

Silence, Self and Sacrifice in Gertrud Kolmar's Prose and Dramatic Works

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A Thesis Presented to

The National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Faculty of Arts



NUI MAYNOOTH
O'Nascail na hÉireann Nà Nuaid

Department of German

**In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

June 2010

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Abstract

The process of assimilation claimed to domesticate the difference of the Jews by encouraging Jews to adopt attributes of gentile society and shed markers of belonging that identified Jews as other. However, the anti-Semitic basis of assimilation prevented the proposed processes of integration and acceptance of Jews from ever happening. The resulting situation for Jews who had gone through the process of assimilation was a perpetual state of 'inbetweenness'. Perceived as inalienably other, yet in many ways representative of gentile society that projects this otherness, Jews were subject to contradictory and conflicting societal expectations so that it was impossible to fit in with established constructs. In Gertrud Kolmar's prose and dramatic works, textual devices denote the continuous inbetween status of the characters.

The multiple engagements with fixed constructs such as stereotypes expose how Jewish women were represented within perceived stable constructs. However, deviations from conventional structures refute neat categorisation of the characters so that inbetweenness is the prevailing status for all characters. Kolmar's works do not present a solution to inbetweenness; rather, the lack of solutions and satisfactory conclusions to Kolmar's prose and dramatic works is a textual device that accurately portrays the nature of Jewish existence in Kolmar's time. Similarly, analyses of space and spatial markers in the prose works explore the complexities of Jewish existence as appropriations of the same space are multiple and contradictory.

The thematic development of silence and sacrifice shows how the inbetween subject engages with conventional modes of communication and religious belief. In the prose and dramatic works Kolmar appropriates the significance of silence and sacrifice for her time. Silence is removed from its role as a symbol of oppression of Jews and used as a virulent, subversive mode of communication. Similarly, sacrifice is examined as a ritual that attests to the existence of divine powers, and the individual's responsibility to attribute meaning to existence is explored. These investigations reflect on the realities of Kolmar's time when religious beliefs (Judaism) were perceived as the source of otherness and the necessary sacrifices made to ensure survival in a hostile environment, such as the forced selling of Kolmar's family home, were stripped of meaning. Kolmar's prose and dramatic works offer an insightful commentary on the problematic existence of Jews in the 1930s and 1940s in Germany. The complexities of existence are not overlooked in Kolmar's works; rather, they are perceived as manifestations of inbetweenness, which are explored in these works in a manner that exposes the flawed structure of the society that has led to the inbetween state of German Jews.

Chapter I: Introduction: Gertrud Kolmar as author and playwright

1.1 Kolmar's life and works

Gertrud Kolmar was born Gertrud Chodziesner on 10th December 1894 in Berlin.¹ She chose Kolmar, the German version of her Polish surname as her pseudonym. The eldest of three children, Kolmar was raised in an assimilated household in an upper middle-class area of Berlin. Proficient in English and German, Kolmar worked as a teacher and an interpreter for a brief period in 1918. When Kolmar's mother became ill, she returned to the family home to care for her, leading a life withdrawn from social activities and the literary circles of Berlin. Following the death of her mother in 1930, Kolmar remained at the family home to care for her father, whose health was deteriorating. Kolmar was to remain by her father's side until his deportation to Theresienstadt in 1942, which was followed by Kolmar's deportation to Auschwitz in February 1943. Kolmar's writing career dates from 1917, when her first cycle of poetry, *Gedichte*, was published. The prose and dramatic works were written in the years immediately preceding and during the Nazi regime in Germany. These works are available today because Kolmar sent them to her sister in Switzerland for safe-keeping. A number of works, including a collection of poetry written in Hebrew, remained with the author and were consequently destroyed.

Kolmar has been appreciated mainly as a gifted poet; the majority of scholars regard her largely unknown prose and dramatic works to be of lesser quality than her poetry. Karl Krolow decided not to publish Kolmar's prose works "aus

¹ For a detailed account of Kolmar's life see Woltmann, Johanna (1993), *Gertrud Kolmar 1894-1943*. Marbacher Magazin 63 (1993).

Qualitätsgründen” (cf. Balzer 1981: 165) and the poet and author Jacob Picard felt that Kolmar’s prose works did not match the high standard of her poetry (cf. Balzer 1981: 165). In studies that have explored Kolmar’s prose works, Kolmar remains anchored by her primary role as a poet. Shafi concludes, for example, that while Kolmar’s novel *Die jüdische Mutter* is thematically rich and contemporary, the novel is an example of “eine Dichterin, die sich in ein neues Genre einarbeitet und dabei dem lyrischen Ton noch zu sehr verhaftet bleibt” (Shafi 1995: 205). The delayed publication of Kolmar’s prose and dramatic works has also contributed to the meek reception of Kolmar as a prose author and a dramatist. Kolmar’s novel *Die jüdische Mutter* was published for the first time in 1965 as *Eine Mutter*; in 1978 the novel was published under the full title: *Eine jüdische Mutter*. However, the original title given to the novel by the author in 1931 is considered to be *Die jüdische Mutter*, the title of the 1999 publication and the one used in this study.²

The developments of the title of Kolmar’s novel signal the perceived controversial nature of Kolmar’s story. Johanna Woltmann cites the reason for the shortened title *Eine Mutter* of the first publication as the decision by her sister Hilde to omit the word ‘jüdische’ and thereby avoid possible anti-Semitic reactions (cf. Woltmann 1995: 285). The more widely used title *Eine jüdische Mutter* establishes the story as a work of fiction about an individual, while the original title provocatively signals a story about typical Jewish mothers, which, due to the often disturbing actions of the protagonist, Martha, could trigger a reaction amongst Jews and anti-Semites alike. However, the possibility of a negative reaction is a curious

² See Woltmann, Johanna (1995) for a detailed account of the publication history of Kolmar’s works.

reason to alter the title. As Hoffmann points out, it is also not a successful tactic: “Die Gefahr, daß die Erzählung auf fatale Weise rezipiert wird, ist allerdings durch eine mehr oder weniger willkürliche Änderung des Titels nicht zu bannen” (Hoffmann 1996: 106). What is common to both of the prevailing titles is the word ‘jüdische’, which denotes a significant attribute of the protagonist, Martha Wolg. Furthermore, the use of the definite article in the original title establishes Martha as an archetype. While Kolmar’s novel engages with the specific position of Jewish mothers in Berlin in the early 1930s, the title introduces the framework of established perceptions of Jewish mothers. Martha’s actions contradict the stereotype of the Jewish mother, so that Martha is often portrayed in a negative light. It is precisely this unease with Martha’s actions that betrays the complexity of the position of Jewish mothers at this specific time. While Martha’s murder of her daughter, Ursa, should not be interpreted as the actions representative of Jewish mothers, her unsettled position and contradictory actions are representative of the complex position of Jewish mothers at this time, who were devoid of secure positions in their environment.

Kolmar’s novella *Susanna* was written between December 1939 and February 1940; however, it was only published for the first time in 1959. It has also suffered misrepresentation, as all published versions of the text deviate considerably from the original manuscript in Marbach. Hubig and Marx have established that the variations in the printed versions of the text are often extreme, infiltrating the published text with a more than justifiable amount of the publisher’s influence: “Dieser Grad an textentstellenden Eingriffen ist philologisch durch nichts zu rechtfertigen” (Hubig/Marx 1996: 128). The 1993 publication of *Susanna* is the version used in this

work; however, considerations by Marx and Hubig who incorporate the original text in their analysis form a significant basis of my arguments.

Kolmar's *Briefe an die Schwester Hilde (1938-1943)* are considered in this study as literary works. While Kolmar's sister, Hilde, was living in exile in Switzerland, the two sisters corresponded regularly by writing letters. The letters span the period between 1938 and 1943 during which time Kolmar's living situation in Germany became increasingly oppressive, something that can be traced through each letter. While Kolmar's part of this epistolary exchange was retained by Hilde and subsequently published in 1970, the letters that Hilde wrote to Kolmar were never recovered.

Kolmar's letters were not intended to be literary works. These letters reveal details about the author's personal life to a much greater extent than any interpretations of Kolmar's prose, poetry or dramatic works might hope to achieve. The letters can certainly be appreciated in terms of their value as historical documents of the Nazis years in Germany. However, the letters can also be interpreted within the framework of literary analysis. Kolmar's recounting of her experiences in Nazi Germany engages with the genre of Holocaust testimony and memory. The letters contain techniques typical of the diarists who wrote during the Nazi years. Young explains that "events enter the diaries in particular ways, through allusion only, or at times not at all" (Young 1988: 26). In chapter IV, this style of representation of events is analysed in Kolmar's communication with Hilde. While events cannot be explicitly referenced, they are adequately represented through effective use of imagery, allusion and suggestive language. While Kolmar's account of daily life in

Berlin is of heightened historical interest, it should be noted that Kolmar's personal letters are inevitably subjective and cannot be fixed solely within the context of historical documents. Rather, the letters provide insight into aspects of living at this time from a specific perspective. Young's claim that literary testimony of the Holocaust does not provide evidence but knowledge (cf. Young 1988: 37), is also applicable to Kolmar's letters.

The letters can also be classed within the literary genre of the autobiography. Johanna Zeitler, in her publication of Kolmar's letters refers to this genre claiming that the letters are a "lockere, gereimte Autobiografie" (Zeitler 1970: 218). Indeed, viewing the letters within this framework allows for an in-depth analysis of the literary devices at work within Kolmar's letters, even if they were not written consciously as literary works. In her analysis of these letters, Shafi draws on the attraction of this genre, specifically, the genre of the epistolary autobiography, in the context of feminist studies. Since women have historically experienced exclusion from a patriarchal order, both linguistic and social, the epistolary autobiography presents women writers with the opportunity to "emphasize the inner realm, the private sanctuary of emotions that is often shared with the partner in the epistolary dialogue" (Shafi 2000: 106). Shafi's analysis explores the representation of this 'inner realm' in Kolmar's letters, seeing in the letters the forging of a "self that would be able to resist the onslaught on her subjectivity" (Shafi 2000: 105).

Kolmar's dramatic works were published collectively for the first time in

2005.³ This publication of Kolmar's dramatic works contains the first publication of *Cécile Renault: Schauspiel in vier Aufzügen*, which has not yet been performed on stage. *Nacht: Dramatische Legende in vier Aufzügen* appeared first in Italy, printed in Italian and German in 1994; however, this publication is marred with numerous spelling mistakes. In 2000, the play was performed at the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus; in 1999 the play was published as part of the anthology *Spectaculum 71: Sechs moderne Theaterstücke*, which signalled the first easily accessible and reliable version of the play. This collection of plays also contained Kolmar's short drama *Möblierte Dame (mit Küchenbenutzung) gegen Haushaltshilfe*, which had previously been published in 1994 in *Orte*, a publication based on an exhibition, celebrating the author's life on her 100th birthday. The publication contains documents from the author's life and extracts from her entire body of work.

Though many of Kolmar's works were published posthumously, Kolmar did enjoy limited critical acclaim for three poetry collections that were printed before she died, namely, *Gedichte* (1917), *Preußische Wappen* (1934) and *Die Frau und die Tiere* (1938). Her reputation as a leading German lyric poet preceded the publication of her prose and dramatic works and contributed to the delayed response from scholars. However, recent studies have included Kolmar's prose works in analyses of the writer's works. Lorenz (1997) explores issues of Jewish identity arguing that Jewish self-hate motivates the protagonist's self-destructive actions. Erdle (1988) explores the prevalence of violence in Kolmar's prose works as a reflection on the

³ See Nörtemann, Regina (2005) for a detailed account of the publication history of Kolmar's plays, p. 159-160.

baseness of the anti-Semitic environment of the protagonist; she also contributes to the exploration of the theme of exile in Kolmar's prose (1993). Balzer (1981) bases his analysis of Kolmar's prose on the author's relationship to creativity and motherhood and the difficulties of articulating a maternal and a creative existence. Hoffmann's analysis of *Die jüdische Mutter* (1996) focuses on the paradigms established in the title, namely the negotiation of Jewishness and maternity in Martha's environment. Published in the same collection of essays, Hubig and Marx (1996) explore the concept of Jewish articulation in the novella *Susanna*, seeing the title character of the novella as a post-structural figure that transcends the limitations of her environment. Frantz's book entitled *Gertrud Kolmar's Prose* (1997) is the only publication so far that focuses solely on Kolmar's prose works. Frantz relates Kolmar's prose works to their historical context, seeing in the actions of the protagonists direct reflections of their anti-Semitic environment. Shafi's earlier publications on Kolmar's prose (1990), (1991) and (1995) explore the nature of the protagonists' otherness that marks their existence. Like Balzer, Shafi sees in Kolmar's prose the expressions of a female creativity, which is at odds with traditional gender expectations. Shafi's recent publication (2009) on urbanisation in *Die jüdische Mutter* offers fresh insight into the studies on Jewish identity, as Shafi incorporates the backdrop of a modern Berlin setting into the investigation of urban experience. This analysis complements Colwig's examination of representations of Berlin in Kolmar's novel (1998).

Studies on Kolmar's dramatic works are scarce, with *Nacht* attracting the majority of scholarly attention. Responding to the prominent theme of sacrifice in the

play, Brandt (1994) and Colin (1994) explore the significance of this theme against the context of the play's production, namely anti-Semitic Germany. Nörtemann's analysis in the publication of Kolmar's dramatic works (2005) also focuses on the theme of sacrifice in the play, while exploring Kolmar's engagement with other works that deal with the legendary figure of Tiberius. Shafi's extensive analysis of Kolmar's oeuvre (1995) contains sections on all plays; along with Nörtemann's commentary on Kolmar's dramatic works these appear to be the only contributions that deal with *Möblierte Dame* and *Cécile Renault*.

1.2 Kolmar's works in the context of literary studies and Jewish studies

This study explores how the texts engage with the context of their production offering an insightful commentary on the complexities of existence within Kolmar's environment. The prevalence of Jewish characters in the prose and dramatic works calls for an analysis of the social context from a Jewish perspective; reflections on the nature of existence are informed by the author's own experiences as a marginalized Jew. The body of research that has documented issues of Jewishness and self-articulation in Kolmar's prose works provide a useful starting point to develop further concepts of self, as expressed in the novel and the novella. Kolmar's insightful fiction has ramifications for the specific female Jewish position of the texts but also, I will argue, for the human condition in general. The complex themes of *Die jüdische Mutter* are in keeping with features of the German novel of the early twentieth century; in Chapter II, Kolmar's novel is analysed in the context of the salient attributes of the German novel, demonstrating how Kolmar offers a radical

interpretation of taboo themes such as infanticide and homosexuality. Kolmar's novella *Susanna* is shown to be a discerning analysis of the concept of belonging in one's environment, again reflecting on the nature of the human condition. While Jewishness is a central theme in the novella, it transcends the framework of the anti-Semitic context of its production, uncovering the complex situation of modern man in his environment, which is significant even without the Jewish perspective. Jewishness serves to offer a particularly shrewd insight into the struggles of the protagonists, as the aporetic nature of asserting a sense of self in a hostile environment that oppresses the individual was the marker of Jewishness at this time.

The concept of belonging and identity formation for Jews is a popular topic in Jewish cultural studies. The history of the Jews in Germany is marked by the processes of alienation and exclusion and the conflicting aspirations for belonging and inclusion, which were proven to be in vain, for the most part. Of particular significance in the following analysis of the negotiation of Jewishness is the process of assimilation, which began following the emancipation of the Jews in the late 19th century and that resulted in the complex paradigm of identifying secure concepts of Jewish existence, which could successfully indicate belonging. The emancipation of the Jews signalled a hopeful process, whereby the Jewish people were to be recognized as equal to their German counterparts. The ideals of the Enlightenment influenced the endeavours of Jewish emancipation, which aimed to assimilate the Jews into German society. As one critic explains, "Jews were emancipated into the autumn of the Enlightenment, when the ideals of rationalism, pragmatism and tolerance still retained their appeal" (Mosse 1985: 1). The subsequent period marked

a high point for German-Jewish culture. The Jews, enjoying their new civic freedoms, contributed extensively to German culture and the success of Jewish writers and sculptors, among others, as well as the presence of Jews in theatres and other cultural hubs is striking in the latter part of the 19th century. As David Sorkin explains, “emancipation had allowed Jews not just to enter, but to inundate German culture to the point of domination” (Sorkin 1985: 100).

However, despite the active presence of Jews in and their significant contribution to German culture, the process of assimilation was complex and ultimately unsuccessful. This was due to the presence of anti-Semitism in German society, which may not have been overtly present in the initial stages of Jewish emancipation or in the successful Weimar years. However, retrospectively, anti-Semitism can be seen to be influential on the failure of the assimilation of the Jews to German society. Another contributing factor to the failure of assimilation was the desire of Jews to remain a distinct group in society. While some Jews chose to preserve their distinctiveness by marrying only co-religionists and thus preserving the continuity of their beliefs, others lived secular lives being “indifferent to, or rejecting Judaism without converting” (Sorkin 1985: 117). The insistence on a distinctive Jewish characteristic, which, it was hoped, would allow for a dynamic relationship between Jews and Christian Germans in the long term, ultimately allowed for the identification of the Jews by anti-Semites, as a destructive force that was a threat to German society.

The possibility of the dynamic co-existence of a distinctive Jewish subculture and gentile German culture was not realised in the long-term. Thus, the aspirations of

belonging, which appeared to be credible in the years following the emancipation of the Jews and the subsequent cultural successes of numerous Jews, were proven to be unrealistic, particularly as anti-Semitic sentiments increased in popularity, culminating with the success of the Nationalist Socialist party in the federal elections of 1932. Even Jews who had shed all markers of Jewishness and converted to Christianity were not always guaranteed acceptance amongst gentiles, since Jewishness was perceived by anti-Semites as an inherent, irremovable characteristic, which betrayed inferiority and otherness. As one critic explains, “though Jews had been emancipated, Jewishness was not” (Katz 1985: 94).

It is against this backdrop that Kolmar’s prose works are interpreted in the following analysis. Having grown up in an assimilated household, Kolmar experienced the illusion of assimilation and the subsequent realisation that Jewish emancipation was to be short-lived. The effects of these historical developments for Jewish cultural studies are the ensuing contradictory and problematic assertions of a sense of Jewishness. The prevalence of anti-Semitism compounded the search for positive representations of Jewishness and contributed to the process of self-hatred that has been attributed to Jews, in particular. In his seminal book, *Jewish Self-hatred*, Sander L. Gilman, explains that “self-hatred results from outsiders’ acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group — that group in society which they see as defining themselves — as reality” (Gilman 1986: 2). Gilman applies this concept to the specific context of Jewish self-hatred, identifying Jews as the outsider and gentile society as the reference group. Thus, Jewish self-hatred results from a complex relationship between marginalized Jews and dominant, gentile

society. The acceptance of the negative perception of Jews by anti-Semitic society motivates the desire to remove all aspects that define one as Jewish. This process of self-hating is an expression of desire to attain full identification with the reference group. However, as Gilman explains, gentile society does not fully accept the self-hating Jew for this would undermine the superiority of the gentile who must insist on the inferiority of the outsider. The reference group ultimately views the self-hating Jew as nothing more than a “shoddy counterfeit, an outsider” (Gilman 1986: 2). If the motivation for Jewish self-hatred is full identification with the dominant reference group, then this can never be successful since “the ideal state is never to have been other, a state that can never be achieved” (Gilman 1986: 2). This leads to a perpetual outsider status, as Jews cannot fully identify with Jewishness since this is perceived as a negative attribute which should be repressed. On the other hand, the dominant reference group do not accept the self-hating Jew, as Jewishness remains an integral marker of belonging. Robertson summarises the dilemma as follows: “Sooner or later one would be reminded that one was a Jew and that in many people’s eyes this was incompatible with being a German” (Robertson 1999: 286). This results in conflicting perceptions of the self, as Jews rejected or were rejected from all familiar markers of identity. The remaining status is the perpetual outsider.

Kolmar’s works can be interpreted within the context of Gilman’s definition of Jewish self-hatred. In the prose works, the circumstances that lead to self-hatred are investigated and the literary interpretations can be understood as a critical reflection on Jewish self-hatred. The process of self-hatred is exposed as flawed since the ultimate goal of self-hatred to repress Jewishness and become accepted by gentile

society is doomed to fail. This is due to the anti-Semitic beliefs in the inherent alien nature of Jews, who can never be granted equal status to German gentiles regardless of the efforts of Jews to repress their Jewishness.

The concept of Jewish self-hatred is prevalent in Kolmar's prose works as the protagonists engage with anti-Semitic representations of themselves generated by their gentile peers. Jewishness is a source of shame for the narrator in *Susanna*, whereas Martha's Jewishness is seen by herself and her peers as the cause of her otherness. Both perceptions are undoubtedly informed by the anti-Semitic projections of Jews from gentile society. However, both Martha and the narrator are distanced from gentile society despite their efforts to adopt the standards and norms of the dominant culture at the hands of Jewish traditions and customs. In this respect, Jewish self-hatred is presented as self-destructive, compounding the search for a sense of belonging in a modern world for Jews.

1.3 Post-colonial approaches to Jewish studies

In the following analysis, the framework of assimilation and Jewish self-hatred is incorporated with a post-colonial approach. The similarities between the concepts allow for this combination, which in turn presents the opportunity for an original analysis of Kolmar's works. The application of post-colonial studies to Jewish studies is a new approach that has proven to be successful in yielding new interpretations. The domination of German middle-class gentiles over Jews is not the same as European overseas colonisation; however, the processes are structurally similar so that the predicament of the Jewish community can be framed in colonial terms. The

dominance of the German gentile community over the Jewish community corresponds to the imposition of the norms of the coloniser's culture at the expense of the innate practices of the colonised people so that, "in both instances, there is a powerful, culturally and politically dominant side to the equation, the sheer existence of which exerts on the weaker side a certain pressure to conform to its standards (linguistic and cultural, amongst others)" (Krobb 1999: 43).

The establishment and reinforcement of the difference of the Jews constructed a superior/inferior binary that is at the core of colonisation. The Jews' subsequent emergence from the ghettos, which was an inevitable development in the course of the embourgeoisement of society, meant that markers of Jewish identity were shed in favour of identification with the coloniser; in this sense, the departure from the ghettos can "be understood as a process of decolonisation" (Krobb 1999: 43). The otherness of the Jews did not disappear completely with the assimilation of the Jews to German society. The establishment of Jewish cultural movements, such as the *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* in 1821, served to enhance the distinctiveness of the Jews, in what was intended to be a positive move for Jewish people who had lost touch with their Jewish heritage. The Verein was a symbol of Jewish academic achievements, but as it operated within mainstream middle-class culture, it represented a link to German gentile society. The otherness of the Jews based on anti-Semitic views that the Jews were inferior people prevented movements such as the Verein from realising successful assimilation. Attempts to assimilate fully were thwarted, particularly as the fascism and anti-Semitism of the early twentieth century proliferated the otherness of the Jews, so that the inbetween situation of the

Jews is comparable to the condition of the post-colonial subject: distanced from 'original' markers of belonging and prevented from assimilating completely into the dominant structures because of the associations with the colonised space.

Homi Bhabha's post-colonial theories argue that this outsider position, the inbetween status of seeming to belong but never being fully accepted leads to the establishment of a post-colonial identity that is capable of criticising and subverting the dominant structures. Bhabha calls for a revision of supposed identity forming categories such as race and gender and proposes that the location beyond established norms is the locus of articulation of culture and self. He argues that "those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural difference" (Bhabha 1994: 1) offer insight into the nature of existence in an inbetween position. The position held by Jews in a post-assimilation society is comparable to that of the colonised subject in a post-colonial society; this allows for a reading of Kolmar's novel using Bhabha's theory. Bhabha has implemented some of the most widely used terms in post-colonial literary theory such as mimicry and ambivalence in his investigation of inbetweenness. Bhabha investigates strategies of dominance and resistance in post-colonial discourse, identifying a space between coloniser and colonised, a third space, which is the location of subversion and resistance. His theories offer new avenues of interpretation as the occupant of the inbetween space, the person who is neither fully colonised nor coloniser, is given space to articulate. For Bhabha, identity, though never a fixed definitive, is articulated on borders, margins and inbetween spaces, in the area created by the inevitable slippage of a colonial authority. Bhabha contends that it is inevitable that colonial authority

provokes resistance, even if this resistance exists not in the obvious places amongst the colonised but in this third realm *between* coloniser and colonised. This inbetween position is applicable to Jews who have gone through the assimilation process and remain distanced from secure categories of belonging. Using Bhabha's approaches the position of the Jews can be examined to reveal the complex nature of existence in this third realm, which in turn reflects on the characteristics of the spaces from which Jews are estranged. The devices of mimicry and ambivalence reflect on the flawed nature of the dominant power and allow for the articulation of subversion and resistance to this power. German gentile society is thus portrayed from the inbetween position of Jews, which offers unique insight into the structures of this dominant society and the possibilities for subversion of this power.

1.4 Mimicry and ambivalence

The colonial process whereby the coloniser imposes his values, customs and language on the colonised, is a complex one, which reveals much about the anxieties and the desires of the coloniser. On the one hand, the colonised subject is compelled to adopt the attributes of the coloniser, such as language and dress, in order to become similar to the colonial power. The replacement of the native culture by the dominant one is, after all, a primary goal of colonial authority. In the case of the Jews in Germany, adopting the customs and traditions of the gentiles was often seen as a positive step. Aspirations of equal treatment, in the form of equal civil rights and full acceptance as gentile citizens were the driving forces behind the voluntary assimilation of the Jews. However, the coloniser's acceptance of the colonised subject is based on the

recognition of the difference between them. The colonised subject maintains a significant degree of separation from the coloniser, so that the superior/inferior binary, which is at the core of the coloniser/colonised relationship, is intact. Thus, the exercise of colonial power is paradoxical by nature: the colonised subject should be like the coloniser, as the coloniser's aim is to impose the traits of his culture on the colonised subject, but also distinguishably other, or as Bhabha puts it: "the subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 1994: 86). The coloniser/colonised relationship is threatened as the colonised subject becomes more and more *like* the coloniser — the enforcement of the difference between them is difficult because of the similarities between coloniser and colonised. In the case of the Jews in Germany, assimilation can be compared to the process of decolonisation, where the Jews became increasingly similar to their gentile peers. The similarities between Jews and gentiles are the source of the threatening nature of their relationship as the difference of the Jews is camouflaged by their sameness. This complex coexistence of sameness and difference is at the core of the coloniser/colonised relationship.

1.4.1 Mimicry

The colonised subject engages the device termed by Bhabha as 'mimicry' or partial representation of the coloniser as his inalienable and essential otherness prevents him from ever constituting a full representation of the coloniser. The contradictions evident in the colonial authority that sets out to make the colonised subject like the coloniser, but also insists on the difference between the colonised subject and the

coloniser, not only allow for the subversion of this authority but actually create the cause of, and space for, such subversion. The mimic man, as Bhabha refers to the colonised subject, is a threat to the coloniser because of his concurrent depictions of sameness and otherness. His otherness is what keeps the coloniser at a distance but his sameness is what forces the coloniser to see traces of himself in his colonised subject. Thus, the colonial gaze is returned by the colonised subject and the colonial authority is challenged and deprived of his uniqueness in the acknowledgement of the familiar gaze. In other words: “with mimicry, the authoritative discourse becomes displaced as the coloniser sees traces of himself in the colonised: as sameness slides into otherness” (Childs/Williams 2006: 79). This partial representation or mimicry is so close to mockery, that it is inevitably and inherently subversive. The mimic man represents a distorted image of the colonial power, a perverse creation which returns his gaze on the very forces that are responsible for his existence. The concept of the returned gaze, the idea that the observed (colonised subject) becomes the observer (of the coloniser) is crucial to Bhabha’s theories and is the space for the subversive forces to manifest themselves in post-colonial theory. The mimic man is subversive because he is similar to the coloniser, yet he is colonised explicitly because of his otherness. Furthermore, the transparency of the unstable colonial authority, the fact that the colonial authority gives rise to mimicry, endows a certain amount of power to the colonised subject. He becomes aware of his status as a constructed representation, and the fears of the coloniser and the threat posed by the colonised become known to the colonised, thus supplying him with the tools necessary to subvert the coloniser’s authority. The subversive nature of mimicry, then, is caused not only by the threat of

sameness to diminish otherness, but also in the “sudden awareness of inauthenticity, of authority’s constructed and assumed guise” (Childs/Williams 2006: 79). The colonised subject’s awareness of the mechanisms that establish his constructed position and the constructed position of the coloniser give him the power to expose the artificial nature of perceived stable positions, such as the coloniser’s perceived superiority and the colonised subject’s perceived inferiority. Mimicry threatens to expose the anxieties and the artificial nature of colonial authority, which bestow the colonised with a potentially subversive power.

