as a wife, mother and lover can be described as being cold, dismissive, even hostile. The protagonist interacts with her society in a detached manner and deliberately tries to isolate herself. Her *Bildung* is impacted in a fundamentally negative manner because she refuses all forms of support. A key outcome of successful *Bildung* is to find a compromise with their society. However, the question arises: what happens if one isolates oneself from their society? How is gender performance perceived if the individual is viewed to be foreign or alien? What are the limits placed on a character's *Bildung*, or is *Bildung* limited? Martha Wolg is a character unwilling to change her behaviour, even when her decisions lead to negative consequences. The following questions thus arise: what is the purpose of Martha Wolg's performance of the strong woman? Why does she engage in behaviour which actively opposes self-development? The analysis of the novel will show how it can be viewed as a female anti-*Bildungsroman*, in that the protagonist embarks on a path of self-destruction.

A type of anti-*Bildung* can be witnessed or, from a different perspective, Martha Wolg's *Bildung* is programmed to fail, as she is unable to integrate her experiences and alter her behaviour. She is confronted with anti-Semitism and misogynistic behaviour, but she also appears to have internalized certain negative ideas of a Jewish woman. However, the socio-economic and political situation in the Weimar Republic, the time period the novel is set in,

plays an important role on the *Bildung* of the character. The Weimar Republic was a time of great social upheaval which witnessed the rise of violent anti-Semitism and forced German Jews to question their place within German society. The assimilation process was viewed increasingly as having been one-sided on the part of German Jews and had not led to complete acceptance. In accordance with Benedict Anderson's theory of connecting nationalism and racism, German Jews were perceived to be outsiders and were not accepted as a part of the imagined German community. The protagonist, for example, may assert that she is a strong woman, but her challenge to traditional gender roles, combined with her outsider status as a Jewess, reveal the limitations of self-imagination. The protagonist is described as strange and foreign with words like *Seltsames* and *Fremdes*, which explains in part why her performance is met with hostility. The *Bildung* of Martha Wolg is both a reflection of the specific historical situation in Germany during the Weimar Republic, as well as the private evolution of a character who throughout the novel is shown to be increasingly unable to cope. The novel shows the various stages of Martha Wolg's anti-*Bildung*, which can be summarized as a downward spiral. Rather than incorporating knowledge and advancing in her evolution, Martha Wolg's determined opposition to integrating her experiences reveals a character destined to fail. To begin the analysis of *Bildung* of the character Martha Wolg, a brief summary of the author's background is useful.

Gertrud Kolmar was born on December 10, 1894, as Gertrud Käthe Chodziesner, the eldest of four children to a wealthy and assimilated German-Jewish family. Her father and his family came from a small town in Poland called Chodziesner, and they moved to Berlin in the late nineteenth century. The father became a successful lawyer and married a woman from a wealthy German-Jewish merchant family that was part of the assimilated *Großbürgertum* in Berlin. However, it was a world in which Kolmar felt uncomfortable; already in her youth she

had rejected the lifestyle of her class and become increasingly ascetic (Jäger, *Gertrud Kolmar-eine deutsche Jüdin* 234). As an adult, Kolmar worked briefly as a governess, but later returned home to live with her parents, never to marry or have children. Jäger reveals in her study that Kolmar had had an abortion and tried to commit suicide at age 22 (*Gertrud Kolmar. Publikations* 169). Kolmar's traumatic experiences can be seen reflected in the character Martha Wolg, as they explain some of the character's behaviour, especially her role as a mother. At the same time, the depiction of the protagonist raised fears of fostering an anti-Semitic image of a Jewish character.

The publication history of the novel reveals the unease of the publishers' and Kolmar's family in the depiction of Martha Wolg and its implications for anti-Semitic stereotypes. Written in 1930-31 and titled *Die jüdische Mutter*, the novel would not be published until 1965 under a different title, *Eine Mutter*. The fear is addressed by Kolmar's sister Hilde Wenzel, who lists three reasons in a letter from August 14, 1962 for not wanting to publish it. Firstly, she did not believe the aesthetic quality of the novel to be as strong as Kolmar's poetry (Jäger, *Gertrud Kolmar. Publikations* 151). Secondly, she felt the autobiographical nature of the novel would reflect negatively on her sister and thirdly, she did not like the image of Judaism that was presented (Jäger, *Gertrud Kolmar. Publikations* 151). Some researchers such as Elisabeth Hoffmann agreed with the title change (106). Hoffmann argued it was too provocative and supported the idea that the changes had to be made to avoid the misunderstanding that the novel was describing typical Jewish behaviour. "Der suggestivere Originaltitel hingegen hätte den Anschein erwecken können, daß in dem Text ‚typisch jüdisches‘ Verhalten geschildert würde, ein Verhalten gar, das für *jüdische* Mütter repräsentativ wäre" (105-106). The fear that the publication would in some way claim that the character is representative of a particular type of

Jewish behaviour raises questions about the degree to which stereotypes had been challenged in post-war West Germany.

The post-war situation in the Federal Republic of Germany was one of great economic success, primarily through its membership in the European Economic Community, which later became the European Union. It also marked the integration into NATO and improvement of its relationships with former enemies. However, the crimes of WWII committed in the Holocaust against the Jews were not discussed. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* from 1967 reveals the incapacity of West German society to face its role in the genocide of the European Jews. The changes to the title of the novel demonstrate an unreflective response, meaning that certain images of Jews were perhaps still held twenty years after the Holocaust. The publication of the novel, however, met with great success. In 1963, long passages of the novel were featured in a radio program on *West Deutscher Rundfunk*, with the title *Die Verfolgte* (Jäger, *Gertrud Kolmar. Publikations* 147). In 1964, Wenzel changed her mind and allowed the novel to be published, providing two alterations were made: 1. the title be changed from *Die jüdische Mutter* to *Eine Mutter* and 2. that Ella Geiss, a childhood friend of Kolmar's, agreed to the publication of the novel. The novel was published for the first time in 1965 with the title *Eine Mutter* and republished in 1978 as *Eine jüdische Mutter*. A quick summary of the novel provides a glimpse into an ambivalent character, who, though at times is a victim, is also a victimizer, revealing the unease Wenzel had in publishing the novel.

Eine jüdische Mutter is written in the third person and divided into three parts. It begins with a description of the main character Martha Wolg, a widowed German-Jewish woman living with her daughter in Berlin, Germany ca. 1930. Martha Wolg divides her time working as a photographer and taking care of her daughter. Her role in the failure of her marriage to Friedrich

Wolg is told in flashbacks, which reveal a cold and distant woman. Friedrich Wolg recognizes gradually that his marriage has failed, goes to the United States for one year, returns a sick man and dies shortly thereafter. His death leaves Martha and her daughter penniless and it is only through the help of her in-laws that she is able to learn a trade, photography. Martha Wolg moves from her modern apartment in the city centre to a small one in an impoverished suburb of Berlin, which does not have electricity or modern conveniences. It is in this neighbourhood that Martha Wolg's daughter Ursa is abducted and raped. Martha is eventually able to find her daughter and bring her to the hospital. Ursa is traumatized and, fearing that she will never recover, Martha Wolg poisons her. The second part of the novel is devoted to Martha Wolg's attempts to find an ally, who can help her locate the perpetrator, whom she refers to as the murderer. She meets with a lawyer and even seeks advice from a fortune teller, both of whom advise Martha Wolg not to pursue her quest for revenge. She ignores their advice and begins an affair with Albert Renkens, an old friend of her husband, with the supposed intention that he will help her locate the perpetrator. The final section focuses on Martha Wolg's relationship with Albert Renkens and her admitting her role in her daughter's death. The failure of the relationship forces the protagonist to confront the fact that she is completely isolated, without any friends or family. Overcome by despair she commits suicide by drowning in the Spree River.

On the surface, this summary of the novel does not fully explain Hilde Wenzel's reluctance to publish the novel. However, in the next two sections it will become clear that Martha Wolg's behaviour can be described as both irrational and abusive. Although she faces discrimination and isolation, Martha Wolg rejects friendship and support when they are offered to her. The protagonist does not have a strong tie to either the German or Jewish communities in Berlin and chooses isolation over community. Furthermore, Martha Wolg's choice to reject the

integration of new experiences and her mistreatment of others reveals the source of Wenzel's misgivings in publishing the novel. However, since its publication, the novel has attracted scholarly interest, which has concentrated on the following three categories: 1. the failure of Jewish assimilation in German society; 2. the mother-daughter relationship between Martha Wolg and her daughter Ursa; and 3. role of anti-Semitism and its effects on the main protagonist. The academic research conducted on these relevant aspects has explored how these issues create tensions in the novel. Gudrun Jäger uses the author's biographical information to exemplify the failure of assimilation in *Gertrud Kolmar. Publikations- und Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Jäger shows that although Kolmar's family, on the surface, appeared to be assimilated into German society, tension remained for Kolmar in search of her identity. She argues that the lack of a strong identification with Judaism, while not being accepted as full member of German society, left Kolmar and many German Jews of her generation searching for new identities. Kolmar incorporates this experience into her construction of the protagonist Martha Wolg, who does not appear to belong anywhere. In *Gertrud Kolmar's Prose*, Barbara Frantz presents a psychoanalytical reading of the novel, in which she argues that Eastern Jews faced discrimination by Jews and non-Jews alike (41). Martha Wolg had to navigate in a society that viewed her as the epitome of the "other," in terms of gender, race, and nationality. This marginalization affected her ability to be a mother, which is a key theme in scholarly research.

The mother-daughter relationship in the novel is examined by Elisabeth Hoffmann and Monika Shafi. Hoffmann asserts that Martha Wolg viewed her daughter to be a possession and not a separate individual (109), which she ties to Kolmar's troubled past. As a young woman, Kolmar had an abortion and Hoffmann suggests that the difficult mother-daughter relationship in the novel reflects this. Hoffmann also addresses the anti-Semitism in the novel and comes to the

conclusion that assimilation had been a failure (121). Shafi presents a reading of the novel in which Martha Wolg's most important role is that of being a mother, which does not differentiate her from the rest of society (193). However, Shafi suggests that the anti-Semitism faced by Martha Wolg profoundly affected her role as a mother.

Mutterschaft bedeutet für Martha eine absolute Verbundenheit mit dem Kind, die sie ihrer Persönlichkeit zufolge nir in Isolation vollziehen kann. So wie sie schon das Baby dem Vater wegnahm, so lebt sie später als alleinstehende Mutter mit der Tochter in einer naturnahen, vorzivilisatorischen Umwelt. (196)

Martha Wolg is unable to separate herself from her daughter or share her with anyone, including the father. The move to the apartment in the suburbs of Berlin can be viewed as an attempt to distance herself further from the rest of society, in both time and space. The apartment she chooses for herself and her daughter has none of the modern amenities of the apartment she shared with her husband. The isolation that is created by the relocation to the suburbs has a profound effect on her identity and performance as a mother. Monika Shafi notes further in her study the difficulty the character Martha Wolg had in her roles as a mother and lover.

Indem Kolmar den Konflikt zwischen Mutterschaft und Erotik mit der Problematik der jüdischen Außenseiterin verband, leistete sie nicht nur einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Mutter – Tochter – Thematik, sondern auch zur deutsch – jüdischen Literatur und zur Literatur der Moderne. (205)

In the analysis it will become clear that Martha Wolg confronts many difficulties and that she is unable to bring different aspects of her life into agreement. Her relationship to her daughter is marked by both coldness and a sense of tremendous love, but a love that she is unable to express.

In relationships with Friedrich Wolg and Albert Renkens, her sexual passion is not matched by being a loving or caring woman in daily life.

Studies by Beatrice Eichmann-Leutenegger, Irene Kacandes and Dagmar Lorenz examine the perceived Jewish self-loathing in the novel. Lorenz focuses on one-sided Jewish assimilation and asserts the Jews had lost their traditions, while unable to gain entry into German society. She argues that Martha Wolg had internalized a racist image of Jews and she tries to find a connection between the failed assimilation and the Holocaust. Similarly, Irene Kacandes presents an interpretation in her essay “Making the Stranger the Enemy: Gertrud Kolmar’s *Eine jüdische Mutter*.” Kacandes strives to understand how the Holocaust could have occurred through a reading of the novel (99). These scholars have tried to understand the revelatory nature of the novel to explain historical events. Although the authors focus on the failure of one-sided assimilation and that many problems between German and German-Jewish identity had not been resolved, it remains problematic to tie the novel to the Holocaust. The novel, however, can be read to show how self-development affected by self-hatred produces a type of mutated self-creation. It will be shown that the protagonist has absorbed anti-Semitic stereotypes into her identity.

Martha Wolg’s *Bildung* is heavily influenced by her status as an outsider, as an Eastern European Jewess leading an isolated life. In contrast, the protagonists of the other two novels to be analyzed in this dissertation, *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster*, are accepted by their societies. A key factor of a *Bildungsroman* is to have the protagonist achieve a type of understanding or finding their place in society. *Eine jüdische Mutter* shows through its main character that it was perhaps impossible for a Jewish woman to find any acceptance within German society. In other words, Martha Wolg will remain an outsider and never be accepted,

irrespective of her behaviour. The following chapter will examine Martha Wolg's relationships as wife and mother and show the limits placed on her. The analysis will show that Martha Wolg's *Bildung* has both positive and negative aspects, but ultimately she fails as the negative aspects of her evolution supersede the positive.

Chapter 2.2 Dissimilation of German Jews

The political situation in Germany in the Weimar Republic was highly volatile, with a succession of elections and weak governments, an economic crisis and huge societal upheaval. To interpret the novel, it is necessary to understand the socio-political and economic situation of the Weimar Republic and the rise of violent anti-Semitism after the loss of WWI. As mentioned in the introduction, during periods of economic distress the Jewish population was transformed into the scapegoat and in the Weimar Republic violent anti-Semitism became a feature of daily life. Previously held beliefs that assimilation would bring about the desired acceptance were being challenged. Framed within the idea of the imagined community, there was a wide range of reactions from German Jews, with some coming to the conclusion they were not accepted as equal members. The discrimination they were facing could not be overcome by assimilation, acculturation or conversion to Christianity.

The idea of German Jews as not being fully German, and thus not being accepted as full members of German society, had its roots in the nineteenth century. As mentioned earlier Johann Gottlieb Fichte presented a definition of the German state as being organic. For him there were two types of societies and named them *Gesellschaft* und *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* refers to the French model, which is based on laws and the citizen, and *Gemeinschaft* underscores the bonds of blood, referring to a German nation. The importance of Fichte's definition cannot be

underestimated, as he presented hurdles which could never be overcome by those defined as not belonging to the organic German state. In the analysis of *Eine jüdische Mutter*, I will show how she is seen as belonging to a different racial group. The ideas of blood and race were adopted by other authors, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who had great influence on defining Germans and Jews as separate races. Chamberlain presents Germans and Jews as being in a battle to the death between the different races in *Foundation of the Nineteenth Century*. Citing Herder, he insisted that the Jews were an alien people in Europe (Chamberlain 330). Not only were Jews alien to Europe, but they stood face to face with the Teutonic peoples, separate from one another (Chamberlain 256). Chamberlain's writings had a far-reaching influence, from politics to social movements such as the women's movement in Germany at the turn of the century.

For the purpose of the analysis of the novel *Eine jüdische Mutter*, it is helpful to understand how Jewish women were defined at the turn of the twentieth century. Susanne Orman highlights the widespread acceptance of anti-Semitic ideas by the women's movement in her book *Frauenbewegung und "Judenfrage." Diskurse um Rasse und Geschlecht nach 1900* (86). She describes how the movement viewed Jewish women as being heavily involved in prostitution as both victims and victimizers (Orman 148-149). One of the most extreme anti-Semitic stereotypes perpetuated by the women's organization was that female Jewish prostitutes distinguished themselves from non-Jewish prostitutes through their high level of shamelessness and perversity (Orman 152).¹ Orman's study outlines the popular discourse surrounding Germans and Jews within the women's movement and shows how widespread these racial ideas were in the Weimar Republic.

¹ In *Eine jüdische Mutter*, the protagonist's sexuality is portrayed only in negative terms.

The research conducted on the Weimar Republic has been extensive and it would be impossible to cover all the major scholarly research related to it. Instead I want to name a few works that provide an overview of the social, political and economical situation in the Weimar Republic. Eberhard Kolb's *Die Weimarer Republik* examines the three periods of the Republic: the foundation from 1918/19-1923, the relative stabilization from 1924-1929, and the destruction of the Republic and rise of the NSDAP from 1929-1933. The division of the Republic into these three phases coincides with the end of WWI and hyper-inflation, the relative stability in the economy from 1924-1929, to the world-wide economic downturn, signalled by the stock market crash of 1929. The economic problems led to new social and political unrest, undermining the Republic, which had problems of legitimacy since its creation. Peter Longerich's *Deutschland 1918-1933* covers the period in depth and showcases the developments in German society during this period. He examines how the culture of the *Klassische Moderne* produced new developments in all areas, from painting to architecture, in the form of Bauhaus. He also shows that men and women were presented with different role models, which were quite different from pre-WWI German society. These works give a general overview of the problems confronting German society during the Weimar Republic. These authors describe how anti-Semitism was used by political opponents of the Weimar Republic to discredit the state. The increase in anti-Semitism and lack of legitimacy of the new state had a profound effect on the German-Jewish population.

Cornelia Hecht reveals, in her study *Deutsche Juden und Antisemitismus in der Weimarer Republik*, the difficulties faced by German Jews. The Weimar Republic was a period in which many Jews were confronted with violence motivated by anti-Semitism, a situation much different from pre-WWI (99). She examines the reasons for the rise in anti-Semitism and shows that Jews

were being held responsible for the loss of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles. Hecht points out that the Weimar Republic was often referred to as the *Judenrepublik* by its opponents (13). The crisis in politics spilled over into the private sphere where it spurred on a conversation amongst many German Jews about the success or, what was viewed increasingly by many Jews, failure of assimilation. Hecht shows that acculturation had not brought about the desired acceptance of German Jews as full members of German society (49-50). She writes:

Nicht wenige junge deutsche Juden litten im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert unter ihrer deutsch-jüdische Identität, weil die Umwelt ihnen die Anerkennung als Deutsche versagte, sie zugleich aber auf ein inhaltsleer gewordenes Judensein zurückwarf. (44)

The lack of acceptance as full members of German society, as well as having no connection or attachment to a Jewish identity, caused many German Jews to question the purpose of assimilation. In the following section I show how the lack of a well-defined identity affects Martha Wolg at the most personal level. She has neither access to a German nor a Jewish community and her *Bildung* is deeply defined by this lack of support. The situation in the Weimar Republic for German Jews forced many to confront the lack of belonging and to forge a new Jewish identity. Hecht writes, “Sie wollten weder ihr Selbstwertgefühl noch ihr Verhalten länger abhängig machen von den (Vor-)Urteilen der nichtjüdischen Umwelt” (44). The desire to create and assert their own identity gained momentum. Other studies have focused on the high level of hostility confronting German Jews. Shulamit Volkov argues in *Germans, Jews and Antisemites* that anti-Semitic hostility as well as the inner dynamics of assimilation itself were the leading causes of dissimilation (261). Ritchie Robertson’s book, *The ‘Jewish Question’ in German Literature 1749-1939*, provides an overview of important thinkers and writers who presented Germans and Jews in a binary relationship. From Herder’s concept of the “Volk” (157-158) to Fichte’s belief that a “hidden language of the Jew”

existed (158), Robertson outlines the main arguments to show how the German and Jewish subject was created as two separate groups. Robertson argues that Jews tried to overcome barriers set up by anti-Semites through a process of acculturation (245-246), but that the emancipation of the Jew was viewed to be a failure. Leading writers such as Alfred Döblin remarked that assimilation and emancipation had brought little real acceptance of Jews (Robertson 279). In fact, Weimar is a period which Robertson refers to as a period of dissimilation, in which many leading Jewish scholars had begun to question the success and failure of a one-sided assimilation. The question of one-sided assimilation challenged assumptions about German society held by German Jews. German Jews who had believed their position in German society had become stronger through assimilation and acculturation were forced to re-evaluate this idea. Ultimately, it was the political situation which cast German Jews as outsiders.

The rise of the NSDAP in 1930s as an officially elected party led to its acceptance by other traditional political parties. Hecht shows that Jewish organizations were deeply concerned by what they witnessed as a shift in the socio-political situation in Germany, which allowed a fiercely anti-Semitic party to become part of the political landscape. She writes:

Für die *Jüdische Rundschau* hatte sich das deutsche Bürgertum mit der Existenz der Nationalsozialistischen nicht nur abgefunden, sondern sah in ihnen “willkommene Bundesgenossen gegen Kommunisten” und “gegen die Juden.” Man solle sich besser nicht täuschen: “Der Antisemitismus der Nationalsozialisten wird für die weitesten Schichten des deutschen Volkes keinen Grund darstellen, Mitarbeit und Unterstützung der Nationalsozialisten abzulehnen”. (207-208)

The socio-political and economic uncertainty in the Weimar Republic created a breeding ground for political parties such as the NSDAP, which exploited the fear for their own gain. They gained

credibility by being acknowledged and accepted by traditional conservative and liberal political parties. Jewish organizations had to acknowledge that simply pointing out that the NSDAP was reactionary did not address the problem (Hecht 208). The real challenge was that German Jews were targeted by anti-Semites ever more frequently and violently, and this was not being addressed by the traditional liberal and conservative political parties.

Gertrud Kolmar does not address the socio-historical situation explicitly in her novel, but hints at the instability and insecurity of that particular time period. There are moments of calm, when the protagonist is seen to be leading a fairly successful life. However, the undercurrent of the novel reveals a tension in the socio-political situation in Germany, such as the protagonist finding a copy of the *Völkischer Beobachter* at Albert Renkens' apartment. The next sections will show the troubled relationships the protagonist has with her husband and boyfriend and her attitude towards motherhood. The image which emerges is highly complex and describes the unravelling of a protagonist who is unable to deal with her reality. The analysis will underscore the dangers of being isolated and not having the support of friends or family. The following sections will reveal the major obstacles the protagonist faces in her development. The deteriorating situation for German Jews in the Weimar Republic is in some ways mirrored in the novel through the demise of the protagonist.

The analysis will reveal that the protagonist is not accepted as a member of the imagined community, but is defined as a foreigner from a different era. Using Anderson's theory of defining communities it becomes clear that Martha Wolg is an outsider. The language used to define the protagonist underscores her difference from German society. The anti-Semitic stereotype of her sexuality is used to showcase her destructive nature. Martha Wolg's performance of the strong woman is viewed to be irrational and abusive and it shows the limits

of subverting gender identities. Butler would argue that through parodying gender performance and causing “gender trouble,” a new identity could be formed. However, in the case of Martha Wolg it becomes apparent that her performance is so extreme that it is rejected by her society. Further, she intensifies it by turning against herself. An examination of the different aspects of the novel will show that the protagonist refuses to acknowledge her situation and incorporate her experiences. Hence, she does not achieve *Bildung* but rather anti-*Bildung*.

Chapter 2.3 Self-Isolation as Barrier to *Bildung*

In the Weimar Republic, the role of women was changing as more women began to enter the workforce and become an important group of consumers. Nina Sylvester writes in her article “Before Cosmopolitan,” the “Girl” or flapper, created by the glossy magazines, was a young, fashionable, and financially independent woman (550). Irmgard Keun’s *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*, published in 1932, presents a character named Doris, whose only wish is to belong to high society. Ariane Martin writes in her essay “Kultur der Oberfläche, Glanz der Moderne:” “Mit der Signifikanz dieses Titels war der Akzent verlagert, denn mit dem Adjektiv ‘kunstseidene’ zur Charakterisierung der Titelfigur enthält er mehr kulturelle als soziale Implikationen und verweist latent auf den Aspekt des Artifizialen” (349). She shows that the protagonist desires a type of life that is not real and writes:

Kunstseidene jedoch ist keine echte Seide, sondern ein industriell hergestellter billiger, gleichwohl aber ein glänzender Stoff. “Glanzstoff” gibt der Brockhaus von 1931 als Synonym für Kunstseidene an. Mehr Schein als Sein--diese Assoziation legt das Adjektiv ‘kunstseidene’ nahe, mit dem die aufstiegorientierte Titelheldin des Romans charakterisiert ist, jene Doris, die aus kleinsten Verhältnissen stammt und

keinen anderen Wunsch hat, als diesen: "Ich will so ein Glanz werden, der oben ist."

(349)

The desire to be part of the wealthy elite, who have the means to lead a luxurious life, is Doris' desperate hope. She is, however, either unwilling or unable to understand that the fantasy created by the magazines is in fact just that, a fantasy and at the end of the novel Doris is completely broke and homeless. The image of an outgoing flapper is contradicted by the reality faced by the majority of women in the Weimar Republic.

Contrary to the outgoing and cheerful image of a young woman as a flapper, which was being promoted in the 1920s, the protagonist Martha Wolg is reserved and does not follow the fashion of her time. Barbara Frantz argues that while the glamorous image of the flapper fit some women's situations, it did not reflect the situation for working-class Jewish immigrant women (40). The protagonist lived with her parents until she married Friedrich Wolg and she did not have any friends or acquaintances. Apart from visits from an Aunt, the family did not have any notable ties to the community in Berlin. The parents did not prevent their daughter from having friends or socializing, but Martha Wolg did not appear to have any interest in doing that. "Sie traf nicht wie andre mit ihnen auf Festen oder beruflich zusammen und hatte dies starr, geschlossene, abweisende Gesicht nicht bloß dann, wenn einer im Hausflur, vorm Laden mit ihr ins Gespräch kommen wollte" (Kolmar 19). Further hints to Martha Wolg's psychological make-up can be seen through her evening trips to watch the street cars drive in and out.