1.4.2 Ambivalence

Ambivalence for Bhabha is a term used to describe the relationship between coloniser and colonised. It is a complex mix of repulsion and attraction, which disrupts the coloniser’s power. Mimicry exposes this ambivalence and questions, even ridicules, the power of the coloniser. The basic principle of ambivalence is that the relationship between coloniser and colonised is not a straightforward exercise of the coloniser’s power and authority. As discussed earlier, the colonised subject is prevented from becoming exactly like the coloniser, as this would be too threatening to the coloniser. This, according to Bhabha, compels the colonial relationship to be ambivalent. The paradoxical nature of this relationship is characterised by the dichotomised forces of repulsion and desire, which ultimately challenge the dominance of the coloniser’s authority. Ambivalence is also a term used to explain the various and contradictory ways in which the coloniser uses the colonised – both exploitative and nurturing. The

coloniser treats the colonised subject as an inferior being but at the same time believes in the purpose of his act: to civilise the colonised subject.

The ambivalence of the coloniser/colonised relationship is exposed in the relationship between Jews and their gentile peers. In Kolmar's novel, the protagonist, Martha, is an assimilated Jewish woman, whose relationship with a German gentile is based on the conflicting structures of ambivalence, namely desire and repulsion. The otherness of Martha is the cause of her lover Albert's attraction and ultimate rejection of her; this contradiction weakens the structures that insist on Martha's otherness, as the otherness that is the cause of the difference between German gentiles and Jews is attractive. The insistence on the difference between coloniser and colonised ensures the stability of the superior colonial power; this power is threatened by the attraction and engagement with this difference in the form of Martha and Albert's relationship. The ambivalence of Martha and Albert's relationship reflects the impossibility of existing within neatly defined categories for the post-colonial subject who is in an inbetween position. The perception of Martha is constantly shifting between conflicting representations of attraction and rejection. This complements the protagonist's negotiation with differing modes of existence such as the modern career woman and the traditional domestic mother figure. Martha's otherness prevents her from being fully accepted as either a modern woman or a traditional mother, which reflects on her inbetween position, outside of fixed categories of belonging. The employment of stereotypes further underscores the ambivalent relationship between Martha and her gentile peers.

1.5 The stereotype in post-colonial discourse

The stereotype is a significant concept in post-colonial discourse, which reveals the slippage of the coloniser's perceived authority. The stereotype is *not* simply an expression of racist or discriminatory beliefs; it is a mode of discourse that is ambivalent and therefore a potentially subversive method of representation for the colonised subject as it fails to successfully establish difference between self and other or coloniser and colonised. The ambivalent nature of the stereotype means that it is constructed out of simultaneously dichotomised expressions of attraction and repulsion, desire and fear. In Bhabha's terms, the stereotype is "a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive" (Bhabha 1994: 70). To explain the complex workings of the stereotype, Bhabha draws on Freud's theory on fetishism. Freud proposes that in order to allay the fear of castration, a fetish object is chosen, which is familiar and comforting and which compensates for the threatening 'lack' that castration poses. The fetish object functions as a comfort, in the sense that it is something familiar and controllable by the person who chooses this object. It is also a replacement and cover for something that is *not* familiar and comforting, something that is a threat, a danger — in Freud's example, this is the threat of castration. For Bhabha, there is a structural similarity between the fetish and the stereotype as both choose something familiar and safe (fetish/stereotype) and link it to that which is non-familiar or threatening (castration/racial difference). Thus, both stereotype and fetish function in similar ways. The stereotype, like the fetish object, acts as a comforting foil which compensates for a threat. For example, the threat of racial difference which challenges the racial superiority of the coloniser is masked by the stereotype, which is

a familiar construct, controlled (or thought to be controlled) by the coloniser who projects the stereotypical image. Thus, the fear is masked and allayed by the construction of the stereotype, as the stereotype affirms the 'difference' between coloniser and colonised. The ambivalence of the stereotype lies in the simultaneous act of recognising difference and disavowing it. The difference, though recognised, is transformed into something familiar and known by the representations of this difference in the form of the stereotype. Thus the stereotype represents difference but this difference is denied by being represented as something familiar and known. Bhabha explains that the stereotype is based on "a multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and its disavowal of it" (Bhabha 1994: 75). The stereotype then is a construction designed both to enforce difference and to domesticate it as a way of removing the threat this difference poses. The anxiety of the stereotype is further evident in the method used to perpetuate the stereotype, namely repetition. In order to assert the validity of the stereotype it is necessary to consistently repeat stories, anecdotes and perceived facts. Only through constant repetition, does the stereotype have any chance of becoming established, familiar and accepted. For Bhabha, this anxious repetition is a way of covering up the fact that the stereotype cannot be proven. In order to compensate for the fact that the basis of racism is irrational, the coloniser must reinforce what can be *perceived* as truths by anxiously repeating them. This repetition gives the stereotype its fixity, its seemingly securely established perception as truth. "The *same old* stories of the Negro's animality, the Coolie's inscrutability or the stupidity of the Irish *must* be told again and afresh, and are differently gratifying each time" (Bhabha 1994: 77). Thus, the

anxious and enthusiastic repetition of the stereotype is an indicator of the fear and desire of the coloniser. Furthermore, the stereotype that complies and fulfils the desires of the colonised, serves to expose the ambivalence of the discourse of stereotype. Herein lies the opportunity for subversion. By exposing the ambivalent nature of the stereotype, the instability of the colonial authority is revealed and the structures of colonial discourse and authority are challenged. Bhabha says that “by acceding to the wildest fantasies (in the popular sense) of the coloniser, the stereotyped Other reveals something of the fantasy (as desire, defence) of that position of mastery” (Bhabha 1994: 82). The stereotype is, then, a constant reminder of the fragility of the coloniser’s power. By attempting to contain the unfamiliar and the threatening within the confines of a recognisable, knowable construct such as the stereotype, there is the possibility of disruption and subversion by the colonised subject who is contained within this construct. Thus, for Bhabha, subversion is inevitable and he goes so far as to say that subversion is the result and product of colonial authority.

1.6 Stereotypes and inbetweenness in Kolmar’s prose works

In her prose works, Kolmar engages with prevalent anti-Semitic stereotypes such as ‘die schöne Jüdin’. An anti-Semitic stereotype dating as far back as the 17th Century,⁴ the Jewish woman is often portrayed as exotically beautiful and promiscuous. Her promiscuity is threatening, particularly to Aryan German men. In *Die jüdische Mutter*, Albert is attracted to the exotic otherness of Martha as he views Martha as the

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the history and use of this stereotype see Krobb, Florian (1993).

embodiment of the promiscuous Jewess. The portrayal of Martha as either a devoted mother or a promiscuous Jewess invokes the perception of Jewish women propounded by the anti-Semite Otto Weininger. The notoriety of Weininger's doctoral thesis *Geschlecht und Charakter*, which was published in 1903, makes this text a valuable indicator of the historical context of Kolmar's prose works, as Kolmar would have been exposed to the effects of its publication. Weininger's thesis was widely received; his suicide following the publication of the thesis no doubt increased the author's infamy. While this act of suicide is often understood as the author's ultimate expression of his own self-hatred (he was born a Jew), the significance of Weininger's text for this study is his portrayal of Jews and women as purely sexual beings who threaten the unity and superiority of the male environment.

In *Geschlecht und Charakter*, Weininger adopts a pseudo-scientific approach to understanding male and female characters. Men are productive and moral while women are perceived as "exclusively and entirely sexual" (Weininger 2005: 205). Women are interested only in procreation or sex as both centre on the female body. Women are therefore deemed to "correspond to one of two types: the mother [...] and the prostitute" (Robertson 1999: 300). Weininger continues to argue that Jews are primarily feminine: "One would be well inclined to attribute to the Jew a larger share of femininity than to the Aryan" (Weininger 2005: 276). Weininger concludes that the Jewish woman is the ultimate representation of this femininity, and she is therefore a great threat to Aryan, male society.

In Kolmar's prose works, the Jewish female protagonists engage with the stereotypes invoked by Weininger. Martha is portrayed in extreme terms: either as a

devoted mother or as solely sexually driven. Susanna is also depicted as a woman who is inherently promiscuous. The use of these familiar anti-Semitic stereotypes, which echo the arguments put forward by Weininger can be understood in broader terms when post-colonial and feminist theories are incorporated. While there is evidence that the protagonists experience Jewish self-hatred, as they comply and even promote anti-Semitic stereotypes, the protagonist's engagement with these stereotypes can be understood as subversive. The concept of Jewish self-hatred and the inbetweenness of the post-colonial subject are both structurally similar as the basis is a flawed, unbalanced relationship between the repressed, inferior person and the dominant, superior person. The discussion of stereotypes in the prose works explores how Kolmar's works critique the establishment of firm societal constructs such as mother or whore. This critique in turn underscores the problems of Jewish self-hatred, as the inferior/superior binary that is the basis of the relationship between Jews and gentiles prevents full identification with gentiles, a desired outcome of Jewish self-hatred, from ever happening.

In Chapter II and Chapter III, the complexities of Jewish existence are examined using post-colonial and feminist theory. The post-colonial terms coined by Homi Bhabha (1994) are useful in the investigation of self-articulation and location, detailed in Chapter II. Bhabha's terms are widely used in post-colonial studies and spatial approaches that focus on the nature of existence within a specific environment. Post-colonial theoretical approaches are particularly relevant in an examination of the situation of Jews in a post-assimilation environment: the unstable position of the colonised subject is comparable to the position of Jewish people who have

experienced confusing processes of detachment, aspirations of belonging and consequent inbetweenness. The function of the stereotype is significant in post-colonial theory, as it is often used in racist discourse to indicate the difference of the colonised. This correlates with the role of the stereotype in the practice of Jewish self-hatred. The self-hating Jew attempts to remove himself from the stereotype by attempting to identify with those who project the stereotype. An examination of stereotypes in Kolmar's prose works exposes the complexities of Jewish existence, while revealing the problematics of Jewish self-hatred and existence as a perpetual outsider.

1.7 Sacrifice, silence and space

In an examination of strategies of engagement in the texts, the thematic development of silence and sacrifice is shown to be a textual strategy which expresses the complexities of German-Jewish existence at the time the texts were written. Both themes have been examined at length in relation to Kolmar's poetry; my analysis seeks to explore the significance of these themes in the prose and dramatic works. In chapter IV the thematic development of silence is traced in *Briefe* and in the dramatic works. Silence is shown to be a communicative strategy that subverts the authorities that silenced Kolmar because of her Jewishness. Using silence as a medium of communication challenges the supremacy of language as a form of communication, as silence is portrayed as a powerful medium to relay meaning. The potential of silence to facilitate communication with a higher power also imbues silence with sacred qualities, while the validity of language as a form of communication is

questioned. The unreliability of language and the dangers of demagogic speech are portrayed in the plays. Kolmar explores the power of language in a political framework, allowing for a reading of the play in relation to the political context of Kolmar's time.

In Chapter V sacrifice is explored in *Nacht*, *Cécile Renault* and *Die jüdische Mutter*. The significance of sacrifice in religious practices provides a framework that attributes meaning to sacrifice as a form of communication with divine powers. In the dramatic works, the validity of the ritual of sacrifice is called into question as the sacrificial act is stripped of its significance. Sacrifice is located within a gender discourse, as the female dies senselessly in an act that has meaning for the male. Kolmar engages with Jewish religious practices in her employment of the motif of sacrifice; the exploration of the validity of sacrifice is, therefore, also an investigation into the legitimacy of Judaism in Kolmar's time. The analyses of silence and sacrifice focuses on the relevance of both states for the author's time; the representations of silence and sacrifice as voluntary, chosen states is at odds with the real situation at the time the texts were written ,when silence was enforced and sacrifices were made senselessly. Kolmar explores strategies of subversion within established practices such as religious sacrifice and communication through language, which reflect on the attempts to overcome restrictions facing German-Jews during Kolmar's time, such as strict censorship of written communication.

In Chapter VI, the analysis of space in Kolmar's prose works explores the possibilities of freedom within constraint. Limited physical space is not shown to be a hindrance to personal freedom, which subverts the forces that restrict the space.

Kolmar's living conditions at the time of writing *Susanna* are an indicator of the significance of space for the author. Living in a so-called 'Judenhaus' at the time of writing, Kolmar's physical space was restricted and assigned for her, so that the concept of ownership of space was deeply problematic. Thus, the appropriation of an assigned space, in accordance with individual perceptions that defy the forces responsible for assigning the space, is a subversive act. The appropriation of space in *Die jüdische Mutter* reveals the desire for an established Jewish traditional way of life, which has been lost. Public spaces are alienating, whereas private spaces represent former lifestyles and traditional communities.

Locating Kolmar's prose works amongst twentieth-century texts that deal with the fate of modern man warrants the inclusion of Bauman's reflections on the connection between Jews and modernity. Zygmunt Bauman sees Jews as being in a unique position so that the alienating effects of modernity are particularly discernible. Expanding on arguments established by Bauman and Bhabha mentioned above, I explore how Kolmar's prose works are an acute critique of the position of Jewish women in their environment, investigating concepts that also have ramifications for woman's position in her environment. The so-called 'spatial turn' of literary theory informs my analysis of space and place in Kolmar's prose works, which seeks to examine how the protagonists' engagement with specific spaces complements the articulation of self.

In the chapters on silence and sacrifice, a close textual analysis investigates how Kolmar engages with themes that are rooted in antiquity and engage with theological teachings. Kolmar's *Briefe an die Schwester Hilde* features in the chapter

on silence, as these letters, which were heavily censored, document the silencing of Kolmar during her lifetime. My analysis of these letters seeks to uncover the unwritten story communicated in the letters, which is relayed in the absence of language. The function of silence as a communicative tool explores the language/silence binary, where the former is considered to be a superior form of communication. In the letters and in the dramatic works, this binary is called into question, as silence is a more effective form of communication than language.

Kolmar's letters are the only documents that reveal anything about the author, who led a reclusive life, particularly in her later years. Kolmar's life remains the source of fascination for scholars who have linked the treatment of themes such as childlessness, solitude and female creativity directly to events that are believed to have profoundly affected the author. The recent publication by Gerlind Reinshagen *Die Frau und die Stadt* (2007) is a testament to the fascination Kolmar's life continues to generate. Reinshagen creates a fictional account of a night in Berlin, when the author is thought to have contemplated suicide. While Kolmar's life is no doubt a source of interest, particularly as there is so little known about her, this study concentrates on Kolmar's texts from a perspective that is not limited to the knowledge of her life. Nevertheless, the context of the production of the texts is considered of primary importance in my analysis, as this uncovers how in her prose and dramatic works Kolmar engages with the society in which she lived.

Chapter II: Locating the self: The negotiation of Jewishness and modernity in *Die jüdische Mutter*

2.1 *Die jüdische Mutter* and twentieth-century German fiction

Kolmar's novel *Die jüdische Mutter* was written between 1930 and 1931. Set in the author's home town of Berlin, the urban environment compounds Martha's attempts to find solace and comfort after the death of her daughter, five year-old Ursa. Features of urban life such as industrial development and the consequent impact on the natural environs are depicted as ugly and detrimental to the preservation of the traditional family unit. The setting of the novel aligns Kolmar's work with other works of early twentieth-century fiction, which utilize the backdrop of the city to reflect the personal endeavours of the protagonist at self-articulation. Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, written in 1929, is one such example; it contains a vivid portrayal of the cityscape of Berlin and follows the movements of the protagonist Franz Biberkopf as he negotiates his urban existence. The setting of Kolmar's novel has only recently been considered in scholarly research as an active agent in the development of key themes such as Jewish and female identity. Shafi explores the nature of urban identity in the novel (2009), focusing on the significance of the city for the development of Martha's sense of self. Anja Colwig's analysis of authentic place names in the novel relates the setting to the author's own urban existence (1998), concentrating on the portrayals of Berlin life in the 1930s in the novel.

The urban setting is closely linked to the concept of modernity. Modernity is a vague term as it is difficult to identify its exact starting point. Bauman summarises the dilemma as follows: "How old is modernity? is a contentious question. There is

no agreement on dating” (Bauman 1991: 3). Generally, modernity is closely associated with the early twentieth century, with acute manifestation in urban centres such as Berlin. Modernity can be defined as “institutions and modes of behaviour established first of all in post-feudal Europe but which in the twentieth century increasingly have become world historical in their impact” (Giddens 1991: 3). Modernity is characterised by rapid changes in technology and infrastructure which consequently altered the way of life in modern environments. Developments in infrastructure improved mobility so that passengers of the tram could be connected to various parts of the city. However, the developments which seemed to ease daily life estranged the individual further, as social structures provide confusion rather than orientation.

Kolmar’s novel, then, is set in a time where modernity was developing rapidly: the protagonist’s engagement with her urban environment is at the same time her negotiation with modernity. Kolmar’s text corresponds to works of fiction, which were written contemporaneously and which have as key themes, issues of self articulation in relation to society. In *Critical Strategies: German Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (1972), Boa and Reid provide an overview of key themes and features of German fiction in the twentieth century. Kolmar’s novel is not mentioned in this study but the following analysis demonstrates that *Die jüdische Mutter* belongs to the collection of fiction referred to in this work. The importance of the city in the novel and its effects on the natural environment establish a conflict between man-made environment and the natural environment, which is in keeping with the features of the German twentieth-century novel. The significance of the natural world in

Kolmar's works is related to modernity in *Die jüdische Mutter* as the industrialisation of Berlin encroaches on the natural world. The sprawling nature of urbanity also serves to further alienate the individual, so that technological improvements do not provide clearer orientation in the city; rather, the individual is repelled and isolated by the acceleration in modern developments. The individual is thus out of place in the urban environment, as traditional modes of behaviour are usurped by modern social activities, which represent an aggressive break from the past. For example, the emancipation of women allowed for women to forge careers and be liberated from the traditional role of homemaker and mother. However, these developments meant that traditional institutions such as the family were considered to be of lesser importance. In the novel, the conflict between the modern woman and the traditional mother figure is explored, as Martha represents both, with her role as a mother taking on primary importance. Significantly, she is an isolated mother with no community support, indicating the decline of the traditional family unit. These modern aspects are added a further dimension, as Jewishness is a prominent theme. The negotiation with Jewishness in the novel complements the developments of modernist themes mentioned above.

Kolmar's novel focuses on the life of a thirty seven year old Jewish woman, Martha Wolg, neé Jadasohn. Following the death of her daughter, Ursa, after a vicious sexual attack by an unnamed perpetrator, the novel traces the actions of Martha as she struggles to come to terms with life without her beloved daughter. After the event Martha takes many trips around Berlin, as she seeks revenge for the death of Ursa and a sense of direction in her now disoriented life. This search

develops the common theme in twentieth-century German fiction of the alienating effects of modern society on the individual, who perceives his position as that of an isolated, outsider figure. This is considered to be the most important aspect in novels of this period: “since the novel has always been concerned with portraying society, the most important single aspect of character in the novel is man’s relation to society” (Boa/Reid 1972: 92).

Martha’s search exposes tensions between the man-made environment of a modernising Berlin and the natural environment, which has been sacrificed at the hands of industrialisation and modernisation. The use of animal and natural imagery underscores the conflict between both worlds: animals which provide relief and solace from the draining effects of the city are kept behind bars at the city zoo, symbolising the restrictions imposed upon the animal world by the agents of man-made environment. The animals in the zoo console Martha: “es war gut, daß es solche Tiere noch gab, so klar und so eins” (Kolmar 1999: 116). However, the exotic condor bird is restricted within his cage at the zoo and is therefore out of place: “Er war gefangen hier, arm und fremd” (Kolmar 1999: 118). Again, Kolmar’s text is in keeping with key features of German fiction at the time as, “one major theme of twentieth-century literature” is “the contrast between [natural and man-made environment]” (Boa/Reid 1972: 37).

Other features of fictional novels of this period are the symbolic importance of professions and the family; these are two aspects which are significant in Kolmar’s novel but which have hitherto not been considered in scholarly research. Professions in novels of this period “tend to go further than merely identifying a person’s social

status and have symbolic significance” (Boa/Reid 1972: 105); the symbolic significance of Martha’s profession as an animal photographer places her in the role of mediator between the natural and the modern world, as her profession means that she engages with features of modernity in her use of the camera and the natural world at the same time.

Martha’s family comprises of a deceased husband, a daughter whose life is taken early in the novel, deceased parents and estranged in-laws. It is precisely her *lack* of family, which is of significance: it represents the destruction of Jewish lineage and the loss of traditional forms of community. In twentieth-century German fiction, the family is seen to represent the structures of the society, which forms the backdrop of the novel: “the most important social grouping as far as the novel is concerned is the family. [...] the family is most frequently a synecdochal device to represent the state itself” (Boa/Reid 1972: 107). Therefore, an analysis of the institution of the family in the novel is at the same time an investigation of the societal structures that frame Martha’s life. Martha’s attempts to preserve her family are troubled by a modern society that does not hold sacred the family institution. The ensuing conflict is between modernity and tradition, with the former stifling the continuation of the latter.

The final aspect of German fiction in the twentieth century that is of relevance for this study is the treatment of the figure of the outsider. The figure of the outsider has a long tradition in German literature: “There is a very long tradition of ‘Sonderlinge’ in German literature — non-conformists, people who in some way stand outside society or the recognised conventions” (Boa/Reid 1972: 105). The very

title of the novel, *Die jüdische Mutter*, describes the position of an outsider. As a Jew, Martha is subject to the negative constructs of her anti-Semitic gentile peers, which result in her inevitable status as an outsider. However, while a ‘Sonderling’ is perceived as harmless and inoffensive, Martha’s outsider status is based on her precarious self image, which causes her to have a troubled relationship with society. Coming from an assimilated Jewish family, Martha is the product of the assimilation process, which failed in its alleged aims to integrate Jews fully into dominant society. Assimilation set out to remove the ‘alien’ element of Jews so that they could become indistinguishable from their gentile peers. However, the anti-Semitic foundation of the assimilation process meant that Jews would inevitably be perceived as other and inferior, as assimilation was based on a superior/inferior binary. Martha’s outsider status is a testament to the failure of this process as her assimilated background has not granted her a secure position amongst her gentile peers.

Zygmunt Bauman aligns assimilation with the indicators of the modern human condition: the sense of estrangement and alienation from one’s innate environment, the marker of the modern human condition, is a direct effect of assimilation, as this process did not grant Jews acceptance into dominant society but rather attachment to a transitory state, outside of fixed categories of belonging. The demands of assimilation to discard established attributes of the self and adopt new forms of existence created the position of not belonging anywhere, but to the process of assimilation: “The assimilants found that they had in effect *assimilated themselves solely to the process of assimilation*” (Bauman 1991: 143). The failure of assimilation lies in its flawed premise that gentile society was superior to Jewish society,

preventing true integration, as the very concept is denied in the establishment of the superior/inferior binary: “It [assimilation] assumed the superiority of one form of life and the inferiority of another; it made their inequality into an axiom, took it as a starting point of all argument, and hence made it secure against scrutiny and challenge” (Bauman 1991: 105). Estrangement from a familiar sense of self and vain attempts to achieve a new sense of self placed Jews involved in the assimilation process in a unique position outside of fixed categories of belonging. This position exposes the mechanisms of identity formation and reflects the challenges facing the individual who is removed from secure concepts of self. These alienating effects of assimilation make Jews akin to the modern man, who stands outside any secure categories of self, damned to live an asocial, ahistorical existence. Bauman describes the situation of the Jews as follows:

It was the Jews, exposed to powerful assimilatory pressure, called and pressed to shed and to pick up identities, to build their own selves out of glimpses of somebody else’s selves, to self-assert and self-deny, to become different from what they were and to become like what they are not, to simulate and dissimulate — who were among the first to experience the full impact of the modern condition. (Bauman 1991: 157)

The assimilatory pressure which caused the Jews to distance themselves from familiar modes of existence and adopt new ways of living, which were never fully in reach because of the anti-Semitic foundation of assimilation, created the same alienating effects attributed to the modern human condition. The exclusion from fixed categories of belonging meant that Jews, like modern man, were constantly searching for a secure position in their environment.

The search mode is brought into play in *Die jüdische Mutter* as the pivotal action in the novel; the attack on Ursa and the subsequent search for the perpetrator engages with features of the detective novel. According to Shafi, the motif of searching, key to the genre of the detective novel, contributes to Martha's engagement with her urban surroundings and "lends itself particularly well to an exploration of urban space and of urban communities" (Shafi 2009: 119). To take Shafi's argument further, the search mode complements not only the investigation of urban experience and identity, but also Martha's search for a sense of belonging in a modern environment, from which she seems eternally alienated. To explore Martha's relationship with her surroundings, Homi Bhabha's post-colonial theories are useful, as Bhabha identifies the features and location of an inbetween space, a location that does not fit neatly into constructed categories. Martha's status as the outsider means that she occupies an inbetween space, as she does not fit in with societal constructs.

2.2 Inbetweenness: Martha's mimicry

Using the terms identified by Bhabha, the protagonist Martha Jadasohn in *Die jüdische Mutter*, can be seen to resemble the mimic man. Her inbetween status means that Martha constitutes a partial representation of the coloniser (gentile society) while the use of stereotypes such as 'die schöne Jüdin' and the mother figure, reveals how Martha's status as an outsider is a product of the external gaze and her own perception of herself. The sense of alienation and loss of place is a feature of the 'mimic man' and the modern human condition. The use of mimicry, ambivalence and stereotypes complements the development of themes of the modern novel, outlined

earlier. Thus, in *Die jüdische Mutter*, the protagonist's struggle with her sense of self demonstrates the complexities of the modern human condition from the interstice position of a German Jew.

Martha's surroundings – the modern Berlin metropolis – play a role in her engagement with the device of mimicry, as she is both involved with and distanced from her modern surroundings. Berlin of the early 1930s was a lively and modern place. Electric trams navigated through the city as a symbol of technological advancement; the tram was a key symbol in Alfred Döblin's famous modernist novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Women had attained a new social position with the emergence of the modern-day career woman, who adapted to the modernisation of society by rejecting traditional domestic roles of motherhood and home-maker. The very title of Kolmar's novel puts Martha at odds with her modernising environment: *Die jüdische Mutter* clearly identifies the role of the protagonist as confined to Judaism and motherhood. As Shafi explains, motherhood did not fit in with the roles of the modern Weimar woman:

Motherhood [...] is what Weimar's *neue Frau*, the wage-earning, sexually liberated, athletic and fun-loving flapper, postponed, avoided or accepted only reluctantly and it is certainly not associated with the fast-paced life of work and entertainment offered in the city. (Shafi 2009: 117)

Martha's Judaism also inevitably conflicts with the anti-Semitism of her gentile peers. However, Martha's conflict with her environment is more complex than what the two binaries of motherhood/emancipation and Jewishness/anti-Semitism suggest, as she engages with features of modernity and can be seen in many respects as the 'neue Frau' of the Weimar republic. This is most evident in Martha's successful

career as an animal photographer, which makes her every bit the modern professional woman, especially as photography was still relatively new and exciting in the 1930s. Kolmar's first cousin Walter Benjamin was fascinated by the art of photography and published his thoughts on the subject in his famous essay entitled *Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie* in 1930. Although the development of the camera and photography dates back as far as the 1820s, it was still an innovative and developing art form indicative of the advances in modern technology. It is not unreasonable to presume that Kolmar was fully aware of her cousin's preoccupations with this subject, as Kolmar took an interest in Benjamin's writings. Although most letters and documents were destroyed during the war, two letters written by Kolmar remain, revealing that the cousins shared at the very least a mutual respect for each other and that they enjoyed a literary relationship: "Sie [die Briefe] belegen, daß es überhaupt eine im weitesten Sinne literarische Verbindung zwischen Cousine und Cousin gegeben hat" (Kambas 1998: 125). In these letters, Kolmar's knowledge of Benjamin's work is evident as she expresses her ongoing interest in his current projects. Similarly, Benjamin read and commented on Kolmar's poetry and he was one of her only links to the literary circles of Berlin.

Martha's role as an animal photographer means that she works during the day, while her daughter is left in the care of a neighbour. Her career brings her into contact with the higher classes of society as the practice of photographing animals was the latest "Sitte im reichen Westen" (Kolmar 1999: 24). Thus, Martha's career signals her deviance from a traditional role as a mother, who stays at home and does not work. Other indicators of Martha's modernity are her marriage to Friedrich Wolg,

a member of the German middle class. This breaks Martha's ties to traditional Jewish practices that would insist on Martha marrying a Jew. It is also an indication of the dissolution of Jewish communities and the assimilatory moves that were part of modern development. A further indication of Martha's modernity is her liberal sexuality. Her relationship to her husband is devoid of traditional concepts of love and limited to a sexual relationship: "sie lebte mit ihm nur in einer Gemeinschaft der Nächte" (Kolmar 1999: 20). She consciously acknowledges that her relationship to her lover Albert, who she meets after the death of Ursa, has nothing to do with love, but is purely sexual: "Heut Abend oder gleich jetzt nachmittags soll er in meinem Bette sein. [...] Ich liebe ihn nicht" (Kolmar 1999: 140). Shafi correctly points out that Martha views sexuality as a commodity, correlating with the modern ideals of Berlin's society: "the fact that she articulates her sex life in commodity terms indicates aspects of a modern metropolitan mindset" (Shafi 2009: 122). Martha's liberal view of sexuality is a bold transgression of traditional codes of conduct, whereby relationships are based on conventional concepts of love.

Despite Martha's engagement with modernity in the form of career, sexuality and marriage to a gentile, she rejects other features of modernity and maintains aspects of a Jewish identity that prevent her from full identification with her gentile peers. Her marriage to Friedrich, while showing that Martha does not strictly adhere to Jewish practices, also exposes Martha's rejection of the modern lifestyle her husband offers her: "Sie wollte nicht paddeln mit ihm, nicht auf dem Motorrad sitzen, und an dem Rundfunkgerät im Eck blieb meist er der einzige Hörer" (Kolmar 1999: 20). Martha's husband is closely aligned with modernity; Martha's indifference to

Friedrich's motor-cycle and radio can be understood as her rejection of her husband and of the modern lifestyle that he represents. As Friedrich's wife, Martha is connected to this lifestyle, yet her refusal to engage with him complicates her position. She is distanced from the modern lifestyle that Friedrich offers; however, her position as his wife means that she is connected to this lifestyle also, so that her inbetween position is exemplified in her role as a wife to Friedrich. Martha's contradictory embrace and rejection of features of modernity, exemplified in her marriage, contributes to her inbetween position, which is further explored in Martha's relationship to her Jewish self.

Martha's Judaism is a contentious aspect of her self: it is a manifestation of Martha's otherness and it inevitably dissociates her from her anti-Semitic husband, in-laws and later, her lover Albert. When Martha meets her future husband Friedrich for the first time, the ambivalent nature of his relationship to Martha is apparent. Her otherness as a Jewess is precisely that which he finds attractive. Martha embodies all the stereotypical features of the exotic Jewess, with her dark features and ivory skin. Friedrich is drawn to Martha because of her difference. He tells his father: "Wenn ich Blauaugen will und blondes Haar, brauch' ich bloß in den Spiegel zu gucken" (Kolmar 1999: 19). However, Martha's difference is soon the cause of Friedrich's rejection of her. Friedrich blames the unbridgeable distance between them on Martha's otherness, which he links directly to her Jewishness: "Es war ein Seltsames da, ein Fremdes, etwas ... er suchte den Namen dafür. Dies vielleicht, daß sie aus anderem Blut, daß sie Jüdin war" (Kolmar 1999: 20). This ambivalent relationship oscillating between attraction and rejection recurs in every relationship Martha has

with the coloniser. Later, when she forms a relationship with Albert Renkens, he is attracted to her for the same reasons that Friedrich was. However, her otherness eventually becomes the cause of Albert's rejection of Martha. Martha is therefore, a stereotypical figure: her difference attracts Albert and Friedrich; however the attraction to this difference threatens the unity of Albert and Friedrich's superiority. By reinforcing Martha's otherness as a way of affirming the separation between Martha and gentile society, Martha is being treated like a stereotypical figure, as her otherness is recognised and then domesticated by relying on familiar constructs such as Martha's Jewishness. The description of Martha's Judaism reveals how it is open to interpretation by the onlooker, and so, can be understood as the cause of Martha's otherness, as perceived by onlookers:

Er [der Glauben] war ihr nicht angezogen so wie ein Kleid, das man auswaschen kann oder verschleißßen und leichthin abwerfen kann, sondern war mit ihr geworden wie eine Haut, verwundbar, doch unverlierbar, unlöslich. (Kolmar 1999: 21)

The ambivalence that stems from Martha's Jewishness is accurately portrayed in the comparison with a skin. Jewishness is vulnerable and under threat, yet irremovable and therefore resistant. This description signals the complexities of Martha's position as Jewishness cannot simply be removed even if desired in the form of voluntary assimilation, for example. The description of her Judaism as a skin indicates that it is something externally visible and subject to scrutiny by those around her. Skin in post-colonial literature is the marker of difference and the site of discrimination, revealing the cultural and social standing of the individual. Bhabha explains that "skin in racist discourse is the visibility of darkness, and a prime signifier of the body and its social

and cultural correlates” (Bhabha 1994: 82). The idea of skin as signifier, as a flaw evident to those who are looking at it, evokes the image of the observer constructing the observed. Indeed, this is something that also surfaces in Kolmar’s poetry. In the poem *Ewiger Jude* from the poetry cycle *Das Wort der Stummen* (1933), the Jewish speaker of the poem is persecuted because of a sign on his forehead that is out of his line of vision and illegible to him. “Ist bemakelt/Meine Stirn mit wunderlicher Schrift? /So verworren, so gekrakelt, daß sie nirgends mehr den Deuter trifft” (Kolmar 2003: 362). Here, the perception of the Jewish person is constructed by the observing gaze who tarnishes and stains this perception so that it is visible to those who see it, but not necessarily to the person himself. Similarly, Martha’s Jewishness is constructed by others in a negative way, as it is her Jewish identity that ensures her otherness and distance from society.

Martha’s Jewishness is not solely constructed by her gentile peers (Friedrich, Albert). Martha associates her Jewishness with a sense of otherness, while acknowledging that her Jewish self is an irremovable and important part of her. She consciously associates her sexuality, the mark of her otherness in the eyes of the coloniser, with her Jewishness. She tells Albert that her sexuality is linked to her Jewishness, when he asks her about it: “Mein Blut” (Kolmar 1999: 158). This expression has direct links to racist ideology, where otherness and inferiority are perceived to be inherent characteristics. Martha can be seen to have internalised the racist ideology of her anti-Semitic environment and she fits the description of the self-hating Jew outlined by Gilman. The structure of self-hatred is exposed here as Martha’s expression of an anti-Semitic belief is reinforced by Albert’s acceptance of

this. Thus, Jewish self-hatred is encouraged because of the prevailing anti-Semitism of Martha's peers. The correlation of Martha's Jewishness with her otherness is a suitable explanation for Albert as this corresponds to a familiar stereotypical image of Jews as exotically other. Albert's acceptance of Martha's explanation as a reasonable and plausible cause of her otherness reveals his reliance on racist ideology. Albert agrees that Martha's sexuality can be subsumed under her status as a Jew by identifying her primarily in relation to her Jewishness: "Du bist eine Jüdin" (Kolmar 1999: 158).

Martha's reliance on racist concepts reflects on the complexities of her position as a Jew in an anti-Semitic society, as negative perceptions and projections of Jewishness are acceptable in this environment. In post-colonial terms, Martha contributes to the construction of the stereotype by allowing her otherness to be categorised in terms familiar to Albert; thus, Martha's otherness is domesticated by the familiar stereotype. Martha can be seen to exploit the power of the stereotype; her primary aim in her relationship with Albert is to avenge the death of her daughter. By acceding to the stereotypical image of the promiscuous Jewess, Martha allows Albert to locate Martha's otherness within a knowable construct, thus domesticating the threat that this otherness represents. Consequently, Martha can remain a source of fascination for Albert, which will enable Martha to use him to help find Ursa's attacker. The subversive power of the stereotype is exposed here, as Martha's expression of racist ideologies reveals how the stereotype can be constructed by both coloniser and colonised.

Martha attempts to link her Jewishness with her quest for revenge following the death of Ursa. She visits a Jewish lawyer, who she hopes will help her find the culprit. Martha directly links her thirst for revenge with her Jewishness: “Ich bin keine Christin. ‘Und wenn jemand dich auf die rechte Wange schlägt, so reich ihm die linke hin...’ [...] Ich bin Jüdin” (Kolmar 1999: 125). Martha differentiates herself from the Christian ideal of forgiveness, claiming instead that ‘an eye for an eye’ is the basis of her actions. Once more, Martha attempts to link her otherness to her Jewishness, as if her difference is an innate quality. However, the Jewish lawyer cannot comprehend Martha’s thirst for revenge, proving that Martha’s associations of her desire for retribution with her Jewishness are inaccurate. Martha exploits anti-Semitic stereotypical perceptions of Jews as inalienably other in order to justify her actions. While Albert accepts the false explanation that Martha’s otherness is caused by her Jewishness, the Jewish lawyer refuses to accept that Jewishness is the source of Martha’s desire for revenge, exposing Martha’s portrayal of herself as a construct. Stereotypes in racist discourse are thus exposed here as constructs, which can be manipulated by both coloniser and colonised. Martha exploits the prevalence of anti-Semitic constructs to appease Albert and she attempts to do the same when she meets the Jewish lawyer. Martha’s positive perception of her Jewishness in relation to her role as a mother questions whether Martha truly associates Jewishness with perceived negative characteristics such as shameless sexuality and a relentless desire for revenge. Rather, Martha can be seen to exploit the prevalence of negative perceptions of Jewishness in order to satisfy those who believe these perceptions to be truths.

Martha also views her Jewishness as the source of continuity and belonging. By ensuring that her daughter, Ursa, is brought up in the Jewish faith, Martha combines positive and negative associations of Jewishness in her relationship to her faith. Martha's troubled relationship with her Jewishness is characterised by a confused reliance on and rejection of her faith. Upon discovering Ursa, she repeatedly calls out to God: "O Gott. Ihr liebes Kind. [...] O Gott. O Gott" (Kolmar 1999: 51). Martha calls out to God and perceives her misfortune as a form of punishment: "O Gott, o Herr [...] ich glaube an dich! Ich bin jahrelang nicht in den Tempel gegangen [...] Ich war nicht immer gut. O straf' mich; nur laß Ursa" (Kolmar 1999: 37). However, Martha also claims that there is no God, when she visits Ursa for the first time in hospital: "Es gibt kein Gott, es gibt nichts" (Kolmar 1999: 56). Martha's inability to wholly subscribe to Jewish beliefs is indicative of her inbetween position. The colonisation (assimilation) process has caused Martha to deny her Jewish self; however, the anti-Semitism of her environment bases Martha's otherness precisely on this aspect of identity, which colonisation (assimilation) set out to deny. Thus, her Jewish self is the focus of her existence as the 'other' in her anti-Semitic environment and also an irremovable part of Martha's understanding of her self, despite the fact that she associates Jewishness with otherness, that is, with not belonging. This paradox is expressed in Martha's inability to identify wholly with either a Jewish sense of self or an identity borne by her gentile peers. Martha is unable and unwilling to shed that part of her self that reinforces her difference and denies her the chance to attain full identification with the coloniser (non-Jewish society).

Previous interpretations of Martha's complex relationship to her Jewishness have explained the negative portrayals of Martha's Judaism on the anti-Semitism of Martha's peers (cf. Lorenz 1997, Kacandes 2003). Lorenz argues that Martha's unsettling thirst for revenge and her animalistic sexuality are evidence of Martha's internalisation of anti-Semitic beliefs which results in Jewish self-hatred. Lorenz locates Martha's behaviour within the historical context of the text's production arguing that the Western European Jews, who internalised negative projections of Judaism, are reflected in the figure of Martha: "Insofar as they accepted racism and eugenics, the assimilated Jews of Western Europe became the accomplices of the mass murderers" (Lorenz 1997: 101). While Lorenz draws extreme conclusions from Martha's engagement with negative portrayals of Judaism, Martha does exhibit characteristics of the self-hating Jew and she does play a part in ensuring the existence of the anti-Semitic stereotype. However, Martha's engagement with anti-Semitic stereotypes, such as that of 'die schöne Jüdin', is more complex than her acceptance of anti-Semitism. Martha exploits the accepted stereotype of the promiscuous Jewess in order to get what she wants. As discussed in the following section on stereotypes, Martha's engagement with negative representations of Judaism is subversive; she exposes how these images are artificially constructed, as Martha can also manipulate these images. Lorenz argues that "Martha [...] accepts a false group identity and buys into the defamatory myths created by anti-Semites" (Lorenz 1997: 98). On the contrary, Martha lives as an outsider, excluded from full identification with collective identities, positive or negative. When Martha does express a sense of collective belonging it is a wholly positive assertion, which refutes

the anti-Semitic projections of her peers. This occurs near the end of the novel, when Martha pays Albert one last visit in a bid to have him back. As she is waiting for him, she sits in a room where a young, blonde-haired boy is playing the piano. He glances disapprovingly at Martha as she enters the room and continues playing while Martha sees anti-Semitic magazines on the table, which read:

Der wahre Feind ... geht plattfüßig, dickbäuchig, krummnäsiger, schwarz tagtäglich an euch vorüber. Die Söhne und Töchter Israels ... Schmarotzerpflanzen am deutschen Stamme. (Kolmar 1999: 200)

It is at this point that Martha realises that the ideology of assimilation is impossible in an anti-Semitic world. The words in the magazine portray negative stereotypes as fact, reinforcing the superior/inferior binary that is at the core of the gentile/Jew relationship. The above quotation is an example of the anti-Semitic beliefs that prevented full assimilation from ever happening. The music from the blonde-haired boy, representative of middle-class German society, is beyond Martha's comprehension. Although both are in the same room, Martha feels as though he is "in einem anderen Lande" (Kolmar 1999: 200). Here, the slippage of assimilation is exposed as the very concept of belonging is negated. Martha can never be properly assimilated if she constructs her self image based on the anti-Semitic perceptions held by those around her. It is precisely at this moment, when Martha is confronted with the anti-Semitism of her environment, that she expresses a sense of a collective identity. As Colwig has pointed out, "Martha entwickelt hier erstmals ein Wir-Gefühl" (Colwig 1998: 107). Martha appears to articulate a secure sense of self in the recognition of her belonging to a collective Jewish community; the location of this sense of belonging is linked to a personal understanding of Jewish history and

tradition: “Wir müssen nur stark und tapfer sein. [...] Wir müssen nur wieder in uns hineingehen; dahin kann uns keiner verfolgen” (Kolmar 1999: 201). Martha is evidently not a passive recipient of negative representations of Judaism, as Lorenz argues, as her expressions of pride in her Jewishness signal that Martha perceives her Jewishness in a positive way. Furthermore Lorenz’s argument overlooks Martha’s intentions to pass Judaism on to Ursa, which are the basis for Martha’s animalistic protection of Ursa.

Kacandes argues that in *Die jüdische Mutter*, the process of “making the stranger the enemy” (Kacandes 2003: 102) is detailed in the multiple projections and acceptances of unproven anti-Semitic beliefs. While Kacandes acknowledges the dangers of simplifying negative representations of Jewishness by arguing that Martha has internalised anti-Semitic beliefs, her analysis like Lorenz’s, does not address the complexities of Martha’s character. Referring to Martha’s association with a ‘Tiermutter’, Kacandes’ argues that “we should connect this metaphor to an ancient attitude of Christian Europe that Jews are closer to animals than humans” (Kacandes 2003: 103). However the dominant portrayal of animals in Kolmar’s novel is a positive one. Animals are depicted as leading an incorrupted existence in harmony with the natural world, which contrasts to the “zwiespältig unklaren, lärmenden Menschen” (Kolmar 1999: 116). Martha’s animalistic protection is an expression of Martha’s desire to maintain her Jewishness; something that refutes the interpretations that Martha is a victim of Jewish self-hate.

Furthermore, Martha does not solely rely on anti-Semitic constructs in her understanding of Jewishness. Martha’s expressions of revenge are based not on anti-

Semitism, but on Judaism: she quotes directly from the Bible, when speaking with the Jewish lawyer. Martha's consideration of Solomon's judgement, where she concludes that she would not have given up her baby, comes after reading the story for herself: "Sie blieb und las Salomos Urteil aufmerksam wieder" (Kolmar 1999: 91). Martha's engagement with Jewish traditions, such as her views on revenge, though perceived as negative, cannot be interpreted as resulting from an anti-Semitic manipulation of such traditions, as Martha draws directly from Biblical sources. Rather than simplifying all negative representations of Judaism as stemming from anti-Semitic beliefs, Kolmar's contentious presentation of Judaism can be seen as an intricate analysis of the problematic orientation of a Jew in an anti-Semitic environment. Martha's ambivalent relationship to her faith is a testament to her inbetween position, which sees her actively engage with her Jewish past and her assimilated present: Martha's hybrid self cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional articulation of anti-Semitism.

2.3 The use of stereotypes in *Die jüdische Mutter*

The stereotype of 'die schöne Jüdin' is brought into play in the relationship between Martha and Albert. At their first meeting he describes her as "eine fremde Priesterin" (Kolmar 1999: 145) and he associates her promiscuity directly with her Jewishness. During a walk in the park, Albert calls Martha shameless and then calls her by her Jewish name, Mirjam: "Du – du bist eigentlich ... das schamloseste Weib, das ich kenne" (Kolmar 1999: 156). He describes her as overtly sexual: "Bei dir ist nichts Mache, kein Lenzeszauber ... blaue Mondnacht im Amorsaal – du weißt, was ich

meine. Mirjam!” (Kolmar 1999: 156). This is the first time we learn that Martha has a Jewish name, inherited from her grandmother, and it is the only time this name is used. The connection between her Jewish name and her promiscuity is a further evocation of the stereotype of the beautiful Jewess. According to Bhabha, the coloniser uses the stereotype to mask a threat or danger using something controllable and familiar. The purpose of the stereotype is both to reinforce otherness and to domesticate it: the perpetuation of otherness affirms the perceived superiority of the coloniser who constructs the stereotype, and the use of familiar stereotypes allows the coloniser to perceive the otherness as knowable and therefore, controllable and non-threatening. Martha’s sexuality is portrayed as animalistic, unpredictable and threatening. At night, Martha takes off her clothes at an open window and she resembles a creature of the night with the menacing glow in her eyes portraying filmic evocativeness of eroticism: “Ihre Augen verdunkelten sich wie von Blut. Sie glühte. Sie riß das Hemd von der Schulter, stand nackt vor den unverhangenen Scheiben” (Kolmar 1999: 95). This scene exposes the untameable energy of Martha and the dangerous glow in her eyes indicates the threatening nature of her sexuality. Martha’s sexuality is masked by her Jewishness – her promiscuity is seen as an attribute of her Jewishness by Albert. There is a paradox in Albert’s perception of Martha, which exposes the ambivalence of his relationship to her. He simultaneously desires her for her otherness (sexuality), but by associating her Jewishness with her sexuality, he is repelling her, in accordance with his anti-Semitic position. This is further demonstrated in the following dialogue:

‘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 1999: 159)

It is clear from this dialogue that Albert sees Martha as the embodiment of 'die schöne Jüdin' but it is significant that Martha herself steps into the role ascribed to her by Albert. She shakes her head in defence of Albert's accusations — a mild reaction. Before Martha and Albert begin their relationship, Martha is clear about her intentions. She knowingly adopts the role of 'die schöne Jüdin' in order to get Albert to help her find the culprit for the attack on Ursa:

Sie war bereit. Sie wußte gut, was sie wollte. Sie spielte sich selbst nichts vor. Sie dachte nicht an Liebesbeginn, an heiße Blicke und zarte Worte, an den ersten suchenden Kuß. Sie dachte brutal: Heut Abend oder gleich jetzt nachmittags soll er in meinem Bette sein. Er soll mich decken. Ich bin heiß. Ich liebe ihn nicht. Aber er soll mein Willen tun, und ich muß dafür zahlen. (Kolmar 1999: 140-1)

By consciously adopting the stereotype, Martha takes the power from the coloniser (Albert) in the sense that she contributes to the construction of the stereotype. The above description also extends beyond the framework of the accepted stereotypical image, so that the stereotype is exaggerated and portrayed using the most base of terms. The manipulation of the stereotype to uncomfortable levels is in itself a subversive act, as the stereotype is shown to be subject to manipulation by the person usually contained within this stereotypical image. Martha uses her sexuality to manipulate Albert, empowering her and rattling the authority of the colonial power. While this is an anti-Semitic stereotype, the fact that Martha controls it, questions, firstly, the validity or truth of the stereotype and, secondly, the coloniser's power to

use the stereotype as a tool of asserting his own authority. In the relationship between Albert and Martha, where Albert is the Aryan German and therefore, perceived as the superior person, it is Martha who exploits him and not the other way around. There is a subversive nature to Martha's actions as the stereotype is exposed as a construct — the idea that 'die schöne Jüdin' is real and representative of the natural attributes of Jewish women is dismissed as Martha constructs the anti-Semitic stereotype that is supposed to be projected onto her. Martha is, therefore, responsible for the representations of herself within anti-Semitic terms. Martha exploits Albert's ambivalent relationship to her, by taking advantage of her perceived otherness in the knowledge that this is precisely the source of attraction for Albert. Similar to Friedrich, however, this otherness is exactly the cause of his eventual rejection of her. When Martha confronts him about affairs with other women he does not deny it; rather he accuses Martha of using him solely to find Ursa's killer. The exotic promiscuity that was once the source of attraction now serves as grounds for rejection. Before he leaves her he says: "nur eine Wahrheit sollst du noch hören, eine sehr dreckige Wahrheit: Du bist eine Dirne" (Kolmar 1999: 193). These are the same words he used to describe her earlier when he talked of Martha's otherness as the source of his attraction to her, linking Albert's rejection and attraction to Martha to her otherness. This is further evidence of the ambivalent relationship between Albert (coloniser) and Martha (colonised); it alternates between attraction and rejection, culminating in his final rejection of her. Martha remains in her inbetween position signifying her permanent status as outsider. While the engagement of 'die schöne Jüdin' stereotype reflects specifically on Martha's situation as a Jew, her

inbetweenness is also the marker of the modern human condition. The use of stereotypes uncovers the workings of constructed modes of existence, which is particularly apparent in the Jewish case, as anti-Semitic constructs relegated Jews to the eternal position of 'outsider'.

Martha's status as a mother is, along with her Judaism, a deciding factor in her negotiation with identity formation. This is indicated firstly in the title of the novel. The themes of motherhood and childlessness have central roles in the text, no doubt influenced by Kolmar's expressed longing for a child. Kolmar never married, though it has been documented that she fell pregnant and was forced to have an abortion by her family because of the shame and degradation of having a child out of wedlock (see Frantz (1997), p. 4-5 for a summary of this period in Kolmar's life). The changes the title experienced throughout the years did not alter the theme of maternity that is evoked in the title. In *Die jüdische Mutter*, stereotypes of motherhood are employed, in a similar way to the use of the stereotype of 'die schöne Jüdin', to expose how roles are constructed. The stereotypical images of the mother figure broaden the scope for interpretation beyond the specific Jewish situation and reveal much about the position of women who are met with constructed gender roles. Martha's inability to meet the expectations of constructed gender roles reflects also on the modern human condition: the fate of the individual to remain outside the accepted framework of society.

Feminist theory has appropriated post-colonial approaches in the investigation of the role of gender in post-colonial studies. This is a logical and useful combination as both approaches are focused on the existence of the other (colonised, woman)

within a dominant structure (coloniser's environment, patriarchal order). Both approaches are concerned with the exertion of power and strategies of resistance and are intrinsically linked as "gender will always be imbricated in the matrix of power, exploitation and resistance that characterises colonialism and the patriarchal" (Mills/Lewis Introduction 2003: 20). Feminist theory is thus useful in a post-colonial analysis of *Die jüdische Mutter*; the otherness of Martha as a mother compounds Martha's otherness as a Jew, adding a further layer of intricacy in the exploration of the inbetween figure.

2.4 Good mother/ bad mother

Martha's role as a mother is the most important aspect of her life and she defines herself in these terms along with her Jewish identity: "Ich bin Jüdin und eine Mutter" (Kolmar 1999: 125). Her relationship with Ursa is the focus of the novel, even after Ursa's death. It is useful to look at feminist literary theory to interpret this relationship. Prominent trends in Gender Studies begin with the premise that gender is not biologically determined but rather socially constructed. Traditional 'female' roles, such as housewife and mother, are not inherently female but rather ascribed by society, which is inherently patriarchal. Judith Butler is best known for her writings on gender as a constructed role and she challenges other feminist critics who lapse into stereotypical biological interpretations of women's roles. Butler argues against the presumption that the term 'woman' carries with it forms of established identity categories:

For the most part, feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity, understood through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist goals within discourse, but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued. (Butler 1999: 3)

The acceptance of the category of women and associated forms of existence is, therefore, the recognition of established characteristics, which, Butler argues, overlooks the fact that gender is a societal construct. Maternity and motherhood are often the focus of theorists who challenge patriarchal arguments that claim that the ability to be a good mother is biologically determined and every woman should possess a maternal instinct. Feminist critics challenge the essentialism of this proposal and argue that mothers are faced with impossible expectations constructed by a patriarchal society. If a mother does not fulfil the expectations of the natural, perfect mother she is cast into the role of the evil, bad mother. Thus, there is no room for deviations from two stereotypes: the good mother or the bad mother. This forms the basis of a conflicted relationship between mother and daughter as images of womanhood are impossible to fulfil, leading to dissatisfaction on the part of mother and daughter. Binary oppositions such as good mother/bad mother “offer unrealistic and impossible models of womanhood, setting them against each other and in conflict with themselves” (Nice 1992: 5).

However, motherhood and maternity are often regarded as exclusively female realms precisely because they are biologically determined. Julia Kristeva is one such critic who claims to criticise the patriarchal expectations of motherhood but who herself has been criticised for her focus on the inherent and instinctive maternity of women (cf. Butler 1999: 103). Kristeva does however propose insightful theories on

the position of the mother and child in a patriarchal structure and at the very least she calls for a maternal discourse in its own right. Kristeva sees society as inherently patriarchal and language as controlled by the structures of patriarchy. Language is therefore a product and ruling mechanism of the patriarchal system, or the 'Symbolic', as Kristeva terms it. During pregnancy and the first few months of infancy mother and child share a relationship that is not yet defined by language, as the child cannot speak. This relationship is in the pre-linguistic and therefore pre-Symbolic stage, termed 'the Chora' by Kristeva. This bond between mother and child is harmonious and beautiful and strengthened by the combined identity of mother and child as the infant does not yet have a sense of self, independent from the mother. This phase is interrupted when the child recognises the potential for an autonomous existence free from the ties of the mother. By embracing the language of the Symbolic order, the infant rejects the maternal bond with the mother and enters the Symbolic realm. For Kristeva, the existence of the Symbolic, patriarchal realm is only possible when the maternal realm or Chora is suppressed. The child's transition from maternal to Symbolic is never a harmonious one as it involves the rejection of the mother and the violent separation of mother and child. The mother is then banished to the abject realm, which lacks any stabilising structures in the definition of the self. Abjection for Kristeva constitutes anything that is discarded or rejected in order to achieve subjectivity. Infants rejecting food symbolise the rejection of the maternal ties in favour of an independent existence. The abject subject is in a horrific state, as borders that demarcate between subject and object are diminished. The abject experiences an identity crises described by Kristeva as being "on the fragile border

[...] where identities (subject/object etc.) do not exist or only barely so – double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject” (Kristeva 1982: 207). Kristeva argues, however, that the mother is in a position to disrupt and challenge the patriarchal order from this abject position. Though the maternal has been rejected and suppressed, it remains a constant threat to the structure and authority of the patriarchal order: “And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master” (Kristeva 1982: 2). The abject is also in a unique position and can expose and explore the very subject/object mechanisms that form the structures of society: “I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased borders” (Kristeva 1982: 4). For Kristeva, this realm is rich territory for exploring the eccentricity of human subjectivity. The mother is displaced within the patriarchal model, and any attempts to regain or prolong the pre-oedipal bond with her child, is seen as the mother smothering and stunting the child’s development.