Bei Sommerwetter mochte sie auch mit den Eltern in einer Anlage hocken, dann schritt sie wohl zum Bahnhof hinüber und schaute ein Weilchen mit seltsamen Augen zu den ein- und ausfahrenden Stadtbahnzügen empor. So fand sie die letzten

der Zwanzigerjahre und kannte noch jämmerlich wenig von dem, was die Menschen Erlebnis nennen. (Kolmar 19-20)

The protagonist's lack of experience and interest in having a social life limits her self-development. The description of Martha Wolg watching the streetcars driving in and out further underscores the factor of strangeness. The author's description of Martha Wolg portrays her as an ambivalent and controversial character. The list of adjectives used to describe her by Kolmar in the first two chapters underscores how negatively the character had been characterized: "dunkle Frau" (11), "starr geschlossene, abweisende Gesicht" (19), "schweigsam, Trauerlappen, kalt, antikes Steinbild, eis" (21), "Medea and Megäre" (25), and "Wölfin and Tiermutter" (26). The image evoked is of a cold, distant, and even an evil woman, who is capable of committing crimes. The description of the protagonist creates a character who is defined only in negative terms. The definition of the character with such negative terms has an effect on her *Bildung*.

Martha Wolg wants to be accepted as a strong woman, but the negative description of her character suggests somebody who is unstable. Judith Butler writes in *The Psychic Life of Power*: "Power acts on the subject in at least two ways: first, as what makes the subject possible, the condition of its possibility and its formative occasion, and second, as what is taken up and reiterated in the subject's 'own' acting" (14). Instead of evoking strength and independence, her performance as a strong woman is perceived as being extremely ruthless and oppressive. An example of this can be seen in the argument the character has with her husband over baptizing their daughter:

Ihre Stimme war kalt. "Es ist ganz gleich, was du drüber gelesen hast. Wenn du dein Versprechen nicht halten willst und den Pfarrer aufhetzt" ...Sie unterbrach sich: "Es ist unnütz zu drohn, wenn man noch nicht weiß, was man tut. Aber bedenke," sagte

sie leise, “daß unser Kind noch in mir ist, in meinem Schoß und daß du es, wenn es geboren ist, nicht mitschleppen kannst in deine Fabrik und daß ich es, wenn du es mir auch nimmst, überall finden werde.” (Kolmar 25)

Martha Wolg is not simply defending her point but is actually threatening her husband, which he takes seriously. Friedrich Wolg is fearful and he explains the situation to his parents and asks them to be tolerant, because he truly believes that she is capable of murder. He refers to Martha as Medea, but his father calls her a Megäre. In Greek mythology Medea kills the children she had with Jason in revenge after he abandons her; in contrast, Megaira is one of the three Erinyen or Erinnyen, which appear together and are known to carry out revenge on individuals. Their names are Alekto (the determined), Megaira (the jealous) und Tisiphone (the vengeful). Megäre and Megaira are also names used to describe extremely angry or evil women. Although Martha Wolg tries to assert her strength, the destructive attributes of her character and her performance create a negative impression. In contrast, Martha Wolg’s husband Friedrich Wolg and other characters in the novel are described in far more favourable terms, generating thereby positive impressions.

The character Friedrich Wolg is described by Kolmar with words such as “*Frische and Lebhaftigkeit*” (21) and his father Hans Wolg’s personality is described as having a “*jovialen, behaglichen Art*” (21). These descriptions emphasize vitality and kindness, making the characters far more appealing than Martha Wolg. They also show that the protagonist does not belong to their “imagined community.” The words used to describe her underscore her otherness, while further solidifying their own position. Friedrich and Hans Wolg’s actions are viewed less negatively, even when it is obvious that there is a form of discrimination taking place. From the beginning of the relationship, Friedrich’s father Hans Wolg is hostile towards Martha. He states

that Martha ought to be named Lea, the hated wife in the Old Testament because of her coldness, which he finds disturbing. He also believes the marriage is doomed from the start, as he thinks that Martha Wolg is stronger than his son. “Sie ist stärker als du, das spür ich, bloß wenn ich sie sehe. Und wenn du mal anders willst als sie: die duckst du nicht. Entweder du reißt aus, oder sie bricht dich in Stücke. Ohne Gnade” (Kolmar 21). This statement is borne out when Friedrich leaves for America for one year, returns very ill and subsequently dies. The contrast in the descriptions of Martha and Friedrich raises doubts about whether they are to be accepted as real or are in fact supposed to be stereotypes.

Gudrun Jäger examines how the characters are presented in the novel and argues, “Dagegen werden, so gewinnt man den Eindruck, nicht mit Charakteren dargestellt, sondern Typen, die die Autorin teilweise bis zur Grenze der klischeehaftigkeit überzeichnet” (*Gertrud Kolmar. Publikations* 162-163). For Jäger all the characters, including the daughter Ursa and later Albert Renkens, are embodiments of qualities that do not reflect individuals, but rather clichés. Is Kolmar using the descriptions to construct actual characters or are the descriptions being used to expose stereotypes of Jews and Germans? In her role as a wife, I would argue that the protagonist is not just a cliché, but rather exposes a dark undercurrent in society.

Martha Wolg leads a very isolated life, an isolation she refuses to abandon even during her marriage, which can be heard in Friedrich Wolg’s complaint:

Daß sie von seiner Arbeit wenig verstand, obwohl sie aufhorchen und ja sagen mochte, konnte er schon verzeihn; ärgerlicher war, daß sie kaum eine seiner Neigungen teilte. Sie wollte nicht paddeln mit ihm, nicht auf dem Motorrad sitzen, und an dem Rundfungerät im Eck blieb meist er der einzige Hörer. Ging er ins Kino,

ins Kaffeehaus oder auch zu Bekannten, so fand sie stets einen kurzen Grund, einsam daheim zu bleiben. (Kolmar 23-24)

This description of Martha and Friedrich Wolg does not show a marriage, but rather two individuals tensely occupying the same space. Martha Wolg's behaviour is actually almost incomprehensible in that it does not make sense to get married, if the character prefers to be alone. Monika Shafi examines the character's performance and comes to the conclusion that:

Diese Isolation ist aber von Martha Zeit ihres Lebens bewußt gewählt worden. Sie steht allen Menschen abweisend, ja feindselig gegenüber. Selbst wohlgesinnte Hilfangebote oder Ratschläge weist sie schroff zurück. Ihr Verhalten wird auch anhand von auktorialen Erzählenkommentaren kritisiert und verurteilt. (202)

The decision to remain isolated is criticized but the criticism does not change the character's behaviour. Furthermore, an explanation is never provided as to why Martha Wolg chooses to reject friendship. The reader is left to wonder and question the merit of withdrawing from society, which has grave consequences for the protagonist. Shafi writes:

Diese Sichtweise trifft auch Kolmars Protagonistin Martha Wolg zu, denn Martha reagiert auf eine von ihr prinzipiell als feindlich eingestufte Umgebung ebenfalls durch 'Abschluß' und zieht sich auf die Bastion der Andersartigkeit zurück. Diese Haltung behindert aber gleichzeitig ihre eigene Selbsterkenntnis und kritische Wahrnehmung. (202)

Martha Wolg has created a situation for herself from which she is unable to extricate herself. She rejects all offers of friendship and prefers to remain isolated, and because of her choice to remain isolated, she is unable to examine her behaviour critically or include different opinions when making her decisions. The protagonist has no frame of reference in which she can examine and

integrate her experience, and her *Bildung* becomes a type of anti-*Bildung*. The revelation of Martha Wolg's lack of any experience with other young people as a young woman carries over into her married life and it is central to understanding her performance as a wife. Her role as a mother, wife and lover are deeply influenced by her lack of social skills or experiences. Martha Wolg's most controversial role is, however, as a mother and the analysis will reveal how her anti-*Bildung* has devastating consequences for her and others.

The examination of Martha Wolg's gender performance of a strong woman in the novel *Eine jüdische Mutter* shows the limitations of trying to assert one's opinion or create an identity. Although the novel's protagonist tries to project an image of confidence, her behaviour is interpreted as being strange and hostile. A key factor in causing Martha Wolg's gender performance to be rejected is that she does not accept any of society's rules. As Shafi notes:

Eine Mutter ohne Familie, eine Jüdin ohne Gemeinde, eine Künstlerin ohne Kunstwerk zu sein und außerdem den eigenen sexuellen Bedürfnissen zu folgen bedeutet eine solch fundamentale Absage und die institutionellen Grundlagen der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, daß dieser Figur kein gesellschaftlicher Handlungsort zugestanden werden kann. Der Roman zeigt deutlich, daß ein solches Maß an weiblicher Abweichung nicht toleriert wird. (204)

The novel shows how a complete rejection of society's rules, coupled with a failure to incorporate experiences into one's *Bildung*, can lead to marginalization. By not having any allies or a support group, Martha Wolg is left alone to fend for herself. The basis of *Bildung* is to understand the experiences one goes through and to find place for oneself in the social order. The element of honesty is crucial, because it allows the character to better understand themselves and their situation. The character Martha Wolg does not integrate experiences into her development,

nor does she admit that she needs help and support. The suppression of her own desires and rejection of help stunts Martha Wolg's *Bildung*.

I would suggest that the description of Martha Wolg produces alienation and distance between the main protagonist and other characters in the novel. By creating such an alienating character, Kolmar is showing how individuals become marked and are dismissed as being strange if they try to assert themselves. Martha is not allowed to define herself except to state that she is strong. Kolmar shows the extreme marginalization of a character, by preventing the character from explaining her actions. Martha's *Bildung* lacks her integration of experience, which is underscored by her inability to explain her behavior. The alienation created in her role as a wife carries over into her role as a mother.

2.4 Martha Wolg's Role as a Mother

Martha Wolg's role as a mother reveals the contradiction between her assertions and actions. She claims that she deeply loves her daughter, but is unable to show her affection because she is not like other mothers. I would argue that Martha Wolg's stunted *Bildung* did not allow her to recognize the problematic nature of her role as a mother. She does not appear to understand, for example, that preventing Ursa from forming a bond with the father and grandparents is a loss for the child. In the case of Friedrich Wolg, she uses her gender performance of the strong woman to alienate him from his child.

Ihn freute natürlich das kleine Geschöpf, doch wurde sein Vaterstolz bald gedämpft, das es ihn gleichsam mit winzigen Fäusten aus Marthas Leben verstieß. Sie dünkete ihm oft eine Wilde jetzt, die er gewaltsam im Käfig hielt, die nur trachtete auszubrechen. Trat er zu ihr, sie hatte das Kind an der Brust, so sah sie ihn wortlos an

mit fremdem unheimlich flackernden Blick wie eine Tiermutter, die um ihr Junges zittert. Nie stritt sie mit ihm, sie quengelte nicht; meist schob sie ihn ohne viel Wesens beiseite wie ein Ding, das man gerade nicht braucht. (Kolmar 26)

Martha Wolg's gender performance not only pushes the father out of the daughter's life, but it causes the relationship Martha and Friedrich to breakdown completely. It is at this point that he leaves for one year in America, only to return as a sick man and to die. The loss of the father is compounded for Ursa with a loss of any connection to the grandparents. After the child has been abducted and assaulted, the grandparents write to Martha Wolg stating their wish to visit the child (Kolmar 75). She, however, does not answer the letter and her decision is difficult to understand:

Martha zerpfückte den Wisch. "Wären sie so voller Mitgefühl, sie hätten schon hergefunden." Sie urteilte ungerecht. Die Alten hatten sicher geglaubt, daß sie nach unangemeldeter Fahrt Martha nicht antreffen würden. Und Martha dachte: Sie sollen auch gar nicht kommen. Ich will sie nicht. Ich geb ihnen keine Antwort drauf; sie dürfen von Ursa nichts haben. Denn ihr war, als verschenke sie schon ihr Kind, wenn sie nur dies Leid, das sie um es trug, mit anderen Menschen teilte. (Kolmar 75)

As with the father, the protagonist is unwilling to allow her daughter to have a bond with anyone but her. Furthermore, she states that she feels she is giving her child away when she shares her pain, which is also the reason for rejecting her boss' offer of help. Frau Hoffmann visits Martha after Ursa had been found and suggests that she stay with Martha until the afternoon. Once again Martha Wolg rejects the offer of help:

Sie dürfen nicht-Sie dürfen sich nicht mit mir ärgern. Ich-Es fällt mir schwer. Ich möchte nicht unhöflich sein. Nicht undankbar sein. Aber ich kann nicht...mit

Menschen darüber reden. Mit keinem Menschen. Ich muß ganz einsam sein. Ich muß das alleine tragen... das alles...für mich. Manche Mütter...die unglücklich sind...lassen sich gerne trösten...ablenken auch...ich weiß. Ich nicht. Ich...Ich bin anders...(Kolmar 79)

Frau Hoffmann is disappointed in having her offer rejected, but the statement reveals far more about Martha Wolg. Her insistence that she is different is used to excuse her behaviour without any self-reflection. As each of her actions is predicated on her *Andersartigkeit* it is impossible for her to act differently. Scholars have given different explanations as to why the protagonist acts as she does.

Hoffmann suggests in her analysis that Martha Wolg acts as she does because she does not know who she is:

Alles andere als eine orthodoxe, fromme Jüdin einerseits – die scharfe Kritikerin eines bildungsbürgerlichen Reformsjudentums, das sich der deutschen Kultur blind unterwirft, andererseits. Eine Frau, die über viele Merkmale einer assimilierten Jüdin verfügt, die sich gleichwohl als eine Fremde und Außenseiterin sieht und tatsächlich im entscheidenden Moment auf diese Rolle festgelegt oder auf eine zeitweise schon überwunden geglaubte Position zurückgeworfen wird. (126)

Martha does not appear to have a sense of who she is and I would argue that she has internalized certain anti-Semitic ideas as part of her identity. Here, I want to emphasize how her lack of insight into her own identity negatively affects her and her daughter. She is adamant that the child should not be baptized, but at the same time she never takes her daughter to the synagogue and is unable to answer her daughter's simple question of what it means to be Jewish. Furthermore, Hoffmann argues that Martha did not see Ursa as a separate individual, but rather

an extension of herself (109-110). On Ursa's grave stone, her full name and birth and death dates are not listed. It appears that any information which would set the child apart as an individual has been withheld by the mother. To understand this lack of separation between the mother and child a closer examination of Martha Wolg is helpful.

Barbara Frantz suggests a reason for the protagonist's behaviour was caused by the psychological damage that had been inflicted on her. Frantz suggests that Martha Wolg's identity had been destroyed by her parents, husband, lover, and society (96). She recognizes the degree to which Martha has been described in negative terms and she tries to approach the character with empathy and argues: "Hope, pain, and disillusionment are aspects of Martha's experience which the reader can relate to, and which can make Martha's perspective accessible to us" (Frantz 73). By describing the character's painful past, Frantz presents a more sympathetic observation of the protagonist:

Martha's relationship to her daughter Ursa is determined by Martha's inner reality. A look at Martha's past history will demonstrate her problematic emotional development, which has resulted in insecure ego-boundaries, a disturbed sexuality, and injuries to the narcissistic self. (73)

This interpretation of Martha's character acknowledges that there are problems with her psychological composition. One such episode that could support this theory of dysfunction is Martha's memory of how a man exposed himself to her and her friend when they were children. The friend dismissed the man as simply being a pig, but Martha is deeply traumatized and has nightmares for a year (Kolmar 63-64). Frantz argues that because of the trauma, Martha is unable to separate from her child, and instead views Ursa as an extension of herself (Frantz 74). This reading of the protagonist's performance as a mother is compelling, but it does not answer the

core question: Why does Martha Wolg reject all offers of help from friends? The question becomes even more urgent when the reader observes the protagonist trying to solicit help from complete strangers.

Martha Wolg tries to find an ally to bring her daughter's assailant to justice. She visits a lawyer and a fortune teller and even begins a relationship, whose stated purpose was to help her find the "murderer." She visits the lawyer, Fritz Plommer, who recognizes that Martha is not interested in justice but revenge, which he attempts to dissuade her from pursuing. The lawyer and Martha have a long discussion about the death penalty, which she claims as a Jewess, is the correct method to deal with criminals. Fritz Plommer is adamantly opposed to the death penalty and citing that he too is a Jew, only far more tolerant than Martha. He states: "Ich möchte doch diese primitive Vorstellung in Ihnen zerstören: 'Vergossenes Blut schreit nach Rache. Die Rache fordert den Kopf.' So bequem ist das nicht" (Kolmar 150). The interaction between the lawyer and Martha underscores the lack of self-examination on the part of the protagonist. It is unclear why she contacted this particular lawyer and it is also unclear why she lies to him, when she says she will not pursue revenge. The lawyer refers her to an experienced detective, whom Martha does not contact. The reader is left to question: what is the purpose of this meeting?

Hoffmann and Frantz outline problems with Martha Wolg's lack of a clear identity and her psychological problems to explain her behaviour. However, I argue that the protagonist is well aware of the choices she makes and does not appear to care if someone is hurt in the process. For example, Martha's objective for beginning the affair with Albert Renkens is to have an ally to help her find her daughter's "murderer," and in payment she will sleep with him.

Sie dachte brutal: Heut' abend oder gleich jetzt nachmittag soll er in meinem Bette sein. Er soll mich decken. Ich bin heiß. Ich liebe ihn nicht. Aber er soll meinen

Willen tun, und ich muß dafür zahlen. Ich weiß nichts Besseres. Und ich habe lange gefastet, und wir werden die Lust aus uns pressen, deren wir fähig sind. (Kolmar 163)

The brutality in this statement is reminiscent of Martha's attitude toward Friedrich, with whom she had little emotional connection, and the relationship with Albert Renken is predicated on lies. After being together with Renkens, her first thoughts are not that she has found an ally, but rather that she is no longer alone (Kolmar 172). Both in her interactions with the lawyer and Albert Renkens, it becomes clear that Martha Wolg uses her daughter as an object to attract a partner. Further proof of this can be seen in the final interaction between Martha Wolg and Albert Renkens.

The relationship between Martha Wolg and Albert Renkens eventually comes to an end because Albert Renkens will no longer tolerate her behaviour. The protagonist is devastated and unable to cope with being alone and she attempts to reconcile with him. She destroys the picture of her daughter to prove to him that he would no longer have to compete with Ursa for her affection. However, the destruction of the picture and her confession that she poisoned her daughter only shocks and leads him to reject Martha (Kolmar 238). At this point, Martha realizes that she is alone and her suicide is described as a resolution:

Sie war still. Sie wollte nichts rächen mehr. Sie haßte nicht mehr. Sie zürnte jetzt keinem Menschen. Sie zürnte nur ein wenig sich selber, nicht lang. Ich habe dich einmal getötet, du Freude; Gott ist gerecht: wer dich anrührt, muß sterben. (Kolmar 242-243)

This passage reveals that the protagonist was aware that her behaviour was the cause of her isolation. She had pushed people away with hate and had tried to ignore the problems that were present in her life and in the end she was left isolated.

Martha Wolg's performance as a mother is intriguing in that from the point of conception to finally poisoning Ursa at the hospital, the character never puts the child first. She prevents her from having a relationship with her father and after his death she never lets the grandparents see their granddaughter. Furthermore, after the child is abducted and sexually assaulted, she refuses to accept all help, including offers from her good acquaintance and boss Frau Hoffmann. Her refusal to integrate her experiences results in a type of *anti-Bildung*. Instead of finding a compromise and a place within society, the protagonist has nowhere to turn. The dangers of isolating oneself and continuing in a destructive pattern of behaviour are emphasized in the novel, as are the acceptance of stereotypes as part of one's identity.

The protagonist's attempt to assert her identity as the strong woman fails because her society rejects her gender performance. By presenting an outrageous and even cruel gender performance, the protagonist is unable to achieve any success. The failure as a mother and wife are almost programmed to occur because the protagonist never waivers in her performance of the strong woman and she does not allow for any nuance. Her behaviour is always harsh and unforgiving and as a result, she is further isolated. Once she has decided that she will play a particular role of the strong woman, the protagonist closes herself off from any other possible interpretations. The *anti-Bildung* of the character is shown in stark detail, with the protagonist being unable to modify or change her behaviour.

Chapter 2.5 Ambiguities of Racism

Martha Wolg's *Bildung* is affected by anti-Semitism present in German society during the Weimar Republic. In the previous section, it is revealed that the principal character faced difficulty because of her performance of a strong woman and her disposition for self-isolation. However, the analysis of anti-Semitism and the role it plays in the self-development of characters is crucial for an understanding of the novel. Anti-Semitism added an additional barrier to the already complicated relationships between the various characters. The novel shows the character's complex relationship with Judaism and German society. Martha Wolg does not have a close religious or a cultural tie to Judaism, but rather views her Jewish identity in racial terms.

Benedict Anderson examines how nations are given legitimacy and brought into existence in *Imagined Communities*. As the title suggest, there is nothing organic or natural about a nation-state, but rather that its foundation is the collective belief in a particular story. Anderson writes:

For it shows that from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be 'invited into' the imagined community. Thus today, even the most insular nations accept the principle of naturalization (wonderful word!), no matter how difficult in practice they may make it. (145)

The invitation into a particular community is based on the acceptance of a certain element, such as religion or race. The pseudo-scientific research in areas of racial identity in the nineteenth century, however, functioned to solidify the differences between groups. Ideas of racial purity and contamination functioned to create barriers effectively in the case of German Jews, who are cast as the Other. The emancipation of the Jews in 1869 did not lead to their full acceptance as Germans. Dietz Bering argues in *Der Name als Stigma* that certain names were considered

Jewish and therefore unfavourable. He shows how individuals tried to change their names to remove the marker that defined them as the Other. The nineteenth century was a time in which many Jews tried to assimilate by changing their names to sound more “German,” and this process can also be observed in the case of the author Gertrud Kolmar. Monika Shafi reveals that Kolmar: “...ist die deutsche Entsprechung des Ortes Chodziesner, aus dem die Vorfahren des Vaters” (33). Shafi states that the choice of this particular pseudonym was not simply a matter, however, of having a German equivalent of a Polish name:

Die Wahl dieses Pseudonyms ist in mehrfacher Hinsicht bedeutsam. Der Wechsel von Gertrud Chodziesner zu Gertrud Kolmar umfaßt nämlich weit mehr als die Eindeutschung des väterlichen Heimatortes. Der Name „Kolmar“ verlagert einerseits dem Schwerpunkt von einer polnischen-jüdischen zur einer deutsch-preußischen Identität. Er impliziert weiterhin, daß die Tochter nicht unter dem Familiennamen veröffentlichen sollte oder durfte. (33)

In her analysis of the author’s name change it is apparent that there is a shift in the definition of the author’s identity, but it also shows that the author should not publish with her family name. Shafi argues that Kolmar had a contradictory relationship with her role as a Jewish woman and her place in society (33). Kolmar did not have an easy relationship with either her family or the social milieu she belonged to. These difficulties are compounded by the socio-political situation of the Weimar Republic, when anti-Semitism had increased and challenged the benefit of a one-sided assimilation, which was viewed as a failure by Kolmar and other German-Jewish intellectuals. Kolmar addresses the issue in the novel through a description of a wedding Martha Wolg attends:

Sie erinnerte sich einer jüdischen Trauung, der sie vor acht, neun Jahren im Festsale beigewohnt... Der Prediger im Ornat der Reformgemeinde stand bloßen Hauptes und hielt seine Rede von Goethe und Schiller, von Schopenhauer und Kant. „Er hat ganz prachtvoll gesprochen,“ lobte jemand nachher, „- so freisinnig—gar nicht, als ob es ein jüdischer Geistlicher wäre.“ Frau Cronheim nickte. „Schade nur, daß die Kirchglocken fehlten. Dann hätte man überhaupt nichts gemerkt.“ (Kolmar 74-75)

The hyper-acculturation can be seen in the Rabbi's unorthodox attire and reference to the most important German writers and thinkers. The rabbi is viewed positively by his congregation in that he is able to speak as if he were not a Jewish religious leader. The element to underscore in this compliment is to eliminate all characteristics of being Jewish, which are viewed negatively. It appears the congregation would like to be Jewish without having markers of Judaism. However, this hyper-acculturation did not provide German Jews with the acceptance they desired and they in fact appeared to be unaware of this. Jäger presents Gershom Scholem's analysis of the situation faced by German Jews.

Danach erlagen breite Schichten der jüdischen Bevölkerung, insbesondere der Mittelstand, einer Selbsttäuschung über ihre reale Lage. Sie ergab sich aus dem Widerspruch der Ideologie der Assimilation, die von vielen verkündet und schon als vollzogen behauptet wurde, und den wahren Gefühlshaltung in wichtigen Lebenslagen, bei denen noch starke und oft nicht bewußt gemachte Bindungen an das Judentum fortwirkten. (qtd. in *Gertrud Kolmar-eine deutsche Jüdin* 238)

The contradiction, which Scholem outlines above, can be witnessed in the novel through an analysis of the central character Martha Wolg. She does not appear to have a clear understanding of Judaism, whether she views it as a religion or race or both. She violently opposes her

husband's desire to baptize Ursa, claiming the child will be raised as a Jew, but makes no effort to take the child to the temple. When her daughter questions why they do not attend church, Martha is unable to give her a straight answer and only says that they are Jewish. "Schon im Begriff, ihrem Kinde zu geben, was es kaum noch erfassen mochte, hielt sie inne; ein anderes kam ihr zur Hand" (Kolmar 102). She tells her daughter that she will take her to the temple, but there is no evidence in the novel showing that Martha actually did. This moment is crucial to understand because it shows that Martha is aware that Jews are treated as outsiders.

Although Martha Wolg suggests a religious definition of Judaism, there is no proof that she feels any connection to it. Gudrun Jäger points out in her analysis that for Martha, Judaism is more akin to a race than a religion (*Gertrud Kolmar-eine deutsche Jüdin* 170). Added to the lack of connection is Martha's self-imposed isolation from German and Jewish society. By removing herself from public life, Martha may believe that she is protecting herself from anti-Semitic attacks. However, she makes no attempt to find a place within the German-Jewish community in Berlin. The contradictory nature of the character's beliefs of Judaism is reflected in viewing the religion in racial terms. Dagmar Lorenz argues in her essay "Jüdisches Selbstbewußtsein" that the novel *Eine jüdische Mutter* is an exemplification of Jewish self-hatred. Without fully understanding this aspect of self-loathing, the main character has adopted a negative image of herself. Lorenz writes: "Ohne das Korrektiv eines Kollektivs bildet sie sich ihr eigenes Selbstverständnis davon, was heißt, Jüdin und Mutter zu sein, das, ohne daß es ihr bewußt ist, von nationalsozialistischen rassistischen Theoremen geprägt ist" (133). The difficulty for Martha is that she is neither a conservative Jewess, who attends the synagogue regularly and follows the customs, nor does she accept modern Judaism. Instead the character adopts certain anti-Semitic ideas of Jews, especially Jewish women, and claims them as her own. The problem with this

acceptance is that it has a negative influence on her decision making as wife, mother and lover, which is demonstrated in the analysis.

Hoffmann examines Martha's view of herself and argues that she accepts the idea of the beautiful Jewess because she does not have any other role-model:

Marthas Blick in den Spiegel bietet dem Leser also wahrlich nichts Neues and Originelles. Aber er zeigt, daß die Protagonistin der Erzählung sämtliche Klischees internalisiert hat und sich zuschreibt, bevor der Geliebte sie ihr zuordnet. Sie selbst durchschaut den prekären Charakter dieser Stereotypen gewiß nicht. Sie benutzt diese Vorstellung, weil ihr keine anderen Bilder für eine autonome, selbstbewußte weibliche Sexualität zur Verfügung stehen. (115)

Hoffmann shows the difficulty faced by an individual who is marginalized and has internalized anti-Semitic ideas of herself. In her relationships with men, Kolmar presents a character which appears to act out a parody of an anti-Semitic definition of Jewish sexuality. For example, Friedrich comments that his wife's sexuality is explosive and states that he has a lover, and not a wife.

Doch meinte er schon in der ersten Zeit einmal zu Martha, spottend: "Ich habe eigentlich gar keine Frau, nur eine Geliebte." Er sprach wahr. Denn sie liebte mit ihm nur in einer Gemeinschaft der Nächte; er nannte sie lächelnd Vesuv oder Ätna und Krakatau, weil ihre Umarmung den Ausbrüchen scheinbar ruhigen, heimlich glimmernden Kraters glich. (Kolmar 23)

Martha does not respond to these comments and appears to tacitly accept Friedrich's description of her sexuality. Later Friedrich admits he is tired of the constant changes in Martha's behaviour and even finds it strange.

Es war ein Seltsames da, ein Fremdes, etwas ... er suchte den Namen dafür.

Dies vielleicht, daß sie aus anderem Blut, daß sie Jüdin war. Sie hatte aber die Sitten und Bräuche ihrer Ahnen nicht mitgebracht, feierte keinen Freitagabend und dachte niemals daran, in den Tempel zu gehn. Sie ließ ihren Glauben doch nicht. Denn es war ihr nicht angezogen so wie ein Kleid, das man auswaschen oder verschleifen und leichthin abwerfen kann, sondern war mit ihr geworden wie eine Haut, verwundbar, doch unverlierbar, unlöslich. (Kolmar 24)

From this description the racial elements of Judaism are emphasized and Martha is referred to as being foreign and strange. Martha does not celebrate any Jewish holidays or go to the synagogue, and her religion is described by Friedrich as being part of her skin, clearly implying a racial element to her character. Friedrich is repeating the clichés ascribed to the “exotic Jewess”, which Albert Renkens does as well. In the exchange between Albert Renkens and Martha Wolg, it becomes clear that Martha herself invokes anti-Semitic images to describe her actions.

Seine Blicke flimmerten; er raunte:

“Wer hat dir das beigebracht, nicht dies, sondern alles; sag endlich, ich hab dich schon öfter gefragt: dein Mann?”

“Mein Blut.”

“Das glaube ich dir nicht. Du hast was in Büchern gelesen?”

“Ich lese solche Bücher nicht, das ist Schmutz.”

“Du hattest auch Liebhaber, ja?”

“Nein.”

“Doch. Aber mich liebst du nicht.”

Sie schwieg.

“Aber du schläfst mit mir gerne?”

“Ja...”

“Du bist eine Dirne.”

Sie schüttelte stumm den Kopf.

“Du bist eine Jüdin.” (Kolmar 181)

Hoffmann indicates that, Martha through her silence: “An der Entstehung dieses falschen Bildes ist Martha sehr wohl beteiligt” (119). She suggests that Albert is not really anti-Semitic, but is in fact trying to get Martha to make a commitment to him.

In diesem entgleisten Dialog will der Mann mittels der Verneinung (“Aber mich liebst du nicht”) Marthas Liebesgeständnis erzwingen. Als dieses ausbleibt, schleudert er ihr enttäuscht und wütend Beschuldigungen entgegen, die in der Tat dem Arsenal antisemitischer Stereotypen entnommen sind. (Hoffmann 119)

This explanation for Albert Renkens’ behaviour, however, does not address the broader issue of the stereotype of Jewish women’s sexuality. German women were presented as good mothers and wives, whose sexuality was for the nurturing of the family. It was in essence seen as a positive quality, designed to empower the German nation (Omran 14). In contrast, Jewish women’s sexuality was portrayed as being perverse, unwholesome, and designed to undermine the German nation. Martha Wolg’s relationships with both Friedrich Wolg and Albert Renkens are plagued with difficulties. But it is her sexuality which is depicted with anti-Semitic stereotypes, which makes the protagonist appear to be even more negative. Furthermore, it is repeatedly implied that Martha Wolg is not German and that she is from a different era. Hans Wolg describes the protagonist Martha Wolg with an anti-Semitic stereotype as a stone carving and remarks: “Wir leben im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, nicht in Jakobs Zelt. Alttestamentarisch

sieht sie schon aus” (Kolmar 21). The two images evoked are of death and foreignness, which are carried over into the description of Ursa’s appearance. Kolmar describes the daughter as the following:

Es war ja ihr Kind, nur das ihre. Als hätte bei seinem Entstehen des Vaters Helle mit dem Dunkel der Mütter gekämpft und ihre Finsteres hätte sein Lichtes zuletzt erschlagen und aufgefressen. Ursulas Auge und Haar waren nächtig, die Haut war gelblich, fast braun, klang tiefer noch als der Elfenbeinton im mütterlichen Gesicht.

Und auch ihre Züge verrieten von Friedrich Wolg nichts. (Kolmar 26)

This description is important to analyze because it contains many elements, which anti-Semites believed would be the result of a mixing of German and Jewish blood. The term *Mischling* was coined by anti-Semites to describe the offspring of a German and Jew (Gilman *Jew’s Body* 175). Instead of the child having lighter skin or hair, due to a German parent, anti-Semites insisted that the child would appear even more Jewish, hence darker. “And their ‘blackness’ appears even more strikingly in mixed marriages, almost as nature’s way of pointing up the difference and visibility of the Jew” (*Jew’s Body* 175). The effect of this type of stereotyping, according to Gilman, was: “By the mid-century, being black, being Jewish, being diseased, and being ‘ugly’ come to be inexorably linked” (*Jew’s Body* 173). The racial attributes ascribed to Ursa’s appearance are not random, but follow anti-Semitic discursive practices. Her darkness and appearance of a foreigner once again highlighted the idea that neither she nor her mother belonged to the imagined German community.

The effect of anti-Semitism on the protagonist’s *Bildung* is revealed through the negative self-identification. On the one hand she is described as having an explosive sexuality and on the other she shares none of her husband’s, or later her lover’s, interests. In fact, Martha Wolg’s

sexuality and gender performance as a wife and lover are predicated on anti-Semitic beliefs. Having a child with Friedrich Wolg did not lead to a strong family unit, but rather it is presented as being destructive. Since the protagonist is isolated and does not have strong ties to the Jewish community, she does not have access to an alternative image of Jewish women. She embodies anti-Semitic ideas of her identity, which in turn leads to a destructive gender performance as a wife and lover.

The lack of *Bildung* is made apparent through Martha's inability to change her behaviour, even when it becomes obvious that it only produces failure. The anti-Semitism in the novel is very real and Martha is a victim of it, but, as researchers have pointed out, Martha participates in upholding the anti-Semitic image of Jews. She does not challenge Albert Renkens, but rather supports the idea that her sexual behaviour is tied to her Jewish identity. The lack of *Bildung* must be discussed in connection to the political situation. Should the novel be read as the failure of assimilation to bring Jews into German society? Is the character Martha Wolg a symbol of complete marginalization, having neither a German nor a Jewish community? Is the novel a warning against being unable to compromise? I have tried to address these questions by showing how the protagonist is involved in destructive relationship after another.

Chapter 2.6 Conclusion

The novel can be read as a female anti-*Bildungsroman* as it shows the results of refusing to incorporate experience into one's self-development. The main protagonist Martha Wolg is a highly ambivalent and contradictory character, whose self-development raises fundamental questions. Why does the main protagonist refuse to integrate her experiences in her *Bildung*? Can it be that she is in fact trying to assert her identity without acknowledging any outside

involvement? The analysis shows that Martha Wolg works hard to avoid confronting her behaviour. It is revealed that she normally does not succeed or have a favourable result with her performance of the strong woman, but becomes more marginalized in her community.

Kolmar examines the effects of marginalization on individuals and their self-development. The protagonist has remained on the edges of society for so long, that when she is offered a more inclusive role, she rejects it. A process of dissimilation can be seen in the novel, in the suicide of the main protagonist. Martha Wolg as a character is unable to form bonds and ties within either the German or Jewish communities, and is in effect, completely isolated. With Frau Hoffmann as one of her only acquaintances, Martha Wolg is in essence living within herself. That is to say, she does not share her thoughts or ideas with anyone but herself. Her explosive behaviour at the lawyer's office and the mistreatment of her husband are examples of the character's inability to understand the negative aspects of her gender performance. Martha Wolg is a classic outsider, but it would be difficult to call her a heroine, as her performance as a wife, mother, and lover leads to such devastating consequences for herself and others.

The novel reveals the difficulties of *Bildung* and self-development in an historical situation, which was deteriorating rapidly, both politically and socially. At the time Kolmar wrote the novel in 1930-1931, the Weimar Republic was on the verge of collapse. The author was also aware of the discussion among German-Jewish writers and intellectuals, such as Alfred Döblin, that one-sided assimilation had not produced the desired for acceptance as full members of German society. As a result, serious discussion of dissimilation was beginning to take place within certain circles. Gertrud Kolmar had never felt comfortable in her upper-middle class surroundings and did not enjoy the social aspects of belonging to this group. Coupled with violent anti-Semitism in the Weimar Republic, certain scholars questioned whether assimilation

had taken place at all. In this setting, it could be understandable why the main protagonist retreats into the private sphere. *Eine jüdische Mutter* reveals a de-evolution of the protagonist and shows that her retreat does not bring safety, but only marginalizes her further.

Martha Wolg is an independent woman, who has the full rights afforded the citizens of the Weimar Republic, a job and the freedom to make her own choices. She is not threatened by the state and does not need to fear that she will become *homo sacer* or the sacred man, a situation that both the protagonists of *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* must contend with. Nevertheless, she remains in a vulnerable position because of her self-imposed isolation. In the next chapter, I will analyse the novel *Nach Mitternacht* and examine a female protagonist who has a circle of support through her family and friends. A close analysis will underscore the importance of having friends and community and that these elements are crucial to the *Bildung* of a character. The author examines German society in the Third Reich from the perspective of a nineteen year-old female protagonist, who could be described as a polar opposite of Martha Wolg.

The female protagonist of *Nach Mitternacht* does not have the political freedom that Martha Wolg has. As a citizen in the Third Reich, Sanna Moder is vulnerable to denunciation and persecution. However, being accepted as an ethnic German, she has the advantage over Martha Wolg in that she does not personally fear the racial policies of the Nazi state, but rather fears for her friends. I will show how the female protagonist changes from a friendly, outgoing young woman to a withdrawn and fearful one. The situation of the political state is crucial to analyze to understand the character's *Bildung*.

Whereas Martha Wolg is partially responsible for her *anti-Bildung*, in *Nach Mitternacht* the overwhelming influence of a totalitarian state on a character's *Bildung* has to be emphasized.

I will show that when Sanna Moder tries to accommodate the Nazi regime's policies and not stand out from others, it does not protect her and she becomes a victim. The influence of the socio-political environment on the self-development of the protagonist is much more powerful than in *Eine jüdische Mutter*. The novels *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* show that the possibility of becoming *homo sacer* or the sacred man is quite real. Unlike the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich was a totalitarian state that had complete power over its citizens. That individuals actions such as denunciation upheld the power of the NS regime cannot be denied. Nevertheless, it must be underscored that the individual had no civil rights in the Third Reich to protect them from the regime. Whomever the regime cast as the outsider would be persecuted and the individual or communities had no legal recourse. The protagonists Sanna Moder and Nelly Jordan must navigate through a system that has officially stripped them of their civil rights. Although neither is Jewish, there is still the possibility that they could be persecuted by the NS regime. The following analysis of *Nach Mitternacht* demonstrates clearly how easily it was to become the sacred man. The situation of the Third Reich presented special challenges to the *Bildung* of both Sanna Moder and Nelly Jordan.

Chapter 3 *Nach Mitternacht* by Irmgard Keun: A Process of De-evolution

3.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The novel *Nach Mitternacht* reveals that within a totalitarian system *Bildung* takes place, albeit not according to the traditional definition. *Bildung* was viewed as a positive process of self-creation in the genre of the *Bildungsroman* in the nineteenth century, in which the different stages of a male protagonist's self-evolution were showcased. The process of self-development was viewed within a humanistic tradition, which at its core believed in the continuing improvement (*Verbesserung*) of the individual and society. The situation in the Third Reich posed a major challenge to *Bildung* because institutional racism and political violence were the norm. The political situation in Germany under the NS regime raises important questions in connection to the *Bildung* of the female protagonist: Is *Bildung* always a positive thing? Is a democratic state necessary for proper *Bildung* to take place? How does the process of *Bildung* function in a totalitarian state based on anti-humanistic ideas? In the flashback scenes, the reader encounters a witty and outgoing young woman, who is excited about life in the big city and the freedoms it offers. She does not hold any specific political point of view, nor is she particularly well-educated, a fact that she recognizes. The scenes reveal a character who is far more interested in her appearance and personal life. However, when she becomes a victim of the NS regime, she begins to gain a better understanding of the socio-political situation in the Third Reich and its impact on her and others. Sanna Moder's transformation from an optimistic to a fearful young woman reveals that she understands the real danger posed by the NS regime and has incorporated her experience into her *Bildung*, but is no longer willing to integrate into that society. I would refer to this type of *Bildung* as a form of de-evolution because instead of finding

a compromise with her society, the protagonist integrates her experiences and consciously rejects her society.

The novel is set almost entirely in cafes and pubs and the protagonist is constantly in contact with others, unlike Martha Wolg, who chose a life of isolation. Sanna Moder's thought process and her decision-making are accessible to the reader, unlike those of the other characters in the novel. She is a highly complex and contradictory character who both resists the NS regime, but is still impressed by its show of power. She is horrified by the violence the NS regime directs at her and other individuals, but this does not lead her to become politically active, but rather to become quiet and withdrawn. The imagined community, based on ideas of racial purity and exclusion, affects the protagonist's *Bildung*. The protagonist modifies her performance as a young German woman in response to the persecution she experiences and the violence she witnesses. *Nach Mitternacht* reveals how *Bildung* is an ongoing process with no final conclusion and that it is deeply affected by the socio-political environment, potentially leading characters to rebel.

In contrast to *Eine jüdische Mutter*, the novel *Nach Mitternacht* offers a possibility of success for the protagonist in her *Bildung*. Whereas Martha Wolg actively resisted all offers of friendship and refused to integrate her experiences into her self-development, Sanna Moder does the opposite. She has friends and though she does not integrate her experiences immediately into her self-development, she is conscious of her social environment and the role she plays in it. The novel *Eine jüdische Mutter* highlights the dangers of being isolated and without a community, with the protagonist Martha Wolg making life-altering decisions alone. By relying solely on her own opinion, Martha Wolg viewed all situations from only one perspective. Furthermore, her isolation prevented her from understanding the changes that were occurring within the political

sphere.¹ In contrast, Sanna Moder tries to understand the socio-political situation in Germany from the many different points of view as expressed by her circle of friends and family. The protagonist is better able to assess her environment and incorporate her experiences into her *Bildung*. However, the novel *Nach Mitternacht* shows that the socio-political situation in the Third Reich affects the protagonist negatively.

This chapter will begin with a summary of the plot and an overview of scholarly research. Although the author and her novels had been popular at the time of their publication in the Weimar Republic, Irmgard Keun was not allowed to publish in the Third Reich and her books were banned.² An outline of the historical situation and the effects of totalitarianism on society, such as the isolation experienced by individuals, will be discussed.³ The protagonist's *Bildung* in terms of gender and class, followed by an analysis of the effects of institutionalised racism and discrimination on the characters will show that *Bildung* does not move in a linear, but rather in a cyclical motion. It is a process which demands that the protagonist confront the Nazi regime and the role she plays within her society. The end of the novel shows Sanna Moder going into exile, which can be interpreted as a rejection of the NS regime and its ideology. In this case *Bildung* leads the protagonist away from her society.

The time frame for the novel *Nach Mitternacht* is 48 hours, in which Sanna Moder narrates through a combination of flashbacks and present-time situations about her experiences in the Third Reich. As a sixteen-year-old, she is sent to live with her Aunt Adelheid in Cologne in order to help her with her store. But as soon as they meet, it is clear that Sanna Moder does not

¹ In the previous chapter I showed how anti-Semitism was becoming a part of the political landscape with Martha Wolg's discovery of a copy of the *Völkischer Beobachter* in Albert Renkens' apartment.

² After the war both Irmgard Keun and her writings fell into obscurity and it was not until the late 1970s that she was rediscovered.

³ This section is important in that unlike *Eine jüdische Mutter*, where Martha Wolg seeks to be alone, the isolation experienced in *Nach Mitternacht* is not by personal choice. Rather, the self-censorship by the characters is an attempt at self-preservation; by avoiding any discussion of the political affairs, the characters hope this will protect them. Keun illustrates, with a number of examples, how this strategy fails.

like her aunt and is even afraid of her. The protagonist objects to the aunt's treatment of her son Franz, which can be described as being emotionally abusive. Later, Sanna and Franz begin a relationship despite Aunt Adelheid's opposition. In order to remove Sanna from her son's life, Aunt Adelheid denounces her to the Gestapo and this episode highlights an aspect of daily life in the Third Reich. Denunciations and arrests were widespread in the Third Reich, with personal gain being the primary motive. Eventually the protagonist is released and she flees to Frankfurt to live with her stepbrother Algin, who had already been blacklisted by the Nazis and is no longer allowed to publish. In Frankfurt, Sanna meets other individuals who have been negatively affected by the NS regime: Dr. Breslauer, the Jewish doctor who is not allowed to practice medicine, and Heini, who is forbidden to work as a journalist. Sanna describes the daily fascism which has overtaken the lives of individuals and shows the difficulties of living in a totalitarian state. In the bars and cafes that she visits with her friend Gerti, the atmosphere is tense and uncomfortable. Eventually she reunites with her boyfriend Franz, who had stayed behind in Cologne in order to start a small shop with his friend Paul. However, Franz is denounced by a rival businessman, who did not want competition on his street and at the same time wanted to improve his position in the SA. Franz and Paul are arrested but only Franz is released from prison and he takes revenge on the SA man; it is, however, unclear if he actually killed the SA man. He travels then to Frankfurt to be with Sanna and confesses to what he has done. At a final party at her step-brother's house, Sanna Moder and other characters make life-altering decisions: Algin leaves his wife for another woman, Frau Aaron forces Dieter Aaron to abandon Gerti, and Heini commits suicide. The end of the novel sees Sanna Moder, her boyfriend Franz and Dr. Breslauer leaving Germany for the Netherlands by train.

The realism in the novel in the depiction of daily life in the Third Reich can be attributed in part to the author's experiences. Unlike writers such as Thomas Mann and Anna Seghers, Irmgard Keun did not immediately choose exile but remained in the country until 1936 and was able to witness first-hand the effects of Nazi ideology on German society. In the period from 1933 to 1936, Keun pursued, however, two contradictory paths in her life, which can be seen reflected later in the contradictory nature of Sanna Moder's *Bildung*. Eva-Maria Siegel points out in her essay, "In der Zeit der großen Denunziantenbewegungen. Trennungen und Trennungsängste im Werk von Irmgard Keun," that on the one hand Keun was trying to get a publication contract with Allert de Lange in Amsterdam, to have some financial security when she went into exile (256). On the other hand she was still trying to get accepted into the *Reichsschriftumskammer* and to publish in Germany (Siegel 256). Keun left Germany in 1936 and wrote the novel *Nach Mitternacht* in exile in the same year. It was published by Querido in 1937, a publishing house famous for supporting authors who described themselves as anti-fascist. The novel was published to much acclaim and translated into many languages, making Keun an international star. Although it brought Keun success, the novel impacted her personal life negatively. In 1937 Keun's husband Johannes Tralow got a divorce from her on grounds of unfaithfulness and accusations that Keun had written an anti-German book. Although the novel had been a bestseller upon publication, Irmgard Keun and her literary works were forgotten after WWII, and not rediscovered until the late 1970s.

Gert Sautermeister's essay "Irmgard Keuns Exilroman *Nach Mitternacht*" was originally published in 1981 and it returned attention to the author and her writings. He examines the novel within the parameters of exile literature and reflects that it was probably intended for a reader in a time after fascism (Sautermeister 453). At the time of its publication, it did not have readers in

Germany, as Keun was banned in the country. Sautermeister focuses on the protagonist Sanna Moder and shows that she is a strong character, who consciously uses her naïve statements to reveal the contradictions and lies of Nazi ideology (455). Other scholars such as Gudrun Raff also acknowledge that the protagonist uses her naivety to criticise the Nazis, but do not view her as a strong woman. In her essay “Wi(e)der-Schreiben. Ironie, Komik und Satire in Irmgard Keuns Roman *Nach Mitternacht*” Raff argues that Sanna Moder is not able to fully understand the ideology of the Nazis (155). Raff believes that Keun allows her protagonist to be smart only in apolitical matters, such as her personal relationships, and that as soon as the protagonist must examine political elements she is completely lost (156). Similarly, Hiltrud Häntzschel presents Sanna Moder as a politically inexperienced individual (238) in her essay “Macht und Ohnmacht der Wörter,” and she compares and contrasts Sanna with Heini and argues that it is Heini who is the intellectual (244). She writes: “An zwei ganz unterschiedlichen Sprechhaltungen läßt sich Keuns Praxis einer Ästhetik des doppelten Bodens vorführen, an der Sprechweise der politisch unerfahrenen Erzählerin und zugleich der hochreflektierten Intellektuellen” (Häntzschel 238). Irene Lorisika emphasizes Sanna Moder’s strength and her resistance to the NS regime, which is motivated by her protective feelings for her loved ones, rather than political reasons (197). Anja Schmidt-Ott writes: “Sannas Glaube an die Liebe geht allerdings tiefer als eine mädchenhafte Romantik, ihr Glaube ist verankert in einem intuitiven, wie angeboren wirkenden Vertrauen auf Treue” (118-119). Once again, the analysis focuses on the main protagonist’s ideals of love and protective feelings towards her family and friends, rather than an intellectually motivated resistance to the NS regime. Doris Rosenstein’s essay “Bilder und Szenen aus dem ‘Dritten Reich’” analyzes how the novel is structured and shows how time is constructed in the novel (166). Birgit Maier-Katkin presents an analysis of alterity and views Sanna’s behaviour as being

critical of the Nazi regime in “Alterity, alienation and exile in Irmgard Keun’s *Nach Mitternacht*”. Eva-Maria Siegel explores the function of fear in the novel and writes: “Der dominierende Begriff in *Nach Mitternacht* ist Angst, Angst in jeder Form, bis hin zur Störung der optischen Wahrnehmungsfähigkeit” (261). Siegel argues that individuals who do not fear the Nazis are the ones who become guilty (*Täter*) (261), and shows that support for the Nazis was based on a variety of reasons from personal gain to feelings of loyalty to the state (260). Fear is a dominant aspect of the novel and it needs to be analyzed to show how it impacted every aspect of life in the Third Reich.

The fear of one another and the lack of trust show a breakdown in society, which in turn has a deep impact on the *Bildung* of the protagonist. The different examples will be used to highlight how the power of coercion of the NS regime had infiltrated the most personal aspects of the character’s life. Unlike the turbulent socio-political situation in the Weimar Republic, the threat posed by the NS regime is far greater. In the Weimar Republic there was economic hardship and the political arena seemed to offer few answers to the overwhelming problems faced by individuals. In contrast, the NS regime appears to offer ideas to combat the problems facing the nation, but a closer examination reveals that the situation for the individual is far worse. The experiences of the protagonist expose the daily violence and threats faced by individuals. The following analysis will explore how the protagonist reacts to the violence of the state and how she incorporates her experience into her *Bildung*, even though it leads to exile.

Chapter 3.2 Fear-Induced *Bildung*

Isolation in the novel *Nach Mitternacht* is a phenomenon that reveals the power of a totalitarian system over its citizens. This type of isolation is different from that of *Eine jüdische*

Mutter, where Martha Wolg chose to withdraw from others; although it is never made clear why she preferred to stay single, it is nevertheless her choice. In contrast, the protagonist and the other characters of *Nach Mitternacht* have become silent and isolated because they are fearful of their fellow citizens and the state. Fear affects the *Bildung* of Sanna Moder and other characters in an all-encompassing manner. The different characters experience the power of the Third Reich and modify their behaviour to adjust to the new reality. However, the events in the novel show that the individual could do little to protect themselves and that a new reality had to be confronted in the Third Reich.