Martha’s role as a mother adds to the complexity of her character. Martha is faced with contrasting stereotypes of good mother/bad mother by her husband; her inability to conform to acceptable societal expectations of mothers exposes the stereotype to be a one-dimensional construct that does not reflect the position of women in society. Martha cannot be confined to one representation of mother, which makes her a complicated figure. The reader is at times sympathetic towards the protagonist; however, her harsh actions and opinions make it difficult to understand her and truly sympathise with her. This creates distance between the reader and the protagonist, which allows the reader to closely analyse Martha’s actions within her environment. Martha’s transgression of the restrictions of stereotypes can be viewed

as a critique of the social structures that establish unrealistic norms for mothers. Martha's complex character reveals that the mother is by no means a one-dimensional figure that can be categorised as good or bad; the new possibilities for women in the 1930s brings underlying contradictions in the representation of women to the fore.

From the outset of the novel, Martha is portrayed as a loving mother, who would sacrifice everything to ensure the happiness of her child. This is portrayed in the build up to the introduction of Ursa: Martha returns from work and calls to her neighbour, who informs her that Ursa is playing with her child. Moments later, Martha is greeted by her daughter; a scene that is delicately described to reveal the tender relationship between mother and daughter:

Ein dünnes, schüchternes Klingeln. Sie öffnete. Zwei junge Ärmchen wuchsen im Dunkel um ein rundes Gesicht, das feucht und kühl wie die Erdbeere war. Sie beugte sich hin und küßte es, undeutliche Worte murmelnd; ihr ernster fast harter Blick verfiel und lächelte. (Kolmar 1999: 12)

The affection shown by Martha impresses on the reader, particularly as this is the first introduction to Ursa. The transformation of Martha's serious expression to a smile signifies that Ursa is the source of Martha's happiness. This is reinforced during the novel as Martha is incapable of finding happiness after the death of Ursa. Martha's devotion to Ursa has been interpreted as excessive, which hinders Ursa's development (cf. Shafi 1995). Shafi argues that Martha wishes to prolong the pre-Oedipal union between mother and daughter and in so doing neglects to provide Ursa with a healthy role model. Martha's excessive devotion to Ursa also portrays "eine absolute Macht der Mutter, welche das Kind an sich bindet und ihm nur wenig Spielraum lässt"(Shafi 1995: 197).

However, the first introduction to Martha and Ursa paints a picture of a happy healthy child. She is playing outside with friends when Martha returns home from work: “Die Ursel ... die ist nach der Laube. Mit meiner Anna und Elschen” (Kolmar 1999: 10). Thus, Ursa has absolute freedom to develop socially as she is around other children during the day. Martha and Ursa’s evening routine has all the markers of a conventional mother-daughter relationship. They share a meal together, while Ursa tells stories about her friends and their adventures, with Martha listening attentively, before getting ready for bed. This involves communal prayer and demonstrations of affection: “Noch einmal strich ihm [das Kind] die Mutter leicht über das Haar und die Kissen. [...] ‘Gute Nacht, meine liebe Mutter.’ ‘Schlaf wohl, liebes Kind’” (Kolmar 1999: 15). Despite Martha’s apparent love for her child, she is unable to fit in with societal expectations of a ‘good mother’, as her love for Ursa, is perceived as excessive, particularly by her husband and in-laws, who refer to Martha as a “hungrig[e] Wölfin”, because of the excessive measures she takes to protect Ursa.

Martha’s devotion to her mother role causes her to (willingly) sacrifice other aspects of her life: her relationship with her husband crumbles soon after Ursa is born because Martha devotes herself solely to raising her child alone, without help from Friedrich: “Es war ja ihr Kind, nur das ihre” (Kolmar 1999: 22). Martha’s love for her daughter is perceived as overbearing by her husband and in-laws, and she does not fit in with societal expectations of motherhood, propagated by her family. Martha is already viewed in a negative light by her father-in-law, who is overtly opposed to the union between Martha and Friedrich. He sees Martha as a cold-hearted woman, who poses a real threat to Friedrich’s happiness. He describes her with a fusion of Jewish

images and cold, cruel adjectives: “Jerusalem am Nordpol. Sie ist stärker als du [...]. Entweder du reißt aus, oder sie bricht dich in Stücke. Ohne Gnade” (Kolmar 1999: 18). The anti-Semitic attitude of Martha’s father-in-law inevitably taints his perception of Martha as a mother. Her intention to pass her Jewish faith on to her daughter enrages her father in-law and compounds his negative perception of Martha: “Eine Jüdin ... sie sollte froh sein, wenn ihr Balg christlich erzogen wird” (Kolmar 1999: 22). Her in-laws refer to Martha as a “hungrig[e] Wölfin” (Kolmar 1999: 22), as she devotes herself solely to Ursa and keeps her at a distance from everybody else, including the child’s father and grandparents. Martha is quickly cast in the role of evil mother, who, according to her husband, poses a serious threat to Ursa. He warns his parents of her murderous ability: “Ihr kennt sie nicht. Sie ist imstande und tötet das Kind; das ist eine Medea” (Kolmar 1999: 22). The threatening nature of Martha, as portrayed by her husband and in-laws, contrasts starkly with the initial representation of Martha as a loving mother. Martha is unfairly restricted to an excessively negative stereotype by her in-laws: the stereotype of the Medea figure who murders her child. The unreliability of the authority of the stereotype is apparent here as Martha’s Medea status is unproven. It is true that she is overly protective of her child but the argument put forward by Friedrich and his family that she may kill her child is illogical and never proven. The repetition of stereotypes ensures the stereotype’s existence but, as Bhabha argues, the authority of the stereotype is fragile. The stereotype is a construct, which reflects on the coloniser’s (Friedrich and his parents) fears: Martha is perceived as threatening because of her otherness; the application of a stereotype creates the illusion of containment of this otherness. However, the

stereotype serves only to mask the threat; the perceived threat posed by Martha is still there. This subverts the colonial authority that projects the stereotype, as the fears and anxieties of the supposed superior power are exposed, while the perceived threat is intact.

The stereotype of the 'ideal mother' is evoked later in the novel, when Martha recalls a conversation she held with Friedrich. Once again, the stereotype is exposed as a construct. Upon reading a news article about a woman who killed her son because he was homosexual, Friedrich expresses his disgust at the actions of the mother. Martha, however, reveals that she understands the mother: "Nein. Ich versteh' es" (Kolmar 1999: 73). Friedrich's outrage at the murder is based on his perceptions of the role of the mother: because it was a mother, who committed the crime, Friedrich is quick to condemn her. His judgement then, is based not on the crime itself, but on the perpetrator, who, as a mother, should be forgiving: "Eine Mutter soll immer verzeihn" (Kolmar 1999: 73). Friedrich is repeating a familiar construct of the compassionate mother, based on essentialist beliefs that a mother, by nature, should not condemn her own child. The fact that this description of the role of the mother is a construct is enhanced in the lines that follow his statement about forgiving mothers: "Er sprach diesen Satz, als käme der nicht aus ihm selbst, als hätte er ihn gelegentlich vernommen oder gelesen" (Kolmar 1999: 73). While Friedrich's condemnation of the mother is based on perceptions of the acceptable role of mothers in society, Martha considers the position of the mother and does not condemn her. Significantly, she does not condone the act either: she merely expresses understanding, which is not necessarily an expression of approval. Friedrich's

statement that mothers should always forgive is backed up by a subsequent statement that women, in particular, should sympathise with sick people: “Man muß Mitleid haben mit kranken Menschen. [...] Besonders ein Weib” (Kolmar 1999: 73). Friedrich’s perception of women is based on essentialist beliefs, which situate women in pre-defined roles that are impervious to changes in society. Martha’s divergence from accepted norms shows that this is not true, as she is a mother and understands the act of the mother who killed her child. Thus, the construction of the stereotype is exposed as being based on untruths as there is no evidence given by Friedrich to say that women, particularly mothers, should be forgiving.

The episode outlined above also exposes the contradictory, fragile structures of the society that is responsible for the construction of acceptable roles for women. As discussed earlier, Martha’s Jewishness prevents her from ever being fully accepted by gentile society. Her otherness is the cause of both Friedrich and Albert’s rejection of her. However, Friedrich claims that mothers should forgive: he projects an image, based on principles that he himself, as an anti-Semitic gentile, does not uphold. The mother, in the case Friedrich mentions, rejects her son because of his otherness (homosexuality), just as Friedrich ultimately rejects Martha because of her otherness (Jewishness). In the case of Martha, she is expected to fill an impossible role: as an outsider, she has been shown that otherness is cause for rejection; yet as a woman, she is expected to accept and forgive otherness. Martha’s refusal to fit in with societal constructs is a further expression of her inbetween status: she engages with perceived norms (she is, in many respects a ‘good mother’), but she rejects expectations associated with the traditional mother role, as propounded by Friedrich.

It is also an expression of the impossible situation facing women in Berlin of the 1930s in general. Motherhood was a secondary aim of the 'neue Frau' of the Weimar Republic; yet modern women were supposed to fulfil traditional roles, despite the new career opportunities available to women. This is particularly true for Jewish women, who remained subject to established domestic roles, regardless of changes in their professional life: "Even wage-earning women were supposed to wake their children and tuck them in" (Kaplan 2005: 287). Martha's inability to conform to established traditional constructs of 'mother' adds a layer of significance to the title: *Die jüdische Mutter* represents a figure who suffers a double marginalisation: as a Jew, Martha is banished to an inbetween space, which is cemented by her role as a mother, as motherhood is subject to unrealistic ideals.

Martha remains trapped within her maternal role after Ursa's death, perpetuated by herself and by those around her. The first indication that Martha cannot move beyond her maternal role is her inability to grieve for Ursa in a way that allows her to move on. Ursa is denied an individual identity even in death, as Martha chooses an epitaph that defines Ursa in a way that is only meaningful for the mother. The traditional markers of identity such as date of birth and her full name (Ursula Wolg) are missing. The inscription on Ursa's headstone reads simply: "Ursa, mein Kind" (Kolmar 1999: 83), which makes Ursa's identity dependent on that of her mother's. Following Ursa's death, Martha cannot accept that she has been separated from Ursa. On a walk through the zoo, Martha frantically follows a young girl and her boyfriend who are holding hands as they stroll through the grounds. Martha becomes enraged as she imagines this girl is Ursa, and the prospect of Ursa becoming

an independent woman is too much for Martha to bear. Martha displays a form of separation anxiety as she cannot accept that Ursa would have become her own person. She reacts aggressively reasserting that Ursa belongs to her: “Sie ist *mein Kind*” (Kolmar 1999: 117). The forced separation, or what Kristeva terms the “clumsy breaking away” that describes the separation of mother and child, is tangible in this scene as the difficulties of the mother who is forcibly separated from her child are displayed. Martha continues to identify herself as a mother and she does not succeed in adapting to society without her daughter. Martha is in the abject realm — lacking structures or borders that can positively affirm her. Even Albert recognises that Martha is primarily a mother and he too is guilty of trapping her in this role. He uses Martha’s inability to overcome the loss of her motherhood as a reason for leaving her: “Es hat immer nachts zwischen mir und dir diese Kinderleiche gelegen” (Kolmar 1999: 205). His final insult to Martha is telling her she is a bad mother: “Du bist keine gute Mutter” (Kolmar 1999: 205). Again Martha is categorised by a negative stereotype anchored by her role as a mother. It is significant that Martha’s struggle after Ursa’s death takes up over two thirds of the novel. Her lack of orientation without her mother role enhances the significance of the child’s death as only when Ursa was alive did Martha express a sense of belonging.

2.5 Death of the family: infanticide/euthanasia

The motif of infanticide is a familiar feature in German fiction, most notably from the Age of Enlightenment, when so-called enlightened individuals (scholars, lawyers,

doctors) criticised the severity of punishment for mothers guilty of infanticide.⁵ The unfulfilled wish for a child or the loss of a child are themes that dominate in Kolmar's poetry cycles *Mutter und Kind* (1917) and *Mein Kind* (1927-1937). Shafi points out that in her poetry, Kolmar's personal desires for a child are expressed: "Kein anderes Thema im Werk Kolmars hat so sehr zu autobiographischer Deutung Anlaß gegeben wie ihre intensive Darstellung von Kindern und Mutterschaft" (Shafi 1995: 113). The theme of childlessness that is developed in Kolmar's cycles of poetry is taken further in this novel, as the child is taken from her mother in a most brutal and violent manner. In *Die jüdische Mutter* the cause of this childlessness is of such a dark nature, that it invites a deeper investigation as to what this could represent. Martha decides that Ursa is beyond recovery after her attack and poisons her to death. The death of Ursa at the hands of her mother is a major event in the novel: the act reflects on predictions by Martha's in-laws that she could kill her child, as well as her own statement, that a mother could understandably murder her own child out of love. She recalls her comments made during a conversation with Friedrich: "Wenn man sein Kind sehr lieb hat, dann kann man alles. Man kann sich von ihm ermordern lassen. Man kann es auch töten" (Kolmar 1999: 74). The act of poisoning Ursa cannot be understood as a straightforward murder: Martha's act is motivated by mercy and even her neighbours and the doctors believe that Ursa's death is for the best. Thus, the motif of infanticide is accompanied by another contentious theme: euthanasia. Engaging with such a morally and ethically divisive issue, Kolmar's progressive

⁵ See *The Feminist Encyclopedia of German literature* (1997), p. 258 for an overview on infanticide in German literature, Eigler, Frederike/Kord, Susanne.

work creates a complex dilemma for the reader: we cannot wholly condemn Martha as a murderer, as her mercy killing (as she perceives it) is understandable. The combination of the themes of infanticide and euthanasia contribute to the dense web of contradictions that characterise Martha's existence: in this case she is either condemned a murderer or admired for her bravery at making a difficult decision. The resulting situation is Martha's eternal status in an inbetween space, which is expressed once more in the perplexing circumstances of Ursa's death.

The death of Ursa can be interpreted in relation to the symbolism associated with the child. Ursa is associated with symbolism throughout the novel, which links her closely to the continuation of the matrilineal Jewish family line. This is reflected in Martha's behaviour as a mother; she is perceived as a dangerously over-protective mother by her husband and in-laws. However, it is too simplistic to view the representations of Martha as solely arising from the projections of her peers. Martha *does* act strangely when her daughter is born, protecting her fiercely as if she were constantly under threat. As discussed earlier, Martha consciously deprives Ursa of a relationship with her father and grandparents, strengthening the exclusive relationship that Martha has with her daughter. Martha and Ursa's close relationship is intensified by the descriptions of Ursa, who bears an extremely close resemblance to her mother, with no traces of her father's features. She has dark eyes and hair and an even deeper skin tone than her mother. This creates greater divides between Friedrich and Martha as well as Friedrich and Ursa, while strengthening the ties between Martha and Ursa. Physically they are both 'other' and contrast sharply to the Aryan features of

Friedrich. Martha's darkness is described as winning the fight against the blonde hair and blue eyes of her husband:

Als hätte bei seinem Entstehen [des Kindes] des Vaters Helle mit dem Dunkel der Mutter gekämpft und ihr Finsteres hätte sein Lichtes zuletzt erschlagen und aufgefressen. Ursula's Auge und Haar waren nächtig, die Haut war gelblich, fast braun, klang tiefer noch als der Elfenbeinton im mütterlichen Gesicht. (Kolmar 1999: 22)

The image of a struggle between Martha's and Friedrich's genes evokes primal images of survival and continuation of lineage. This image portrays Friedrich and Martha as mutual enemies, with Martha winning in the fight for the survival of her family line, as her daughter inherits her skin tone and not her father's. The use of animal imagery in relation to Martha's role as a mother enhances the vulnerability of Ursa, as Martha protects Ursa excessively as if she were constantly under threat. She is compared to an animal, guarding her young from others to protect her from harm:

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. (Kolmar 1999: 22)

Martha's behaviour is animalistic: she does not speak; rather her eyes reflect the intensity with which she is guarding her child. Animals protect their young because they are driven by instincts to ensure the survival of their breed: the analogy comparing Martha with a 'Tiermutter' locates Martha's protection of Ursa within the instinctive impulses of animals. Thus, Ursa's inheritance of her mother's features, and Martha's excessive protection of Ursa is representative of the preservation of Martha's lineage. Ursa, then, represents the continuation of an exclusively female family line, as Martha's animalistic protection of her daughter ensures that she does not have access to a patriarchal role model.

This matriarchal line is also Jewish as Ursa inherits Judaism from her mother. Furthermore, Martha is overtly insistent upon the continuation of the Jewish line through Ursa; she reacts with outrage to Friedrich's suggestion that Ursa should be christened, informing him that "Unsere Kinder werden doch nicht getauft" (Kolmar 1999: 21). Although Martha admits to gaining no solace from her trips to the synagogue, following Ursa's death: "Es gibt mir nichts" (Kolmar 1999: 120), she reveals that her intentions were to teach Ursa about her religion at home: "ihr Kind sollte seinen Glauben daheim, nicht in der Schule empfangen" (Kolmar 1999: 91). When Ursa asked why they don't go to church like her friends, Martha responds: "Wir gehen dafür in den Tempel" (Kolmar 1999: 87). Upon recalling this conversation with Ursa, Martha is reminded of her own happy childhood memories at the synagogue:

Und wie sie sprach, war auf einmal der Tempel ihres Geburtsstädtchens da, der Umzug der Kinder mit bunten Fähnchen – auf jeder Spitze steckte ein Apfel und in dem Apfel steckte ein Licht. [...] Sie mußte Ursa berichten. (Kolmar 1999: 87)

Martha's nostalgia for her past is connected with her aspirations for Ursa's future: it is clear that the continuation of Jewish traditions is of primary importance for Martha.

Ursa, then, is a representation of the continuation of Martha's Jewish self: Martha's animalistic protection indicates firstly, that the continuation of her Jewishness is important to her, and secondly, that the survival of the Jewish line is in danger. Martha's insistence on preserving the Jewish family line and the destruction of this with the death of Ursa can be understood within the context of 1930s Germany, when the fate of the Jewish family line was at risk. Although Jewish

populations in the city of Berlin were rising, as Jews sought better employment opportunities in the buzzing metropolis (cf. Kaplan 2005: 273), there was a drastic decrease in the birth rates in Jewish families:

From 1920 to 1925 there were 15 births per thousand among Jews annually but by 1932 this figure dropped to 7.2 (compared with 16.2 in the population at large. (Kaplan 2005: 274)

Set in 1931, *Die jüdische Mutter*, places Martha in this group of Jews who saw the future of their community in jeopardy. Martha's perception of the threat facing Ursa, and therefore the future of her Jewish lineage, is understandable in this context.

The disruption of Martha's family, therefore, represents the disruption and discontinuation of the Jewish family line, which in this story is exclusively female. Martha's role in Ursa's death complicates the interpretation of Ursa's death as symbolic of the death of Judaism, as it is Martha who is ultimately responsible for this. Significantly, Martha's administering of the poison to her daughter is considered to be an act of mercy, so that the death of Judaism can be understood as a form of relief. In the context of the problematic preservation of the Jewish family in 1930s Germany, disallowing the continuation of the Judaism can be understood as a merciful act that prevents future generations from encountering the obstacles of being Jewish, without a supporting community, in an anti-Semitic environment. The possibility of the continuation of a matrilineal family line is also brutally denied with the untimely death of Ursa.

The death of Ursa is a pessimistic reflection on the state of the Jewish community as the family was considered impervious to external influences, described as "the 'indestructible core' of Jewish existence where the individual and Judaism as

a whole could be reinforced” (Kaplan 2005: 286). Family structures in modern texts of twentieth-century German fiction were seen as representative of the broader social structures, in which the family lives. *Die jüdische Mutter* contains in the relationship of Martha and Ursa, a representation of the family structure that reflects the broader structures of the Jewish community: with Ursa as Martha’s only living relative, this fragile family structure can be understood as symbolic of the crumbling Jewish communities and families of the 1930s in Berlin. Martha’s expressed distance from her Jewish roots compounds the situation: protecting Ursa in order to protect her lineage is made even more difficult by Martha’s lack of contact with any Jewish community. Viewed in the context of the declining Jewish population at the time when Kolmar wrote this work, Martha and Ursa’s relationship is representative of the situation of the Jewish community; Martha’s excessive protection of Ursa is based on the belief that her gentile society poses a threat to the continuation of her lineage. The untimely death of Ursa can be understood to mean the end of Martha’s Jewish lineage: a morose reflection of the declining Jewish community of Kolmar’s time.

2.6 Severing the bond: Martha-Ursa

As discussed earlier, Kolmar’s text is not limited to Jewish themes and issues: motherhood and the role of women can be examined in this text with the use of feminist literary theory, which explores the concept of motherhood in a modern setting. Using Kristeva’s theory on the Chora and the abject, we can interpret Martha’s fierce protection of Ursa in terms of Martha’s maternity. Martha seeks to maintain a pre-Symbolic bond with her daughter by ensuring that Ursa does not form

a relationship with her father or grandparents, which preserves the mother-daughter bond. The attack on Ursa signifies the violent disruption of this bond, which exposes dominant patriarchal structures. The description of the relationship between Ursa and Martha is infused with poetic language and nature symbols, which provide the reader with a view of a harmonious loving relationship. Ursa is called ‘Melody’ after a yellow rose (p. 47). On another occasion she is “wie ein winziges Blumenmädchen aus weißer Rose im grünen Laub” (Kolmar 1999: 14). The location of the home Martha shares with Ursa also evokes peaceful images which complement the special bond between mother and daughter:

Dies war ein Klösterliches, der Friede, die Abgewandtheit, Abseitigkeit eines Stifts, etwas Träumendes, etwas Vergangnes, wiewohl das Bauwerk sein letztes Gesicht kaum vor der Jahrhundertwende erhalten. (Kolmar 1999: 9)

The evocation of the image of a convent also places Martha’s home in a secluded area, intentionally retaining a distance from the rest of the world. Martha and Ursa have little contact to the outside world, reinforcing the idea that Martha is trying to preserve something vulnerable in her relationship with Ursa. The seclusion of Martha’s home reflects her desire to maintain an independent, self-sufficient environment for herself and her daughter, which corresponds to the description of Kristeva’s pre-Symbolic realm as a “self-contemplative, conservative, self-sufficient haven” (Kristeva 1982: 14). Martha views Ursa as an extension of herself, a possession, something that is enhanced by the numerous references to Ursa as ‘es’. Soon after Ursa is born, it is clear that her daughter belongs to her only: “Es war ja ihr Kind, nur das ihre” (Kolmar 1999: 22). The balance of the relationship is based on synchronised bodily motions — eating together, sleeping together, as though both

mother and daughter are part of the same “maternal entity” (Kristeva 1982: 13). Martha listens intently to the deep breathing of her daughter, before she herself falls into a deep sleep: “Sie lag aber, schlummerlos noch [...] und schloß die Lider erst, als von drüben ein tiefer, klarer, gleichmäßiger Atem zog” (Kolmar 1999: 15). Again, this focus on synchronised bodily movements corresponds with Kristeva’s description of the mother-child bond in the pre-Symbolic stage as a combined identity before the child “becomes a subject in its own right and leaves the natural mansion” (Kristeva 1982: 13). Enhanced by the idyllic surroundings and primitive living conditions, the mother-daughter relationship flourishes and is the locus of beauty and joy against the backdrop of the hostile, modernised society. Martha’s rejection of the patriarchal model and her maintenance of an exclusively female zone for her daughter represent a desire to establish a maternal sanctuary. Ursa does not appear unhappy or affected because of the lack of a paternal figure in her life. Rather, she is portrayed as a lively child and her association with nature images links her with concepts of development, growth and beauty.

This idyllic union is soon broken, when Ursa is last seen walking away with a strange man. Two days later, she is found in a deserted grass area amongst debris and rubbish. She has been sexually abused and she is critically ill. The plot of the novel develops in a dark direction and the attack on the young girl is certainly shocking for the reader. In an examination of modernity in *Die jüdische Mutter*, Shafi has shown how Ursa is treated as a piece of rubbish, symbolic of the destructive effects of urbanisation and its disregard for the individual. Shafi rightly draws on the description of Ursa, when she is found, barely distinguishable, amongst debris and

waste. The subsequent treatment of Martha by police officers, hospital workers and members of the public reveals the indifference of the authorities to Martha's painful situation, and the society, from which Martha has kept her distance, is exposed as hostile. When Martha chokes back the tears as she provides the police with a description of Ursa, the police officers appear disconnected and untroubled: "Der Beamte vermerkte die Angaben, war beschäftigt. Der andere aber, der scheinbar las, sprach unvermittelt und wie in die Luft hinein" (Kolmar 1999: 46). If the attack on Ursa is an expression of the ugliness and baseness of the Berlin society, then this society can also be categorised as patriarchal as the sexual assault on Ursa is an expression of male aggression and violence. The imposition of the male into Martha and Ursa's maternal union is aggressive, destructive and the cause of the ultimate dissolution of Martha. In Kristevan terms, the mother-daughter bond and the realm of the Chora have been destroyed by the imposition of the patriarchal authority. In Kristeva's theories, she argues that the development of the child's autonomous existence involves the "clumsy breaking away" (Kristeva 1982: 13) of the child from the mother. The child is separated from the mother by the imposition of the patriarchal order. The separation is never peaceful; rather it is violent, imposed and ultimately catastrophic for the mother. This can be applied to the separation of Martha and Ursa. Despite Martha's efforts to maintain the pre-Oedipal union with her daughter, the violent authority of the external patriarchal society destructs this bond. In Judaism, the fifth year is very important in the development of the child as it is the time when the child should move away from the mother and begin the path towards independence (cf. Herweg 1994). This is most important for young boys, as Judaism

traditionally places great value on male children who are seen as the future defenders of Israel: “mit 5 erfolgte für Jungen in der Regel [...] eine abrupte Loslösung von ihrer Mutter” (Herweg 1994: 170). All of these associations open up avenues of investigation into the attack on Ursa. If the separation of Martha and Ursa is the result of the imposition of the patriarchal order, then, this interference is not successful in leading the child into patriarchal society. Ursa is unconscious following the attack on her; when she does regain consciousness, she is unable to speak. Thus, the separation of mother and child not only severs the pre-Symbolic bond; here, the imposition of the patriarchal order actually stunts the child’s development.

Martha’s decision to poison Ursa coincides with her acknowledgement that the pre-Oedipal bond has been permanently severed. The attack on Ursa, as the representation of the imposition of an aggressive, patriarchal authority, corrupts the relationship between Martha and Ursa and Martha cannot bear the sight of Ursa in her transformed state. It is understandable that Martha feels she must stop Ursa from suffering any further; however, her decision to poison her daughter appears to be borne out of selfish reasons. Martha’s inability to *witness* the suffering and not the pain of the child herself is specified as the reason for poisoning her. Martha’s decision indicates that she does not consider Ursa as a separate entity: she does not consider the possibility that Ursa will recover. Following the Kristevan line of argument, Martha is traumatised because the pre-Symbolic bond with her daughter has been severed and Martha is now in the abject realm, where she lacks any definitive structures or borders necessary for a definition of self. The severing of this bond involves, according to Kristeva, the rejection of the mother and in an important

sequence of events, we see how Martha poisons her daughter after Ursa has blatantly and aggressively rejected her:

Ursa hatte bis jetzt scheinbar friedlich gelegen; aber als sie die Mutter sah oder hätte sehen müssen, kam diese Unruhe in ihre Züge, wieder dies zuckende Bangen, auch ihr kleiner Körper ängstigte sich, machte Bewegungen, nutzlose, schwache, wie ein Gebundener, der an Stelle und Ort vor etwas Gräßlichem flüchtet. Und seine Kehle röchelte Laute, zu ermattet schon, um noch zu schrein. Ihm hatte ein Menschenangesicht Grauenhaftes getan, nun schauderte es vor jedem. Es floh. Das Kind floh vor seiner Mutter. (Kolmar 1999: 76)

The colourful and natural images that once described the lively child are replaced here with fearful images. Ursa is devoid of the ability to speak: her voice has been transformed into noises and screams. The turning point for Martha is Ursa's final rejection of her and she cannot bear the pain of being unwanted by her daughter. It represents, for Martha, the confirmation of the severed link between mother and daughter and the impossibility of Ursa's recovery. Martha forces the poison down Ursa's throat and moments later the child dies. Martha's consequent inability to completely shed herself of her mother role and to establish a secure sense of self, reflect on the dominant patriarchal structures that prevent Martha from attaining a sense of self within these structures. The imposition of these patriarchal structures into the relationship of Martha and Ursa shows that even the pre-Oedipal bond exclusive to mother and child is vulnerable. Thus, the trauma of the death of Ursa signifies the death of Jewish lineage and the impossibility of the survival of a maternal realm within patriarchal structures. Martha's existence after the death of Ursa is charted through two thirds of the novel, seeing Martha wander through Berlin, as she attempts to come to terms with life without Ursa. Martha engages with her

urban surroundings, exposing the conflict between the natural world and the man-made cityscape, which is symptomatic of the existence of conflicting binaries in her environment. As the unity of the pre-Oedipal bond has been disrupted, Martha is devoid of affirming structures to provide orientation and meaning. The investigation of coexisting, contradictory societal structures mirrors the complexity of Martha's existence without her daughter, as Martha is inbetween established constructs. Martha's environment can be viewed as a reflection of her interstice position.