Milan Kundera argues in *Art of the Novel* that there had been a major change in the socio-political realm which faced authors after WWI. He writes:

In the novels of Kafka, Hasek, Musil, Broch, the monster comes from outside and is called History; it no longer has anything to do with the train the adventurers used to ride; it is impersonal, uncontrollable, incalculable, incomprehensible-and it is inescapable. This was the moment (just after the First World War) when the pleiad of great Central European novelists saw, felt, grasped the terminal paradoxes of the Modern Era. (11-12)

The fear confronted by the authors after WWI was the realization that private life had in many ways ceased to exist. That is to say that the individual could not escape from the power of the state. As Giorgio Agamben argues in *Homo Sacer*, all life had become political life and the private life of pre-modern era had ceased to exist. Civilians were impacted by wars in a way they had not been before and revolutions changed societies completely, in Germany and Russia for example. Irmgard Keun was confronted by the historical situation in the Third Reich, where she

was marginalized and blacklisted by the Nazis. She describes the changes implemented by the NS regime in her novel and their effect on citizens. Sautermeister writes:

Die Schauplätze der Keun präsentierten Deutschland hauptsächlich zwischen 1933 und 1936, in den Anfängen der Gleichschaltung, als die NSDAP das Volk und dieses sich selbst ideologisch, politisch und sozialpsychisch formiert- zu jener Masse, die wenig später antisemitische Hetzjagden und Massendeportationen stillschweigend den totalen Krieg lauthals billigte. (457)

The reshaping of society by the NS regime takes place gradually over a period of time in which the citizens become accustomed to the new norm. Every aspect of life, from work to marriage, is controlled by the NS regime and it is a control that citizens succumb to completely. Agamben's theory that the modern age is marked by the elimination of the separation between the public and private life can be seen in *Nach Mitternacht*. In *Eine jüdische Mutter* the protagonist has some power to resist public pressure by isolating herself, which is a possibility not given to the characters in *Nach Mitternacht*. The following examples will show that the characters feared their family members, friends and neighbours and this fear had a significant influence on their *Bildung*.

The characters in the novel cannot shut out the power of the state and Keun underscores this fact by showing how even mundane situations have become dangerous. The level of distrust and paranoia can be seen in the protagonist's fear to speak openly. The experiences of the characters reveal the level of fear in German society and the increasing isolation of individuals and the lack of privacy:

Früher war es immer so gemütlich, wenn zwei Mädchen mal gemeinsam auf die Toilette gingen. Man puderte sich und sprach schnell Wichtiges über Männer und

Liebe. ... Man gab sich aufgeregte Ratschläge gegenseitig auf der Toilette, die waren oft ganz dumm, aber es waren doch interessante, fröhliche Gespräche. Jetzt ist die Politik auch in diese Luft eingedrungen. Gerti sagt, es wäre schon viel wert, wenn auf so'ner Toilette keine Toilettenfrau säße, der man Heil Hitler sagen müßte und außerdem noch zehn Pfennig geben. (Keun 39-40)

The example highlights how a totalitarian system did not allow any area of life to be private. It was dangerous to even have an innocent conversation about someone in public, because it could be overheard, misconstrued and used against the speaker. Sautermeister argues that by placing the characters in the public, the dangers facing them were clearer. "Was hat es mit diesen Schauplätzen auf sich? Sie lassen, weil sie öffentlich sind, die Gefahren sehen, die der Faschismus für den citizen, den Menschen als öffentliches Wesen, bereithält" (Sautermeister 458). It shows too that there has been a change in the personalities of both Sanna and Gerti, who have recognized the danger of being outspoken and have modified their behaviour. The protagonist is especially aware of the dangers of making an innocent comment, because she had been denounced by her aunt and arrested. An examination of the episode at the Gestapo headquarters in Cologne underscores the all-encompassing power of a totalitarian state and the dangers it poses to citizens.

Sanna Moder's experience can be described as both horrifying and farcical, but Keun still manages to inject wry criticism to show the absurdity of the socio-political situation in Germany under the Nazis:

Und immer mehr Menschen strömen herbei, das Gestapo-Zimmer scheint die reinste Wallfahrtsstätte. Mütter zeigen ihre Schwiegertöchter an, Töchter ihre Schwiegerväter, Brüder ihre Schwestern, Schwestern ihre Brüder, Freunde ihre

Freunde, Stammtischgenossen ihre Stammtischgenossen, Nachbarn ihre Nachbarn. Und die Schreibmaschinen klappern, klappern, alles wird zu Protokoll genommen, alle Anzeigenden werden gut und freundlich behandelt. Zwischendurch kommen Mütter, deren Söhne verschwunden sind, Frauen, deren Männer verschwunden sind, Schwestern, deren Brüder verschwunden sind, Kinder, deren Eltern verschwunden sind, Freunde, deren Freunde verschwunden sind. Diese Fragenden werden nicht so gut und freundlich behandelt wie die Anzeigenden. (Keun 79)

The individuals making the complaints are treated well by the officers and their statements are taken down courteously. One explanation for this courtesy can be that the denouncers are viewed to be supporters of the NS regime, even if they are not motivated by ideology. In contrast, the individuals who are looking for loved ones are treated badly and are viewed to be enemies of the state. This example highlights how the state promoted discord amongst the population in the Third Reich. Sautermeister states:

Die Erzählerin entblößt die 'Volksgemeinschaft' als die Heimstätte der Konkurrenz im Stadium ihrer maximalen Entfesselung: von der Angst vor dem Nächsten umgetrieben, allerorten Verrat witternd, zur Denunziation entschlossen, machen die Volksgenossen vom politisch sanktionierten Terror Gebrauch. (463)

Keun's use of religious symbolism by referring to the Gestapo headquarters as a "Wallfahrtsstätte" further underscores her criticism. One normally makes a pilgrimage to a holy site, not the police station. Keun's ironic remark reinforces her criticism of her fellow citizens. It also shows that Sanna Moder had not understood the nature of the Nazi regime and its power over the citizenry. The understanding for the protagonist comes in a dramatic and traumatic way, and it is a lesson which has a profound effect on her *Bildung*. She understands the dangers of

speaking freely with the statement: “Damals bei der Tant Adelheid war ich ja noch viel dümmer als heute” (Keun 73). The comment for which she was arrested was made in private and the denouncer was her own aunt. Her friend Paul had asked Aunt Adelheid what she liked the most about the Führer, and without thinking Sanna replied that the aunt found his sweating to be the most impressive thing about him. The reaction of the aunt and the aunt’s friend reveals a level of fanaticism that the protagonist did not know existed:

Sofort schlug die Fricke die Hände überm Kopf zusammen, als hätte ich das Gemeinste von der Welt gesagt. Ich konnte mich nicht weiter erklären, weil eine Kundin kam und Hundepostkarten kaufte. Tant Adelheid verschwand mit der Fricke in die hintere gute Stube, und ich Idiot war weiter ganz vergnügt und ahnte nicht, dass die beiden Frauen mir Todesstricke aus meinen Worten drehen wollten. (Keun 74)

The realization that a few words could cost her life and freedom is knowledge which terrifies the protagonist. The protagonist integrates her experience into her understanding of the socio-political situation and the changes in her personality are dramatic: she becomes quiet, withdrawn and fearful. However, these modifications in personality are no guarantee that they will protect her. Even a shy person such as Franz, who does not make any statements about the NS regime, is denounced and arrested.

The example with Franz and Paul is revealing because it showcases the arbitrary nature of violence in the Third Reich. The character Franz is apolitical and does not voice his opinions on anything. In contrast, his friend Paul is much more outspoken, but he does not engage in an organized manner to oppose the NS regime. Nevertheless, both are arrested and only Franz is released, leaving Paul’s whereabouts unknown. The SA man Schleimann who had denounced the

two had been motivated by two reasons: For one, he wanted to strengthen his position within the SA,⁴ and second, he did to want to have any economic competition (153). Franz and Paul wanted to open a shop, which would have created difficulties for him.

Er wollte eine Tat begehen, die ihn bei den Nazis wieder geachtet und beliebt machte, und er wollte den Zigarettenladen von Franz und Paul kaput machen, in seiner Strasse wollte er keine Konkurrenz. Er ging zur nächsten Parteistelle und zeigte Franz und Paul wegen kommunistischer Umtriebe und zersetzender Reden wegen an. (Keun 153)

On the surface it appears that Schleimann is similar to others who use the NS power apparatus to increase their personal status. What is, however, astonishing is Schleimann's political loyalty before the Nazis came to power: he was a leading member within the Social Democratic Party! Whatever Schleimann's motivation had been to denounce the two friends, the end result for Franz and Paul was tragic: the shop was completely destroyed and Paul had disappeared. The impact of such arbitrary violence in both cases is profound, leading to destruction of solidarity and trust.

Individuals denounced others for a number of reasons in the Third Reich, which increased distrust in society. Eva-Maria Siegel lists the three main motivating factors in her essay "In der Zeit der großen Denunziantenbewegungen:"

1. Das Handeln aus Loyalität zum Regime, "gleichsam aus Staatsräson, 2.

Instrumentalisierung der Denunziation für persönliche Konflikte; 3.

Denunziatorische Handlungen aus der Lust heraus, anderen zu schaden innerhalb von

⁴ He had been the object of intrigue with rumours being told that his grandmother had been Jewish (Keun 152), and although he had proven they were false, the damage to his standing within the organization remained.

Staatswesen, welche die Mobilmachung solcher Leidenschaften erlauben oder sie fördern. (260)

In *Nach Mitternacht*, loyalty to the regime as a motivating factor to denounce someone does not occur. Rather, as it has been shown, reasons number two and three are far more common and the outcome for the society was devastating. It bred fear and isolation among the population and it upheld the NS regime, which will eventually have severe consequences for Germany and Europe as a whole. Sautermeister writes:

Freilich der totale Staat wäre keiner ohne die Komplizenschaft seiner Bürger. Die politische Sehschärfe der Erzählerin erweist sich unter anderem darin, daß sie schon Mitte der dreißiger Jahre die tätige Mitschuld der Subjekte am objektiven Verhängnis unverstellt erblickt. (459)

By revealing how widespread the level of denunciation is, Keun shows how the population participated in its own oppression. The actions of Aunt Adelheid and the Schleimann created the situation which gave them minimal benefits, but provided the NS regime with a type of support it would not have otherwise enjoyed. Keun is especially clear in her depiction of the denouncers that party loyalty was rarely the main motivating factor in an individual's decision to denounce someone. She shows as well that the state relied on the citizens to uphold its power and that without them, the state had minimal power.

Robert Gellately dismantles the myth of the omnipotent Gestapo in his essay "Allwissend und all gegenwärtig?," in which he points out that historians accepted a powerful Gestapo to be a fact and made it the starting point of their own research and analysis of the NS regime (44). The Gestapo myth was created in the 1930s by commentators and critics to help explain the situation in Germany. But by doing so, they completely ignored the role of individuals in upholding the

NS state (44). Through his research of surviving Gestapo files of Düsseldorf, Würzburg and Speyer, plus examining diaries, letters and literature, Gellately presents a much more disturbing picture in which the individual, as a denouncer, played an important role in upholding the power of the NS regime. It becomes clear that the Gestapo could not function without the help of the denouncer, irrespective of the motivating factors which caused individuals to denounce one another: personal gain, fear or duty. Denunciation increased so much that the Gestapo had to try and slow it down (Gellately 66). He presents an image of the Gestapo which is very similar to that of Keun's in *Nach Mitternacht*, which he mentions as one possible source when trying to understand how the society functioned under the NS regime (68). By challenging the myth of a powerful Gestapo, the importance of the individual is raised. The significance of the individuals in helping the Gestapo can be seen in the following comparison from Götz Aly's book *Hitlers Volkstaat*: "Die spätere DDR setzte zur Kontrolle ihrer 17 Millionen Bürger 190,000 hauptamtliche und ebenso viele nebenberufliche Stasispitzel ein, die Gestapo zählte 1937 einschließlich der Sekretärinnen und Verwaltungskräfte knapp 7000 Mitarbeiter, der SD deutlich weniger" (27). Once again the role of the individual citizen in their own oppression is underscored, which has devastating consequences for the citizens.

Hannah Arendt argues in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* that the modern regimes gained full control because they controlled not only the public, but also the private sphere. Arendt suggests that the complete isolation of an individual in a society was the most extreme form of power a totalitarian government had over the individual. "Isolation is that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed" (Arendt 474). This is not an ordinary isolation, of the inability of an individual to connect with others, but rather isolation imposed on individuals by an outside

power, wishing to gain control over them. Unlike Martha Wolg, who chooses self-isolation, Sanna Moder is forced into marginality and silence because she rejects the ideals of the NS regime. She is afraid to speak out and the reader only knows her opinions from her inner monologue which she uses to criticize the regime. Maier-Katkin writes:

Susanne's self-reflective quality and particular awareness of "I" allow her to observe the social environment critically without abandoning her unique position of self-awareness. She is willing to scrutinize not only herself but also everything and everyone else. Thus, throughout the story, Susanne's alterity and estrangement from society, her Otherness and Sameness remain intertwined and become an important tool in her relations to the Other. (302-303)

The main character, however, does not voice her objection to Nazi ideology, because she is aware of the consequences that will follow. Instead she meditates on the various situations and tries to avoid any conflict or situation, which would put her in opposition to the party. In her essay "Alterity, Alienation, and Exile in Irmgard Keun's *Nach Mitternacht*" Maier-Katkin shows alterity can be used to understand the behaviour of the main protagonist. She gives four functions of alterity:

alterity, first, as personal and strictly internal experience; second, as dialectic between Self and political Other or Self and Society; third, as narrative device and language application displaying a distinct minority discourse; and, fourth, as political subversion resulting in the main character's eventual position as stranger, outlaw, and ethnological other. (300)

In the novel the protagonist becomes increasingly distant from society, and she is unable to identify with others around her. This lack of connection or increasing disconnection can be seen

in changes in her personality. For Arendt, this isolation was a vital factor for a totalitarian regime to maintain its power.

Arendt interprets the isolation of individuals and fear of others as key components of a totalitarian regime, because they prevent any opposition from forming. By preventing a free and open discussion, the regime effectively shuts down public discourse on any topic related to politics. The regime sets the policies in place and because the regime is always right, to oppose the regime the opponents are not only wrong but also traitorous. In *Nach Mitternacht*, Sanna Moder is not only afraid to voice her opinion, but even to admit her lack of understanding, because this too is a traitorous act. Arendt points out that by shutting down public discourse, the totalitarian regime can proceed at will. The citizen, on the other hand, is left in a state of confusion and cannot discuss his or her ideas in public or private, because even the private sphere has become political. Because there is no open debate, an individual does not know if other people share their ideas. In the short term this may cause depression and anxiety, but later, I believe it actually leads to questioning one's own thoughts. If all the other individuals are supporting the regime, am I wrong to oppose it? Perhaps everyone is right and I am wrong? A totalitarian system destroys the fabric of society and isolates the individual, leaving the individual feeling powerless. Isolation can be seen not only in the physical separation from society, but also a psychological separation from the community. By believing they do not belong to the larger collective society or imagined community, the characters in *Nach Mitternacht* experience alienation and exclusion from their society. The following examples highlight the distrust and paranoia that is experienced by the characters in the novel.

Keun presents a number of examples in her novel which underscore the widespread level of fear and its effect on the characters. The description of the elderly ladies at the Café Esplanade

may appear to be exaggerated, but I would argue that Keun is emphasizing the lack of trust amongst individuals:

Zwei ältere Damen kamen herein, dünn und sauber sahen sie aus, unverheiratet und nach beschränkten Mitteln, wie reisende Lehrerinnen aus einer kleinen Stadt. Sie bestellten Kaffee und Apfeltorte mit Sahne. Als sie anfangen wollten zu essen, wurde im Radio das Horst-Wessel-Lied gespielt, die alten Fräuleins ließen ihre Löffel fallen, standen auf, reckten die Arme. Das muß man, weil man nie weiß, wer einen beobachtet und anzeigt. Vielleicht hatten sie voreinander Angst. Gerti und ich standen auch auf. (Keun 30)

This episode underscores the deterioration of trust among individuals. Sanna Moder comments that perhaps the two women are frightened that the other may denounce them. That they act in such a manner without hesitation emphasizes the level of fear, paranoia, suspicion and distance in society. The two women cannot be certain who is watching them and whether or not they will be denounced. Arendt's theory of the effects of isolation in a totalitarian state can be seen expressed in the actions of the two women. In the novel *Nach Mitternacht*, this type of behaviour is repeated by other characters. Although neither the protagonist nor her friend is a supporter of the NS regime, they too behave in a similar manner to the two elderly ladies. One can observe the changes in individuals which reveal a shift in their character, meaning that they were beginning to conform to the ideals of the NS regime, to what historians have called *Gleichschaltung*. *Gleichschaltung* refers to the period from 1933-1936, which saw all aspects of German society and public institutions changing to conform to the NS ideology. It was a period in time in which unions were disbanded and all political opposition was banned and/or

incarcerated in concentration camps. The characters in the novel are aware that these changes have taken place and have therefore changed in order to conform.

The self-censorship and changes in a character's behaviour are reactions to the socio-political situation in the Third Reich. The level of fear and distrust has forced the characters to make changes in their lives in order to remain safe. In one particular case, the character altered the lifestyle of their spouse before any trouble could emerge. Sanna Moder's neighbour, Frau Grautisch, explains why she allows her husband to drink twice as much at home, but why he is no longer allowed to go the pub:

Eine Frau, die ihren Mann liebt und ihn sich erhalten will, läßt ihn in der heutigen Zeit nicht zum Stammtisch. Die kölschen Männer haben en loses Mundwerk, und wenn sie dann was geladen haben, fangen sie an, über die jecke Politik zu quasseln und Witziger und drecklige Bemerkungen zu machen und meinen, sie wären under lauter guten Freunden. Am nächsten Tag sitzen se dann da mit em dicken Kopp, und irgendein Neidiger, dem sein Geschäft gerad nit jod geht, is schon der Gestapo oder irgendein' Parteistell am rennen, für en Anzeig zu erstatten. (Keun 84-85)

Frau Grautisch is well aware of the changes that have taken place in society and that for her husband Mieb's own safety it is better that he no longer socializes in the pubs. Mieb's, however, feels that his life is constrained and even compares sitting at home and not being allowed to socialize with friends to being in a concentration camp. Frau Grautisch's comedian-like reaction to this assertion underscores her understanding of the socio-political climate. "Dat de dat noch nit jemerkt hast', sag ich ihm dann- , dat janze Volk sitzt als im Konzentrationslager, nur die Regierung läuft frei erum" (Keun 85). The statement by Frau Grautisch underscores the

lack of freedom of the individual and shows once again that there is no separation between the private and public spheres of life.

The situation for the different characters in *Nach Mitternacht* underscores Giorgio Agamben's argument that there is no separation between the private and public life in the modern era. How people behaved in their homes or in public could be used against them without them even trying to make a conscious effort to resist. The protagonist and the other characters have all modified their and changed their behaviour in order to protect themselves. The *Bildung* of the characters has indeed been spurned on by fear, with the characters integrating their experiences into their development. The novel is revelatory in its examination of German society under the NS regime, dispelling myths and explaining how the Nazis assumed control. One of the key factors in maintaining their control over the German population was their use of parades and events which required mandatory participation of the entire German population. Elaine Martin argues the Nazi party's performance of power is a crucial aspect of their control over the population, in that it not only showcased their own strength, but it also encouraged the active physical participation of citizens in their movement:

In our interviews, several authors mentioned the Nazi emphasis on spectacle with mass gatherings and torchlight parades, and they compared the mood, especially in the early years to a Mardi Gras (Karneval) atmosphere. During such rallies and political gatherings heavy drinking occurred, many played hooky from work and school, and one increasingly had the sense of normal rules having been suspended.

(Martin 70-71)

Martin describes how the Nazis were able to gain support and the attraction the party held for the average citizen. In *Nach Mitternacht* it is Sanna Moder's reaction to the "party" atmosphere of

the rally in Frankfurt which shows how individuals could be seduced by the display of power. The Nazi parade in Frankfurt includes all aspects of German society, from the working class to the wealthy elite, as well as the different branches of the military: the SA, SS and *Reichswehr*. As Hitler's motorcade drives by Sanna Moder is impressed by the show of power. Keun writes:

Dann glitten auf einmal Autos über die Straße – so weich und eilig wie fliegende Dauenfedern. Und so schön! Nie in meinem Leben habe ich so wunderbare Autos gesehen. Und so viele Autos kamen, so viele! Alle Gauleiter und zugehörigen hohen Parteimänner führen in solchen Autos, es war herrlich. (Keun 31)

And later on she states: "Es macht mir Freude, die schönen Autos zu sehen, wie wunderbar blanke rasende Käfer sahen sie von oben aus" (Keun 31). Sanna Moder has such a positive reaction, even after she had been arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo and immediately after she had seen a man physically assaulted up by the Nazis. The brutality of this episode needs to be highlighted to show how the protagonist's reaction to the parade is contradictory to the horror she feels at watching the man be assaulted. At the parade, the protagonist is seduced by the display of power, which stands in direct contradiction to the assault she had witnessed. In both cases, the NS regime is demonstrating its power, but the protagonist does not appear to make the connection. At the rally there are many individuals who support the Nazi regime, but there are also others who are simply passing through the middle of town. One such character is a man who tries to convince the SA men to let him through the barrier because he has just received a new job and does not want to be late. The SA man simply retorts: "Meckern Sie nicht, sein Sie dem Führer dankbar, der große Ideale hat" (Keun 27). However, the man does not go away quietly:

Ja, der Führer hat die Ideale, und wir habens Nachsehen. Die Stimme des grauen Mannes zitterte, man merkte, daß er mit den Nerven runter war. Die Leute, die ihn

gehört hatten, wurden stumm vor Schreck, der SA – Mann wurde rot und konnte nicht atmen. Der graue Mann sah wie mit einem Schlage ausgelöscht und in sich zerbrochen aus. Drei SA – Leute führten ihn fort, er wehrte sich nicht. (Keun 27-27)

Not one individual comes to the man's aid and no one says a word until an older woman does the Hitler salute and kicks the arrested man's bicycle:

Das Fahrrad war auf den Boden gefallen, die Leute standen im Kreise drum herum und guckten es stumm und aufgeregt an, es glimmerte matt im Regen und sah staatsfeindlich aus, keiner wagte es anzufassen. Nur eine dicke Dame machte ein wildes Gesicht, warf ihren Arm straff in die Luft zum Heilgruß, rief „Pfui“ und trat mit dem Fuß gegen das Rad. Da traten noch mehr Frauen dagegen. Dann öffnete sich die Kette, wir konnten durch. (Keun 28)

The violence perpetrated by the lower SA men is but a prelude to the violence the NS regime at the top would release in WWII. But the reaction of the crowd is also unsettling as they are too fearful to help the man. Even after the arrest, they appear to be paralyzed and it is not until the women react with violence that the tension is dispelled. The crowd's kicking of the bicycle has to be interpreted as a symbolic attack on the man himself. By kicking the bicycle the bystanders placed themselves on the side of the sovereign power and not on what appeared to be the sacred man. Agamben would argue that the bystanders reinforced the power of the sovereign in the form of the SA men by kicking the bicycle and not raising any voice in protest. Keun reveals with this small example the daily terror that individuals had to face. Sanna and her friend Gerti do not participate in kicking the bicycle, but they also do not say anything critical to the SA man. Sautermeister explains the situation in German society under the NS regime as follows:

Durch ständige Kontrolle, der Öffentlichkeit vermehrt der Faschismus den Individuen die Darstellung ihres Selbst, der ihnen eigentümlichen Privatheit. So zehrt er nach und nach ihre Individualität aus--bündelt er sie zum gesichtslosen, gleichförmig empfindenden, der vorgeschriebenen Ordnung hörigen 'Volk'. (459)

The bystanders do not help the man because they do not want to be in solidarity with anyone who is perceived to be the Other. Here I want to underscore the fact that although Sanna witnesses the man being beaten right before the parade, she is still enthralled by the display of Nazi power a little while later. Even when she mocks Hitler and the parade, the enormity of the crime that she had witnessed does not appear to have affected her: "Und langsam fuhr ein Auto vorbei, darin stand der Führer wie der Prinz Karneval im Karnevalszug. Aber er war nicht so lustig und fröhlich wie der Prinz Karneval und warf auch keine Bonbons und Sträußchen, sondern hob nur eine leere Hand" (Keun 32). She is making ironic remarks, but the criticism appears to be too light in face of the brutal beating she just witnessed. Sanna Moder does not fully integrate her experience at the parade until the death of Bertchen Silas, the *Reihedurchbrecherin*, later that evening.

The role of the *Reihedurchbrecherin* was to showcase how a child would "spontaneously" appear by the side of Hitler and hand him a bouquet of flowers and recite a poem. The Silas' realize the prestige of being photographed with Hitler and gain in social standing within their circle of family, friends and colleagues. The father of Bertchen Silas had written a poem and practiced it with her for weeks, and they had bought an expensive bouquet of flowers from Italy. This gift is especially extravagant because they are a family of limited means. On the day of the parade, however, Bertchen Silas is sick and has a fever. Nevertheless she takes part in the parade because her parents do not want the child of their rival to be the

Reihedurchbrecherin. However, at the parade the motorcade fails to stop and the Silas' must be satisfied with Bertchen having her picture taken with some SS men. Rather than go home with their sick child, the Silas' proceed to a bar where the child recites her poem until she collapses and dies. It is at that point that Sanna Moder begins to process the horrors of the day.

The protagonist does not speak up at the beating of the man, nor is she very critical of the parade. It brings to mind the question: is the central character unwilling to incorporate new experiences into her self-development? Although she had been a victim of the NS regime, it takes the death of a child for Sanna Moder to face the breaking point. The death of Bertchen Silas functions as a catalyst for the protagonist's *Bildung*, in that Sanna cannot ignore her experiences but must incorporate them into a new understanding of herself and her society. Resistance to the Nazi regime was possible, but it required vigilance to prevent oneself from being seduced by an irresistible orchestration of power. Sanna Moder incorporates her experiences into her self-development, and begins to acquire a deeper understanding of the socio-political situation in Germany.

The *Bildung* of the protagonist has been spurred on by a variety of factors, but especially fear: fear of family members, friends and neighbours. This fear has affected the characters significantly and forced them to reassess themselves and their role in society. In the last chapter, the protagonist Martha Wolg was isolated and without a community. Nevertheless, she had rights as a citizen of the Weimar Republic, which were guaranteed by law and gave her certain protection. In *Nach Mitternacht* these rights have been annulled, leaving the characters vulnerable to the power and violence of the state. In *Kindheitsmuster* fear and isolation have an even more powerful control over individual characters and their *Bildung*. NS ideology and fear influenced, however, both gender and racial identity in the novel. Although the protagonist is

affected by the fear of others, she does not isolate herself from society. Rather she tries to define her identity as a young German woman, which rejects the NS definition.

3.3 Gendering in the Third Reich

Sanna Moder's gender identity is crafted by Keun on a number of levels, revealing a character who does not accept the NS ideal as her identity. On the most superficial level, she is similar to Keun's other female protagonists, such as Doris in *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*. Like Doris, Sanna Moder is interested in her appearance and is a social climber who does not view herself as an intellectual. She is far more focused on being an "It" or popular girl, living in the big city and enjoying the freedoms it entails, while largely ignoring politics. However, she is forced to become aware of the political reality of the Third Reich and to navigate the socio-political environment. The multifaceted levels of the protagonist's gender identity are revealed through her response to the challenges posed by the NS regime. She gains a better understanding of the NS regime and with her knowledge she is able to resist the regime. In contrast, her stepbrother Algin Moder and her friend Heini are destroyed by the NS regime because they are prevented from pursuing the occupations that had defined their gender identity. The following analysis will reveal that, within the NS state, new gender identities were created while simultaneously others were destroyed.

Horsley describes the New Woman in her essay "This Number is not in Service:" "The image of a self-assertive, sexually and financially independent female epitomized for many the drastically changed social and economic situation of Germany after World War I, and was frequently equated with the modern metropolis or modernity itself" (38). Sanna Moder exemplifies this image of the modern woman, who has a job in Cologne and enjoys the social life

offered in a city. Keun presents a protagonist who seeks to lead a glamorous life and to be viewed as beautiful and sophisticated.

Wenn ich abends vorm Zubettgehen in den Spiegel gucke, dann finde ich mich manchmal sehr hübsch und liebe meine Haut, weil sie so glatt und weiß ist. Und ich finde meine Augen groß, grau und geheimnisvoll und glaube, daß auf der ganzen Erde keine Filmschauspielerin so lange schwarze Wimpern hat. Dann möchte ich manchmal das Fenster aufmachen und alle Männer von der Straße rufen, damit sie kommen und sich wundern wie schön ich bin. Natürlich könnte ich das nie richtig tun. Aber es ist doch ein Jammer, daß jemand ganz allein für sich oft am schönsten ist. Man findet das aber auch vielleicht nur. Wenn ich neben der Gerti sitze, finde ich mich jedenfalls nur klein, blaß und mickrig. Noch nicht mal mein Haar leuchtet. Es ist eine blonde Farbe, die schläft. (Keun 7-8)

The description reveals a young woman, who despite her insecurities, still manages to convey a spirited personality. In his essay Gert Sautermeister remarks: “Von so viel quellfrischer Naivität ist man auf den ersten Blick eingenommen, beim zweiten entdeckt man mit wachsendem Vergnügen, daß es eine sehr kunstbewußte Naivität ist” (455). Sautermeister argues that the character has a purpose in her appearance of being naive, and that she is rather quite intelligent and perceptive of her family, friends and the society in which she lives. In her relationships with her family and friends, she reveals a keen sense of understanding, irony, even self-irony of both the political and personal situations, which is shown in the following example describing her hometown and the danger of stating her opinion openly. “Der ganze Ort is mir aber auch für die Dauer zu klein, ich habe tausendmal lieber eine große Stadt. Man darf so was ja nicht sagen heutzutage wegen der Weltanschauung und der Regierung” (Keun11). Sanna Moder points out the poverty in the small

towns and expresses her own desires, but is well aware that such sentiments are not tolerated by the NS regime. The protagonist understands that deviation of any kind from the NS ideal will not be tolerated. In the previous section I showed how a character could be confronted by violence with the slightest provocation. Here I want to demonstrate how the protagonist uses her gender performance to her advantage. At the Frankfurt Nazi parade, the two friends Gerti and Sanna want to cross a street and are prevented by the SS men guarding the path, who also refuse to tell the friends why:

Gerti bekam gleich kolhschwarze Augen vor Wut. Ich kenne das an ihr, sie wird dann gefährlich und bringt sich selbst natürlich in die größte Gefahr. Darum fragte ich den einen SS noch mal so ganz süß wie ein Malzbonbon und voll Demut, als hielte ich ihn für einen höchsten Beherrscher Deutschlands--auf solche Weise wollen Männer ja von Mädchen behandelt sein. (Keun 25-26)

Sanna Moder is able to get an answer from the SS man and once again she shows her sharp sense of wit and satire. Her performance of an overly sweet, simple, young woman is a conscious gender performance and reveals that she has a better understanding of the socio-political environment than most of her friends and family. The protagonist has integrated her experiences and is aware that her actions can cause her trouble, but also get her ahead. She performs the “innocent young woman” in order to achieve her aims, which include moving up socially and financially. Yet she never succeeds fully with this agenda in the NS-state.

In *Nach Mitternacht*, Keun shows the protagonist trying to live up to the image she has of the modern and ambitious woman. For example, Sanna Moder is invited to dinner by a mid-level civil servant, who can be described as neurotic and hypochondriac based on the fact he has so many fears about food and sex. During the date it becomes clear that he is looking for a well-to-do wife, who could help him improve his public standing. When Sanna Moder reveals that she

does not come from a wealthy family, the civil servant replies: “Er sagte, ich sähe wie ein mageres kleines Schulmädchen aus” (Keun 64). The civil servant also comments on her “*volkstümliche Herkunft*”, which contrasts with his higher social status. However, Sanna Moder defends herself by commenting on the civil servant with the following description:

Der Regierungsrat sagte dann, er sehnte sich nach einer Ehe, denn nur in der Ehe wäre es erlaubt, seine Triebe frei und christlich zu entfalten. Da dürfte man. Ich dachte, daß ich wahnsinnig gern eine Frau Regierungsrat werden würde wegen der Tant Adelheid und wegen ganz Lappesheim. Aber dann hätte ich auch die schrecklichen entfalteteten Triebe erleben müssen. Ich konnte mir das gar nicht vorstellen. (Keun 63)

The scene with the *Betriebsrat* in the restaurant is revealing, in that the character has enough self-awareness to admit that she would like to have a prominent position in society, while understanding that she would be in a degrading relationship. Coupled with his other neuroses, the civil servant also had difficulties with his own sexuality, which he told the protagonist that as Catholic it was his duty to fight his erotic desires. This self-awareness allows the protagonist to be honest and critical of her own decisions. By being more forthright, direct and clear, the character is able to incorporate her experiences into her self-development, which does not necessarily result in her becoming more assertive.

Keun describes how a subject’s identity is broken down and then recreated. The protagonist has changed from being outgoing and self-confident to a fearful young woman, who is unable to comprehend her own strength. In fact by the end of the novel, the protagonist believes she must hide her strength: “Wir fahren durch die Nacht, alle Lichter fahren schwebend mit. Mein Kopf liege in Franz’ Schoß. Ich muß mich schwächer zeigen als ich bin, damit er sich

stark fühlen und mich lieben kann” (Keun 170). Sanna knows she is stronger and yet suddenly at the end of the novel, she no longer accepts her strength as being positive. The question has to be asked, why she believes she needs to pretend to be weaker in order to be loved, when it was her strong character that first attracted Franz to her? The answer may lie in Sanna Moder’s overall *Bildung*. Throughout the novel the protagonist has become increasingly silent and less sure of her strength. Furthermore, she is now going into exile and she is trying to adapt and adjust to the new situation. The relationship between Sanna, Franz and his mother also needs to be examined because it provides some further clues to what appears to be a sudden change in the protagonist’s behaviour.

Aunt Adelheid blames her son Franz for setting a fire in which his younger brother Sebastian dies. At the time of the fire, Aunt Adelheid had left the children without any supervision, but this fact does not force her to reflect on her own responsibility. To add to the grotesque nature of blaming her son, Aunt Adelheid places a shrine in her home to her dead son, which Franz must decorate every week:

Jeden Sonntag vor dem Essen mußte der Franz Blumen und Blätter an das Bild des kleinen Sebastian stecken. Lauter einzelne Blüten und Blätter gab die Tant Adelheid ihm, setzte sich auf einen Stuhl und sah schweigend auf Franzens Hände, die manchmal zitterten und einzelne Blüten fallen ließen. Schweigend und streng sah die Tant Adelheid ihm dann zu. Franz wurde rot und bückte sich und hob die Blüten auf. „Es wundert mich, daß du essen kannst, aber es freut mich“, sagte sie manchmal mit langsam singender Stimme. Dann legte der Franz Messer und Gabel hin, in seinen Augen stand hoffnungslose Verzweiflung, seine Arme hingen lang und dünn herab. (Keun 58-59)

Aunt Adelheid does not really care about her dead son Sebastian, but uses emotional abuse to keep Franz under her control. Sanna witnesses the abuse of Franz silently, but at one point she finally she loses her temper.

Einmal konnt ich es nicht mehr aushalten und habe die Tant Adelheid angeschrien, daß sie vor Schreck keine Antworten fand. Ich weiß nicht mehr alles, was ich geschrien habe, nur: daß sie schuld hätte an dem Unglück, sie allein und niemals der Franz, der ein kleines Kind damals war ohne Wissen und Verstand. Daß sie schuld hätt' an dem Tod des kleinen Sebastian und schuld, wenn der Franz unglücklich wär. Und wenn der kleine Sebastian jetzt ein Engel wär, würde er traurig über seine Mutter und voller Liebe zum Franz. Die Tant Adelheid hat mir das nie verziehen, aber der Franz bekam frohe Augen. (Keun 59)

This example shows that Franz was happy that she had confronted the aunt, something that he had not been able to do previously. The relationship between Sanna and Franz takes shape because of Sanna and it is she who later organizes the escape to the Netherlands. The protagonist steers the relationship from the beginning and is clearly the stronger partner. It is difficult to understand why the protagonist wants to appear weaker in order to be loved. Perhaps the key to understanding Sanna's transformation is to examine it through the lens of fear, which, as demonstrated in the previous section, had a debilitating effect on the characters. The brutality faced by individuals could occur at any time and this uncertainty may have played a role in Sanna's *Bildung* from a strong to an uncertain young woman. Furthermore, she may be trying to appear weaker so that Franz believes that she needs him as much as he needs her. In contrast to the protagonist, the character of Aunt Adelheid shows how the new regime contributed to her growing personal power.

Aunt Adelheid is an abusive woman, who mistreats her family and neighbours without any sense of remorse. She is emotionally abusive towards her son and her denunciation of Sanna Moder reveals a character with a range of sociopathic qualities. Her treatment of the elderly retiree Pütz during an air raid drill exemplifies her brutality towards others, and reveals her inability to accept that she is wrong. Pütz is a physically weak elderly man who does not want to participate in the air raid drill. Aunt Adelheid is aware that he is not strong, but she still forces him to participate, nearly killing him in the process:

Oben auf dem Speicher ist er umgefallen, alle waren erschrocken....Tant Adelheid hatte ihm die Maske falsch aufgesetzt, und es war schwer, seinen Kopf wieder herauszukriegen. Ich dachte, er würde sterben, aber ganz langsam hat er sich erholt. Es war wie ein Wunder.

Die Tant Adelheid sagte: “Pütz, sie müssen mir dankbar sein, sehen Sie das ein? Ohne mich wären Sie verloren gewesen in einem Augenblick ernster Gefahr.” (Keun 13-14)

The attitude Aunt Adelheid has towards Pütz is one in which all remorse, empathy or pity is lacking:

“Laßt mich doch im Bett sterben, laßt mich doch im Bett sterben”, wimperte der Pütz mit einer piepsenden Stimme wie eine Maus. “Pütz”, sagte die Tant Adelheid streng, “Sie haben das neue Deutschland nicht begriffen, Sie haben den Aufbauwillen des Führers nicht begriffen. Alte Leute wie Sie muß man zu ihrem Heil zwingen oder über sie hinwegschreiten.” (Keun 14)

Aunt Adelheid is using the NS power structure to increase her influence over her social environment. Later she becomes the *Hauswart*, meaning in case of an actual enemy air raid she

would receive a gun and authority over all the individuals living in the building. She received the right to shoot anyone who did not obey her command, leading the protagonist to comment she feared her aunt more than a thousand enemy planes (Keun 14). For Aunt Adelheid, the inclusion within the Nazi party is a chance to gain social status. The character of Aunt Adelheid is symbolic of those ruthless personalities who used the power structure of the Third Reich to gain more power for themselves. In contrast, the analysis of how once successful male characters, such as Algin Moder and Hein, have been broken by the NS regime demonstrates that any form of independent thought could lead to persecution.

During the Weimar Republic, Algin Moder had been a celebrated and popular author whose writings focused on characters living in an urban setting. However, similar in many ways to Keun herself, he had been blacklisted by the Nazis and was forbidden from publishing because his themes did not support the ideals of the NS regime. The difficulties faced by Algin Moder are great and he crumbles under the pressure. The lack of support from even his father is astonishing, as the father had originally taken great pride in his success:

Das Buch vom Algin liegt nicht mehr auf dem Tisch neben der Theke, weil die Nationalsozialisten es auf eine schwarze Liste gesetzt haben. Es ist nämlich zersetzend und vergeht sich an dem elementaren Aufbauwillen des Dritten Reichs. Das hat die nationlasozialistische Zeitung in Koblenz geschrieben. Mein Vater war zuerst nicht Nationalsozialist, aber er war für einen elementaren Aufbauwillen. Er mußte auch auf die Gäste Rücksicht nehmen, und darum hat er das Bild des Führers über das Sofa gehängt statt der eingerahmten Kritik vom Algin. Und es ärgerte meinen Vater, daß der Algin verbotene Bücher geschrieben hatte, nachdem er ihn für teures Geld so viel hatte lernen lassen. (Keun 17-18)

Algin Moder responds to the pressures placed on him by the NS regime by first trying to comply with the new rules. He tries to gain permission to write, while remaining true to his ideals. However, it becomes clear that he will not be successful in gaining permission and, rather than question the Nazis and their ideology, he begins to accept these ideals. Topics and people he had previously laughed at are suddenly very important to him. Algin Moder's wife, Liska, does not like his new stories, which focus on Nazi themes such as *Heimat* and the countryside. Rather than acknowledge his wife's criticism, he becomes angry and distant from her and begins an affair with Betty Raff, whom he had originally disliked. Algin Moder's acceptance of Nazi ideals can be seen as a parallel to his leaving his wife for Betty Raff. Sautermeister writes: "Für Algin bedeutet eine Frau wie Betty Raff die endgültige Absage an eine nur sich selbst und seinem Gewissen verantwortliche Schriftstellerei" (470). By rejecting his wife who is open and honest, for Betty who is secretive and dishonest, it shows that Algin Moder has abandoned his ideals. Sanna Moder witnesses her stepbrother change from a successful and outspoken man to a broken man, without strength. He has abandoned his ideals and cannot see anything outside his own misery. It is true that he has become a victim of the NS regime, but this does not lead him to become defiant. Rather he chooses to conform to the NS ideology even if it means losing his personality. In a manner he is similar to the character Heini, who had also been blacklisted and prevented from working as a journalist.

The name "Heini" is on the one hand a diminutive form for Heinrich, which may invoke a more familiar or sympathetic character than Aunt Adelheid, who is only addressed in a formal manner. On the other hand the name is also an insult like the word *Trottel*. Keun may be attempting to decrease the distance between the reader and the character by making him more approachable, but that does not mean she is not somewhat critical of him. Heini has few friends left and relies on handouts from his wealthier friends to be able to pay for his food and lodging.

He lives alone in a cheap motel and his only source of solidarity is the friends to whom he constantly complains. At the end of the novel, Heini commits suicide because he realizes the futility of his rants, which reveal him as a bitter lonely man, incapable of any effective resistance. Heini's outbursts and his attempts to warn German citizens of the hazard posed by the Nazis appear to be more about his own suffering than the dangers facing Germans:

Ich habe die Menschen geliebt, länger als ein Jahrzehnt habe ich mir die Finger wundgeschrieben und den Kopf leergedacht, um sie vor dem Wahnsinn der heranbrechenden Barbarei zu warnen. Eine Maus, die durch Piepsen eine Lawine aufhalten will. Die Lawine ist gekommen und hat alles begraben, die Maus hat ausgepiepst. (Keun 162)

Heini believes that he was betrayed by the German people and his outburst portrays him as a rather narcissistic character.⁵ His suicide at the end of the novel is not unexpected, because he has become so alienated and disillusioned and does not see a way forward. In contrast, the character of Sanna Moder is not willing to admit defeat so readily and decides to go into exile, something Heini adamantly refuses to do. Although he has become a marginalized figure in the Third Reich, he still cannot bear the thought of being an outsider in a foreign land. This aspect of his character is a reflection on the idea of belonging to a larger collective, something which Sanna Moder must also confront. However, she is better able to navigate the socio-political situation than either Algin Moder or Heini, even though she does not have their educational background. This fact underscores the idea that *Bildung* is not the same as education, as it is clear that both her stepbrother and friend have a far more sophisticated understanding of the NS regime. Rather, Sanna Moder's ability to integrate her experiences and willingness to take

⁵ Keun uses the image of the mouse to describe the weaker opponents of the NS regime. The old Putz and Heini are described as having small, mouse-like voices. The author Art Spiegelman also used image of the mouse was to depict Jews in *Maus*.

chances are what allow her to better resist the NS regime. By not shutting out her experiences, the protagonist has achieved a type of successful *Bildung*, even though she is forced to leave the country.

The NS ideology affected the characters in the novel generally in a negative manner. The characters who resisted the NS regime either abandoned their ideals, committed suicide or went into exile. By contrast, characters who were willing to use the socio-political environment to further their goals were successful. Nevertheless, it is difficult to refer to Aunt Adelheid and Betty Raff as strong characters because their power is based on brutality and deceit. Their strength as “strong” women always comes from abusing others, who are weaker than them. In contrast, Sanna Moder holds onto her ideals and does not mistreat others. The protagonist’s experiences cause her to become less vocal and even somewhat unsure of her strength. However, she remains committed to integrating her experiences and this is reflected in her *Bildung*.

The original idea of *Bildung* showed the protagonist experiencing a series of adventures, which would culminate in his finding a compromise with his society. In contrast, *Nach Mitternacht* shows a protagonist who becomes increasingly alienated from her society, as she gains a better understanding of it. Sanna Moder confronts the reality in the Third Reich and she is highly critical of those who have abandoned their ideals to conform. This rejection brings back the question of *Bildung* in a totalitarian state: Is it possible to achieve *Bildung* in such a system? The protagonist demonstrates that it is but that it will require a rejection of that society because it is not possible to find compromise with it without abandoning all of one’s ideals.

3.4 Impact of Nazi Racial Policy on *Bildung*

The Nazis issued the Nuremberg Race Laws in 1935, which regulated the most intimate contact between Germans and Jews. The Nuremberg Race Laws not only reversed the Emancipation from 1869, but added a racial component to the discrimination of the Jews. In the past, Jews were viewed as a religious group, who could through baptism and acceptance of Christianity gain access to rights not afforded to them as Jews. The Nuremberg Race Laws defined the Jews as a racial group, belonging to a separate race from the Germans, and made it impossible for Jews to overcome the discrimination they faced. The Jews were not considered to be Germans; as such, they did not have any rights and were also vulnerable to state sanctioned violence. Giorgio Agamben argues in *Homo Sacer* that the sacred man was not only placed outside the law, with the law being indifferent to him, but rather the “sacred man” was exposed to violence because he was not afforded any rights and privileges. The Jews of Germany had become the sacred man after the Nuremberg Race Laws were enacted. One of the key aspects of the Laws was the isolation and expulsion of Jews from public life, which is demonstrated in *Nach Mitternacht*.

Irmgard Keun addresses the issue of anti-Semitism in her novel by exposing the isolation and marginalization faced by the Jewish characters. Although the characters of Dr. Breslauer, Herr Aaron and Dieter Aaron are peripheral in the novel, they represent the effects of anti-Semitic policies. Keun’s portrayal of the Jewish characters in her novel emphasizes their isolation and withdrawal into private life. Herr Aaron is an assimilated Jew with a non-Jewish wife, and he does not celebrate any Jewish customs. In fact his self-definition gives the reader insight into how he viewed himself in the Third Reich: “Er will aber nicht, daß man behauptet, er wäre Jude und sagt, er wäre kein Jude, sondern Nicht-Arier” (Keun 22). The play on words shows how he is trying to distance himself from the category of Jew in order to protect himself.

In contrast, Dr. Breslauer has an understanding of the NS regime which leads him to conclude that the situation for German Jews will not improve.

Unlike Herr Aaron, Dr. Breslauer does not believe life in Germany will get better and he has made arrangements to immigrate to America and accept a job there. He has the educational and professional experience to be a doctor in the USA, plus he has the financial means to set up a new life for himself. Dr. Breslauer was a renowned doctor before the Nazis took power in Germany. He is able to understand the fundamental difference of the NS regime and previous anti-Semitic regimes. In contrast, Herr Aaron is unwilling to concede that the situation is as bad as it is. As a businessman he feels the Nazis are less of a threat than the communists, who he feared would take away his business. The blind spot in Herr Aaron's assessment of the Nazis is their hatred of the Jews, which they have put into law. In conversations with other characters, especially Heini, Herr Aaron is reluctant to admit that he has a problem with the fascist regime. It may be that he has not felt the extreme measures personally, but several years after being in power, the Nazis have made their antipathy to Jews clear. Herr Aaron's statement that life is not so bad can be interpreted as an awareness of anti-Jewish measures which had come before and a belief that the Nazis are following that tradition. In contrast, Dr. Breslauer comes to the realization that the Nazis are different from other anti-Semitic groups in that they pose an existential threat. By systematically removing German Jews from every aspect of public life, the Nazis demonstrated that there was absolutely no place for German Jews in society.

The protagonist Sanna Moder witnesses the absurdities of a regime trying to control the most intimate aspects of an individual's life. In *Nach Mitternacht* the effects of the Nuremberg Race Laws on individuals can be seen in Sanna's reaction to the relationship between Dieter and Gerti. Sanna is terrified that her friends Gerti and Dieter will be denounced and arrested for

breaking the race laws and her behaviour illustrates that she believes the threat to Gerti and Dieter is very real:

Manchmal gehe ich mit ihnen, damit der Eindruck im Lokal ungefährlicher ist. Gern tue ich das nicht und komme mir immer ganz blödsinnig dabei vor. Ich möchte heulen vor Angst. Hübsch und nett sind die beiden, vielleicht müssen sie morgen ins Zuchthaus. Warum sind sie so wahnsinnig? Ich verstehe das nicht. Andere tanzen, sie dürfen nicht tanzen... Der Wirt guckt immerzu rüber, vielleicht kennt er die Gerti durch ihr Geschäft und zeigt sie morgen an. Der Dieter ist auch bekannt in Frankfurt durch seinen Vater. Am Nebentisch sitzen Leute mit Pg.-Abzeichen – lieber Gott, man muß fort aus diesem Lokal. Ein anderes Lokal muß gefunden werden und wieder ein anderes, und einmal wird's schlimm werden. (Keun 23-24)

Sanna Moder is not only concerned about the Nazi party members sitting at the next table, but she is also fearful of the bartender who constantly looks over at Gerti. Earlier in the novel she mentions that Gerti is a very pretty girl, and perhaps the bartender is only looking in her direction because he finds her attractive. The effect of the anti-Semitic laws and constant surveillance by others has created a heightened sense of anxiety. In fact I would argue that overriding level of fear has made the protagonist paranoid. The anti-Semitic laws are a partial factor in her fear, but as we witnessed in her arrest, one did not have to break the law to get into trouble.

The issue of anti-Semitism is not the main focus of the novel *Nach Mitternacht*. Keun treats individuals who hold anti-Semitic beliefs to be foolish and she uses the example of the “Stürmermann” (Keun 115-119). The character is described as a jovial forty year old individual, who uses a divining rod and horoscope to discover who is a Jew. Heini takes advantage of the naïve “Stürmermann” in the bar by having him explain his discoveries to Sanna Moder and the

other guests. The “Stürmermann” is especially fond of Dr. Breslauer and claims that he knew the two were born friends, completely unaware that Dr. Breslauer is Jewish. The guests listen to the “Stürmermann” and at one point Sanna joins in and remarks: “Was ist denn aber” – ich muß es fragen – “was ist denn aber, wenn Löwengeborener Jude ist?”(Keun 119), to which the “Stürmermann” replies the horoscope does not apply to Jews. At this point, the protagonist cannot believe what she has just heard and finds it difficult to understand how anybody could hold such beliefs. This episode does not have the same grave effect on the protagonist as Berthchen Silas’ death. There is awareness that discrimination is taking place but the true nature of the antipathy towards Jews is not understood. The character of the “Stürmermann” represents a certain degree of foolishness, but he does not frighten Sanna Moder in the same manner as Aunt Adelheid.

The major effect of anti-Semitism in the novel can be seen in the isolation and removal of Jewish individuals from public life in the Third Reich. Their citizenship was denied and the repressive measures taken against them. There would be no room in German society, either privately or publicly, for Jews to participate and be accepted as Germans. Although Keun could not foresee future events, the novel is revelatory in its description of how Jews were systematically forced apart from the rest of society. It is this isolation which would play a significant role in their deportation and eventual murder during WWII. It is significant to note that Gertrud Kolmar experienced the effects of NS policy personally. She and her father were forced from their home, had their property seized and were both eventually deported and murdered. Irmgard Keun shows the initial steps in the Third Reich of marginalization, which would eventually lead to mass deportation and murder. Keun’s decision to go into exile appears to have been influenced by her understanding of the threat posed by the Nazis. The decision to

have her protagonist do the same thing was to underscore the idea that there was no possibility or future for an individual if they did not abandon their ideals. *Bildung* is shown through a rejection of the Nazi ideology and regime and going into exile is the most obvious sign of this rejection.

The effects of anti-Semitism on the *Bildung* of the protagonist are tied to the fear she has of her socio-political environment. Sanna Moder's experience at the Gestapo headquarters in Cologne showed that denunciation was widespread and it could happen for the most minor of reasons. She is a complex character who rejects Nazi ideology and its world view. She understands the discrimination of Dr. Breslauer and Herr Aaron within a paradigm of suppression of all opposition to the NS regime, whether the character is Jewish or not. The issue of anti-Semitism is addressed in a manner which shows the holders of such beliefs to be foolish. It is not addressed in a manner that would suggest that Jews faced an existential threat from the NS regime. Hence, Sanna Moder views the threat posed by the NS ideology of anti-Semitism in a general sense of overall oppression.