2.7 Exploration of binaries

Kolmar's text engages with a motif common to modern German fiction of the twentieth century, namely the exploration of man's relationship to his natural environment and his man-made modern environment. In what can be seen as a response to the rapid industrialisation of Berlin, Martha's vantage point reveals the conflict between the natural and the modern world, as she is located inbetween both. Her career keeps Martha in close contact with the developments of her modern society; however, she is shown to be closer to a natural, animalistic existence. The natural world is seen to suffer at the hands of man, while the urban constructions serve to further estrange the individual from his surroundings. The development of this theme locates Kolmar's text among progressive twentieth-century fiction that reflects on the alienable effects of modernisation, and the regrettable loss of contact with the natural world. Kolmar transcends the expectations set forth by the title of the novel as she extends the Jewish motif and provides an acute commentary on the complex nature of modernity. The exploration of binaries such as technology/nature,

flowers/waste and instinctive drives/constructed gender roles, expose the ills of modern society and the incompatibility of the natural world and the modern world.

2.7.1 Technology/nature

As an animal photographer, Martha is in constant contact with animals which restores the peace and harmony that the city drains from her. This is an unusual choice of career even for a modern woman in the Weimar Republic. Working with a medium as new and exciting as photography, Martha is engaging with a key feature of modernisation. Photography, as a symbol of man-made modernisation, comes face to face with its antithesis: the natural world. Martha's talent for photographing animals impresses her employer Lydia Hoffmann so much that she decides to introduce this service to her photography business: "Ihre [Martha's] besondere Meisterschaft erwies sie als Tierabbildnerin, ja, sie führte die Tieraufnahmen bei Lydia Hoffmann erst ein" (Kolmar 1999: 24). Martha's skill at photographing animals aligns her closely with the natural world and places her in the position of mediator between the modern world, represented by her role as the photographer, and the natural world, the subject of her photographs. Martha's position establishes the point of conflict between the modern world and the natural world; her connections to both enable the theme of conflict to develop in the portrayal of her experiences. The contrast between the natural world and the modern world is emphasised by the selection of animals that Martha photographs. As well as regular domestic pets such as cats and dogs, Martha works with exotic animals, not native to Germany such as monkeys and parrots. As

domestic pets, these animals have been transposed into an alien environment, which contradicts the natural order:

Ein junger Neufundländer, den sein Herr nur zufällig mitgebracht, gab den Anfang; bald war es Sitte im reichen Westen, die Schoßhunde und Angorakatzen, die Äffchen und Papageien von ihr photographieren zu lassen. (Kolmar 1999: 24)

Animal photography was becoming customary amongst the rich; thus, the animal photographs can be understood as symbolic of the perceived superiority and high social standing of the owner of the animal. The containment of the image of an animal within a photograph is symbolic of the imposition of man on the animal world. Displaying this image as a decoration signifies the perceived superiority of the owner over his animal and reinforces the power of the owner. The process is a reflection on the processes of capitalism and industrialisation that were the markers of modernising Berlin: the natural world is exposed here as a commodity, exploited for the benefit of modern man.

Martha's career can also be understood as representative of her specific situation, namely, the relationship between coloniser and colonised. The colonised people all over the world have historically been associated with animals: as justification for the process of colonisation, the colonised have been reduced to the status of animals so that colonisation is viewed as a worthy and necessary process (cf. Young 1995: 6). In the Jewish case, Jewish people were commonly depicted as rats and vermin in anti-Semitic propaganda magazines. Therefore the animal photographs can be interpreted as the representation of the power relations between coloniser (man) and colonised (animal). If the animal is a metaphor for the colonised, and the

function of animal photographs is the expression of the superiority of the owner, the function of the colonised, then, lies in their status as objects that enforce the authority and superiority of the coloniser. This corresponds to other representations of the colonised: the use of stereotypes exposes the ambivalent nature of the relationship between coloniser and colonised. As discussed earlier, the construction of stereotypes domesticates and reinforces difference in an attempt to affirm the authority of the coloniser. Similarly, the representation of the colonised as an animal articulates difference and the perceived superiority of coloniser over colonised; however the threat posed by the difference (here, untameable nature) is merely masked and it remains potentially subversive.

The coexistence of technology and nature exposes the alien environment of the colonised. The misplaced position of exotic animals as domestic pets, framed within a photograph can be understood as a reflection on the problematic position of Jews in an anti-Semitic environment. As a photographer, Martha mediates between the animal world and the modern, technological world, signalling her inbetween position flanked by environments that do not innately belong alongside each other. The exploration of the technology/nature binary is thus a further evocation of Martha's inbetweenness — the aporetic nature of existence for an assimilated Jew, which sees Martha both connected to and distanced from her environment.

2.7.2 Instinctive drives/constructed gender roles

Martha is frequently associated with the unpredictability and untameable nature of animals; this is perceived as threatening by the coloniser as her animalistic nature

clashes with the stringent restraints of societal constructs. The collision of Martha's animal urges and her constructed societal roles as wife and career woman expose the artificial nature of boundaries and restrictions associated with social roles. Martha's animalistic expressions are seen as closer to a genuine articulation of the self, which, however, is stunted by the oppressing structures of society. As discussed earlier, Martha's animalism is closely linked to an instinctive drive to protect the lineage of her Jewishness; this leads her to be termed "Tiermutter" and a "hungrige Wölfin" (Kolmar 1999: 22) by her in-laws. Thus, in motherhood, Martha's animal-like instincts surface, with the aim of protecting her young and ensuring the survival of her Jewish lineage. Tensions arise between Martha's expressed instinctive urges and her role as wife to Friedrich. As discussed above, Friedrich propounds gender constructs imposed by the coloniser. Therefore, he represents a threat to Martha, whose animal drives respond only to natural urges and impulses, a rhythm that defies restriction by societal constructs. This conflict is expressed in the likening of Martha to a caged animal: "Sie dünkte ihm oft eine Wilde jetzt, die er gewaltsam im Käfig hielt, die nur trachtete auszubrechen" (Kolmar 1999: 22). The image of the cage as a structure that contains and restricts, represents both the aggressive imposition on Martha and the threat that Martha represents: her animalism is such that the necessary mode of restriction is something that wholly limits her freedom. Martha's 'containment' is counteracted by the creation of her own barrier. In what can be perceived as a subversive act, Martha retreats from Friedrich to such an extent that she is no longer accessible to him. His attempts to reason with her, to demand his

own way are fruitless as Martha becomes dangerously isolated. Again, this is described with images of barriers:

Und wollte er trotzen, doch vor ihr gelten, so baute sie sich eine Zauberwand,
in die seine Hacke sauste. Die Wand wich zurück, der Schlag fiel ins Leere,
sein Arm schmerzte nur, und sie stand unversehrt, wo sie sich vorher getürmt.
(Kolmar 1999: 23)

Martha's barrier is an elusive, non-physical one, controlled by Martha. It is therefore incomprehensible to Friedrich. The imagery is subverted, as the confinement of the cage is seen as useless compared with the impenetrable wall that Martha has surrounded herself with. This signifies the initial attempts by Martha to shield her pre-Symbolic bond with Ursa; Martha intensifies these efforts when she moves to an isolated suburb with her daughter. The attack on Ursa signifies the destruction of this instinct-driven realm and is an indicator of the incompatibility of a natural, instinct-driven existence with the constructed roles of the modern person. Furthermore, the construction of barriers in the form of Martha's 'Zauberwand', Friedrich's 'Käfig' and Martha's secluded living quarters relates the necessity of the containment of Martha's animalistic urges: her instinctive drives must be protected from the outside world as they are incompatible with the constrictions of societal constructs.

Martha's animalism resurfaces after Ursa's death when she visits a bar where she suspiciously observes the customers, imagining that the culprit for Ursa's death is among them. She is approached by a man who asks her to dance and Martha complies. Following a confusing exchange, Martha realises that she is in a transvestite bar and has been taken for a man dressed as a woman: "Du bist doch ein Bubi" (Kolmar 1999: 137). The scene exposes the slippery boundaries of gender

constructs as the perceived stable gender categories are easily disguised. Martha's aggressive, animalistic reaction reveals her rage at discovering the fragility of these constructs.

Martha sah rot. Sie fühlte Blut vor den Augen. Sie warf sich irgendwohin, sie griff irgendwo zu, sie bohrte in irgendwas, einen Arm, einen Hals, eine Wange, die Krallen. (Kolmar 1999: 138)

Martha's instinctive, wild reaction contrasts sharply with the neat gender constructs that are universally accepted. Again, the slippage of the authority of such constructs and the notion that something natural is forcibly contained within them is expressed through Martha's actions. She too relies on the stability of gender constructs and she is exposed and vulnerable when the structure crumbles. As a mother and wife, Martha defies constructed gender roles: she isolates herself from others and raises her child alone. This rejection of gender roles is linked to her existence as an instinct-driven person. In the bar, Martha's animalism surfaces because universally accepted gender roles are exposed as fragile. Thus, Martha relies on the existence of gender roles. This paradox is an articulation of Martha's inbetween status: her simultaneous engagement with, and rejection of societal constructs. Martha's animal urges are portrayed here as unruly, untameable and dangerous. As a mother, Martha was compared to a she-wolf: an animal with a role to care for its young. This places primary importance on her role as a mother: it enabled Martha to live in accordance with natural impulses and urges; her animalism had a purpose, an orientation. Following Ursa's death, these urges are merely masked by gender constructs that Martha, as a partial representation of the coloniser, inevitably embodies to a certain extent. Martha emulates the gender expectations of her environment, so that she 'mimics' the coloniser. Her animalism

has no outlet with the loss of Ursa; yet these urges remain a part of her. The eruption of Martha's animalism exposes the ambivalence of the relationship between coloniser and colonised: the containment of the other through the application of stereotypes/gender constructs is a façade. Otherness, expressed here as animalism, exists beneath the surface of the imposed boundaries, threatening the authority of the coloniser. When the societal constructs are exposed as fragile, the threat posed by the colonised emerges, challenging the perceived authority of the colonial power.

2.7.3 Flowers/waste

According to Zygmunt Bauman, waste is a product of modernity. The insistence on clearly defined categories ensures the existence of waste: whatever does not fit in with established constructs is repelled as waste. Baumann argues that “the production of waste (and consequently concern with waste disposal) is as modern as classification and order-designing” (Baumann 1991: 15). Waste is understood in the literal and symbolic sense: just as weeds are considered waste in relation to the garden, so too are strangers seen as waste in relation to the establishment of a nation-state. The urban setting of *Die jüdische Mutter* exposes the excessive production of waste as a result of industrialisation. The area around Martha's home is infiltrated with chaotic buildings creating masses of waste as building developments progress: “dies [war] eine Welt des Werdenden, des Unfertigen, der Gegensätze: auf unwirschem Wüsten – und Steppengebiet unregelmäßiges Bauen” (Kolmar 1999: 27). The process of industrialisation claims to provide orientation by improving infrastructure. The description of Martha's surroundings as “eine Welt des

Werdenden” indicates the progressive nature of the buildings that are being developed around her. However, the progress of industrialisation is questioned in the description of the “ungeregeltes Bauen”, which denotes disorientation and chaos. The building work signals the negative impact of industrialisation on the landscape and the failure of industrialisation to stimulate progress and direction. In *Die jüdische Mutter*, industrialisation is portrayed negatively as architectural developments infringe upon the natural environs. Shafi points out that “the Kurfüstendamm in the evening neither impresses nor unsettles Martha — pointing instead to modernisation’s concomitant ugliness” (Shafi 2009: 121). Thus, the failure of industrial developments to impress on Martha signals the failure of industrialisation with its architectural and technological advancements, to provide orientation and inspiration for the individual.

In contrast to the chaotic effects of modernity, the natural world represents progress and direction. Kolmar emphasises the contrast between the natural and the man-made environment by employing the symbol of the flower. Flowers represent the regenerative and resilient natural environment that is viewed positively when compared with the ugliness of modernising Berlin. Secluded from the impositions of industrialisations, thriving dahlias and gladiolas offer Martha a sense of comfort when she returns from work. The scene evokes images of natural life cycles, free from interference from humans:

Schwarzpurpurpne Dahlienbüschel, orangene Tupfen Studentenblumen, honiggelbe, rahmweiße Gladiolen, Naschkelche für Hummeln und Bienen, die auch der Goldraute Sprühwedel noch vereinzelt umsummten, die prallen, steifgetragenen Köpfe des Goldballs Rudbeckia. (Kolmar 1999: 26)

As Martha continues her walk, the scene is interrupted by the sight of a factory, signifying the unnatural imposition of industrialisation on the ecological environment, which is significantly devoid of trees: “Aus baumloser Einöde jenseits des Flusses stieg eine große rote Fabrik jäh in vergehenden Himmel” (Kolmar 1999: 27). There is a sense that the natural environs, though severely depleted due to the devastation of industrialisation, are still thriving in certain areas of the city. The description of the factory is followed by the depiction of a typically peaceful rural scene: “weiter vorn aber ruhte, dörfliches Bild, ein Alter im üppigen Ufergras und weidete seine Ziegen” (Kolmar 1999: 27). The contrast elucidated here presents the natural environment of flowers and animals as the location of a peaceful, harmonious existence, whereas the man-made environment, signified by the factory symbolises a loss of place and a sense of disharmony within its surroundings. The juxtaposition of flowers and symbols of industrialisation not only reflects the imposition of the modern world on the natural world. The coincidence of both symbols also complements the portrayal of the inbetween position of the protagonist. Martha engages with the features of modernity; she is a regular tram passenger and an animal photographer. The solace that she derives from the natural environs surrounding her home also links Martha to this environment.

The yellow rose in *Die jüdische Mutter* has a specific significance: from the outset of the novel the yellow rose represents the disappearing fauna of Martha’s environment. The rose is resilient, surviving in areas that are otherwise overwhelmed with man-made waste. In the depictions of the yellow rose, towering in overgrown areas, nature is portrayed as a symbol of strength that can resist the ravages of human

destruction. However, the rose is invariably surrounded by waste and debris, making it a symbol of growth and hope that easily fades amongst the landscape of destruction. In the opening page a yellow rose plant is depicted, emerging from an otherwise unkempt garden: “Über pfleglosem Rasen glomm ein Hochstamm tief safrangelber Rosen, viele tropfenschwer hängend” (Kolmar 1999: 7). The image is one of fecundity, resilience and renewal: the saturated roses are glowing, promising regrowth, despite the unkempt garden. This image surfaces again, when Martha is searching for Ursa having just been informed that she was last seen walking away with a man. She approaches the garden “mit dem mächtigen Hochstamme glimmernder tief safrangelber Rosen” (Kolmar 1999: 30). Once more, the rose is a symbol of strength and survival. Martha is drawn to the plant; she asks the occupant of the garden for the name of the rose, which, he informs her, is Melody. Martha quickly sees the rose as a representation of Ursa: “‘Melody’, wiederholte sie leise. Und fühlte: Meine Ursa war eine dunkelgelbe Rose” (Kolmar 1999: 31).

The association of Ursa with the resilient rose can be seen as her links to the continuation of Jewish lineage: the word ‘Stamm’ can mean both the stem of a flower and a person’s lineage. Like the rose, Ursa is the representation of growth and regeneration of the Jewish line. Later, when Ursa has been missing for more than a day, Martha consoles herself by asserting that Ursa is “von kräftigem Stamm” (Kolmar 1999: 38), a formulation suggestive of strengthening the link between Ursa and the ‘Hochstamme’ of the yellow rose. The connection between Ursa and the yellow rose allows for the interpretation of the rose as symbolic of continuity of family and tradition. The death of Ursa is both symbolic of the death of Martha’s

Jewish line, and the death of Martha's fecund natural environment: When Ursa dies, so too does the yellow rose, which Martha had given to her in hospital: "Ursa trug auf der Brust eine gelbe sterbende Rose" (Kolmar 1999:78). This statement comes at the very end of part one; it signifies the destructive effects of urbanisation on the natural world. The second part of the book opens with Martha visiting Ursa's grave on her one year anniversary. The flowers in the graveyard have adopted mechanical attributes, signifying their surrender to industrialisation: "Die wirkten sehr neu, so abgezirkelt, so künstlich sauber; neu auch und kahl, erstarrte Glätte, goß der Asphaltamm sich hin" (Kolmar 1999: 81).

Flowers, roses in particular, are representative of resilience in an environment that stifles growth. Ursa is thus representative of the vulnerability of the preservation of Jewishness; the solitary flower that wilts as the child dies, complements the overriding theme of the disappearance of Judaism in 1930s Berlin. The binaries explored in the novel establish a structural framework that complements the analysis of Martha's inbetween position. Her engagement with coexisting, but contradictory environments is the marker of an existence that is linked to established categories of belonging, but denied full acceptance within these categories. The symbolism associated with Ursa is also twofold: Ursa represents a link to an affirming Jewishness; however, her death is an indicator of the impossibility of this existence and Martha's ensuing search for belonging signals the permanency of her outsider status, which is linked to her Jewishness and to her alienating modern surroundings. The lack of orientation experienced by Martha is reflected in her often contradictory or controversial actions such as the condemnation of otherness as homosexuality and

the dispensing of the fatal poison to Ursa. The difficulty of framing Martha within fixed categories such as good mother, murderer, traditional Jewish homemaker or modern women is the product of the inbetweenness that characterises Martha's existence.

Chapter III: *Susanna*: Post-colonial approaches to understanding Jewishness

3.1 The structure of the novella

Kolmar's only novella, *Susanna*, was written some time between December 1939 and February 1940, while Kolmar was living in a so called 'Judenhaus' along with other Jews who had been forced to leave their homes. Kolmar's living conditions were worsening as the Nazi regime was intensifying. *Susanna* is the last work written by Kolmar that survived. Because of the high noise level in the house during the day, Kolmar wrote mainly at night while all the other housemates were sleeping. The result is a lyrical prose work in the form of the classical novella, comprising of an internal narrative recalled by an ageing governess who had once cared for Susanna, the title figure in the story. Kolmar's work resembles the novella both in form and content: "Gertrud Kolmars Erzählung trägt formal und inhaltlich Merkmale der klassischen Novelle" (Hubig/Marx 1996: 131). At the time of writing, Kolmar's hopes for emigration had faded, as her father's health deteriorated and Kolmar ultimately decided to stay with him (cf. Woltmann 1995). Towards the end of her life, Kolmar became increasingly interested in the Jewish faith and the Hebrew language. She drew strength from her faith and felt a renewed solidarity with the Jewish people. This is expressed in poems such as 'Wir Juden', 'An die Gefangenen' and 'Anno Domini' from the poetry cycle *Das Wort der Stummen* written in 1933. Corresponding to the author's renewed interest in her faith, *Susanna* tells the tale of young girl, described as "ein[] leicht gemütskränk[es] Mädchen[]" (Kolmar 1993: 7),

who is fully reconciled with her Jewish faith and who is strengthened and affirmed by it. The fact that the title of the novella is a girl's first name is an indication that this tale is a more personal one than *Die jüdische Mutter*. While the introduction of a narrator separates the author from the story, the narrator's circumstances resemble those of the author suggesting biographical connections. Despite the spiritual and personal tone, *Susanna* does reveal much about the dilemma of Jews at this time in Germany, and the story also exposes the serious failings of the assimilation process.

3.2 Post-colonial approaches: the narrator's inbetweenness

In the opening lines, the narrator establishes the context of her story: she is a Jewish woman in Germany in the late 1930s or early 1940s. This is revealed in key references to Jewish exile at this specific time. Referring to the contents of the daily newspaper, the narrator lists a number of cities that were major destinations for Jewish exiles leaving Germany: "eine Reihe ferner Städte: Shanghai, Tel Aviv, Parral, San Francisco" (Kolmar 1993: 7) and the narrator reflects on her own future: "Wo werde *ich* einst sein?" (Kolmar 1993: 7), placing herself among the hundreds of thousands who planned to emigrate. The narrator's identity as a potential Jewish exile is confirmed moments later:

Heute sitze ich noch seit Wochen in diesem gemieteten Zimmer auf Möbeln von grünem Plusch, und im Winkel unter dem Riegelbrett wartet mein großer Koffer. Und hofft auf das zweite Affidavit aus Plymouth, Massachusetts. (Kolmar 1993: 7)

The packed suitcase and rented furniture indicate a transitory position; however, the destination of the narrator is uncertain, compounding her lack of direction and her

insecure position. The narrator's uncertain future is palpable, particularly as she says that her suitcase is waiting for the Affidavit: the narrator is detached from the possible journey that awaits her, indicating that she is not in control of future events. The mention of the Affidavit is an indicator of the specific migration of Jews from Germany to America as this document was required by Jews, "die am Vorabend des Holocausts Deutschland verlassen wollten" (Sparr 1993: 67). Thus, we can deduce that the narrator's present is in the early 1940s in Germany; the recalled events are set eleven years earlier in the early 1930s.

The narrator is in an inbetween position, which is portrayed as a direct result of her Jewishness, establishing a specific context which allows for the investigation of Jewishness from an interstice position. The overall structure of the novella engages with Jewish traditions: the fate of Susanna is comparable to the Biblical figure of the same name who was accused of adultery by two elders, but subsequently saved by Daniel. Kolmar's Susanna is not granted the same fate. Her ill-fated love affair with Rubin is brought to an abrupt end when she is accused of promiscuity by Rubin's mother and Susanna dies in pursuit of him. The narrative structure, whereby the unnamed narrator recounts her tale in the form of recollected eye witness accounts, also correlates with the Jewish 'Zeugnistradition', whereby the retelling of past events has a "zentrale Bedeutung im jüdischen Glauben, in der jüdischen Tradition und für die jüdische Identität" (Young 1991: 149).

The introduction of a Jewish framework allows for a reading of the novella as a reflection on the nature of Jewishness at the time the novella was written in 1941. The narrator's detachment from her environment places her in an inbetween position.

The narrator is comparable to Martha Wolg in *Die jüdische Mutter*: she has experienced assimilation (we later learn that she has been distanced from her faith) and is, therefore, outside of fixed categories that indicate belonging. Bhabha describes the space of the 'beyond' as the most innovative and insightful in terms of identity articulation. Those who do not fit neatly into categories that supposedly define identity are pushed into this beyond realm, a space that is characterised by a state of not belonging. For Bhabha, neat categories such as gender and race do not expose the mechanisms of identity formation; rather it is the inbetween spaces that reveal the processes involved in the positioning and categorisation of the subject. The inbetween spaces "provide the terrain for elaborating new strategies of selfhood — singular or communal — that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha 1994: 1-2). This inbetween state offers a unique perspective on the strategies of identity formation as the state of being inbetween describes the simultaneous acts of belonging and not belonging. Those at the edge or rather beyond the framework of accepted societal norms are in a position to critique and expose the workings of the society to which they are affiliated. In *Susanna*, this inbetween status is reinforced with the use of the internal narrative, as the narrator recalls an experience from her past, which reflects on her uncertain future. The narrator's inbetween present links her past and her future. The use of the internal narrative offers an insightful comment on the problematics of Jewish identity articulation. The internal narrative lends the story its reflective quality: the narrator's memories are tinged with her perceptions of events which have changed in the eleven years that have passed; the result is a deeper

understanding of the complex nature of existence within a hostile environment. The title of the novella is, then, somewhat misleading as the story reveals more about the narrator than the title figure.

In *Susanna*, Jewish identity is explored and reflected against the modern world of the narrator's present, from her inbetween position. Jewishness is portrayed as a distinctive marker of an inbetween sense of self; the very concept of claiming an uncomplicated alliance to a singular collective sense of oneness is shown to be impossible for modern Jews, while also being attributed to the modern human condition in general. As in *Die jüdische Mutter*, the assimilation process has resulted in the aporetic state of assimilated Jews: the state of searching for belonging within an environment that insists on the Jews' permanent outsider position. The investigation of Jewishness from this interstice position reveals much about both the narrator's and Susanna's relationship to their Jewish selves and the overall fate of a collective sense of Jewishness in the narrator's present.

3.3 The investigation of Jewishness

The complexities of the narrator's Jewishness are expressed in the contrast between her troubled relationship with her Jewish self and Susanna's straight-forward understanding of her Jewishness. The uncertainty of the governess is linked to her faith in the opening lines, and this is reiterated once more, when she recalls her time spent with Susanna. Susanna mentions a Jewish prayer "Schach' riss" (Kolmar 1993: 15), which perplexes the narrator as she does not understand what this means. The governess comments that she was distanced from her faith: "Ich kannte das Judentum

nicht, meinen Glauben, und hielt das für eine ländliche Redensart” (Kolmar 1993: 15). The use of the past tense is striking here, indicating that since her time with Susanna, the narrator has become re-acquainted with her Jewish faith. She also refers explicitly to Judaism as *her* faith (“meinen Glauben”), marking Judaism as something which belongs to her. This reflects on the narrator’s current situation, as she awaits emigration to flee Nazi Germany, where Judaism was identified as an innate flaw that distinguished Jews as inherently inferior and inalienably other. Judaism has been and continues to be a contentious aspect of the narrator’s self: formerly, a distanced part of her and currently the reason for her precarious situation, while also the source of a secure sense of self, as she refers to her distanced relationship to her Judaism as a thing of the past. As Thomas Sparr puts it: “Das eigene Judentum ist fern und nah zugleich” (Sparr 1993: 86). The aporetic nature of a Jewish sense of self is expressed here: similar to Martha Wolg in *Die jüdische Mutter*, the narrator acknowledges Judaism as part of her understanding of her self, yet she concedes that she has been distanced from her faith in the past. Thus, Judaism represents a marker of belonging that is also unstable as the narrator’s detachment from her faith indicates.

In contrast to the narrator’s expressed distance from her faith at the time when she cared for Susanna, Susanna conceives her Jewishness as the source of happiness and uniqueness. She proudly asserts that as a Jew, she is a King’s daughter and therefore different from others:

Ich bin eine Tochter vom König David oder vom König Saul. Die lebten, das ist schon lange her; aber wir haben es nicht vergessen. Aber die anderen vielen Leute stammen nicht von Königen ab. Bloß ich. Denn ich bin eine Jüdin. (Kolmar 1993: 20)

Susanna's pride in her Jewish heritage is striking when compared to the problematic relationship that the narrator and Martha Wolg have with their Jewish selves. Her assertion is free from any effects of anti-Semitic representations of Judaism, which in the 1930s would have been widely circulating. Susanna's association with royalty (she refers to herself as a "Königstochter"), is linked directly to her Jewishness, which lends her a uniqueness, a sense of self that separates her from others. She proudly asserts that other people are not the descendants of Kings like she is. While Susanna refers to an understanding of Jewish lineage that is common to all Jews, she asserts that she is unique ("Bloß ich"). Thus, Susanna feels special not only as a Jew but amongst other Jews, so that her understanding of her Jewish self stands apart from other Jews' relationship to their faith. Susanna expresses a simplistic understanding of her Jewish self, which correlates with the Old Testament's understanding of Jews as the chosen people. Her assertion borders on naivety in its simplicity, as Susanna does not acknowledge the challenges of asserting her Jewishness in her anti-Semitic environment. Thus, Susanna possesses an idealised understanding of her Jewish self, which appears unattainable for the narrator. This idealised image of Judaism is complemented by the poetic language used by Susanna. Shafi points out that Kolmar evokes the magic of the Eastern ghetto in this story: "In *Susanna* setzt Kolmar der untergangenen Welt des Ostjudentums, dem Shtetl, ein Denkmal" (Shafi 1995: 206). The idealistic portrayal of Judaism in the form of Susanna and the narrator's troubled relationship with her faith signal two differing modes of existence. When the narrator is confronted with Susanna's simplistic

understanding of her Jewishness, she reflects on her own Jewishness. Her considerations explore the complexities of Jewish existence in a hostile environment.

Susanna's pride in her uniqueness, which can be understood as her difference, is an inversion of the narrator's shame in her otherness as a Jew. When the narrator tells Susanna that she too is a Jew, Susanna asks if this makes her happy: "Freust du dich sehr?" (Kolmar 1993: 21) The narrator of the present interjects and comments on her perception of her Jewishness at that time when Susanna asked this question. She reveals her uneasy feelings towards her faith:

Ich freute mich nicht. Ich hatte vergessen. Ich war nicht stolz, trug kein Zeichen des Königsgeschlechts; ich trug einen Makel. Recht klein war der Makel und störte mich wenig, doch ich deckte ihn zu, wie es ging. (Kolmar 1993: 21)

The complexity of Jewishness is articulated in the above quotation: the narrator claims that she had forgotten her Judaism, signifying that Judaism was once or perhaps has always been a present, though dormant, aspect of herself. Evidently, the narrator's Judaism was the source of shame for her, something which she consciously concealed. The description of her Judaism as a 'Makel' is suggestive of the narrator's construction of a negative self image. In other works by Kolmar, the concept of Jewishness as a 'Makel' is indicative of a constructed image projected by onlookers. For example, in the poem 'An die Gefangenen' from the poetry cycle *Wort der Stummen* (1933), the speaker asks if he carries a stain that is visible to those around him but not to him: "Ist bemakelt meine Stirn?" (Kolmar 2003: 362). In both cases, Judaism is located on the skin as a visible stain, allowing for the interpretation of Judaism as an externally constructed aspect of the self. The narrator refers to her

efforts at covering the stain, indicating that it is something that is visible to others, figuratively speaking. Thus, the perceptions of onlookers effect the construction of Judaism for the narrator. In a similar way to Martha, the narrator's Judaism is stained because of her position as an outsider in an anti-Semitic environment. The narrator's concept of her Jewishness is complex in contrast to Susanna's, as she is influenced by the anti-Semitic manipulation of representations of Jewishness.

The narrator's negative understanding of her Jewishness and the supporting projections from an anti-Semitic environment contribute to the narrator's status as an inalienable outsider. However, the narrator associates this negative understanding of Jewishness with the past ("Ich *trug* einen Makel") [my emphasis]. There is a sense that the narrator is reflecting on the shame she previously associated with her Judaism. Working with Susanna and the subsequent events that have led to the narrator's precarious position as a potential emigrant have given the narrator fresh insight into the complexities of her Jewishness. The use of the past tense to describe the narrator's former sense of shame she associated with her Jewishness and the framework of the internal narrative allow for the interpretation of the narrator's recollections as symbolic of her realisation of the futility of her attempts to conceal her Jewishness. These devices also signal a reconciliation for the narrator with her Jewish self. Indeed, the latter interpretation is supported by the narrator's obvious envy of Susanna, whose uncomplicated relationship to her Judaism and everything else, is portrayed poetically by the narrator. The contrast between Susanna and the governess is emphasised when the narrator repeats the simple question asked by Susanna: the question of whether she was happy because of her Judaism: "Ich höre

noch diese Worte. [...] ‘Freust du dich sehr?’” (Kolmar 1993: 21) While Susanna perceives her question to be one of the utmost simplicity, it uncovers the complexity of the narrator’s understanding of her Judaism. Again, the narrator’s present situation is brought into play: she has been relentlessly reminded of the perceived ‘stain’ of Judaism by anti-Semitic society, confirming that the narrator’s previous detachment from her faith did not remove the narrator’s perceived otherness. It is an indication of the failure of assimilation. Like Martha, the narrator’s distance from her Judaism has not resulted in acceptance in her environment: the hierarchical superior/inferior binary at the core of the assimilation process expressed in the Gentile/Jew relationship negates the very concept of belonging that was thought to be the basis of assimilation.

While the narrator’s reflections on her past hint that she has since become reconciled, on a personal level, with her Jewish self, the death of Susanna can be understood as an indication that Susanna’s idealised concept of Judaism cannot survive in the outside world. Susanna’s existence is hidden from the outside world: she is kept isolated by her guardian, a segregation that should continue her entire life (her guardian, Fordon, informs the narrator that she can never marry), and her single attempt to form a relationship with a member of the outside world is thwarted by the man’s mother. Susanna’s subsequent death signals the final destruction of her unique articulation of Jewishness, an expression that resembles traditional ideals, which are unsullied by the negative projections of anti-Semitism. The narrator’s story is a form of tribute to this traditional form of Judaism, but the final destruction of Susanna and

the narrator's uncertain, solitary position, signals the fragility of Jewish identity in a modern, anti-Semitic environment.

3.4 Narrator/Susanna: Susanna's poetic existence

The contrast between the narrator and Susanna is expressed not only in terms of their respective understandings of their Jewish selves; the difference between both women is representative of the difference between two modes of existence: the unconscious, instinct-driven life of Susanna and the self-conscious, structured existence of the narrator. The contrast is subtly explored by the narrator who questions the validity of the structures that shape her existence when confronted with the unrestricted life of Susanna. The tone of the novella is one of desire: the narrator clearly favours Susanna's way of life, despite the fact that Susanna is kept confined from the outside world. This is expressed in the poetic descriptions of Susanna, who is portrayed as the personification of poetry, which is enhanced further by the harshness and coldness of her surroundings. Susanna's concept of language defies conventional logic: even when reading a book, Susanna rejects the standard approach of reading from start to finish: "Susanna liebte die Bücher, doch hatte sie eine eigene Art, mit ihnen umzugehen. Am Anfang anfangen und mit dem Ende enden, das lag ihr nicht" (Kolmar 1993: 24). Susanna also imagines that words can disappear from books, creating new meanings when they reappear:

Können Wörter aus Büchern verschwinden? Der Druck verblaßt immer mehr, bis er ganz schwach wird, und schließlich ist das Wort nicht mehr da. Und auf der leeren Stelle bildet sich langsam ein anderes. (Kolmar 1993: 36)

The stability and validity of language is questioned as Susanna explores the possibility that the written word can simply disappear and be replaced. For Susanna, language is not a structured medium or a reliable form of communication. Susanna sees language as free from the constraints of logic, which challenges the fundamental societal structures that are established by communicating through language.

Susanna's rejection of conventional structures and approaches to language locates her in the artistic creative realm, from which the narrator explicitly distances herself in the opening of her story: "Ich bin keine Dichterin" (Kolmar 1993: 7). Susanna's disdain for conformist approaches to books as the source of knowledge is clear when she dismisses the narrator's attempts to separate reality from fantasy. When Susanna asks if the narrator has ever seen the crossbill bird, the narrator informs her that she has read about it in books. Susanna's reply expresses her disregard for the reliance on books for information: "Ach, ihr kennt immer nur alles aus Büchern" (Kolmar 1993: 18). The use of the collective 'ihr' also signals Susanna's awareness of her distance from her environment. Susanna expresses an awareness of her difference, though at no stage does her otherness appear to impact on her positive self image. Susanna's poetic attributes are further demonstrated in her wholly simplistic understanding of words, which does not acknowledge the arbitrary nature of language. For Susanna, words, when uttered, instantly evoke that which they signify. Susanna exhibits an uncomplicated and incorrupted relationship with language, fusing semiological borders of signifier and signified. Susanna wholly embraces the associative power of words, which for her, has only positive aspects:

Es gibt Worte, die kann man in die Hand nehmen. Und manche riecht man ... Zum Beispiel: Bratpfanne. Ich sage nicht gerne 'Bratpfanne', dann ist gleich das ganze Zimmer voll Küchendunst. [...] Dann sag ich 'Rose.' (Kolmar 1993: 13)

The narrator poetically recalls Susanna explaining her perception of words and describes how she witnessed in the utterance of the word 'Rose', the creation of the delicate, scented flower: "Und ich sah die Regung, der Hauch ihrer Lippen blühte, zart, mit betauten atmenden Blättern, mit wunderbarem Duft. Rose" (Kolmar 1993: 13). Susanna is associated with creativity; the delicately described vision of the creation of the rose from the movement of Susanna's lips is also closely associated with life-giving and affirming properties in the world of nature. The immediate connection between the utterance of the word 'Rose' and the vision of the flower characterises Susanna's existence as poetic. Balzer sees the existence of Susanna as representative of the artistic self: "Susanna ist die Verkörperung dichterischer Existenz." (Balzer 1981: 170) Shafi takes this argument further, identifying the negotiation of an artistic existence as a specifically female dilemma in the case of Susanna: "In diesem Text sind Künstlerin und Kunstpraxis von spezifisch weiblichen Kennzeichen und Problemen bestimmt" (Shafi 1995: 212). Susanna's fatal end is interpreted by Shafi as the impossibility of poetic existence within the dominant structures: "Susannas Tod und die ihm zugrundeliegende Liebeserfahrung zeigen die Unvereinbarkeit von poetischer Existenz und Leben in der Alltagsordnung" (Shafi 1995: 213). While the arguments put forward by Shafi and Balzer underscore the undoubtedly contentious problematic of (female) creativity, the artistic nature of Susanna can also be understood in broader terms, as the antithesis of the narrator's

structured existence. Susanna represents what the narrator lacks: creativity, spontaneity and complete accord with her emotional self. As discussed earlier, the narrator's sense of self is troubled because of her unease with her Jewishness, whereas Susanna is wholly affirmed by her faith. Focusing on the contrast between the narrator and Susanna, Kolmar's text can be understood not only as a comment on the problematics of female creativity but as an investigation of the modern human condition in general. In contrast to the narrator's lonely, unfulfilled existence, Susanna's existence is characterised by immediate poetic expressions, which seem to stem from her direct response to natural instincts and impulses. The narrator's actions are determined by her status as a professional woman: in the opening pages, she explains how she came into contact with Susanna by responding to a job advertisement in the newspaper. Susanna's unconscious existence is the subject of envy of the governess, however this desire to be like Susanna is arrested by her fears of Susanna as a 'mentally ill' girl. Susanna's illness is identified by outsiders, signalling that her poetic existence is not acceptable in a modern world. Thus, Susanna's situation is aporetic: she is 'free' in the sense that her self image is unaffected by representations of others, yet this freedom is constrained as Susanna's 'illness' is cause for her isolation. This paradoxical situation is reflected in the narrator's relationship to Susanna, as the narrator's fear of Susanna's 'illness' makes her an agent of the outside world.

3.5 The coloniser/colonised relationship and Susanna's otherness

The narrator's inbetween position resembles the situation of the colonised subject in post-colonial theory; the simultaneous state of belonging and remaining an outsider is the marker of the colonised other, as is the case of Martha in *Die jüdische Mutter*. However, unlike *Die jüdische Mutter*, which explores the relationship between colonised and coloniser in the form of Martha and Friedrich and Martha and Albert, the relationship between the narrator and her gentile peers is not explored in *Susanna*. Rather, an inner-Jewish conflict is investigated in the relationship between Susanna and the narrator, a relationship that resembles the ambivalence of the coloniser/colonised relationship. The Christian/Jewish superior/inferior binary of *Die jüdische Mutter* is extended, as the ambivalence of the narrator's perception of Susanna exposes the existence of other hierarchical binaries that form the structures of the narrator's environment.

The narrator's relationship to Susanna has structural similarities to the coloniser's relationship to the colonised subject. As a governess to Susanna, the narrator is responsible for caring and educating Susanna in accordance with the rules and principles of her vocation and the expectations of her employer and society. This relationship is based on a hierarchical binary: the narrator is the educator, the imparter of knowledge, while Susanna is the recipient of this knowledge. The role of the governess is to educate Susanna in accordance with the structures and rules of her environment: Susanna should learn to emulate these structures. While there are obvious differences between the coloniser (gentile) and colonised (Jew) relationship (the governess and Susanna are both Jews, revoking an interpretation of the

governess' attempted assimilation of Susanna into gentile society), the structural similarity of the superior/inferior binary, whereby the former attempts to impose standards and norms on the latter, prevails. A further structural similarity between the narrator/Susanna relationship and the coloniser/colonised relationship is the insistence on Susanna's otherness.

Before examining the ambivalence of the narrator's relationship to Susanna, it is important to identify the nature of Susanna's otherness. Susanna's difference is identified not as her Jewishness but as her status as a "gemütskrank[es], jung[es] Mädchen[]" (Kolmar 1993: 7). However, the exact nature of her mental illness is unclear. When the narrator meets Susanna's guardian, Fordon, he is quick to point out that Susanna is not ill; rather, her understanding of the world differs from conventional concepts: "Sie leidet nicht. [...] Die Wolken über uns anderen lasten ihr nicht; die Mauern, die uns Erwachsene engen und hemmen, sind nicht für sie da" (Kolmar 1993: 9). Susanna's disregard for the structures and boundaries of her environment aligns her closely to an animal-like existence; this is supported by Susanna's expressed identification with animals and the narrator's description of Susanna's animal-like behaviour. Susanna's otherness in the form of her animal-like existence is the source of the narrator's ambivalent relationship towards Susanna: the narrator is both attracted to this otherness and afraid of it. The narrator's fear of Susanna causes her to reinforce Susanna's otherness, as a way of enhancing the distance between them. While the coloniser attempts to make the colonised like him, he must also ensure that the colonised subject's otherness remains intact. This serves to distance the colonised subject from the coloniser, so that the colonised subject is

perceived as “white, but not quite” (Young 1990: 147). Similarly, Susanna’s otherness is perpetuated by the governess, maintaining a significant distance between both women. The narrator’s position is complex: she is both the colonised subject in an inbetween position, in relation to gentile society; yet, she exerts her authority as a governess, which is similar to the colonial authority of her gentile peers, when she attempts to both domesticate and reinforce Susanna’s otherness. The complex relationship between the narrator and Susanna should not be understood as a comment on the narrator’s anti-Semitic environment. Frantz claims that both the narrator and Susanna’s guardian, Fordon, apply the Nazi “Erbgesetze” in their treatment of Susanna: “They are so influenced by, and believe in, the structures the Nazis have put in place that they do not permit Susanna’s self to grow into a mature personality” (Frantz 1997: 100). Such an interpretation overlooks the narrator’s desire to be like Susanna and the broader issues that Susanna’s confinement raises such as the incompatibility of her way of life with the outside world. The narrator’s ambivalence towards Susanna refutes the simplistic understanding that the narrator stifles Susanna’s development because of her internalisation of Nazi policies.

3.6 Ambivalence: the narrator’s relationship with Susanna

When the narrator meets Susanna for the first time, the ambivalence of their subsequent relationship is signalled with the introduction of the familiar anti-Semitic stereotype of ‘die schöne Jüdin’. The narrator describes Susanna’s beauty creating images of exoticism and orientalism:

Nur neben dem Sessel glomm ein buntes Tischlämpchen und da saß sie im weinroten Seidenkimono und wandte mir das Gesicht zu, dies wunderbare Gesicht. Es ist eine Schönheit, die nur die Männer ruft; sie aber war schön für alle. Schön war sie, vollkommen die zarte Haut, die Tönung von altem Elfenbein, die runde Stirn unter schwarzem Haar, die feine und gerade Nase. Dunkel und lachend strahlten die Augen; sie hatten ein sehr tiefes Blau; das sah ich doch erst in den nächsten Tagen. Ihr Mund und die Stimme ihres Mundes waren reizend wie ihre Gestalt; alles an ihr war Anmut und Süße. (Kolmar 1993: 11)

This description concurrently references and transcends the stereotype of the beautiful Jewess, as Susanna's beauty is not only appealing to men in accordance with the stereotype. Susanna is described as "schön für alle". The stereotype is traditionally an anti-Semitic construct, which exposes the conflict between a Christian world and a Jewish world in the relationship between a Christian and a Jew. However, it is the Jewish narrator who constructs the stereotype, which does not support the interpretation of a Christian/Jewish conflict. Furthermore, it is Susanna's mental illness that defines her otherness and not her Jewishness; Kolmar extends the conflict which, according to Shafi, has a specific female dimension. Shafi argues that Kolmar's employment of the stereotype of the 'schöne Jüdin' transposes "die Problematik von der jüdischen auf die weibliche Konstituente" (Shafi 1995: 209). The interpretation of a specific female problematic is supported by the fact that the protagonists are both female. Kolmar's text, therefore, offers insight into the specific challenges of being a Jewess in a modern world. Kolmar appropriates the stereotype to signal this paradigm.

In post-colonial theory, the stereotype is a manifestation of the coloniser's fears and anxieties: it is used to domesticate difference and concurrently reinforce it. The construction of the stereotype is also an expression of the dichotomised feelings

of attraction and repulsion that characterise the coloniser/colonised relationship. The narrator's attraction to Susanna is obvious in the detailed description of Susanna's beauty which impresses on the narrator to such an extent that her memory of their first meeting is perfectly clear. As the narrator begins to recall this encounter, she indicates that the passing of eleven years has not affected her memory: "Ich entsinne mich noch" (Kolmar 1993: 11). The narrator's attraction to Susanna is based not only on Susanna's exotic beauty: As discussed earlier, the narrator envies Susanna's total identification with her Jewish self and her creative existence. Susanna's unconventional understanding of the world is envied by the governess and she attempts unsuccessfully to emulate Susanna's way of life. This is most evident in the narrator's attempts to act like Susanna around the dog, Zoe, who shares a close relationship with Susanna. She tries in vain to communicate with the dog the same way that Susanna does. Her attempts to befriend the dog indicate her desire to access Susanna's unconventional way of life. During Susanna's brief illness (she spends a few days in bed with flu), the narrator attempts to act just as Susanna does with the dog:

In dieser Zeit versuchte ich auch, mich mit dem Tier zu befreunden, ihm näher zu kommen, mit ihm zu reden, wie es Susanna tat. Das glückte mir nicht. Ich war nicht Susanna. (Kolmar 1993: 46)

The narrator's inability to communicate with the dog reinforces the difference between Susanna and the narrator. The narrator's desire to be like Susanna remains unfulfilled. The dog's treatment of the narrator signifies the narrator's exclusion from Susanna's world: "Ich stieß an Zoe, sie lag auf der Flanke; sie dehnte sich, reckte den langen Kopf, ohne sich doch zu erheben. Ich war ihr nicht wichtig genug" (Kolmar

1993: 16). The narrator acknowledges that her desire to be like Susanna, or to gain access to her perception of the world is destined to remain unfulfilled: The narrator continues to be an outsider in Susanna's world: "Sie blieb mir fremd, sie lebte in einem gezauberten, unüberschreitbaren Kreise, und sie trat manchmal zu mir heraus und ich kam niemals hinein" (Kolmar 1993: 48). The narrator's inability to access Susanna's world is partially due to her own perpetuation of Susanna's otherness, which reinforces the unbridgeable wedge between both women. When Susanna informs the governess that she considers herself to be an animal, the narrator reacts fearfully, and she immediately categorises Susanna as mentally ill, distancing herself from Susanna by emphasising her otherness: "ich spürte zum erstenmal leise den Schauer, der uns vor Geisteskranken befällt" (Kolmar 1993: 19). The narrator's use of the collective 'uns' indicates not only that she associates herself with the majority, who consider Susanna mentally ill; the use of 'uns' also signals the narrator's attempts to allay her fears by locating these fears amongst those of the masses: her fears are thus justified. This resembles the 'anxious repetition' of the stereotype that Bhabha claims is an assertion of the coloniser's fears: once the stereotype is repeated, it will become perceived as truth, which in turn domesticates the difference and masks the threat posed by the stereotype. However, the ambivalent nature of the stereotype means that this fear cannot be fully allayed: the attraction to the stereotype exposes the artificial nature of perceived truths: in the case of the narrator, her attraction to Susanna forces her to review her judgement of Susanna as mentally ill. It is significant that the narrator expresses her fears immediately after Susanna claims

she is an animal. The narrator comments that, for Susanna, this assertion was as unproblematic as the articulation of nationhood:

Sie sagte das ohne Lächeln, sie stellte es ruhig fest, wie eine Frau, wenn von Völkern die Rede geht, feststellen würde: Ich bin doch Polin. Oder: Ich bin doch Holländerin. (Kolmar 1993: 19)

The narrator's comments reflect on the complexities of her own situation: as she awaits confirmation of emigration, the straight-forward claims of belonging, indicated by claims of nationhood are, in fact, deeply problematic. The narrator's inbetween position prevents her from achieving the straight-forward sense of belonging that is associated with nationhood, or in the case of Susanna, with her identity as an animal. Thus, the narrator's expressed fear of Susanna is a foil for desire: While Susanna's uncomplicated identification with the animal world endows her with an unadulterated self image, the narrator's fragile situation leaves her with no true sense of belonging. This reflects on the modern human condition in general: the narrator, as a professional, modern woman is solitary and uncertain of her position in her environment; she is the embodiment of the detached modern figure, who is characterised by an inevitable outsider status and insecurity. On the other hand, Susanna's associations with animals link her to an authentic, instinct-driven way of life, which is free from modern self-consciousness.

The main plot of the novella focuses on a love affair between Susanna and Rubin, which demonstrates Susanna's unrestricted reaction to her emotional instincts: she follows Rubin when he leaves her, because of her instinctive attraction to him and she does not stop to consider a rational reaction to his departure. In contrast to this, the narrator's existence is defined in terms of a socially constructed role, namely her

career. In the opening lines the narrator defines herself in these terms, rejecting roles that align her with spontaneity and creativity (poet, author): “Ich bin keine Dichterin, nein. [...] Ich bin keine Künstlerin. Nur eine alte Erzieherin mit zermürbter Stirn und Tränensäcken unter den müden Augen” (Kolmar 1993: 7). The lonely image created by the narrator’s tired and weary face resurfaces in the novella when the narrator reveals that her life has been one devoid of love: “Ich hatte nie geliebt. [...] Ich wurde nie geliebt” (Kolmar 1993: 42). Susanna’s rejection of socially constructed roles and rules has caused her to lead a fulfilled life, despite her confinement. The narrator realises her uselessness as a governess to Susanna, thus negating her perceived status as educator to Susanna and questioning her understanding of her role in society as she identifies herself in terms of her career: “Susanna brauchte mich nicht. Sie nahm mich an und fügte mich in ihre Welt, weil ich nun einmal da war, doch sie hatte mich nicht herbeigesehnt und hätte mich kaum vermißt” (Kolmar 1993: 23). Thus, the threat posed by Susanna is her ability to expose the fallacy of perceived stable constructs: the narrator’s sense of security in her vocation is refuted when she realises that Susanna does not need her at all. The narrator’s attraction to Susanna’s way of life can be understood as an expression of her desire to attain what is missing in her own life, namely articulation of instinct-driven urges, which are not contained by societal structures. The main event of the novella, Susanna and Rubin’s love affair, exposes the narrator’s mistrust of conventional norms and her desire for an existence like Susanna’s.

3.7 Susanna and Rubin's love affair

In the love scene, the narrator's ambivalence towards Susanna is exposed. She initially expresses fear upon being woken by the nocturnal exchange of the two lovers: "Ein Grausen vor der Wahnsinnigen flatterte hinter mir in der Nacht, eine höhende Angst" (Kolmar 1993: 28). The narrator exposes her compliance with the sane/insane binary, where the latter poses a threat to the order of sane society. The narrator relies on perceived categories of sane/insane, as she expresses her fears of Susanna, exposing the narrator's affiliation to conventional norms and structures. Her fears are also revealed to be unjustified: the narrator immediately categorises Susanna as 'wahnsinnig', despite not having located the source of the noise that has awoken her. Susanna's mental illness remains problematic throughout the novel, as it is difficult to identify the exact nature of this illness. Shafi summarises the nature of Susanna's mental illness as simply the articulation of a different way of life: "Susannas Wahnsinn bedeutet eine andere Art zu denken und Realität wahrzunehmen" (Shafi 1995: 209). This dilemma is compounded by the narrator's ambivalence towards Susanna: she fails to fully advocate the norms of her environment which categorise Susanna as mentally ill, finding herself instead, questioning the forces that have led to Susanna's categorisation and isolation.

In the love scene, both Susanna and Rubin are given animalistic qualities: Susanna's hair is described as breathing "wie ein Tier" (Kolmar 1993: 29). She explicitly differentiates Rubin from humans referring to him as "ein Meerwesen" who conceals his true identity because he wears clothes "wie die Menschen" (Kolmar 1993: 31). Rubin also associates Susanna with animal imagery, referring to her hand

as “wie ein kleines, warmes Tierchen auf meiner Brust” (Kolmar 1993: 31). The association of animal imagery with the love affair between Rubin and Susanna correlates with the function of animal imagery in *Die jüdische Mutter*. Sexuality is seen as instinct-driven and untameable by societal constraints. It conflicts with the norms of society: the narrator’s comments following her secretive witnessing of Susanna and Rubin’s nocturnal exchange reveal how she is an exponent of the conventionally accepted concept of love. The narrator makes the following remarks:

Die Liebe beider war offenbar nicht, was Menschen wohl reine Liebe nannten, was damals ich selbst eine reine Liebe nannte. (Möge mir Gott vergeben ...) Eine, die nur mit der Seele küßt und Scheu vor dem Leibe fühlt, dem eigenen wie dem fremden. (Kolmar 1993: 33)

The narrator’s understanding of ‘reine Liebe’ is a non-physical one, where the body is considered shameful. This underscores the contrast between what the narrator witnesses and what she has previously understood as “reine Liebe”, as the animal imagery associated with Susanna and Rubin adds an instinct-driven physical component to their relationship. Once more, the narrator separates her thoughts at the time of the events from her thoughts at the time of writing, indicating that she has changed her view on “reine Liebe”. She concedes that Susanna and Rubin’s love did not correspond to what she, at that time, understood as ‘pure love’. The use of the past tense weakens the authority of the perpetuated societal norm of ‘pure love’, as the narrator, previously one of the advocates of this concept, appears to doubt her own views. The narrator’s attempts to categorise Susanna and Rubin’s love as improper are inverted: the narrator appears to question the accepted concept of ‘pure love’; even her negative portrayal of Rubin as a sordid, sexually-driven man, who is

potentially violent and dangerous, is not convincing as she concedes that this is not truly the impression she had of him:

Der Mann war mir fremd, und ich wußte nicht ob seine glühende Geißel ihn zu Wut und Widerstand peitschte. Ich fürchtete ihn vielleicht insgeheim und stockte aus Furcht ...Vielleicht. (Kolmar 1993: 33)

The final word of the sentence - “Vielleicht”- sets her previous assertions in doubt and reduces her statements to nothing more than her attempts to justify her inaction upon witnessing the love affair between Susanna and Rubin. There is a hint that the narrator considers Susanna and Rubin’s love to be close to an idealised version of love. This is expressed in the narrator’s comments that the love scene appeared to her like something from a fairy tale: “Aber was ich sah, schien so unwirklich, [...] wie aus eines Buches Blättern gelesen” (Kolmar 1993: 34). The narrator also questions why Susanna did not go off into the garden with Rubin: “Warum geschah doch nichts? Warum schoben sie zwischen sich dieses Gitter?” (Kolmar 1993: 33). The railing is representative of the imposition of restrictions on Susanna to keep her isolated from other people. The narrator questions the authority of these structures as she cannot find an appropriate reason for Susanna’s isolation from Rubin.