3.5 Conclusion

Fear plays one of the most significant factors in the self-development of the protagonist, as well as many of the secondary characters. The changes that occur in their identities can be seen in direct correlation to the high levels of denunciation and fear of fellow citizens. The novel *Nach Mitternacht* demonstrates how characters, who grew up in the Weimar Republic, had to change to adapt to a totalitarian regime. The novel's protagonist, Sanna Moder, tries at certain times to adapt her behaviour to the ideals of the new regime by remaining silent, but she is forced to recognize that this behaviour will not protect her. Her decision to go into exile is an admission that she will not be able to find a place in the Third Reich. It is not only a rejection of

the spreading anti-Semitism, but also a rejection of the blindness and foolishness she sees in Nazism in general.

The novel reveals the public role women had acquired in Germany in the twentieth century. *Nach Mitternacht* is set primarily in public spaces such as cafés and bars or at political events such as the Frankfurter Nazi parade. Unlike the protagonist of *Eine jüdische Mutter*, Sanna Moder is almost always in a public place, which raises certain questions. If she is constantly fearful, while she is in a bar or cafe, why does she not modify her behaviour and remain at home? Is the desire to fit in greater than her fear of others? These questions need to be asked because in the examples given, the public outings almost always end in a negative manner. One possible answer could be that Keun is showing that the public and private spheres are equally dangerous, as the protagonist had been denounced after she made a comment at home.

The protagonist engages with various elements in her socio-political environment and this influences her character. Sanna Moder achieves a certain level of understanding and incorporates her experiences into her self-development, something which Martha Wolg refused to do in *Eine jüdische Mutter*. In contrast to Sanna Moder, Martha Wolg had actively resisted the knowledge her experiences provided. Both her relationships with men end in failure, because she refused to learn from past mistakes or even admit she had made mistakes. The protagonist Sanna Moder is the opposite, in that she learns from her experiences, and is thus able to gain a better understanding of socio-political situation in the Third Reich. She learns that she cannot ignore her experience nor can she remain apolitical, but understands that she must engage with her socio-political environment. She acknowledges that her personal choices, such as beginning a relationship with Franz, could put her into extreme danger. She incorporates this knowledge and

her experiences, which transforms her from an outgoing and optimistic young woman to a fearful on.

In the next chapter I will show the *Bildung* of a character who had only known Germany as a fascist state. The novel *Kindheitsmuster* shows that self-development or *Bildung* does not remain static. The *Bildung* of Nelly Jordan shows that personal development changes and adjusts according to changes in the socio-political environment. Nelly Jordan emerges as character who achieves a level of self-development denied to Martha Wolg and Sanna Moder. The reason for this success will be analyzed in the next chapter in depth, but it is noteworthy that of the three protagonists of the three novels, it is Nelly Jordan who has the highest level of acceptance in her society. The implications of acceptance or marginalization for the German nation are profound in that it suggests only certain people will achieve success. A marginalized figure will find it difficult to experience positive *Bildung* because their position compromises them from the start. As seen in the last chapter, the character Martha Wolg was never able to gain acceptance as a strong woman because she was a marginalized figure, who was not supposed to show any strength. In contrast, Sanna Moder faces less discrimination but she too cannot completely shed her marginal status and goes into exile.

Chapter 4 *Kindheitsmuster* by Christa Wolf: *Bildung* from a Position of Power

4.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The genre of the *Bildungsroman* played a significant role in literary and political circles in the German Democratic Republic. Both the political and cultural elites in the GDR employed the *Bildungsroman* as a vehicle to rehabilitate society. Christa Wolf was part of a larger group of authors who used the genre to explore themes of *Bildung* and development of characters in their novels.¹ In *Kindheitsmuster*, Wolf shows how the female protagonist Nelly Jordan evolves from being a Nazi supporter, participating willingly in the Hitler Youth, to a socialist. The *Bildung* of the protagonist moves in a cyclical motion, mirroring the structure of the novel itself. Wolf switches back and forth from Nelly Jordan as child to her as an adult on a road trip to Poland, and as an adult writing about the trip two years later. The structure of the novel shows the process of *Bildung* to be complex, with the protagonist revisiting events in order to gain a better understanding of them and to demonstrate how they affected her identity formation. The back and forth switch in time allows the protagonist to view past events and actions from many different perspectives. Each time she returns to particular time in her childhood, a fuller image begins to emerge in which reveals how her *Bildung* was influenced by the ideology of the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic. In the Third Reich she participated fully as a member of the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, whereas in the GDR she transformed herself through a rejection of NS ideals. Wolf shows how the protagonist

¹ In her novel *Der geteilte Himmel* Wolf explores how the female protagonist of the novel develops, both as a private and public citizen. She has her character react to the building of the Berlin Wall and its effect on her personal relationship.

gains an understanding of the influences in her life that defined her identity through critical self-reflection.

Wolf shows the complex development of a female protagonist within her specific socio- historical and political environment. To try and answer this question, I would argue that the character's self-evolution is better understood by acknowledging the protagonist's privileged position within her community. Unlike the protagonists of *Eine jüdische Mutter* and *Nach Mitternacht*, the protagonist of *Kindheitsmuster* is not a marginalized figure. The central character fits the definition of the imagined community in terms of racial and religious identity. Her performance of the German girl in the Third Reich can be viewed as the ideal of that society. *Kindheitsmuster* is a different type of female *Bildungsroman* than *Eine jüdische Mutter* or *Nach Mitternacht*, in that the protagonist begins her self-evolution from a position of strength. She does not need to address prejudice or marginalization, which both Martha Wolg and Sanna Moder are exposed to. It is revealing that the protagonist who is most successful in achieving this compromise is already accepted by her society. The novel, in fact, mirrors the genre which had been used by writers in the immediate post-war East Germany to show the evolution of a male protagonist from an enthusiastic Nazi supporter to a committed socialist.

Virginia Steinhagen examines the importance of the *Frauenbildungsroman* in the GDR in her 1996 dissertation *Educating Rita and her "Sisters": the female Bildungsroman in the German Democratic Republic*. She demonstrates how the genre of the *Bildungsroman* was used by the state after WWII to eliminate the vestiges of Nazism from German society and pave the way for the creation of a socialist society. The central

theme which emerges is that the German people had been corrupted and that the classics, especially Goethe's writings, could be used to help the people to evolve. The early *Bildungsromane* in the German Democratic Republic focused on the development of a male protagonist who had served in the military during World War II and had changed from a Nazi to a reformed socialist. A key factor in this transformation is the relationship between the writer and the state, which is framed in the form of a father-son relationship. The female characters remain one-dimensional and are used mostly to be supportive of the male protagonist; it is not until the 1960s that this begins to change. The female protagonists of the novels analyzed evolve into multi-dimensional characters, whose journey to self-discovery place them within the public sphere of society. It is not a development which takes place in isolation, but rather shows the protagonists reaction to events such as the Second World War and the building of the Berlin Wall. The authors demonstrate how these events in turn affect the *Bildung* of the female protagonists. In short, the female protagonists are allowed to experience *Bildung* and self-evolution which had been the sole purview of male protagonists.

Kindheitsmuster needs to be analyzed within the historic context of the literary scene in the German Democratic Republic in the 1970s. The analysis will show that the protagonist's *Bildung* is made possible through the protagonist's conscious effort to examine ideas and actions critically. Wolf outlines a process of self-evaluation and self-development of her protagonist. Nelly Jordan participates fully in her society in which she enjoys the benefits of being an accepted member. The acceptance gives the protagonist power to be far more autonomous than the protagonists of *Eine jüdische Mutter* and *Nach Mitternacht*. Power is important for *Bildung* in that the status of the

protagonist influences the success or failure of it. High status allows Nelly Jordan to maintain a high level of self-confidence and a sense of security, traits which neither Martha Wolg nor Sanna Moder possess. The *Bildung* of Nelly Jordan in *Kindheitsmuster* reveals the importance of belonging; individuals who are marginalized do not have the same opportunities for self-development. The protagonist enjoyed the benefits of belonging to the “not persecuted” group of women in the Third Reich. She participates in the BDM and appears to accept many aspects of NS ideology. However, it should also be stated that while Nelly Jordan enjoyed taking part in the social aspects of the organization, she questions its ideals, which turns out to be problematic from the beginning. What the protagonist possesses in contrast to Martha Wolg and Sanna Moder is a level of self-esteem which allows her to have confidence. That is why she is able to strongly critique her behaviour as an adult, which is done through a number of techniques in the novel.

The novel is told through a series of flashbacks to Nelly’s childhood in the 1930s and 1940s to a road trip taken by the protagonist to her former hometown in 1971 and the process of writing the novel from 1973-1975. The narrator tries to piece her childhood together in order to understand how she became the person she is. The trip to her hometown is taken with her husband, daughter and brother. The trip lasts approximately 46 hours, which is spent visiting the childhood home, school, and other places of interest to the siblings. Two years after this trip, the narrator tries to integrate her experiences from her childhood and the road trip through the process of writing *Kindheitsmuster*. The novel covers Nelly’s early childhood experiences, her role in the BDM, to the family’s flight to the west near the end of WWII and her life in the GDR. Central to this re-

creation is the attempt to understand her childhood-self through a careful reconstruction of the past. At the end of the novel, however, the narrator must admit that she is unable to make a connection to herself as a child. The more she tries to get a tangible grip of the past, the more elusive it becomes. In *Kindheitsmuster* the narrator reveals that the connection to her childhood-self is no longer there.

Scholarly research of the novel *Kindheitsmuster* has covered different themes: *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or coming to terms with the past, autobiography, memory, the role of women in the Third Reich and the mother-daughter relationship. Christal Zahlmann reads the novel in terms of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and emphasizes the role trauma plays in the process in her essay “*Kindheitsmuster. Schreiben an der Grenze des Bewußtseins.*” “In KM wird versucht, Trauerarbeit zu leisten, in der Weise wie Alexander und Margarete Mitscherlich diesen Prozeß beschrieben haben: “Trauer ist ein seelischen Prozeß, in welchem das Individuum einen Verlust verarbeitet” (141-142). Zahlmann also examines the idea of memory and argues that the process of writing finds elements of the “I” which have been suppressed in the subject (143). In addition, Zahlmann analyzes the mother–daughter relationship to show how the break in a connection between the two causes Nelly’s overwhelming sense of fear. Zahlmann shows how the element of fear is a constant aspect in all areas of life, whether for Nelly in her interaction with the BDM or Charlotte Jordan’s reaction to being questioned by the Gestapo (150). The element of fear in affecting the behaviour of the characters is not dissimilar from the situation described in *Nach Mitternacht*. Fear controls and directs the behaviour of the protagonist and the other characters at the most personal level. Remarks made in passing amongst supposedly trusted friends lead to denunciation and almost

arrest of the protagonist's mother. The element of fear makes characters choose not to be inquisitive or curious because asking questions could be dangerous, something which the protagonist is very aware of. Other scholars have focused on issue of memory as the central theme when analyzing *Kindheitsmuster*.

The desire of individuals to reconnect with the past comes at a time in the 1970s when the WWII generation of parents were beginning to pass away and the need to remember events accurately became much more urgent. The reading of the novel in the area of memory research leads to questions on how the past can be retrieved and whether or not the memories are accurate. Holub writes in his essay "Fact, Fantasy and Female subjectivity:"

The tripartite structure of Wolf's novel allows her often to thematize "facts." Since she is writing about memories from the thirties and forties, but reflecting upon them in both the narrative of the trip to L. in July 1971 and the process of writing from 1972 until 1975, she has occasion to question the materials associated with most earlier historical and literary accounts: not only facts, but also memories and experiences. (225)

Wolf returns to themes and events from her past from many different perspectives and she tries to gain a better understanding by including the entire scope of knowledge available to her. She examines historical facts and tries to place her experiences in a larger context. The process of remembering is not unproblematic, because different factors determine how events are remembered, which in turn affects the protagonist's *Bildung*. That is to say, how the protagonist remembers a past event affects how she processes it, which in turn affects how she incorporates the experience.

Ulrike Growe emphasizes the effects of memory and forgetting, as well as the inability to speak in her analysis. Growe argues in her study that:

Unter Berücksichtigung der von Frauen empfundenen “Sprachlosigkeit” und dem massenhaften Erscheinen von Frauenliteratur als Folge davon, lag es nahe, das Schreiben einer Autorin wie Christa Wolf zu untersuchen, die in ihren Büchern dem Thema der Ich – Erfahrung und das Schreiben nachgeht, die auch von ihrer Fraulichkeit selbstverständlich ausgeht, die jedoch niemals die Weiblichkeit als ein pures Anderssein isoliert und aufzuwerten versucht.

(8)

For Growe, memory plays a dual role, first as an activity on its own and second, as it functions to determine the structure of the text (13). She views Wolf’s writings within a paradigm of new women’s literature, which tried to express the experiences of women that had been neglected by the official mainstream historians and writers (Growe 1-2). By examining the specific experiences of women, Growe posits that authors such as Wolf brought a new understanding of the past. She points out that the author Wolf does not discuss experiences of women in isolation but rather in their public role in society. Rather than serve as only a foil for the male protagonists, Wolf and other authors were demonstrating that female protagonists experienced *Bildung* in their own right. This recognition in turn showed that girls and women played a much decisive role in upholding the NS regime. By placing her protagonist in the public sphere, Wolf was taking a critical look at the role women played in the Third Reich. This led to the questioning of long-held assumptions of the supposed apolitical or passive role of women in the Third Reich.

Feminist scholarship began to address the role of women in the Third Reich in the 1970s and to look beyond them as either simply as perpetrators or victims of the Nazi regime. Elaine Martin examines the role of women in her essay “Victims or Perpetrators?” and writes:

Beginning in the late 1970s, however, a new kind of research – conducted for the most part by female scholars – began to appear which focused on women’s activities and the roles they played throughout the Nazi years. These studies dealt primarily with the activities of the mass of German women who were not victims, that is, they did not belong to one of the groups of women persecuted by the Nazis such as Jews, gypsies, prostitutes, or mental patients; rather, they belonged to the “aryan” group of those “not persecuted (*nicht Verfolgte*)... (61)

Prior to this period, the role of German women in the Third Reich was not discussed or examined to show how their actions were responsible in upholding the NS regime. Martin examines the writings of authors Ruth Rehmann (*Der Mann auf der Kanzel*), Margarete Hannsmann (*Ein Kind wird Nazi*) and Christa Wolf (*Kindheitsmuster*) and argues that these authors collectively addressed topics which were interrelated: behaviour centred on the survival instinct, including dehumanization, bestiality, militarist world view, fascist aspects of sexuality, racism and a tolerance for violence (70). Although Nelly Jordan, as well as her mother and the other female characters in the novel, is presented by Wolf as participating fully in society, it is not without doubt or conflict. Their reactions to the ideology of the Third Reich cover the spectrum from outright rejection to acceptance. The reader does not observe a homogeneous group, but rather a complex and nuanced

one. The complexity of their roles as wives, mothers and daughters is highlighted by Holub who writes:

But what is more important for the discourse of women and fascism is that Nelly, her mother, her aunts, and her classmates are depicted not as naïve enthusiasts or as innocent victims, but as conflicted participants in a complex social process. (230)

The female characters in the novel *Kindheitsmuster* are aware of the situation they have to function within. The women and girls were not always in agreement with the NS regime, but they were also not completely resistant to it. It needs to be underscored that by performing a particular identity of the German woman, the characters stood to benefit in terms of acceptance and recognition by their society. It also shows that the nation could not function without the support of the female population, who had to be accepted as part of the imagined community. The Third Reich is rightly described as a patriarchal state, but it nevertheless had a place reserved for German women who were needed as wives and mothers. The female characters in *Kindheitsmuster* identify with the NS state, even though they might not accept all parts of its ideology. This complex identity formation of the German girl in the Third Reich is shown Marie-Luise Gätgens's analysis of the novel *Kindheitsmuster* in *Women Writers and Fascism*:

Christa Wolf's autobiographical novel *Patterns of Childhood* reconstructs how social and discursive practices under National Socialism construct the "German girl." Wolf shows that the identity of the "German girl" is constructed in opposition not only to men but to all non-German women. (4)

Gätgens acknowledges that the construction of a particular German female identity placed Nelly Jordan and other female characters in a privileged position. As a German girl, Nelly Jordan enjoyed a position of power, giving her a sense of superiority over other races. In the novel *Nach Mitternacht*, Sanna Moder is accepted as a member of the imagined German community, but she does not ever view herself to be racially superior to anyone. In contrast, Nelly Jordan enjoys her supposed racially superior status as a German girl. She understands to be different from the Ukrainian women workers, for example, is a positive thing for her. Although in the process of her *Bildung* Nelly Jordan rejects this form of racism, I would argue that it is her status of privilege which gives her the confidence to embark on a journey of self-reflection.

The female protagonist faces challenges and must confront her decisions, but as the author reveals, her experiences mirrored many in her generation. *Kindheitsmuster* has been read as an autobiographical novel, as many things such as the name of the home town, birthday, family events and other factors are similar to Wolf's. The author, however, rejects that the novel is autobiographical and writes the following disclaimer:

Alle Figuren in diesem Buch sind Erfindungen der Erzählerin. Keine ist identisch mit einer lebenden oder toten Person. Ebenso wenig decken sich beschriebene Episoden mit tatsächlichen Vorgängen. Wer Ähnlichkeiten zwischen einem Charakter der Erzählung und sich selbst oder ihm bekannten Menschen zu erkennen glaubt, sei auf den merkwürdigen Mangel an Eigentümlichkeit verwiesen, der dem Verhalten vieler Zeitgenossen anhaftet. Man müßte die Verhältnisse beschuldigen, weil sie Verhaltensweisen hervorbringen, die man wiedererkennt. (Wolf)

Wolf is careful to point out that the situation in the Third Reich created an atmosphere which in turn influenced the behaviour of individuals, but that it should not be taken to mean that any one single individual is being represented. I would argue that by presenting Nelly Jordan's experiences in a wider context, a better understanding of the role of girls and women in the Third Reich is achieved. Nelly Jordan's experiences are not exclusive to her, but rather she serves as an example of how girls and women were affected by NS ideology. The protagonist serves as a model in trying to reconstruct the past and the novel can be read as an account of a generation, which had very similar experiences to those of the author. The novel's significance lies in its construction, which allows Wolf to comment on many different issues: the role of women in the Third Reich, anti-Semitism, and the Second World War. Wolf is able to capture the essence of daily life of an average middle class German family in the Third Reich. She reflects on the protagonist's life and allows her to come to terms with the traumatic events of the past. She writes in her essay "Die Dimensionen des Autors:" "Nur glaube ich, daß diejenigen, die es miterlebt haben und die wissen, wie stark und inwieweit und in welchem Sinn sie von dieser Zeit geprägt worden sind, eine gewisse Pflicht haben, sich darüber zu äußern" (806). For Wolf, it is important that the ones who lived through the Third Reich have an obligation, even duty, to address the past and show how it affected them personally.

Not all scholars, however, accept that Christa Wolf is being entirely open about the past. Peter Demetz levels criticism at the novel *Kindheitsmuster* and its author and writes:

I am more disturbed to see a self-searching writer reproducing the party line about opposition to the Nazis being sustained exclusively by organized

Communists and, when she ponders the vicissitudes of modern socialism, to hear her speak about Vietnam and Chile but not Poland or Czechoslovakia on her doorstep. Yet it is also true that Wolf writes eloquently about the dangers of self-censorship threatening the writer from within. I believe that, ultimately, her memories are a tragic book which, given her circumstances, has to repress a good deal about contemporary problems in order to reveal the forgetfulness of others in another age. (151-152)

The dynamics of revealing and repressing memories leads to a type of schizophrenic attitude on the part of the author. She argues that it is the duty of individuals to speak out on their experiences of the past, to reveal their knowledge. At the same time she represses the fact that the Soviet Union exerts a major influence over the eastern bloc countries. In fact she does not address how the Warsaw Pact was a tool used by the Soviet Union to control the different member countries. Wolf is able to reveal her experiences in the Third Reich because a critique of the NS regime was a part of the government's de-Nazification process. But a critique of the GDR or the Soviet Union would not be accepted; hence, Wolf's omission of the brutal crackdown on neighbouring countries. Demetz acknowledges that it might not be possible for Wolf to be as openly critical of the situation in the GDR and neighbouring countries as it is for her to address the past. Self-censorship plays a major factor in the *Bildung* of the protagonist, as I will show in the following analysis. However, even in examining the past a form of self-censorship is practiced by the author. The mistreatment of Communists and Eastern Europeans is, for example, addressed directly but the persecution of Jews is far more abstract. Wolf is able to reveal and examine things which are accepted by the regime in the GDR, but she has to

repress or be more abstract about ideas that are rejected, which will be discussed in this chapter.

The following sections will reveal that the protagonist enjoys many benefits from being a member of the “imagined community” in the Third Reich. Nelly Jordan’s participation in the NS parades and BDM defined her as an insider, which in turn allows her to have a perspective on German society and history denied to both Marth Wolg and Sanna Moder. The protagonist of *Kindheitsmuster* does not have to question her position seriously in society, which in turn allows her to have a more sovereign position on the past. The protagonist has a level of self-confidence that neither Martha Wolg nor Sanna Moder possessed, which in turn allows her to feel more secure when she examines her past actions. The fact that Nelly Jordan does not have to fear becoming the “sacred man” gives her an advantage to address issues that the other two protagonists did not have. Nelly Jordan’s performance of the privileged German girl solidified her position within the imagined community and protected her from becoming marginalized.

Chapter 4.2 Orchestration of Power

In *Nach Mitternacht*, Irmgard Keun describes how all the different classes of German society were present at the Frankfurt Nazi parade and physically took part in it by cheering and saluting. The significance of this participation was to create a link between the individual and the NS regime, which would create a stronger bond between the individual and the regime. The power of the performative aspect of the parade was strong enough to seduce even Sanna Moder, who was not a supporter of the NS regime. In *Kindheitsmuster*, the significance of the rallies and the effects on the individuals as a

whole are underscored even further. Christa Wolf focuses on the participatory aspect of the Nazi marches. She describes how the individual characters became a part of and supporter of Nazi power. The carnival-like atmosphere and the abandoning of rules appealed to the majority of characters, many of whom had never participated in such events before. What appeared on the surface to be a type of party or carnival was in fact a deliberate attempt on the part of the Nazis to create spaces in which they orchestrated their power on all levels of German society. Christa Wolf reveals through her novel *Kindheitsmuster* the true purpose of the rallies and their effect on the individual.

Marie-Luise Gätten explores how the Nazis used the rallies to solidify their rule and to create a new definition of German nationality. As seen in *Nach Mitternacht*, the party rallies played a crucial role in creating an atmosphere and reality to underscore the NS regime's power. Gätten writes:

The Nazis employed performative acts to implant individuals firmly into the fascist order during their frequent parades. What has been called the “aestheticization” of politics under National Socialism, such as the standing in formation, the collective lifting of arms, and the construction of gigantic “human images” does not so much bind the subjects to the National Socialist order through an aesthetic experience but indeed constructs identities through these aesthetic experiences... Participation in the performative act makes it impossible for individuals to distance themselves from the event. Subjects also do not simply express their allegiance to the National Socialist order but become part of that which produces the collective subject of fascism. (87-88)

I agree with Gätten's assessment that the rallies functioned to form a connection between the individual and the state. The individuals' identity was patterned according to the ideological framework of National Socialism (Gätten 89). I would say that the individual abandons their identity and assumes a new collective one through the participation in the rallies. The collective identity creates an impression in the individual that they are more powerful and that their role in society is far more significant. Simply belonging to the powerful imagined community, through participation in the political rally, is reward enough. By identifying so closely with the NS regime, the collective views itself to be part of the power structure.

The characters give up aspects of their identity and accept the definition provided by the NS regime. They express a sense of identification with the NS state, which alters their belief system and identity radically. The creation of the "imagined community" based on NS racial ideology was supported by the performance in the rallies. Participants had to fit the NS definition of a German and all who did not were excluded, specifically German Jews, communists, gypsies and gays. By participating in the rallies, the individuals felt a connection to others in the group and to the NS power elites. The repeated shouting and saluting reinforced the new identity which the NS regime sought for the citizens.

Wolf emphasizes the carnival-like atmosphere in the novel surrounding the visit of Hitler to the protagonist's hometown. "Die Leute konnten verfolgen, wie langsam der Führer vorwärts kam, sie kauften Bier und Limonade beim Eckkneipenwirt, schrien, sangen und fügten sich den Anordnungen der absperrenden Polizei--und SA--Kette. Sie blieben geduldig stehen" (Wolf 73). The scene reveals two elements of the rally that

appear to be contradictory, but are in fact complementary to one another. The crowd is singing and drinking, but it does not lead to a complete breakdown in order; it is in fact a controlled disorder. Much like the actual Carnival time period before Ash Wednesday and Lent, the rules are lifted and individuals are allowed to engage in behaviour that is normally not accepted, such as drinking and dancing in the streets. At the Nazi Party rally, the individuals were allowed to abandon the rules to a certain extent, but they remained obedient to the authorities. Martin argues that: “For many, social ranks were also reversed: those who had been on the bottom rungs of society suddenly had authority over those who had previously been their social superiors. In a similar reversal, certain prohibited behaviours now obtained social sanction” (71). The individuals are given permission to act in a manner that is normally not allowed. This may in part explain the crowd’s reaction when it learns Hitler would not be able to visit their town:

Er kam dann nicht, weil andere Volksgenossen in anderen Städten und Dörfern gar zu begeistert von ihm gewesen waren. Es war jammerschade, und doch hatten sie nicht umsonst den Vormittag lang da an der Straße gestanden. Um wie vieles schöner und besser war es doch, mit allen zusammen erregt an der Straße zu stehen, als allein im Laden Mehl und Zucker abzuwiegen oder der ewig gleichen Staublappen über den Geranien auszuschütteln. Sie fühlten sich nicht betrogen, als sie sich zerstreuten und zu ihren Häusern liefen...