The narrator’s recollection of this night is an interrogation of societal constructions of love. The narrator’s voyeuristic position also emphasises her envy of Susanna, again indicating that Susanna’s concept of love is desirable. The perceived threat posed by Susanna is her disruption of conventional understandings of acceptable behaviour. The narrator’s reflections cast doubt on what she has previously considered to be acceptable and places Susanna in an enviable position. Despite the narrator’s decision to keep her knowledge of this night a secret,

Susanna's concept of love ultimately conflicts with the socially accepted understanding of love when she meets the mother of her lover, Therese Rubin. Frau Rubin confronts Susanna after finding a letter she had sent to her son, in which Susanna begs him to stay with her. Frau Rubin evidently sees Susanna as nothing more than a promiscuous woman who threatens the integrity and future success of her son. This is based on the perceived indecency of Susanna's letter: "Sie macht ihm ein schriftliches Angebot, ja, ein ausführliches Angebot ... ich alte Frau würde rot werden, wenn ich noch mehr erzählte" (Kolmar 1993: 57). Frau Rubin brands Susanna as a "mannstolle, schwachsinnige Dirne" (Kolmar 1993: 58), referring both to her perceived status as mentally ill and promiscuity. Susanna refutes this accusation in the simplest of terms: "Nein. Ich bin keine Dirne" (Kolmar 1993: 59). She then reacts physically, assaulting Frau Rubin in an animalistic manner:

Susanna war aufgeflammt. Ein Zuck – ihre Finger umkrallten den Kragen, den mageren Hals der Frau. Die wehrte sich, keuchte. Ich stürzte zu, ich schrie und riß die klammernden Hände gewaltsam auf. Susanna verbiß sich; ich tat ihr weh und stieß sie gegen die Tischkante, ihre Augen waren ganz schwarz vor Grimm, sie blickte wie ein Tier, dem seine Beute geraubt wird. (Kolmar 1993: 59)

Susanna expresses her anger primarily in physical terms, using only straight-forward syntax, when she verbally defends herself, locating Susanna's main source of expression in physical, animal-like gestures. It is an expression of Susanna's violent rejection of the imposed roles that prevent her from fulfilling her instinctive urges, namely, her desire for Rubin. This scene is similar to the episode in the transvestite bar in *Die jüdische Mutter*, when Martha attacks a man like an enraged animal. While Martha's reaction was based on the exposure of the fragility of gender roles,

Susanna's reaction is an expression of her rejection of such constructed roles. In both cases, animal imagery describes an element in Martha and Susanna that is free from the imposed logic of the modern world: both women react without thinking, they engage with instinctive drives, making their animalistic expressions more authentic, as their actions are not subject to the analysis and scrutiny that characterises human behaviour in the modern world. Susanna's concept of love conflicts with societal norms and her rejection of imposed roles causes Frau Rubin to call for the re-enforcement of constrictions that contain Susanna. She calls out: "der Behörde melden ... Tobsüchtige, die man einsperren müßte" (Kolmar 1993: 59). Frau Rubin's comments reflect on the physical containment of Susanna but also on her restriction within categories propagated by the outside world. Susanna is likened to a caged animal in the connection between her imprisonment and her animalistic attack on Frau Rubin: Susanna's instinct-driven existence is kept away from society as it is threatening. The narrator's comments on Susanna's behaviour reveal, once more, her questioning of the societal constructs she was once an advocate of. Like Frau Rubin, the narrator has categorised Susanna as insane, but she is forced to review her assertions, and her inability to comprehend the enforced separation of Susanna and Rubin, weakens the structures of her environment. It is also a further reflection of the narrator's ambivalence towards Susanna: she is incapable of avoiding empathy and desire towards her, blurring the boundary between her and Susanna, the boundary between sane and insane. Susanna is perplexed following Frau Rubin's accusations. She says to the narrator: "ich will ihn nur lieben. Darf ich das nicht?" (Kolmar 1993: 60), on which the narrator comments: "Ich wußte noch keine Antwort" (Kolmar

1993: 60). The narrator's concession, that she could not explain the reason behind the separation of Susanna and Rubin, draws the narrator closer to Susanna's mindset. Unable to support the claims made by Frau Rubin, the narrator exposes the untruth behind the role of 'Dirne' ascribed to Susanna and recognises the boundary-free world of Susanna's as something more attractive than the dominant structures of which she is a part. The binary of love/promiscuity is also questioned, as Frau Rubin is portrayed in a negative light, refuting the sincerity of the concept of love she claims to uphold. Frau Rubin's excessive reaction to the letter Susanna sent to her son exposes her rigid adherence to conventional structures. She calls for the police as soon as Susanna confronts her, evidence of her dependence on established authorities. She is abrupt and rude when speaking to the narrator: "Nun, was sagen Sie, Fräulein?" (Kolmar 1993: 57). This contrasts starkly to how the narrator has previously portrayed Susanna and Rubin's nocturnal exchange in the garden. Later, the narrator reveals her lack of understanding for love: she questions her ability to categorise Susanna and Rubin's love as an 'impure love', choosing not to judge Susanna and Rubin, as she had initially done when she saw them in the garden. She concedes that she has never experienced love: "Ich wurde nie geliebt. [...] Ich wußte nichts. Ich hatte nie geliebt" (Kolmar 1993: 42). Again, by using the past tense, the narrator implies that she has learned something about love from the story of Susanna and Rubin. Just as Susanna's articulation of her Jewishness is portrayed as idealistic and incompatible with her environment, Susanna and Rubin's love is depicted as fairy-tale like and idyllic; the ultimate destruction of their relationship signals the incompatibility of this understanding of love with the outside world. However, the

narrator's reflections expose the weaknesses of established norms and are a subtle critique of the society that insist on isolating Susanna.

The relationship between Rubin and Susanna exposes the narrator's ambivalence towards Susanna as she rejects Susanna's alternative understanding of love, while also desiring it. The narrator's inability to wholly abide by the norms of society weaken the structures that enforce Susanna, placing the narrator in an inbetween position, as she is attracted to Susanna's way of life but remains distanced from it. Animal imagery is used to represent what is repressed in accordance with the structures of the outside world. The narrator concedes that the accepted understanding of 'reine Liebe' is a constrained non-physical one. Susanna and Rubin are associated with animal imagery signalling the difference between their 'love' and the socially accepted form of love. Frau Rubin's adherence to societal norms exposes her reliance on stringent authoritarian establishments while the narrator's questioning of Frau Rubin's condemnation of Susanna and Rubin's relationship weakens these societal structures. Susanna's status as 'mentally ill' questions the validity of her way of life in an outside world. While Susanna is associated with an incorrupted, instinct-driven perception of her environment, this perception is not compatible with the outside world. The scenes outlined above investigate the legitimacy of societal norms and call for a re-evaluation of previously accepted categories such as sane/insane and love/promiscuity.

3.8 Susanna's death: discontinuation of community

The concept of communal existence is refuted in the novella as each character is isolated and detached from a community or family. The governess, Susanna and her guardian Justizrat Fordon are all isolated and solitary figures. There are no married couples, no children and no communities associated with any of the figures. Justizrat Fordon is a bachelor, the governess describes herself as a tired old woman and Susanna is denied the opportunity to have human friends, let alone marry. Even Frau Rubin is left without her son as he leaves for Berlin. The contrast between Susanna and the narrator and her guardian exposes the fallacy of modern concepts of belonging in society: both the narrator and Justizrat Fordon are defined by their careers — a modern concept — yet this existence excludes family and community. Justizrat Fordon spends his days dealing with clients, whose role in his life is purely professional and therefore transitory. He explains to the narrator that his career is the reason why he cannot look after Susanna in his own home:

Ich bin Junggeselle, und meine Wirtschafterin würde sich, wie ich sie kenne, bald mit ihr zanken. Vor allem jedoch, mein Büro, das Kommen und Gehen der Mandanten, das taugt nichts für sie. (Kolmar 1993: 10)

Susanna refers to Justizrat Fordon as “Onkel Fordon” (Kolmar 1993: 14), which is the only indication of the family connection between Susanna and her uncle. However, Fordon separates himself from Susanna, signalling a severing of family ties and the limited role that family plays in his life.

The lack of family signals the lack of continuity, which creates a bleak outlook for the future. This is compounded by the opening of the novella, where the narrator is in an uncertain position facing an unknown future. The narrator's position

as a potential Jewish exile indicates the fragility of the continuation of Jewishness through family or community. Jewishness is shown to be both the source of shame and inbetweenness, evident in the narrator's relationship to her faith, and the source of uniqueness and contentment, exemplified in Susanna's understanding of her Jewishness. The wistful evocation of the Eastern Jewish shtetl in the story of Susanna is merely a memory for the narrator, as the dissolution of the Jewish community means that a collective sense of identity for Jews is impossible. The narrator's invocation of the shtetl in the form of the figure of Susanna is also portrayed as an inaccessible space for the narrator, who remains detached from Susanna. Both women have their Jewish faith in common, yet they are alienated from each other, as the governess has lost touch with her roots and conflicts with her Jewishness, which she sees as a 'Makel'. As in *Die jüdische Mutter*, where Ursa's death symbolises the death of Jewish lineage, Susanna's tragic end represents the abrupt discontinuation of Jewish lineage. The novella, then, is both an evocation of a sense of pride and uniqueness in Jewishness and also a sad lament at the loss of this.

The context of the novel in the early 1940s signals a time of extreme exclusion of Jewish people from gentile society, so that the narrator's outsider status can be linked to her Jewishness. This position allows for a critique of societal structures that insist on neat categorisation as the position of Jews at this time was not suitable to clearly defined categories. The narrator's inbetweenness as a result of her Jewishness means that she does not wholly fit in with societal categorisations. From this perspective, the binaries that establish a sense of order in society are shown to be based on false perceptions. Susanna's mental illness is never clearly identified;

Justizrat Fordon concedes that she is not ill, merely different. However, Susanna's categorisation as mentally ill is reinforced, demonstrated by Frau Rubin's cries for the police to lock Susanna away. The narrator's positive portrayal of Susanna and the inability to clarify Susanna's illness question the authority of supposed fixed structures such as sane/insane. Similarly, the conventional concept of 'reine Liebe' is questioned as the perceived sordid nature of Susanna and Rubin's relationship is not supported by the narrator's recollection of the events. The lack of explanation for the separation of Rubin and Susanna further underscores the inaccuracy of the love/promiscuity binary that categorises Susanna and Rubin's relationship outside of the accepted concept of love.

The death of Susanna and the solitariness of all characters in the novella signal the serious failings of modern society. The dissolution of a collective sense of Jewishness is exemplified in the unbridgeable distance between Susanna and the narrator. Susanna's enforced isolation is indicative of the misplaced position of her innocence, contentment and instinct-driven existence within her environment. Susanna does express her desire to fuse her environment with the outside world in her wish to be with Rubin. Her death signifies the impossibility of this, while also positioning Susanna's existence as an idealistic rather than a realistic form of life. Susanna's wholly simplistic understanding of her self and her Jewishness is a desirable state, yet it is unattainable in an environment where the self is subject to representation by social forces. The narrator's recollection of the story of Susanna at a pivotal moment in her life is symbolic of the narrator's lament for the lack of belonging which continues to characterise her existence. Shafi correctly summarises

the tragic end of the novella as signalling the necessity of seclusion in order for Susanna to exist truly as a creative person, a woman and a Jew: “Künstlerin, Jüdin und Frau zu sein — dieses dreifache Anderssein bedingt jene prinzipielle Ausgeschlossenheit und Fremdheit, die keinen Raum zum Überleben läßt” (Shafi 1995: 213). The dilemma of the narrator when faced with her antithesis in the form of Susanna also reflects the fundamental complexities of the modern human condition so that the three categories mentioned by Shafi could be subsumed under the general paradigm of existence in a modern world.

Chapter IV: Silence and language in *Briefe* and the dramatic works

4.1 The significance of silence for Kolmar

The interpretation of the thematic development of silence in Kolmar's oeuvre is informed by the significance of silence as a form of expression during Kolmar's time. Silence and language are intrinsically linked potent modes of expression, which had heightened significance in the first part of the twentieth century, as the rising fascist forces abused both silence and language in the forms of propaganda, forced silencing of victims and coercion of speech. The misappropriation of language by the Nazis to persecute the Jewish people meant that German had become a sullied medium of expression. For Jews such as Kolmar who wrote poetry in German and contributed to the body of German literary works, the use of German in propaganda campaigns to persecute the Jews complicated the relationship between Jewish writers and their native language. The book burning of 1933, where thousands of works by Jewish writers were destroyed, is not only representative of the exclusion of Jewish writers from the German literary world but it also exemplifies how German-Jewish writers were denied the right to express themselves in their native language.

The misuse of language in the first part of the twentieth Century led to the development of the philosophical mode of thought called 'Sprachskepsis'. While language was exposed as an unreliable medium of communication, silence was considered to be a purer and often subversive mode of expression. The subversive potential of silence lies in the nature of silence as a chosen, voluntary state. A refusal to speak when requested denies access to the silent person and therefore challenges

the authority that seeks to break the silence. In Kolmar's time, silence also represented the oppression of Jews, as communication between Jews in Germany and their family members abroad was limited due to the strict censorship imposed on written communication. Thus, silence can represent both the articulation of resistance and the forces of oppression.

In Kolmar's oeuvre silence is a textual strategy that expresses the complexities of German-Jewish existence and explores the validity of the medium for self-articulation. Kolmar's collection of poetry, entitled *Das Wort der Stummen* (1933), experiments with the theme of silence in relation to the oppressive, anti-Semitic political situation in Germany in 1933. This cycle of poetry addresses the problematics of speech and silence already in the title. Many of the poems contain the date 1933 in the title, bringing the poems in direct relation to their political context. The oxymoronic title alone invites an analysis of the themes of speaking and silence in this cycle, pointing to two possible interpretations — poetry gives a voice to those who otherwise do not have a voice of their own, or silence is an alternative mode of articulation. Jewish people oppressed by an anti-Semitic regime, women who are forced to live outside mainstream political dialogue, or animals who are regarded as lesser beings than humans, are the subjects of the poems in this cycle. Poems such as 'Wir Juden', 'An die Gefangenen' and 'Anno Domini' voice the calls for justice by oppressed and persecuted Jewish people and other victims of the new political order. Unusually for Kolmar, the political context is clearly evident and the accusatory tone of the poems is overt. The voice of the speaker is often stretched to shouts, screams or singing representing the intense emotional outburst that is expressed in the poems.

For example, the poem 'An die Gefangenen' begins: "Oh ich habe euch ein Lied singen wollen, das die Erde erregt" (Kolmar 2003: 365). Singing here is powerful and earth moving and in many of the political poems, the speaker is given the opportunity to raise his/her voice beyond the normal volume of speech. It is significant, however, that the desire to sing and shout is often not realised in the poems. Rather, a resignation or a welcome acceptance of silence pervades at the end. For example, in the poem 'Der Mißhandelte', the speaker talks of his/her 'Schreien und Stöhnen' which at the end of the poem has diminished against the calm, quiet night ahead: "Nur Schlaf. Nur Stille. Nacht ..." (Kolmar 2003: 368) The silence that prevails at the end of this poem is a voluntary state, which can be interpreted as a strong stance against the oppressive regime that has forcibly silenced Jewish people. By choosing the state of silence and embracing the calm and peace associated with it, the speaker of the poem controls his/her silencing, thereby subverting the power of the oppressor.

The cycle of poetry, *Das Wort der Stummen*, has already been considered in relation to the contentious themes of silence and language. Marion Brandt's extensive analysis of this poetry cycle, *Schweigen ist ein Ort der Antwort*, explores the functions of speech and silence, where silence is often linked to a true, incorrupted mode of expression. Chantal Müller focuses on "das Paradox des Unsagbaren, das Ideal des Schweigens und die Frage, ob das Wort überhaupt als Vermittler zwischen Innen- und Außenwelt dienen könne" (Müller 1996: 51). Müller explores how silence is used to articulate an alternative form of expression that reflects on the author's decision to live marginalised from mainstream literary and social circles. However,

the interpretative approaches that have yielded such interesting findings in relation to this cycle of poetry have not yet been applied to Kolmar's prose and dramatic works.

4.2 Silence as strategy in *Briefe an die Schwester*

In Kolmar's *Briefe an die Schwester*, silence is employed as a strategy to communicate what cannot be explicitly conveyed through language. The letters are addressed to Kolmar's sister Hilde, who was living in Switzerland as a refugee; there are a small number of letters addressed to Hilde's young daughter, Sabine. The letters span the period between 1938 and 1942 when Kolmar's living conditions became increasingly constricted because of her Jewishness. Viewing these letters within the framework of Kolmar's autobiography allows for an interpretation of the letters beyond their function as representations of the author herself, although this is also of interest here. The nature of autobiography allows for a reading of the texts without the dominance of the author. As Gilmore explains, "because the subject of autobiography is a self-representation and not the autobiographer her/himself, most contemporary critics describe this "self" as fiction" (Gilmore 1994: 68). This further justifies an approach that focuses on the textual and literary strategies in Kolmar's letters. Thus, the textual devices used to describe real events are just as significant as the events themselves, as the strategies representation in oppressive circumstances can be explored.

The relocation of Kolmar and her father to a so-called 'Judenhaus' and the enforced factory work imposed on Kolmar are examples of the dramatic changes that are documented in these letters. The letters are necessarily cryptic as they were

subject to censorship; this impacts on the mode of expression used in the letters, as language cannot fully meet the needs of the author in her attempts to communicate the realities of her situation. Thus, silence, often denoted by dots between sentences and abstract references is a significant form of communication in these letters. It is a strategy used by the author to communicate what is forbidden by the Nazis to express through language, such as Kolmar's emigration plans. There is only one side of the letter exchange available: the letters written by Kolmar's sister Hilde were never recovered. The following reading, however, is based on a dual communication: between the reader and the text. The reader is actively involved in piecing together the meaning of the letters, as the silence requires the reader to fill in the gaps in order to arrive at a complete understanding of the message that is being relayed.

The restrictions on Kolmar's expression in these letters can be interpreted in the context of the genre of Holocaust testimony. In describing the difficulties of speaking about the Holocaust, due to the extremity of the event itself, Laub explains that "there are never enough words, there is never enough time or the right time [...] to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory and speech" (Laub 1992: 78). While Laub is referring specifically to Holocaust survivors, these challenges of articulation can be seen in Kolmar's letters. Kolmar's attempts at articulation cannot be equated with those of the Holocaust survivor; however, Kolmar's engagement with language and silence can be seen to stem from the injustices of a Nazi regime and the extreme violations of Kolmar's civil and human rights.

The use of silence as a strategy to convey meaning where language is an inadequate medium is demonstrated in Kolmar's references to emigration and exile. Silence is an appropriate mode of expressing Kolmar's understanding of life as an exile as there is a structural similarity between exile and silence. Both signal detachment from conventional concepts of self-definition: silence is the absence of language and exile is the absence of home. The cryptic references to Kolmar's own emigration plans incorporate silence as part of the message that is being communicated, as the reader must construct the meaning in the absence denoted in the text. In a letter dated 24th November 1938, Kolmar alludes to her plans to emigrate to England, in her request that Hilde puts the plans on hold:

Aber ich muß Dich bitten, die englische Sache vorläufig in der Schwebe zu lassen; es tut mir leid, daß Du vielleicht schon Mühe und Unkosten gehabt hast. Aber wir sind nicht Herren über den Lauf der Dinge. (Kolmar 1970: 15)

The "englische Sache" is the reference to Kolmar's potential emigration plans, which on a surface level are portrayed, in this phrase, as insignificant and nondescript. The unwritten message of Kolmar's plans to flee Nazi Germany is only communicated by looking at the silent story that is not relayed by the written words alone. The strategy of partial silence whereby traumatic events are merely alluded to is a powerful, emotive device, as the silence which conveys the message, signifies the traumatic circumstances that have caused the inability to communicate through language. In this case, the trauma is the increasing persecution of Jewish people, which has led Kolmar to consider emigration plans for her and her father's safety. Furthermore, the written text functions as a foil for the silent story, which reveals the exceptional circumstances of the author's position in contrast to the ordinariness of the text of the

written letters. The fear of the censor means that Kolmar could only indicate her extraordinary circumstances with ordinary language; however, silence carries the full magnitude of her situation which is heightened by the contrast to the written words. This is exemplified in the reference to Kolmar's relocation to a 'Judenhaus', which is communicated in the following statement: "Wir haben gestern unser Haus verkauft, müssen voraussichtlich in 4-8 Wochen ausziehen" (Kolmar 1970: 15). There is no reference to the reason for the sale of the house, or the feelings towards this move, and the letter written one month previous to this does not contain any references to an imminent move either. The statement indicates a dramatic change in Kolmar's life, yet the trauma of this event is not evident in the matter-of-fact tone of the written text. The silence shrouding this event invites the reader to ask questions and uncover vital information about it, such as the reason for the sale, which was "Zwangsverkauf von Haus und Garten im Berliner Vorort Finkenkrug, hinter Spandau" (Zeitler 1970: 234). The written text communicates only the action that is taking place but silence carries the full meaning of this action. As Eagleton explains, absences in texts can be crucial for the relaying of meaning:

What it [the literary work] does not say and how it does not say it, may be as important as what it articulates, what seems absent, marginal [...] may provide a central clue to its meaning. (Eagleton 1996: 178)

The absence of an explanation for the sale of the house signals the impossibility of communicating this through language. In this context, the censorship of the letters is the cause of the inadequacy of language, which leads to a reliance on silence so that the full story can be communicated. This strategy is affecting as it requires the reader to acknowledge that the writer of the letters is restricted by external forces in her use

of language, and furthermore, the reader must uncover the trauma of the circumstances behind the simplicity of the language. Kolmar's reference to the hassle of moving house is, therefore, a powerful expression of the dramatic changes that are being imposed upon her. She describes the moving process as follows:

Du kannst Dir nicht vorstellen, was sich seit 1923 oder schon seit 1894 in unserem Haushalte alles angesammelt hat und nun ausgepackt, gesammelt, gesichtet und zum größten Teil fortgegeben werden muß. (Kolmar 1970: 16)

By saying that Hilde could not imagine the accumulation of items in their home, Kolmar invites Hilde to consider the magnitude of this moving procedure. Kolmar's belongings, representative of her life to this date, are now to be discarded, creating a void in place of what once represented her life in her home. This void is the space that the reader must fill, by comprehending the gravity of the action. Thus, structure complements content as silence communicates the reason and the trauma of the moving process that has caused Kolmar to discard her belongings, a process that, like silence, signals absence and emptiness.

4.2.1 Inbetweenness: silence/language

Kolmar uses silence to communicate to Hilde the difficulties encountered by her friends and family members who have emigrated to South America. The cryptic expressions are characterised by the absence of detailed information, which concurrently signals the presence of the censor. The reader is, therefore, aware if the message that is being relayed is sensitive because of the absence of important details. An example of the numerous references to the emigrants is Kolmar's mention of her brother Georg's plans, which were for him to travel to Australia and not America as

was initially the case: “Der Junge ist, scheint’s, nicht zu seinem Freunde Helmut, wohl aber zu Margot gefahren.” (Kolmar 1970: 76) The absence of detail indicates that Georg’s situation is precarious and Kolmar can only partially relay the information through language to avoid the censor. It appears that Kolmar’s knowledge of her brother’s movements is limited as she uses the verb ‘scheinen’ to describe his situation, which also signals to the reader the uncertainty of both Kolmar’s and Georg’s situation, as it is not possible for Kolmar to identify her brother’s movements with any certainty. Silence functions here as a medium of communication, which is, however, only accessible by an informed reader. The names mentioned in the letter are those of Kolmar’s extended family members, which would have also been known to Hilde. Thus, silence carries the full meaning of the message in a coded form, as the information relayed in the text connects to the silent story only if the reader is familiar with the circumstances to begin with.

Kolmar’s reliance on silence to communicate her message to her sister indicates an ambivalent relationship to language. While Kolmar has access to the conventional medium of expression of language, this access is limited as she must not explicitly express what will catch the eye of the censor. Language, for Kolmar, is ambivalent as it represents both expression and constraint concurrently. This ambivalence mirrors the inbetweenness of the emigrants in South America, who, according to Kolmar, live a kind of “Luftleben” (Kolmar 1970: 99). This term accurately portrays the process of detachment characteristic of emigration and Kolmar indicates that her family members abroad live an inbetween existence: within an environment that marks belonging but detached from a complete identification

with this environment. Kolmar manages to communicate this message without referencing specifically the lives of her family members; however, she mentions locations that had specific meaning for Kolmar: “Man wird nicht in drei Jahren, auch wenn man die Sprache noch so gut spricht, sich noch so gut einlebt, Chilene oder Brasilianer” (Kolmar 1970: 99). Kolmar uses language as an example of the ambivalent relationship that emigrants have with their new country, signalling a parallel between the structure of the letter and the content. Kolmar’s limited access to language in these letters means that she relies on the power of absence, framed by suggestive language to communicate her message. Similarly, Kolmar’s family members who live abroad are connected to a new sense of nationhood but it is the distance from this identity that truly characterises their inbetweenness.

Kolmar’s reflections on the complexity of nationhood and identity correspond to the characteristics of the inbetween figure of post-colonial theory. Nationhood as a marker of identity is revealed to be an illusion, as the concept of belonging is complex, particularly for exiles who are inevitably other in their new environment. In this same letter, the parallel domestic emigration experienced by the writer is detailed and shares similar characteristics to the effects of emigration such as lack of stability, lack of sense of self and place. Kolmar’s observations reveal how insecurity and alienation from one’s environment is not solely an effect of emigration: the isolation and marginalisation of Kolmar as a Jew creates the same complex paradigm. The instability and volatile position of Martha in *Die jüdische Mutter* is comparable to the situation of the author who finds it impossible to feel at home in her environment.

Following the forced selling of the family home, Kolmar never settled in her new home in Berlin. She too lacks a secure sense of home and self:

Einer meiner Bekannten bemerkte bei einem Besuche im vorigen Jahr, daß ich, von Finkenkrug sprechend, 'zuhause' sagte, wie wenn hier in Berlin für mich kein Zuhause sei [...], daß ich so *fühlte*, wußt ich. (Kolmar 1970: 99)

Images of distance and detachment prevail here, impressing on the reader a sense of dissolution and separation. The writer's sense of exile in relation to her environment weaves a silent communication between the emigrants and those who stayed at home. Shared feelings of detachment and homesickness connect family members who never reunited; this connection is subtly weaved through Kolmar's letters as her own exile is paralleled with that of her brothers, sisters and extended family members. Kolmar's observations on the condition of exiles both domestic and foreign are insightful comments on the concept of self and belonging, and the role of silence to communicate her thoughts to Hilde represent the reasons for the feelings of detachment experienced by both Kolmar and her family members.

4.2.2 Silence as a form of protection and facilitator of apotheosis

The retreat from language is perceived by Kolmar as a method of preserving her privacy and autonomy. Silence functions as a protective barrier that allows Kolmar to retain her strength and her uniqueness as an individual, by remaining inaccessible to others. Speech is portrayed as a disrupter of silence, and therefore, it affects the strength of the inner self. The contrast between silence and speech, with the former portrayed as nurturing and protective is referenced by Kolmar when she writes to Hilde about her methods of dealing with her talkative colleague:

Ich will versuchen, mich gegen ihre Redewut mit einem freundlichen, aber hartnäckigen Schweigen zu wappnen. Das habe ich bereits getan und bin nun tatsächlich nicht so zerschlagen und müde wie für gewöhnlich. (Kolmar 1970: 18)

Silence functions as a protective barrier for Kolmar, whereas speech is portrayed as an aggressive attacker on the listener. The silence is described as firm, signalling the necessary efforts required to maintain the sphere of silence in the company of others. On other occasions, Kolmar indicates that her silence in the face of the outside world has become an automatic reaction to her environment. Kolmar explains that her gaze is directed inward signalling the absence of a connection between Kolmar and her environment. Kolmar mentions that when out walking she consciously tried to perceive the space she is in only to find that after five minutes “war mein Blick schon wieder gleichsam nach innen gekehrt” (Kolmar 1970: 24). In a letter dated 1st October 1939, Kolmar writes how this detachment from her surroundings and the subsequent retreat into silence has worsened, seeming most pronounced when she is outside, on the streets of Berlin:

Es ist inzwischen noch stärker, noch bannender geworden, und besonders außer dem Hause, auf der Straße habe ich oft ein Befinden von Betäubung, Benommenheit. (Kolmar 1970: 30)

The image of city streets contrasts sharply with the silent, almost paralysed state of the writer who involuntarily disconnects herself from the city. The silence that distances Kolmar from her environment preserves her individuality and privacy; Kolmar expresses her desire to shroud herself in this silence so as to re-affirm her isolation. She describes her ideal transcendental state, once observed in a gypsy woman:

auf ihrem Gesicht lag [...] eine undurchdringliche Stille, eine Ferne, die durch kein Wort, keinen Blick der Außenwelt mehr zu erreichen war ... und ich erkannte: Dies war's, was ich immer besitzen wollte und doch noch nicht ganz besaß; denn wenn ich es hätte, würde nichts und niemand von außen mir etwas anhaben können. (Kolmar 1970: 114)

The impenetrable nature of this distance, this silence, preserves the articulation of the autonomous subject as it is inaccessible to the outside world and therefore indestructible. Silence functions both as a protector of the individual and a separator between the individual and the outside world. The silence that shrouds the woman ensures the woman's isolation from the outside world, which is portrayed as necessary to maintain the privacy and strength of the individual.

In her letters to Hilde, Kolmar explores the connection between silence and a higher, unearthly power. Kolmar engages with theological traditions, where silence is considered to be a necessary state to communicate with divine powers, a belief that is prevalent in all theological traditions. As one critic notes: "Schweigen nämlich hat seinen angestammten 'Platz' im religiösen Lebensbereich und im theologisch-mystischen Schriften wohl aller Kulturen" (Lorenz 1989: 15). The association of silence with divinity imbues silence with pure and sacred qualities, while speech, as a disrupter of silence, is considered to be impure or corrupt. Silence as a conduit for communication with God is considered to be a pre-requisite for "die innere Sammlung, die meditative Konzentration, die Reinigung, die ihrerseits Voraussetzung ist für eine erste Annäherung des Gläubigen an Gott" (Kasten 1999: 15). The cleansing properties of silence as opposed to speech bestow speech with an inherently sinful character. The challenge of not speaking also enforces the concept of speech as a sinful temptation (cf. Kasten 1999: 14).