(Wolf 74)

The communal activity of participating in the rally brings the characters both socially and politically closer to one another and the regime. The rallies provide the individuals a chance to step out of their daily routines and to participate in an event which on the

surface appears to bring different members of society closer together. A false feeling of *Zusammengehörigkeit* was created through the participation in the NS party rally. I say false because in the following analysis I will show how the characters could not trust each other. The effect of the orchestration of power, however, influenced not only the adults but also the young people, even children. Nelly Jordan understood that she belonged to the imagined community at a very young age:

Wichtig wäre zu wissen, woher die fünfjährige Nelly nicht nur wußte, sondern fühlte, was der Führer war. Der Führer war ein süßer Druck in der Magengegend und ein süßer Klumpen in der Kehle, die sie freiauspernen mußte, um mit allen laut nach ihm, dem Führer, zu rufen, wie es ein patrouillierender Lautsprecherwagen dringlich forderte. (Wolf 73)

The orchestration of power by the NS regime drew in a large cross-section of the German population, as witnessed at the rallies. The rallies' strong performative aspect had an intoxicating effect on the characters, making them feel as though they were part of a larger and more powerful group.

Rolf Nemitz characterizes the parade as an event in which the subject simultaneously assumes two opposing positions. Participants are asked to become objects, to put themselves at the disposal of the military command, while, at the same time, as members of the Volksgemeinschaft (community of people), imagining themselves as subjects of the affairs of the state or, in other words, as subjects of history. (qtd. in Gättens, *Women Writers* 88)

It instilled, as well, a temporary sense of unity amongst the character, which was not borne out by reality. Similar to *Nach Mitternacht*, the characters in *Kindheitsmuster* had

to be careful of what they said and in front whom, which Charlotte Jordan discovers through her own denunciation.

Schwarzsehen kann ja dann vier, fünf Jahre später, mit dem Tode bestraft werden, weil, je trüber eine Lage ist, die Maßnahmen um so drastischer sein müssen gegen die, die sie "trübe" nennen. Im Jahr 44 wird Charlotte Jordan öffentlich--das heißt in ihrem Ladengeschäft--in Gegenwart von drei Kundinnen, die sie gut zu kennen glaubte, deren eine aber eine leitende Stelle in der NS-Frauenschaft innehatte, verlauten lassen: Den Krieg haben wir verloren, das sieht doch ein Blinder mit dem Krückstock. (Wolf 243)

Similar to the situation described by Keun in *Nach Mitternacht*, the NS regime was determined to shut down any debate that could lead to opposition to their regime. The NS regime wanted to stop opposition from forming and one way to do it was to prevent any open discussion. The individual characters may not agree with the regime, but if they are too afraid to speak out, then the regime wins. Charlotte Jordan learns to fear the NS regime and her neighbours after she is denounced by a so-called trusted client. At first, similar to Sanna Moder, she does not understand the danger she has put herself in by making this comment. She carries on with her daily routine until the Gestapo appear at her doorstep:

Drei Tage später, es war ein Sommerabend, Charlotte saß mit ihrer Tochter Nelly und mit ihrer Mutter in der Rasenecke hinter der Veranda und wickelte für Onkel Emil Dunsts Bonbonfabrik Eisbonbons ein, da erschienen zwei Herren im Trenchcoat, trotz der Wärme, unverlangte sie zu sprechen, möglichst im Haus. Bruno Jordan, der dazu kam, legte seiner Frau eine Decke

über die Beine, um den beiden Herren den Anblick ihrer schlotternden Knie zu entziehen: Seine Frau sei leidend, sie fröre so leicht. (Wolf 243)

Charlotte Jordan is shocked and terrified by the Gestapo agents so much so that her legs are shaking. Both Charlotte and Bruno Jordan understand that they are in a dangerous situation. The idea that two Gestapo officers would come to their house in 1944, at a time the war has clearly been lost by Germany, to question one of its citizens for stating the obvious may appear absurd. However, for a totalitarian regime any form of dissent must be crushed. Charlotte Jordan's lies to her children and her reaction of complete denial to the Gestapo officers are better understood in this context.

Zu den Kindern: Die? Achgott, zwei Herren vom Finanzamt. Eine Auskunft, wie es im Geschäftsleben vorkommt.

Zu den Herren: Nie! Sagte Charlotte. Nie habe ich so etwas gesagt. Der Krieg verloren. Da muß sich jemand verhört haben, und zwar gründlich. (Wolf 243)

She does not want to frighten her children and her explanation rings true as the Jordan's own a store. Her absolute denial of having made the comment reveals that she understands the consequences of speaking out in the Third Reich. The fact she had made the statement in front of three women, whom she believed could be trusted, demonstrates this understanding further. Charlotte Jordan must endure several weeks of complete panic and fear until she is finally cleared, something which her own daughter does not notice.

Wo hat Nelly ihre Augen gehabt, daß sie nicht gemerkt hat, daß ihre Mutter vor Angst innerlich flog--bei jedem Klingeln zum Beispiel ins besondere Abends-- und daß sie wenig schlief, fünf, sechs, Wochenlang, bis jene abschließende Aussprache im Haus der Gestapo stattgefunden hatte, wo ihr

mitgeteilt wurde: man lasse die Angelegenheit auf sich beruhen, da die anderen beiden Zeuginnen die fragliche Äußerung nicht gehört haben wollten und der Leumund der Frau Jordan bisher untadelig sei. (Wolf 243-244)

Afterwards her husband tells her not make any more comment and Charlotte says she will cut out her own tongue before she does something like that again (244). This passage reveals the inherent dangers of living in a totalitarian regime; it was possible for anyone to become the “sacred man” and be persecuted. Charlotte Jordan, however, enjoyed a privileged position in her society and this gave her some protection. Because she is accepted as a member of the imagined community, the Gestapo officers are much more inclined to accept her lie as being the truth. Nevertheless, the situation in the Third Reich forced the characters to change their behaviour. Just as Sanna Moder learned in *Nach Mitternacht* the dangers of being outspoken, Charlotte Jordan begins to understand that the dangers posed by the NS regime. The political rallies may have created the impression that there was solidarity amongst the population, but it was in fact not true.

The performative aspect of the rallies affected the *Bildung* of the characters profoundly, who abandoned their beliefs to be part of a larger *Gemeinschaft*. As shown in *Nach Mitternacht*, characters such as Algin Moder changed their beliefs radically to fit in. In the novel *Kindheitsmuster*, Christa Wolf shows the influence of the rallies on the individual characters. For example, Bruno Jordan voted for the Social Democrats before the Nazis gained power. However, in the Third Reich he does not put up any resistance to the Nazi regime and accepts the new situation. Wolf writes:

Übereinstimmungsglück (es ist nicht jedermanns Sache, draußen zu stehen,
und Bruno Jordan, wenn er zu wählen hatte zwischen einem diffusen

Unbehagen in der Magengegend und dem vieltausendstimmigen Geschrei aus dem Radio, dann wählte er, als geselliger Menschen, für die Tausende und gegen sich.) (Wolf 70)

The difference between Bruno Jordan and the SA man Schleimann can be seen in the fact that Bruno Jordan does not use the NS system to further any personal goals. He wants to be left alone and believes as long as he goes along superficially, he will be okay. Although Bruno Jordan is uncomfortable with the new regime, he does not want to stand apart or outside the group. The fear of becoming an outsider is also felt by the protagonist, which I will discuss in the next section. The importance of the rallies was to show individuals that to stand outside was to stand alone. Nevertheless, Wolf is also criticizing the behaviour of the characters. Each character refers to the feeling they have in their stomach when they hear the rally cries. I would argue that this reference points to a childish belief in the NS message. In fairness to the protagonist, it should be remembered that she is only five years old when she first attends a rally. In contrast the father is an adult, but he still does not question or challenge the NS ideology. Bruno Jordan and his family as a whole serve as example of *Mitläufer* who go along with the NS system as long as it does not interfere with their middle class values.

Die Jordans hingen nicht an der Kirche. Sie hingen an ihren Kindern und an ihrem Geschäft und an dem neuen Haus. Bruno hing zusätzlich an der EDEKA, Charlotte hing zusätzlich an ihrem Steingarten, den sie terassenförmig an der einst wüsten Böschung anlegte und allmählich so geschickt bepflanzt hatte, daß er vom Frühjahr bis zum Herbst blühte. (Wolf 191)

According to Gättens, the Jordans practice a type of self-censorship by not commenting on or criticizing the NS regime. As mentioned above, the father, Bruno Jordan, especially does not like to stand apart from the crowd. The outcome of this self-restriction is that it: "...allows the Jordans (and us) to harbour the illusion of a life that possesses an independent purpose" (Gättens 79). Marie-Luise Gättens posits that Bruno Jordan's position is based on conformism and this is why his voting pattern changes from Social Democrat to National Socialist, without causing him any conflict (78-79). But as mentioned before, Bruno Jordan does not use the NS system to hurt others or gain political advantage. Peter Demetz writes in *After the Fires*: "Fleeting moments of domesticity, seemingly unpolitical, reveal how people came to ignore, forget, and neglect what others did or said, as long as the rituals of middle class order were upheld" (151). Bruno Jordan and his wife try to ignore the political situation as much as possible, but as the arrest of Charlotte Jordan showed there was not guarantee that this would protect them.

Simply by asking questions and making statements, the characters would begin to engage in a type of resistance to the regime. However, as witnessed in *Nach Mitternacht*, resisting the regime could have devastating consequences for the individual, which the character Nelly Jordan appears to understand implicitly. "Dann würde Nelly-- "instinktiv", wie man gerne sagt, gefährliche Gebiete mit ihrer Neugier meidend--nach und nach das Unterscheidungsvermögen für Gefährliches und Ungefährliches verlieren müssen und das Fragen allmählich überhaupt einstellen (Wolf 105)?" Similar to her parents, the protagonist conforms to her society. She tries not to question her experiences and in a way she is similar to Martha Wolg, who also rejected integrating her

experiences. However, the difference with Nelly Jordan is that she is aware that she is actively avoiding dangerous topics. The abandoning of curiosity in a totalitarian state could be viewed as a form of self-preservation:

Hat ihre Neugier inzwischen abgenommen? Nimmt Neugier ab, wenn sie lange ins Leere stößt? Kann man eines Kindes Neugier vollkommen lahmlegen? Und wäre dies vielleicht eine der Antworten auf die Frage des Polen Kasimierz Brandys, was Menschen befähigt, unter Diktaturen zu leben: Daß sie imstande sind zu lernen, ihre Neugier auf die ihnen nicht gefährlichen Gebiet einzuschränken? ("Jedes Lernen beruht auf Gedächtnis.") (Wolf 104-105)

Asking difficult questions could potentially bring attention and even harm to an individual. By not challenging the system, individuals may believe they will remain safe and not fall victim. However, as seen in *Nach Mitternacht* with the characters Franz and Sanna Moder, one could be completely apolitical and still become victims of the NS regime. The nature of a totalitarian system is that the individual can be become the "sacred man" without having done anything. The character most able to navigate within her society is the protagonist, who has learned to not ask questions or make comments.

Unlike her mother or the protagonist of *Nach Mitternacht*, Nelly Jordan has only ever known life in the Third Reich. Having been born in 1929, her first memories are as a 5 year old in 1933. She has incorporated her experiences into her *Bildung* and she knows not to stand out in any way. In *Eine jüdische Mutter*, one witnessed a devastating outcome for the protagonist who refused to incorporate her experiences and suffered from it. Her evolution could be called an anti-*Bildung* because she refused to learn from her

experiences. But Sanna Moder and Nelly Jordan both achieve a type of *Bildung* that allows them to function within their society. Eventually Sanna Moder decides that she does not want to find a place within society in the Third Reich and goes into exile. Nelly Jordan, however, remains and participates fully within her society and she is successful. She is a member of the “imagined community,” she performs the idealized German girl, and she knows how to avoid becoming the “sacred man.” As she states herself, she did not see her mother’s fear and wonders why. I would argue that she does not see it because she has trained herself not to see it. Her incorporation of experiences allows her to achieve the *Bildung* which lets her lead a successful life in the Third Reich.

The participation in the rallies and conformism created a sense of an imagined community, which excluded those who refused to be part of the orchestration and conform. The physical participation at the rallies made it easier for the characters to transform their identities and accept NS ideology because it was not a conscious decision but rather a subconscious one. Nelly Jordan lets herself be swept along in the hysteria and it is only in certain moments of quiet that she questions her behaviour and is self-critical. To understand her *Bildung* it is necessary to acknowledge the significance of the participatory nature of the NS regime. The Nazis employed both language and physicality to define the German population according to NS ideology, as well as, to use it to maintain support of their regime. By performing certain actions as part of a larger group, Nelly Jordan was emulating an identity which upheld the ideals of the NS regime. She was performing her identity of the privileged German girl and this solidified her acceptance into the “imagined community.”

Chapter 4.3 *Bildung* of the German Girl

The role of women in the Third Reich became the focus of scholarly research in the 1970s and 1980s. In the novel *Kindheitsmuster*, the protagonist Nelly Jordan wants to escape the traditional role represented by her mother, Charlotte Jordan. She wants to experience life outside her home and gain independence from her parents. Initially, it is the teacher Julianne Strauch and the organization BDM who represent independence and freedom to the protagonist. However, a closer examination reveals that it is the mother who is stronger and more independent in her thinking and it is to her that the protagonist turns to for guidance and support. The novel reveals the complicated and contradictory situation for German girls and women in the Third Reich. The research and the novel demonstrate that, although there was a level of shared experience, individual reaction to the NS regime and their role within society was diverse. Robert C. Holub writes in his essay “Fact, Fantasy, and Female Subjectivity”:

Thus, until the seventies women under fascism were viewed through two stereotypical categories: they were seen, on the one hand, as naïve, pliable beings who swoon under the influence of Hitler’s propaganda and who are attracted to the shiny buttons on the Nazi uniforms. Or they are considered, on the other hand, as equally apolitical, but as people who were not emotionally involved with National Socialism at all. (224)

Research has revealed that women played a far more complex role in the Third Reich and the stereotypes that were ascribed to them, such as being passive or apolitical, were not accurate. The novel shows female characters who resist the NS ideal, such as Charlotte Jordan, and others who use it to further their own goals. For Nelly Jordan, participation in

the BDM gives her the chance to be away from her parent and to enjoy some freedom. She follows the ideology to some extent, but she is not a fanatical Nazi. As shown in *Nach Mitternacht*, the female characters were individualistic and reacted to the NS regime differently, Aunt Adelheid using the new system to increase her power and move up socially, while the protagonist rejected NS ideology. What is consistent with previous regimes is its fundamentally patriarchal nature, which Holub emphasizes:

There is certainly good reason to characterize National Socialism as a form of patriarchy, since it is clear in everything from its propaganda to its legislation that it propagated a male-dominated social hierarchy. But for patriarchy and male domination to continue in German society – or in any society – the cooperation and cooptation of women is essential. (230)

Women played an active role in upholding the NS regime through their acceptance of some or all parts of the NS ideology. The paradox, however, is the female characters who conform to traditional patriarchal definition are closer to the NS ideal than those who have an official position within the NS regime. This is best illustrated in the comparison between the mother Charlotte Jordan and the protagonist's teacher Julianne Strauch.

The public and private influences are represented by the teacher Julianne Strauch and the mother Charlotte Jordan. The mother represents a traditional German wife and mother who raises her daughter in a traditional manner. The teacher, on the other hand, represents the NS regime and it is to her that Nelly Jordan is initially drawn, as she appears to embody the values which represent freedom and independence. However, a closer examination shows that the teacher is, in fact, a marginalized and isolated figure without any friends or family, similar in a way to Martha Wolg. Julianne Strauch is not

accepted by the other teachers because she does not conform to the definition of a traditional German woman. The teacher is not married and does not have any children, and does not seem to have any type of private life. In fact, she appears to be completely isolated outside of her Nazi party functions. This rejection emphasizes that although the Nazis controlled the public sphere and heavily influenced the private, it did not mean their ideology or values were entirely accepted.

Nelly Jordan realizes the ideal that is acceptable for the NS regime is paradoxically her mother Charlotte Jordan, who openly criticizes the regime. By performing the traditional role of a German wife and mother, Charlotte Jordan outwardly fits the NS ideal, which in turn gives her a level of protection. The teacher may believe the NS ideals, but is paradoxically not accepted by her society because she does not perform the traditional definition of a German woman. In the end, the most important influence in Nelly Jordan's life is her mother Charlotte Jordan, who significantly influences her identity as an independent and self-reflective woman. This fact underscores the idea that even in a totalitarian state the individual still has power to determine the outcome of their *Bildung*.

The strength of the mother and her influence on Nelly Jordan help her achieve a type of *Bildung* that allows her to be more self-critical. It is this influence which helps the protagonist to reject the NS ideal and be more willing to view her society directly. As stated before, perhaps to live in a totalitarian society the individual has to learn not to see things or ask questions. But for the protagonist to be more honest, she will have to be self-reflective. Nelly Jordan's rejection of her teacher in favour of her mother can be seen as rejection of the NS ideal. It also shows that the protagonist does not want to be an

outsider and that she will only follow the ideals as long as they do not negatively impact her.

The analysis reveals that the NS ideals are only accepted by Nelly Jordan as long as they do not challenge traditional values represented by her mother. This attitude is exemplified in the protagonist's view of sexuality. In her essay "Language, Gender and Fascism," Gättens shows how concepts of sexual purity were an integral part of creating a specific identity of the German woman. She writes: "While a woman traditionally was obliged to retain her purity for her future husband, whose possession she would become, purity is used strategically within the fascist order in terms of creating a female fascist subject" (Gättens, *Language* 55). For the mother Charlotte Jordan, normality is based primarily on an orderly and clean appearance as well as a restrained display of sexuality. Appearing slovenly or carnal were two elements which suggested the subject was not normal. Gättens emphasizes the importance of sexuality in defining the German woman by stating: "For German women to prove their humanness, they have to practice a more vigilante *Beherrschung* in sexual matters than men. In the construction of the German woman, controlled (*beherrscht*) and carnal (*triebhaft*) form the central binary division" (*Language* 86). Sexuality and normality in the Third Reich were private matters, but ones in which the state played a key role. Gättens writes: "Orderliness is the spatialized manifestation of normality, and it is through strict orderliness that the German family defines itself in opposition to other, clearly inferior families" (*Language* 86). Charlotte Jordan's comments to her daughter about sexuality and Nelly Jordan's fear of being abnormal underscore the importance of gender performance.

The performance of the “proper German girl” was necessary for Nelly Jordan to be accepted by her family and society. A young woman who was described in the novel as *triebhaft* was clearly being criticized and shown to be unfit. Wolf uses the expression *Glitzerwörter* to describe the type of behaviour that was unacceptable for a German girl or woman:

Die tiefe Spur, die Schuld und Verschweigen, welche sich unauflöslich, und für immer in einander verfilzten, Nellys Gemüt zogen, ist mit Glitzerworten besetzt. Den Erwachsenen, die sie aussprachen, begannen die Augen zu glitzern. Man mußte ihnen nicht auf den Mund, sondern auf die Augen schauen, wenn sie sprachen, um herauszufinden, nach welchen Wörtern man nicht fragen durfte. Unnormal zum Beispiel. Charlottes wiederholter Ausruf: Ja seid ihr denn noch normal! Es durchfuhr Nelly, sie könnte recht haben.

Nicht normal sein ist das schlimmste überhaupt... (Wolf 90-91)

The protagonist understands there are words she should not ask about, but they are the words that have had the biggest impact. She feels drawn to the words precisely because they represent a taboo. Words which fall into the category of *Glitzerwörter* are “*unnormal, triebhaft, Schwindsucht*” (91), *Artfremd*, and *Geschlechtskranke*. Each of these words is imbued with meaning going beyond their original definition. The vocabulary is borrowed from medical and scientific language and given a social and racial meaning. For example, the original meaning of *Artfremd* was a designation used to describe different species. However, in the Third Reich the word was used to describe differences between Germans, Jews and other racial groups. The original meanings of the words had been replaced by socio-racial definitions, designed to create a division

between racially pure Germans from other racial groups, defined as inferior. Not only in describing differences between different races, the *Glitzerwörter* were used to emphasize the role of a proper German girl within the Germanic race. Gätgens states: “Again and again the text points to the coexistence of women’s sexual oppression and racism under National Socialism” (*Language* 100). Wolf describes the discourse used within the Jordan home and society in the Third Reich which creates and perpetuates the myth of racial inequality between German women and other racial groups, which are reinforced in the BDM organization.

The influence of NS ideology on Nelly Jordan’s *Bildung* is significant, as the protagonist performs the definition of the German girl by participating in the BDM. Lisa Pine writes in “Creating Conformity:” “Entry into the BDM allowed girls to escape from their tedious home lives, where they were usually under the constant scrutiny of their parents” (368) and girls from the middle class were especially eager to join and achieve a sense of freedom and liberation (Pine 368-369). She argues: “In this respect, there is some indication that the BDM had a modernizing und liberating effect upon the German girls. However, in the place of maternal and paternal influence came societal and state force” (Pine 369). Pine continues and states, “The BDM, therefore, was not an aggregate of the individual personalities of its members, but rather a community into which individuality was dissolved” (369). The goal of the BDM was to create devoted believers in the system. Dagmar Reese quotes Trude Bürkner in *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*: “In the BDM, the girls should be molded into champions of the National Socialist world view” (41). However, the suspicions surrounding the BDM as an organisation are revealed by Pine. She writes how the initials BDM were changed to say

“Bubi Drück Mich” or “Bald Deutsche Mütter” (Pine 375-376). These expressions highlight that the organization was not viewed by all as a harmless girls’ organization. However, Martin Klaus points out in *Mädchen im 3. Reich* that the BDM did not have a policy to teach sex education. He writes: “Sexualität wurde im BDM wie in der gesamten HJ tabuisiert oder als nebensächliches Problem behandelt” (Klaus 59). Sex education is not taught or even mentioned by the organization, but that did not mean that the members remained asexual. Elaine Martin highlights in “Victims or Perpetrators?” that writers revealed a much more complex situation for women in the Third Reich. She writes:

The darker topics that women writers collectively have addressed are in many cases interrelated: behaviours centered around the survival instinct, including dehumanization and bestiality; a militarist worldview; fascist aspects of sexuality as they relate to dominance and aggression; racism; and an overall tolerance for violence. (Martin 70)

In both *Nach Mitternacht* and in *Kindheitsmuster*, a tolerance for violence and the fascist aspects of sexuality can be witnessed. In the novel *Kindheitsmuster*, the protagonist is under tremendous pressure from her family and society in regards to her sexuality. For Nelly Jordan, the contradictory response to sexuality can be witnessed in the idea of *Lebensborn* which directly conflicted with the Jordan’s middle class values. *Lebensborn* was a practice by the Nazis in which blond German men and women would have children without getting married. The idea was to produce the blond Aryan nation, which was the underpinning of Nazi racial ideology. Although the protagonist appears to be committed to the Nazi movement, being a leader in the BDM, she refuses to accept the idea of *Lebensborn*. “Wahrheitsgemäß soll gesagt sein, daß Nelly, als sie den Artikel gelesen hatte, das Blatt

sinken ließ und deutlich dachte: Das nicht” (Wolf 327). The concept of *Lebensborn* highlights the conflict between her upbringing at home and the demands of the NS regime:

Ein Mädchen von dreizehn Jahren, saß sie da, eingeklemmt zwischen der Mahnung der Mutter, sich nicht “wegzuwerfen”, und der Weisung des “Schwarzen Korps zur unbedingten Hingabe für den Führer. Alles, was mit ihrem Geschlecht zu tun hatte, war über jedes erträgliche Maß hinaus kompliziert. (Wolf 327)

This insight describes a character who is able to appreciate the complicated and contradictory nature of the messages she was receiving as to the proper performance of a German girl. Her mother insists she behave like a normal middle European girl, but the state is demanding a very unorthodox behaviour; namely, have children out of wedlock to create a so-called “Master Race.” Nelly Jordan’s refusal to accept this practice shows the adherence to her family’s middle-class values. She has learnt from her mother that she is to follow a strict control of her sexuality. The idea of *Lebensborn* directly contradicts her mother’s stand on sexual mores and practices. Wolf reveals once again the limitations of Nazi ideology and the strength of a parent in guiding their children. However, there are areas in the protagonist’s life where the BDM shapes her *Bildung*.

Nelly’s membership in the BDM allows her to escape her mother’s influence and create a new identity for herself as an independent, German girl:

Ein gehobenes Dasein stand ihr also bevor, jenseits des kleinen, rundum mit Fischbüchsen, Zuckersäcken, Broten, Essigfässern, Würsten verstellten und verhängten Ladenraumes, jenseits der hellen Lichtvierecke, die er auf das kurzgeschorene Rasenstück hinauswarf; jenseits und abseits auch von der

weißen Gestalt im Ladenmantel, die vor die Tür getreten war und sicher schon lange nach ihr, Nelly, Ausschau hielt. (Wolf 278-279)

In the novel *Kindheitsmuster*, the mother Charlotte Jordan and the school teacher Julianne Strauch represent the opposing influences on the *Bildung* of the protagonist Nelly Jordan. Charlotte Jordan represents traditional German values, whereas Julianne Strauch is representative of NS ideology, but is not its ideal. This contradictory statement is borne out through a close examination of the BDM and the role it played in identity formation and *Bildung* of the protagonist. On the surface, the organization promoted independence, the nurturing of leadership qualities, and fitness. However, a closer examination reveals that the primary purpose of the BDM was to prepare German girls for their future roles as wives and mothers, upholding an imagined community based on NS ideology. Nelly Jordan's *Bildung* was not to prepare her for an independent life, but to be even more relegated to the domestic sphere. Unlike her mother who works in her shop and has a level of independent identity apart from being a wife and mother, the protagonist's only role is to be a wife and mother. The conflict arises in the protagonist, who on the one hand wants to lead an independent life as represented by the teacher, but who comes to the conclusion that the organization did not represent true independence.

The protagonist has a conflicted attitude towards the BDM organization and the NS regime. For example, she wears her BDM uniform in school for weeks after the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944. "Nelly findet es nicht übertrieben, daß man die Treue zum Führer äußerlich zeigt. Charlotte meint, man soll die Treue nicht durch Blusen zeigen müssen. Nelly schmerzt es, wenn die Mutter über heiligen Gegenstände vom Standpunkt ihrer Waschküche aus urteilt" (Wolf 405). This example describes the mother mocking the actions of her

daughter and the daughter feeling pain over it. What is the source of Nelly's pain? Is it the case that she is a true believer in the Führer and BDM or is it perhaps a recognition that she is overcompensating? It is revealed in the novel that although she likes the companionship, she does not feel that she belongs in the group.

Kein Wort von "Kameradschaft". Sie putzte sich die Schuhe ab. Dort, wo Mickey mit ihnen sang und spielte und marschierte und Geländespiele machte – da gab es etwas, was die Mutter ihr nicht geben konnte und was sie nun mal nicht missen mochte, obwohl oder gerade weil sie niemals aufhörte, sich unter den anderen fremd zu fühlen. (Wolf 279)

It is revealing that the protagonist participates actively in an organization, which does not really offer any true friendship. Just like the false sense of solidarity created by the NS party rallies, the participation in the BDM offered an illusion of *Zusammengehörigkeit*. The passage above is revealing as is Nelly's outburst after going on a long hike, even she does not enjoy doing this. Although her mother was coming home from the hospital after a dangerous operation and Nelly was looking forward to seeing her, she goes on a hike that she hates. Nelly believes she must behave in a certain manner to be accepted, but has, nevertheless, an ambivalent attitude towards her participation in the BDM. On the one hand it gives her freedom and allows her to develop leadership qualities. However, on the other hand, she does not appear to belong and is even against the strict disciplinary actions of the organization. Here I refer to Nelly's reaction to Gerda Link's suspension from the organization for quarter of a year.

Schrecken, Verzweiflung zu sagen wäre zu stark, und daß sie Angst hat, darf sie nicht wissen wollen. Nach ihrer eigenen Überzeugung hätte sie Abscheu

gegen Gerta Link fühlen müssen, nicht dieses weichliche Mitleid, und Begeisterung über die Gradlinigkeit der Führerin anstatt eben Angst. (Wolf 284)

Eventually the protagonist has to admit to herself that she does not want to return to the BDM until Gerta Link returns. The fear is so strong that on the trip to Poland with her family years later, she leaves out the old building that housed the HJ, a place where she spent a lot of time. She states she would enter the building with a pounding heart and always had a sense of relief in leaving the building (340). The contradictory nature of the organization and Nelly Jordan's reaction to it underscore the fundamental difficulties of performing a particular gender identity. She wants to belong to a larger collective and her participation in the BDM allows her to do this. However, it is precisely this organization which causes her to feel torn, because in many ways it contradicts her own ideals.

The protagonist does not want to be an outsider and she performs the ideal definition of the German girl in the Third Reich. However, as the analysis has shown, the ideology of the NS regime will only be accepted as long as it does not conflict with the Jordan's middle-class values. The taboos surrounding sexuality are significant and Nelly Jordan understands that she must follow the rules to be accepted. Unlike Martha Wolg, who explicitly challenged the sexual norms considered to be "normal," Nelly Jordan obeys her mother's admonishments. Her performance of the German girl falls within her mother's ideals and she does not overstep her bounds. As a result, her already strong position in her society is reinforced. In terms of racial identity, the protagonist once again has the advantage of being accepted as a full member.

Chapter 4.4 Creating a Nazi Racial Identity

Wolf reveals how the transmission of racism and anti-Semitism occurred in the Third Reich in *Kindheitsmuster*. The parents are not racists and do not actively indoctrinate their daughter with anti-Semitic ideas. Rather, Wolf shows how the entire society, from the home to school was permeated with racist thought. Holub writes that the structure of the novel allows Wolf to thematize the “facts” (225) and he shows how the teaching of anti-Semitism took place:

The paths of prejudice, of irrational hatred and racism, are certainly not elucidated with the descriptive logic that we find in historical accounts [...]. But Wolf’s chapter is nonetheless probably closer to the reality of Nationalism Socialism as it was experienced than the scores of books and essays that relate the “facts” of anti-Semitism. National Socialist ideologemes function by processing dubious facts through fantasy to alter damaged subjectivity. (229)

Holub’s analysis is important to our understanding of the novel because he theorizes how beliefs and ideas were inculcated into individuals. Ideas are accepted over time, through a myriad of associations and definitions. Wolf describes how Nelly Jordan incorporated various images and statements about Jews, leading her to become an anti-Semite. Crucial to understanding this phenomenon is the fact that neither parents, nor her grandparents expressed anti-Semitic comments to her directly and in fact shows the mother actively opposing such teachings. Wolf writes in *Kindheitsmuster*:

Ein deutsches Mädel muß hassen können, hat Herr Warsinski gesagt: Juden und Kommunisten und andere Volksfeinde. Jesus Christus, sagt Herr

Warsinski, wäre heute ein Gefolgsmann des Führers und würde die hassen.

(191)

The mother opposes such teachings and says: “Hassen? Sagte Charlotte Jordan. War wohl nicht gerade seine Stärke. --Abends fragt sie ihren Mann: Ist es nicht hannebüchen, was der den Kinder in Religion erzählt?--Laß den doch erzählen, was er will. Wenn man sich da überall einmischen wollte!” (Wolf 191). As seen in the previous section, the father does not want to argue with the teacher, even though his wife is obviously troubled by such teachings.

Wolf does not describe the protagonist as being wilfully indoctrinated to hate a particular group. Nelly Jordan is, instead, indirectly influenced by statements made by Leo Siegmann a friend of her father. She is unable, for example, to hear the word impure (*unrein*) without conjuring up the image of the small Jewish boy and vermin:

(Heikel bis heute, der Verbindung nachzugehen, die sich damals zwischen dem namenlosen Judenjungen, den Nelly durch Leo Siegmann kannte, und der weißen Schlange hergestellt haben muß. Was hat der blasse picklige Junge mit Kröten, Spinnen und Eidechsen zu tun? Was diese wiederum mit der gläubigen fanatischen Stimme, die in jener Sonnwendnacht vom brennenden Holzstoß her rief: “Rein wollen wir uns halten und unser Leben reifen lassen für Fahne, Führer und Volk!” (Wolf 202)

The images, along with the language used to describe Jews are violently graphic, rendering Jews as inhuman beings. The expression and teaching of hatred and intolerance occurs in formal and informal settings. Leo Siegmann’s anecdote of the Jewish boy in his class is an example of informal indoctrination.

Was ihn betrifft, hatte er in seiner Klasse-Realgymnasium, Kaiserzeit, wohlgemerkt! – einen Itzig, einen Judenbengel. Woran es eigentlich lag, könnte er bis heute nicht genau sagen. Aber jedenfalls, wenn sie morgens in die Klasse kamen und der Itzig hockte da schon in seiner Bank wie ein Nasser Sack, dann mußte jeder erst mal an ihm vorbei und ihm eine reinhaun. Das war Instinkt, da kann einer sagen, was er will. Er roch einfach widerlich, oder was es war. (Wolf 199)

Here stereotypes of Jews as the other are presented and Siegmann repeats anti-Semitic comments he has heard. However, the mother does not approve of Siegmann's comments. "Zuerst stürzte noch die Mutter herein, in voller Fahrt. Abab ins Bett, loslos, keine Widerrede. Hast du etwa zugehört?"(Wolf 199). Nevertheless, Leo Siegmann's comments are never questioned in front of Nelly, nor do her parents explain the situation clearly to her. At one point rumours are spread regarding Aunt Trudchen as being part Jewish, to which the mother states such comments are only libellous. Nelly's outburst that she does not want to be a Jew is greeted with astonishment.

Nelly flüchtet in die Küche. Sie hockt sich auf den Kohlenkasten und preßt die quatschnassen Hände zusammen. Sie ist außer sich, aber sie weint nicht. Feucht werden ihr die Augen erst, als die Mutter sie aufstöbert, die natürlich etwas gerochen hat, und wissen will, was los ist.

Da äußert Nelly den bemerkenswerten Satz: Ich will keine Jüdin sein!, und Charlotte richtet an eine nicht zu bennende Imstanz die nicht weniger bemerkenswerte Frage: Woher um alles in der Welt weiß dieses Kind, was eine Jüdin ist? (Wolf 208)

Wolf ends this chapter with the following sentence, “Auf diese Frage ist eine Antwort nicht zu ermitteln” (208). The fact that the mother, who is otherwise quite perceptive, does not make the connection with conversation she has been having with Aunt Trudchen is astonishing. Nelly had internalized what her society expressed about Jews and her outburst showed the dangers of belonging to that group. Nelly’s fear of being a Jew is very real because she has accepted the definitions and ideas of Jews she has heard. She does not simply decide one day to be anti-Semitic, but rather she has been taught to be anti-Semitic by her family, friends, neighbours and society in general.

The outburst demonstrates that German Jews were not accepted to be part of the imagined community, but could in fact be described as *homo sacer*, the “sacred man.” As shown in the introduction, Jews were not only the Other, but a group that was being actively persecuted. The reaction of the main character demonstrates viscerally the fear of being an outsider in the Third Reich. To be rejected meant that you did not belong to the *Gemeinschaft* and had, therefore, no rights. In *Eine jüdische Mutter*, the protagonist Martha Wolg actively chooses isolation, which has devastating consequences for her. The protagonist of *Nach Mitternacht* has a better support system, but she too is marginalized. In contrast, Nelly Jordan is a fully accepted member of her society, a member of the *Gemeinschaft*, and any threat to this membership is taken seriously. To be rejected as a member of the “imagined community” would have ejected Nelly Jordan from her privileged position, which she is aware of. Later as an adult, the protagonist must confront her past attitude towards Jews and it leaves her with a sense of unease that she cannot explain away:

Ein Mann deines Alters, dem nach seiner eigenen Aussage seine Kindheit ins
"Nichts" versunken ist, erklärt: Bis heute könne er nicht unbefangen--das
heißt ohne Schuldgefühl--mit einem Juden reden. Du überlegst, wie man ohne
die Kenntnis der eigenen Kindheit Bildnisse machen kann--der Mann ist
Bildhauer--, zum Beispiel für Kinder. Kein Vorwurf. Eine Frage. (Wolf 202)

The discomfort which is described in the passage can also be seen in the interaction between the mother Charlotte Jordan and the American officer. Forced to collect some water, Nelly and her mother enter a building in which US soldiers are housed. At the house they encounter a US officer who speaks perfect German, but towards whom the mother acts in a rather nervous manner. After the two leave, Charlotte Jordan turns to her daughter and remarks: did you notice he was a Jew? Neither mother nor daughter makes any derogatory remarks, but the mother's question reveals a level of discomfort she has when she must interact with Jews. Although the man was originally from Germany, Charlotte Jordan does not feel comfortable speaking to him, which could be interpreted as a form of guilt. Nelly's own experiences as an adult reveal she has very good friendships with a number of Russians. However, with respect to Jews, they remain both for the mother and daughter a foreign and alien group. This shows that although the protagonist works hard and is self-critical, there elements within her *Bildung* which cannot be overcome.

One reason for the discomfort could be explained by the fact that that Nelly Jordan did not know any Jewish people. In contrast, she had contact with Eastern Europeans and witnessed how her mother's action towards them. During the war, Charlotte Jordan prepares a care package containing diapers and other items for a

pregnant Ukrainian woman imprisoned in one of the nearby camps. The reader does not know if the baby or mother survives, but the very act of the mother shows humanity. The protagonist recognizes this and perhaps the mother's actions provide a space for her to overcome her initial prejudice. But the protagonist does not have any interaction with Jews and the only images she has been exposed to have been negative. Hence, she does not have any positive starting point which would lead to a better understanding of her own attitude.

Everyday language in the Third Reich was permeated with racist terminology and individuals are desensitized to these images. Nelly Jordan's attitude towards the Ukrainian workers demonstrates the separation she felt from them. "Was sie den Fremden gegenüber empfand, war nicht Mitleid, sondern Scheu, ein starkes Gefühl von Anderssein, dem kein Geheimnis zugrunde lag, sondern Julia Strauchs Geschichtsunterricht: Anders heißt wertvoller" (Wolf 363). This example highlights how Nelly Jordan was taught to view herself as being racially superior by her teacher. In contrast Charlotte Jordan wants Nelly to accept certain customs and manners of a Central European, but she does not teach her daughter to hate others. The racism and anti-Semitism are addressed by Wolf in a manner which shows how ideas were repeated and eventually accepted. The protagonist incorporated these images or racial superiority into her identity and performed accordingly. The following example shows how deeply the NS ideology had manifested itself, despite the parent's rejection of it:

Aussage von Bruno Jordan, vierzehn Jahre nach jenem persönlichen Eintritt
des Viehs, des Monstrums in seinen Laden und in sein Leben. Einziger
Zuhörer: seine gottlob erwachsene Tochter Nelly, die mit dem Deutschen

Gruß aufgewachsen ist und es zwei Jahre zuvor mühsam hat lernen müssen,
“Guten Tag” und “Aufwiedersehen” zu sagen. Daß dein Gruß ein deutscher
sei, grüße stets mit Hitler Heil. (Wolf 68)

The fact that neither parent was an active supporter of the NS regime did not matter in terms of the *Bildung* of the protagonist’s racial identity. Without understanding the repetitive nature of the greeting, Nelly Jordan had used language and accepted an identity which embedded her within her the imagined racial community. Only those individuals who had been accepted would be allowed to use the expression to greet other Germans. That it took her much effort and practice to learn how to say “Good Day” and “Good Bye” shows how deeply she had identified with the NS regime. Neither the protagonist nor her parents are fanatical Nazis who identify with the NS ideology. Rather they define themselves as middle-class Europeans and go along with the NS regime as long it does not contradict their values. Nevertheless, they have used Nazi phrases and language for so long that their meanings have been lost. By de-Nazifying her German, the protagonist opens herself to the possibility of creating a new identity for herself.

Wolf demonstrates how racism and anti-Semitism influenced the protagonist’s self-image. Nelly Jordan admits that she viewed herself to be different and better than others, such as Eastern Europeans and Jews. She is, however, able to reject these beliefs by critically examining her attitude towards others. The protagonist is honest about having held particular beliefs, which allows her to reject them. She adopts humanistic ideals, which allows her to reach out to groups she had been taught to regard as the other. The protagonist identity is no longer defined by the racist and anti-Semitic NS ideology.

Chapter 4.5 Conclusion

The protagonist is able to reflect on her past in a way that is not possible for either Martha Wolg or Sanna Moder. As a member of the imagined community, Nelly Jordan participated fully in both the Third Reich and GDR. Neither in the Third Reich nor in the GDR is the protagonist treated as an outsider or a marginalized figure. From the perspective of the NS regime, Nelly Jordan qualifies as a full member of the imagined community, because the protagonist's performance of the NS ideal of the German girl fits its definition. At no time does Nelly Jordan deviate in appearance or performance of the proper German girl in either the Third Reich or GDR. This identity performance helped to ensure that she would not be marginalized or made the "sacred man." Nelly Jordan is given a level of support and protection by her family and community that neither Martha Wolg nor Sanna Moder enjoyed.

The protagonist's *Bildung* in *Kindheitsmuster* follows the literary tradition practiced in the GDR. The early novels looked at the transformation of male protagonists who had fought in WWII and had become disillusioned by the NS regime. Although Nelly Jordan did not fight in the war, she did participate fully within the sphere she was allowed. As a member of the BDM, the protagonist was indoctrinated with the NS ideology and she actively supported the NS regime. After the war, she remains a committed follower and it is only after a lengthy illness that she slowly begins to change. The transformation is, however, a bit too seamless in that the reader does not know what the motivating factor is. Does she change because she now understands the brutality of NS ideology? Did an awareness of the crimes that were committed against Jews, Gypsies

and other groups force her to rethink beliefs? Or could it be argued that the protagonist is somewhat of an opportunist, who changes to fit into the new society in the GDR?

The protagonist was a member of the “imagined community” in the Third Reich and the GDR and this affected her *Bildung* in a profound way. She was able to change her behaviour and beliefs in such a way that she would become a member of a new imagined community, one that was an antithesis of the Third Reich in terms of ideology. I would argue that the protagonist is able to be a successful citizen of both states because she understands what rules must be followed in order to be accepted. She knows that she is accepted and does not want to become a marginalized figure. In the episode in which she has a panic attack and states she does not want to be Jewish, the reader is initially led to believe that this is a response to the anti-Semitic views she has been exposed to. That may well be but I would go further and argue that she does not want to be an outsider, irrespective of who the outsider is. In the Third Reich, the outsider is defined as the Jew, Gypsy, Communist, and Homosexual, but in the GDR the outsider is the Nazi. The protagonist is aware of this fact and I believe it is a factor in her transformation from a committed Nazi to a socialist. However, it should be noted that the protagonist does evolve and reflects honestly on her beliefs and attitudes in the Third Reich.

The road trip to her hometown in Poland allows the narrator to reflect on her childhood and gain a better understanding of the past. The question of how people become who they are is a complex one with no simple answers. The protagonist examines the expectations of her as a German girl by her family and society, which were not identical. For example, the practice of *Lebensborn* directly contradicted her family’s middle-class values. The narrator returns repeatedly to episodes in her youth and makes

the connection to her adult self. She is not afraid to address sensitive matters directly, even when they cause her unease. Rather by going back to the events, the narrator shows that she has the ability to be self-critical and have the courage to change. The road trip can be seen as providing the catalyst which allows for self-reflection.

The novel *Kindheitsmuster* does, however, reveal the limitations of trying to create an independent identity. Nelly Jordan is accepted as part of the “imagined community,” and she is expected to perform a particular role. If she deviates from it in any way, she will be rejected by her community. Hence she does everything in her power to remain part of the larger community. In contrast, Sanna Moder gains a better understanding of her society and decides that she does not want to be a part of it. Her choice to go into exile stands in stark contrast to Nelly Jordan’s attempts to remain in hers, whether in the Third Reich or the GDR. Unlike her relatives who move to what would become West Germany after the war, Nelly Jordan and her family remain in East Germany. This decision to remain could be viewed as a complete rejection of the NS regime, and to be committed to being a socialist. The GDR defined itself in total opposition to the Third Reich and rejected that they were in any way the successor state. That state, it was argued, was the Federal Republic of Germany or West Germany. The revelatory nature of *Kindheitsmuster* is to show the limitations of an individual’s power.

The author shows the difficulties an individual faces in the twentieth century in the modern nation state. The realism of the novel emphasizes the role of the public sphere and the domination by the state over the individual. In Wolf’s novel there are no heroes or villains, but rather characters who have multilayered personalities. The element of transformation and change by examining one’s past form the core of the novel

Kindheitsmuster. She is careful not to allow her character to make simple excuses for her behaviour, such as she was young or immature. Neither is Wolf interested in vilifying individuals, by making assertions of how one should have behaved in a totalitarian state. Rather she presents a nuanced picture of how individuals acted and how they may have been influenced in forming their beliefs.

I would argue that the protagonist has been successful in her *Bildung* because achieves an understanding of herself, her society, and the influence each has on the other. Nelly Jordan has the privilege of being an accepted member of the “imagined community” as well as living in a state that rejected NS ideals. I would argue that the latter element was significant in influencing the outcome of the protagonist’s *Bildung*. As I argued in the previous chapters, the type of state and one’s status in a particular society in which one lived played a major role. The transformation of Nelly Jordan from a Nazi to committed socialist is in many ways successful because of two key factors: one, she was never a fully committed Nazi who accepted all of its ideals and two, she has an understanding of how certain rules must be followed if one wants to be a member of the community. For Wolf it is crucial to the de-Nazification process of the protagonist that she adopts humanistic values. I would argue through her personal status and the ideology of the GDR, Nelly Jordan is able to achieve precisely that type of *Bildung*.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

My investigation of the novels *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* has brought a new understanding of the role women played in defining the German nation in the twentieth century. Unlike the nineteenth century, female protagonists were not excluded from experiencing *Bildung* or having their influence minimized. Rather, the female protagonists actively participated in every area of public and private life. The three novels reveal how the protagonists are defined by their society and how they in turn define the German nation. Whereas the nineteenth century predominantly held the definition of the German nation in connection with the male *Bildungsroman*, the twentieth century expanded the genre to include women and their contributions. The genre of the female *Bildungsroman* showcases the influence women had in creating, maintaining, and even challenging identities of belonging and exclusion. The genre focuses on specific aspects of female participation in public life in the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic. The three novels reveal how *Bildung* was or was not successful and underscores the crucial role played by women in defining the German nation in the twentieth century.

The German nation in the twentieth century went through many different forms and ideologies. A reading of *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* reveals that there is no single definition of “German” nation or German citizen, which underscores Benedict Anderson’s theory of the “imagined community.” Rather, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic each had their own definition of their state, which in turn determined who was or was not a citizen. In *Eine jüdische Mutter*, the protagonist Martha Wolg must confront anti-Semitism, but her rights as a German citizen are protected during the Weimar period. According to the law, she is a full member of the German nation and

afforded all the rights and privileges that come with it. In contrast, the Nazis did not accept German Jews as part of their “imagined community” in the Third Reich and withdrew citizenship from them. The female protagonist of the novels *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* are accepted as belonging to the imagined community, but they still face challenges. In *Nach Mitternacht*, Sanna Moder is denounced, arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo for making a remark about Hitler. There is a prevailing mood of fear which is also present in *Kindheitsmuster* and this fear influences the behaviours of the protagonists. Although Nelly Jordan is accepted by her society, she nevertheless lives in constant fear of becoming the other, which I have outlined in chapter four.

The dissertation shows that *Bildung* can occur whether one lives in a democratic or totalitarian state. The question raises the point of whether *Bildung* is always positive and I would answer that it depends on what is meant by “positive.” If it means going through a learning process about oneself and consciously making decisions, then I would say that could be interpreted as being positive. For example, Martha Wolg refused to make any changes in her performance, even when they caused her problems, and experienced what I would call anti-*Bildung* or negative *Bildung*. In contrast, Sanna Moder gains an understanding of the NS regime and her society, which leads her to go into exile. I would call this type of *Bildung* positive because the protagonist incorporates her experiences and consciously decides to reject the Third Reich. In *Kindheitsmuster* the protagonist questions herself and her convictions to gain a better understanding. Once again *Bildung* could be viewed as positive because there is conscious effort to figure out what had happened and why she had behaved as she did. Hence, I would argue that *Bildung* can occur in all types of socio-political environments, but that it does not always produce what could be termed a positive development.

The female protagonists Martha Wolg, Sanna Moder and Nelly Jordan each represent a type of German woman. In the novel *Eine jüdische Mutter*, the character Martha Wolg compounds discrimination against her through her performance as a “strong” woman. By challenging the gender norm for women in the Weimar Republic, Martha Wolg’s performance was met with hostility because it was perceived to be threatening. In *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler argues that gender norms can be challenged when there is a shift in performance. However, *Eine jüdische Mutter* reveals the limits to this idea because the protagonist is viewed to be an outsider. In *Nach Mitternacht* the protagonist Sanna Moder is more successful partly through her status as belonging to the “imagined community” and partly through her performance as a young woman. Her criticism of the NS regime and society in general is sharp-witted and revelatory, but also quite funny. She does not alienate others through her performance, but rather it strengthens her position within her community. The novel is also important in that it does not portray all female characters as either pro- or anti-Nazi, but presents a nuanced picture. The last novel, *Kindheitsmuster*, describes in detail how women played a decisive role in upholding the NS state. The mother, Charlotte Jordan, is not a Nazi, and even makes critical comments about the regime, but allows the daughter to participate in the BDM. The protagonist Nelly Jordan performs the ideal definition of a young German girl in the Third Reich. However, she, like her mother, goes along with the NS regime as long as it does not conflict with her middle-class values. She participates in all the athletic and social activities of the BDM, but rejects outright the practice of *Lebensborn*. Her transformation from a committed Nazi to a socialist occurs over a long period of time. She gains a better understanding of herself and her society by asking the question: “Wie sind wir so geworden, wie wir heute sind? (Wolf 307)” This question is the focus of the novel *Kindheitsmuster*, and can be understood to be the

basic question to ask when discussing *Bildung*. As I have shown, the answer to this question depends on a variety of factors and it is a continuing process.

The three novels examine how sexism, racism, and anti-Semitism affect the *Bildung* of the female protagonists. In *Eine jüdische Mutter*, the reader confronts a character who appears to have accepted anti-Semitic ideas as part of her identity as a Jewish woman. My research, however, has shown that at the time Kolmar wrote the novel, anti-Semitic ideas of supposed female Jewish perversity were widely held. Both Susan Omran and Sander Gilman demonstrate in their studies how Jewish women were viewed to embody all the negative characteristics of modern society. In *Nach Mitternacht* the protagonist is accepted as a German, and does not experience racial discrimination personally. However, she witnesses anti-Semitism and its effect on her friends, which causes her great distress. In order to protect her friends, the couple Dieter and Gerti, she goes on their dates so as to make it appear there is no relationship. Dieter is Jewish and forbidden to have a relationship with a non-Jew. In *Kindheitsmuster*, Wolf analyzes in depth how anti-Semitism was taught and its effect on the protagonist Nelly Jordan. In the Third Reich, German women were defined in terms of their racial identity, which influenced their performance as German women towards other German and non-German women. I highlighted the episode between Nelly Jordan and the Ukrainian workers, and showed how she felt no connection to them at all. Each protagonist's *Bildung* is affected by sexism and racism directly and indirectly and the novels reveal the negative cost.

The act of *Bildung* is a conscious one in which the individual must examine their actions and decisions in their respective contexts. Why does a person choose to believe certain things or act in a particular manner? When and why is it important to follow societal norms? Is there a possibility that one must rebel against a particular point of view? These questions have been the

basis of this dissertation and they challenge the individual. The protagonists of *Eine jüdische Mutter*, *Nach Mitternacht* and *Kindheitsmuster* have shown that it is impossible to avoid *Bildung*. Nuanced and multiple readings of the novels reveal the many layers of the characters. On the surface it might appear that they have certain personality traits which affect the outcome in a particular manner. However, a closer reading reveals intensely complex protagonists who do not easily allow themselves to be placed in any particular category. By acknowledging the complex nature of each novel, this dissertation has presented a reading of the novels and characters which is revelatory. The novels do not provide satisfactory or simple answers to complex problems, but rather demand the reader try to find their own answers.

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