In Kolmar's letters, silence represents the link to divinity, enhancing Kolmar's distance from her environment. In a letter dated 8th August 1942, Kolmar describes an experience where she became disconnected from her environment and underwent a transcendental experience:

Gestern in der Untergrundbahn war mir's so seltsam: als seien all diese redenden, sich bewegend Menschen mir fern; denn ich wäre gestorben und hinaus über sie, über ihre kleinen Alltäglichkeiten, über jede Gemeinschaft mit ihnen. Solche Ruhe war da in mir, eine tiefe weilende Stille ... (Kolmar 1970: 168)

There is a contrast established between the situation of the people, who are talking, moving and engaged in trivial repetitive activities (Alltäglichen) and Kolmar's quiet, still and isolated state. This contrast also signals the separation of Kolmar from her environment and her preference for isolation and solitude, which fosters a personal, transcendental experience. The religious quality of Kolmar's language cannot be overlooked; Kolmar describes her transcendence as an ascent to a state of calm and peace after dying. The imagery of ascension has overtly religious connections and Kolmar describes her experience as an apotheosis, which grants her access to a sublime state not possible in the earthly realm. The imagery is intensified by the contrast between Kolmar's earthly position in the underground train and her ascent into the eternal, which reinforces the separation between Kolmar in her transcendental state and the people below in the underground train. Kolmar's calm and peace is also described as long lasting, whereas the people are talking and moving, actions that are fleeting and repetitive.

4.2.3 Nature: Access to alternative world

In Kolmar's letters silence is linked to nature, as Kolmar's withdrawal from public and social life and her consequent silence in the face of the outside world, facilitates a connection to the natural world. The cyclical, eternal qualities of the natural world are portrayed as comforting and strengthening in contrast to the draining effects of the human world. Kolmar engages with concepts expanded by the Romantics in her expressed veneration of the natural world. This is a theme that recurs in much of Kolmar's poetry and prose, where animals are often regarded in higher esteem than people, as the natural world in which they live offers the speaker of the poems a sense of belonging that is unattainable in the human world. Animals are sometimes given a voice in the first person such as in the poem 'Lied der Schlange' from the poetry cycle *Das Wort der Stummen*, written in 1933. In the letters, the natural world is given the same veneration as in her poetry. Like silence, nature denotes a world that is safe from the disruption of outside forces. In the following quotation, the inner, peaceful realm of the writer is juxtaposed with the chaotic, oppressive outside environment:

All die Tage waren so angefüllt mit Ereignissen ... mit Weltgeschehen ... [...]. Es scheint mir, als änderten die Dinge so rasend rasch Gesicht und Gestalt; alles wandelt, ja wirbelt. [...] Und ich habe mich inzwischen immer tiefer in das Bleibende, das Seiende, das Ewigkeitsgeschehen zurückgezogen (dies Ewigkeitsgeschehen braucht nicht nur 'Religion', es kann auch 'Natur', kann auch 'Liebe' heißen)." (Kolmar 1970: 29-30)

The general terms 'Ereignisse' and 'Weltgeschehen' are the only indicators that the society in which Kolmar was living was changing beyond recognition. Focusing on what is not said here, filling in the blanks denoted by the dots, reveals the dramatic

changes that Kolmar was experiencing. The sale of the family home and the enforced factory work that was imposed on Kolmar are not referenced here but can be understood as the events that were effecting the rapid changes in Kolmar's life. Kolmar's reaction to this is to indulge in the 'Ewigkeitsgeschehen', eternal things that cannot be disrupted by the changes taking place around her. She mentions religion, nature and love without giving the reader any further details, thus preserving this realm as a private one. In the same letter, Kolmar expresses her longing for nature, which she enjoyed at her previous home in Finkenkrug:

Vielleicht ist es auch gar nicht F., was mir fehlt, sondern eben das Bleibende, Tier und Pflanze, das Immerwiederkehrende, im Vergehen und Werden Beständige. (Kolmar 1970: 31)

Kolmar displays a longing for the seasonal, cyclical mode of the natural world, which is beyond the control and disruption of the human world. The natural eternal cycle transcends the imposed order of a man-made society and there is a sense that Kolmar finds strength and comfort in the cycle of nature that is impervious to human action. The image of nature is devoid of associations with the Darwinian, savage concept of nature. Nature conforms to Kolmar's needs, as she sees the renewal and regenerative properties of nature as comforting. Kolmar's silence towards her peers, allows her to perceive the natural world, which, for Kolmar, is not silent; rather it speaks a language to her that is consoling and inspiring:

Auf den rosa Blütchen der Fetthenne im Balkonkasten krabbelten eben zwei Bienen herum; es klingt lächerlich: ihr Anblick rührte mich so — mir schien, daß ich seit undenklicher Zeit keine Bienen gesehen. Ihr Gesumm sprach mir irgendwie von all dem Grünen, Blühenden, Wachsenden, Fruchttragenden, was ich hier vermisse. (Kolmar 1970: 74)

The unwritten context of this letter is reflected by the fecund, regenerative properties of nature, directly opposing the destructive Nationalist Socialist agenda which prevailed at the time this letter was written in 1940. The regeneration and resilience of the natural world ignites a personal, emotional reaction in Kolmar ('ihr Anblick rührte mich so'), that enables her to aspire towards achieving the same resilience in her own life. Kolmar attributes the natural world with the ability to secure her sense of self, regardless of how much her environment attempts to destroy her autonomy. Recalling her rather gloomy birthday celebrations, Kolmar tells her sister that the will to maintain a positive, affirming self, termed by Kolmar as "das innere Licht", is becoming increasingly difficult to summon:

Ich weiß es wohl, ich sollte mich von dem Duster rundum nicht überwältigen lassen, sondern das 'innere Licht' anzünden; aber dieses Wissen hilft mir oft wenig — wenn ich nämlich das Licht zum Anzünden durchaus nicht finden kann. (Kolmar 1970: 38)

However, a brief but overwhelming experience allows Kolmar to envisage the strength and power that she derives from nature:

Im Sommer kam noch der Glanz von irgendeinem schönen Baum unterwegs, einem Goldregen, einem Fliederstrauch im Vorgarten eines Hauses, der hielt dann auf kurze Zeit vor; freilich ließ er mich Finkenkrug wie ein verlorenes Paradies sehen. (Kolmar 1970: 38-39)

Kolmar is drawn to her previous home in Finkenkrug which was located in a green area and imbued with idyllic landscapes and scenery. Describing Finkenkrug as a 'verlorenes Paradies' links the author wholly with her natural environment, as the very word paradise invokes the image of total harmony with one's surroundings. Paradise has religious associations, so that the natural environs of Finkenkrug take on meaning beyond their earthly location. Kolmar evokes the concept of the significance

of nature that transcends the human world. This paradise is, however, “verloren” as Kolmar is not surrounded by nature in her current location. Kolmar manages to partially retrieve this paradise, and consequently her ‘inner light’ when she receives a present of a candle from her relation Suse:

am nächsten Morgen, kam ein nachträgliches Geburtstagpäckchen für mich von Suse, und es enthielt neben guten eßbaren Dingen ein gelbes Wachslight. Ich mag den Duft dieser Lichter schon gern, er erinnert mich immer an Sommer und Blüten und Bienen; hier aber war noch dies, daß jemand tatsächlich auf meine Frage zu antworten schien und mir sagte: ‘Hier hast du das Licht, das du suchst’ Und nun ist es in mir ein bißchen heller ... [...]. (Kolmar 1970: 41)

The kind gesture of a relative restores Kolmar’s determination to keep going but it is the vision of nature, the thought of summer and blossoming flowers that Kolmar associates with the candle, which restores her inner strength and preserves the private realm that allows Kolmar to maintain her autonomy and subjectivity.

In a letter dated 25th November 1941, Kolmar reinforces her understanding of nature as a representation of a higher power that transcends the earthly realm. Quoting from Estaunié, Kolmar refers to the purpose of the natural world, which may not have relevance within the ordinary realms of perception:

Am Schlusse einer Erzählung von Estaunié finden Kinder bei einem Ausflug auf einem nur durch Kletterkünste erreichbaren Felsstück noch Blumen. Der Junge meint ungehalten: ‘Die sieht doch keiner; wozu blühen die denn hier?’ Und das Schwesterchen antwortet: ‘Damit die Welt schön ist, wenn die Sonne sie ansieht.’ So denk ich auch ... (Kolmar 1970: 116)

The sun can be understood as a metaphor for a higher, natural power for which the flowers have significance. The isolated location of the flowers means that they carry no meaning within their earthly surroundings. However, Kolmar links nature with a

transcendental power for which invisible and inaudible creations, such as the flowers, have a purpose.

In Kolmar's letters, nature represents a power that is silent as it is not recognised within the ordinary realms of perception. Silence in association with nature represents the possibility of alternative forms of existence. The description of natural creations in Kolmar's letters is focused on the visual aesthetics of nature which communicates the transcendental significance of nature. Nature is outside the structures of a man-made environment and consequently not part of any linguistic framework. Thus, nature communicates its transcendental significance to Kolmar through silence, reinforcing Kolmar's belief in a higher, natural and silent power.

4.2.4 Letters to Sabine: silence overcoming separation

Kolmar's letters to her niece, Sabine Wenzel, partially compensate for the absence of Kolmar in her niece's life. The separation of Kolmar and her family members was characterised by silence expressed in the physical distance between them and in Kolmar's written correspondence, which communicates as much through silence as it does through language. In the letters to her niece, Kolmar uses the motif of silence to communicate fairytales. By employing the motif of silence in her communication, Kolmar attempts to overcome the physical distance between them by using silence as a connecting, rather than a separating device.

Shafi correctly points out that the letters to Sabine, fondly referred to as 'Ungeheuer' by Kolmar, have been unduly overlooked in readings of Kolmar's *Briefe an die Schwester Hilde* (cf. Shafi 2000: 113). The letters have a poignantly personal

tone typical of messages intended for a loved one and they contain thematic similarities to the letters Kolmar addressed to her sister. Like the affirming and protective properties of silence and nature, the imagined journeys and recalled memories, which fill the pages of the letters to Sabine, restore the writer's personal strength and contentment. Kolmar also displays her intuitive knowledge of the young childhood imagination, describing in great detail fairytale scenarios. Shafi argues that Kolmar avoids any mention of her own grim situation in these letters: "The notes show her completely attuned to the mind and world of a little girl and they reveal nothing of her own oppression" (Shafi 2000: 113). While Kolmar does not explicitly refer to her own situation, the subtext of these letters is unavoidable to a modern reader. Described by Eagleton as "the unconscious of the work itself" (Eagleton 1996: 155), the subtext emerges in the gaps between words, the missing link when Kolmar abruptly changes the subject, or the spaces denoted by an incomplete sentence.

In a letter dated 31st October 1939, Kolmar dedicates an eloquently written fairytale to Sabine on her birthday. The tale of 'Doktor Goldhärchen' recounts the travels of the young boy 'Goldhärchen' in a magic soap bubble which travels across Europe to visit Sabine in Switzerland, taking Kolmar as a passenger. Images of free, boundless travel are elegantly created as Kolmar describes the journey:

und dann würde ich mich in die Seifenblase wie in eine Riesenglaskugel setzen und dahinschweben über Berge, Täler und Flüsse, über Städte und Dörfer, die dann tief, tief unter mir lägen und aussähen, so winzigklein wie die bunten Holzhäuschen aus einem Baukasten. Und immer noch weiter, würde ich fliegen über Felder und Wälder ... (Kolmar 1970: 36)

The image of travelling in a soap bubble indicates a silent presence: the bubble, like the glass ball, is transparent so that the occupants can see the landscape. However, the bubble is travelling above the houses and mountain tops, and is therefore invisible to the inhabitants of the towns and cities. Silence, manifested in the invisible, inaudible bubble, is a connecting device as the bubble is travelling to meet Sabine. The bubble can also be understood as a protective shield in accordance with the function of silence as a form of shelter from the outside world. The bubble represents an enclosed, isolated space that avoids interference from other public spaces, as it is travelling at a height. The elevation of the bubble above the cities and towns links the refuge of silence that the bubble represents, with a transcendental state. This is further evinced in the description of the underlying houses as “winzigklein wie die bunten Holzhäuschen aus einem Baukasten.” This endows the observer of the landscape below with control and power, as the houses are perceived as diminutive and thus subject to arrangement by the observer.

The additive nature of the description resembles techniques used in fairytales; however, it also symbolises the connection that the soap bubble offers. By adding to the list of underlying objects, for example, in the reference to “Berge, Täler und Flüsse”, the image of travel and movement is evoked, so that the bubble is portrayed in transit as it connects Kolmar to Sabine. Furthermore, the connecting possibilities of this mode of transport — symbolically speaking, of the medium of silence — are portrayed as endless in the reference to the ever increasing height that the bubble reaches (“und immer noch weiter”).

In her fairytale, Kolmar arrives at her sister's doorstep with a gift for Sabine on her birthday:

Und nun gratuliere ich dem Ungeheuer und schenke ihm die große Puppe, und dann wird mit Kaffee und Kuchen der Geburtstag gefeiert. (Kolmar 1970: 37)

This hopeful image is described here in the present tense allowing the writer and presumably the recipient of the letter to revel in the imagined situation. The elated tone of the letter creates a scenario that transcends the reality and temporarily connects the author with her family. The elation of this imagined reunion is suspended by the author's return to reality, which abruptly ends this imaginative fairytale:

das möcht' ich gerne so machen [...] dann würden wir uns drei auch über das Wiedersehn freun und uns ein kleines Fest bereiten. Aber leider kann ich nicht zu Dir hinfliegen; denn ich habe ja keine Zauberseifenblase und bin auch nicht Goldhärchen, sondern eben nur Deine Tante Trude. (Kolmar 1970: 38)

Silence communicates the reality of Kolmar's situation, which can be understood behind the closing statement of the letter. By explaining that she cannot fly to Sabine because she is simply her aunt, Kolmar presupposes that the reader is aware of the circumstances that are preventing her from travelling. Kolmar reaffirms her family connection to Sabine and uses the absence of words as a technique to explain why she cannot visit. The travel restrictions imposed on Kolmar, her sister's insecure status as an asylum seeker, the increasing ill-health of Kolmar's father are just some of the real, political and social issues that prevented Kolmar from ever leaving Germany in the years that these letters were written.

In letters to Sabine, Kolmar uses imagery of dance to express her desire for freedom. Kolmar refers to her love of dance and mentions the dancer Grete

Wiebungen who she greatly admires: “So etwas Frisches, Heiteres, Unbeschwertes, etwas Sommerliches, Sommerferienhaftes lebt in ihrem Tanz” (Kolmar 1970: 75). The description of the dance conjures images of freedom, life, beauty and joy which are starkly opposed to the real situation of the writer. These contrasting images are most prominent when Kolmar reveals her own longing to see a dance show:

ich habe mir förmlich einen Hunger nach Tänzen ‘angeschrieben’ und möchte zu gerne wieder einmal eine große Tänzerin sehn. (Kolmar 1970: 76)

Kolmar’s desire to see a dance show is representative of a desire to enjoy civil rights, to be treated as an equal member of society and escape the persecution of the Nazi regime. Dance represents freedom of movement and expression; it is a non-linguistic form of communication and Kolmar employs the motif of dance in the letters to Sabine to express her hopes of freedom that she has for her. It is significant that Kolmar employs a silent (i.e. non-linguistic) form of expression to project her aspirations. Because of the interference of the censor in Kolmar’s communication with her family, language alone was not an adequate medium of expression. While language facilitates expression, in Kolmar’s situation, it cannot be understood as an accurate representation of freedom of articulation. Against this backdrop, Kolmar envisions the future freedom of her niece in terms of dance and music, which are non-linguistic modes of expression. Kolmar creates scenarios, where Sabine dances to music:

Und sie beginnt zu tanzen ... Die Schneeflocke tanzt sie, die vom Himmel herabsinkt, vom Winde verweht und gewirbelt wird und schließlich niederfällt auf die Erde. Nun liegt sie zusammengesunken da ... der letzte Ton der Musik verhallt ... (Kolmar 1970: 78)

The image of freedom is created by the description of Sabine's personification of the snowflake, which moves freely, falling from the sky to the ground. The conclusion of the dance piece signals the end of the music and the subsequent silence: the image is punctuated by three non-linguistic modes of expression – dance, music and silence. Kolmar uses dance to signal the hopes for Sabine's future success, which is also portrayed as the success of Kolmar's family line. The fictional scenario concludes with family members congratulating Sabine: "die Mutti und alle Bekannten, die später davon hören, freuen sich sehr über den großen Erfolg, am meisten aber Deine Tante Trude" (Kolmar 1970: 81). Kolmar successfully articulates her hopes of freedom for her niece by using silent, non-linguistic forms of expression.

In *Briefe an die Schwester*, silence functions as a subversive form of communication. The restrictions on Kolmar's use of language imposed on her by the censor do not prevent Kolmar from communicating. By using silence to communicate, the authorities that insist on Kolmar's silencing are challenged. In the letters, silence is essential to communicate meaning, and the covert presence of the messages communicated through silence means that the reader plays a key role in deducing meaning from these letters. This strengthens the connection between the writer and the recipient of the letters, as both are actively involved in the process of communication. Kolmar's investigation of silent forms of expression such as dance and her interest in the silent world of nature coincides with the restrictions imposed on Kolmar's access to the conventional mode of communication of language. Against this backdrop silence is portrayed as an incorrupt, powerful mode of expression that evades manipulation and misappropriation by a Nationalist Socialist agenda.

4.3 Silence and language: the nature of communication in the dramatic works

4.3.1 *Möblierte Dame*

The short play *Möblierte Dame* has been linked closely to Kolmar's living situation in the 'Judenhaus', where she resided when she wrote the play in 1939 (cf. Nörtemann 2005, p. 247). The sole female speaker of the play is thought to represent a tenant that Kolmar shared her lodgings with, whose ceaseless chatter drained Kolmar but whose pitiful situation, being a woman in her 50s with no family, led Kolmar to sympathise with her (cf. Kolmar 1970, p.18). The second character in this short play does not have any dialogue; the reader is aware of her existence because the speaker directs her words to a person. The speaker puts questions to the other character and then responds to the answers to these questions, although these answers are not outlined in the written text. One example is when the speaker of the play mentions her trip to the doctor, who has advised her not to eat certain foods. We can deduce from the text that the second character has asked her what foods she can eat:

Ich sollte hungern! Kein Fleisch essen, keine Mehlspeisen, Reis, Nudeln, Kuchen ...
Was ich sonst essen sollte? Das hat er mir nicht erklärt. (Kolmar 2005: 148)

The structure of the dialogue is formed in the manner outlined in the above quotation, so that the silent character's contributions to the conversation are deduced from the speaker's apparent responses. Focusing on the theme of silence, we can see how this play, termed "eine kleine Farce" (Nörtemann 2005: 247), explores deeper notions of self-preservation and questions the validity of language as a form of communication.

The structure of the play employs techniques common to modernist theatre such as the theatre of the absurd. The omnipresence of absence and the lack of plot

and character development link this play to the structure of absurdist plays where “the absence of plot serves to reinforce the monotony and repetitiveness of time in human affairs” (Styan 1981: 126). The absence in this play takes the form of silence, which functions as the second part of the dialogue. This invites an investigation of the function of silence in this play and the nature of communication through language. The absence denoted by silence is shown to have a central role in relaying significant information in the text. An analysis of the language of the play reveals the uselessness of language to communicate relevant information. The incessant chatter of the speaking character becomes a distraction from the main issues that the silence relays, so that language merely gives the illusion of progress and communication.

Language is portrayed as an inadequate form of communication, as the speaker, despite her continuous chatter, does not successfully communicate with the silent character. She repeatedly asks questions and continues talking without waiting for an answer: “Was meinen Sie, soll ich lieber Grieß oder Mondamin nehmen? Ich glaube, Mondamin ist besser für mich” (Kolmar 2005: 148). Language is also shown to be an inaccurate expression of reliable, truthful sentiments. This is evident in the many contradictions that the speaker establishes throughout her speech. One example of this is when she claims not to want to tell a story and then proceeds to do just that: “mit dem Grießpudding habe ich neulich so was Merkwürdiges erlebt – ich möcht’ es Ihnen gar nicht erzählen. Ich hatte gegessen, nur das Gewöhnliche, [...] und von meinem Grießpudding erst die Hälfte” (Kolmar 2005: 148). The speaker continues to say that her heart then stopped – a melodramatic statement that cannot be considered as wholly truthful. The speaker reinforces the validity of the story by saying “Ja,

wirklich” (Kolmar 2005: 148). The word ‘wirklich’ is stripped of its meaning, as the speaker’s statements defy logic. Language is therefore an inadequate medium to represent truth. Instead, the speaker’s use of language exposes the unreliability of words, which are not always used in a way that reflects their meaning.

The speaker’s contradictory statements lend the play a comical tone, as the speaker unwittingly constructs a self parody. She claims to be a selfless person: “Ich bin viel zu gutmütig, auf mich selbst viel zu wenig bedacht” (Kolmar 2005: 151), something which contradicts the portrayal of her personality in the text, as she appears to be concerned only with herself. On numerous occasions, the speaker refers to how hard she works. She claims to be “zu hilfsbereit” (Kolmar 2005: 152) so that she is constantly working. However, the primary subject of the speaker’s speech is food: in the opening lines, she refers to the bread rolls that have been bought for her for breakfast: “Wo haben Sie heute die Brötchen gekauft? Die waren doch *zu* lecker!” (Kolmar 2005: 147). She then recalls a story of eating too much pudding, which made her sick. The final words reveal the essence of the parody: the speaker exits to get cake from the bakery and borrows a stamp from the silent character to spare herself the trip to the post office, reassuring the silent character that “in ein paar Minuten bin ich zurück” (Kolmar 2005: 154). The departure of the speaker contradicts her claims that she is hard-working as she leaves the silent character to do all the work. Her promise to be back shortly can also be interpreted with scepticism as her talkative nature would inevitably delay her.

While the play undoubtedly has comic elements, it is limiting to regard this play as a trivial piece of entertainment which merely mocks elements of human

behaviour (cf. Nörtemann 2005, p. 279). The comic value would be just as effective, if the second character had dialogue. However, the presence of a silent, yet nonetheless communicative character warrants further investigation in relation to the function and validity of silence and language. The content of the speaker's chatter is trivial but the presence of silence reveals real political and social issues that dominated at the time the play was written. The silent character's deduced contributions to the conversation draw out the pertinent issues such as emigration and the instability of the women's situation. The speaker responds to a question from the silent character, which, we can deduce, relates to emigration plans:

Ja, ich habe schon Nachricht aus England. Ich sagte Ihnen doch mal ... meine Freundin wollte sich drüben gleich nach einer Haushaltsstelle für mich umsehn. Nun schreibt sie mir, daß es schwer sein wird. (Kolmar 2005: 149)

The speaker is led by the silent character to engage in a conversation about a significant matter. Silence functions as a reminder of the pertinent issues that affect the characters, which become lost in the trivial content of the speaker's speech. The silent character appears to ask the speaker if she intends to learn English in preparation for a potential move. The speaker responds as follows: "Nein. Kann ich nicht. *Wann soll ich* Englisch lernen. Ich habe doch keine Zeit" (Kolmar 2005: 150). The issue of learning English is relevant and significant for the speaker's situation. The silent character addresses real matters that warrant discussion given the speaker's circumstances. The speaker's response reveals, firstly, her unawareness of the magnitude of her potential plans and, secondly, the irrelevance of her current day-to-day activities. The speaker claims to be too busy with household chores and family visits to learn English; however, the reality of her situation means that these activities

are irrelevant as her existence as a Jewish woman is devoid of meaning in her environment; this is exemplified in the potential emigration plans, which are the result of the perceived worthlessness of Jews. The speaker unwittingly alludes to the pointlessness of her tasks when she recalls her former position as an accountant and office manager: “Ich kann mir gar nicht mehr vorstellen, daß ich mal Buchhalterin war, Büroleiterin in einer großen Firma, die rechte Hand vom Chef” (Kolmar 2005: 151). The formulation establishes a contrast between the speaker’s former job and her current tasks, which are consequently perceived as insignificant. The unwritten story explaining why she is no longer in this position is reflected in the words that follow: “Und nun ...” (Kolmar 2005: 151) The dots following the words denote silence and absence, which communicate the reasons for the dramatic changes in the speaker’s life. Silence reflects the realities of the civil restrictions imposed on the speaker and the persecution she is subject to as a Jew, which have led to her current circumstances living in a *Judenhaus* carrying out meaningless tasks. The constant presence of the silent character in this play signals the omnipresence of these oppressive constraints, even if every day activities, such as the household chores of the women, evade referencing such issues.

Silence functions as a reminder of the serious issues of relevance to the characters and in so doing questions the validity of language as a form of rendering meaning to experience. As discussed above, the contradictions of the speaker’s speech lend this play its comic value. These contradictions also attribute a sense of meaninglessness and ridicule to language itself, when the actual issues, relayed in the silence of the text are taken into consideration. The existential challenges faced by

both characters are heightened by their circumstances which negate any purpose that these women have in relation to their environment because of their Jewishness. Language is shown to be an inadequate medium to comprehend or deal with these challenges; the woman's chatter serves only to reinforce the existential reality as her conversation fails to generate meaning as she does not relay significant information or make any progress. The speaker's departure to the bakery links the end of the play with the opening, which is heralded by a reference to bread just bought in the bakery. Thus, the speaker is repeating an action which took place at the beginning, indicating the lack of progress, development and, therefore, meaning of her actions. The speaker also repeats herself. On numerous occasions she begins a story conceding that she has already told this story before: "Ich sagte Ihnen doch mal" (Kolmar 2005: 149), "ich hab' Ihnen wohl erzählt" (Kolmar 2005: 150). The speaker's language offers no new insights as she recounts stories she has told before. The senselessness of the speaker's circumstances is reflected in her language which fails to provide a resolution or an explanation for the precarious challenges that the speaker faces. The continuous chatter of the speaker gives the illusion of progress and communication; however, the content of her speech is exposed as trivial, repetitive and meaningless against the backdrop of the real issues that are represented by the presence of silence.

The silent character's withdrawal from language means that she is not subject to the ridicule and self-parody that the speaker's language constructs. When contrasted against language, which is portrayed as nonsensical and unreliable, silence is characterised as pure and authentic. The omission of the silent character's part of the dialogue can be understood as an exploration of silence as a coping mechanism

within a corrupt environment. The 'Judenhaus' is an imposed space imbued with the persecutory agenda of a Nazi society that believed in the worthlessness of Jews. This environment deepens the existentialist crisis, whereby the individual must attribute meaning to his/her existence. As discussed above, language enhances the futility of existence within this environment. The silence of the second character which communicates the realities of the circumstances in the Judenhaus represents an acknowledgement of these realities. Silence also preserves the silent character's dignity and privacy and prevents her situation from being trivialised by language. Silence functions as a protective layer for the second character as she remains indecipherable and thus inaccessible to the reader. Her part in the dialogue is solely focused on the speaker's story; the one time she is asked for her opinion, she does not appear to give it. Instead, she changes the subject asking the speaker if she has heard news about emigrating to England:

Ob ich die Dose aufmache? [...] und ein paar Stückchen Ananas zu meinem Pudding esse? Aber ich glaube, das paßt nicht ...was meinen Sie?
Ja, ich habe schon Nachricht aus England. (Kolmar 2005: 149)

The matter upon which the silent character's opinion is asked is undeniably inconsequential; however, this extract stands out as the single moment when the speaker asks for the opinion of her colleague and it is significant that this is not given. Silence shields the reader from achieving any in-depth understanding of the silent character and access to her thoughts and opinions is denied. This contrasts sharply with the speaker of the play who reveals her opinion on all matters and this serves to overshadow the silent character, allowing her to revel in a private sphere that almost goes unnoticed. The silence that is represented by the second character is nonetheless

a potent medium, communicating the context of the story: an oppressive society under Nazi control. That the silent character communicates this context while remaining detached from it, signifies a personal triumph on behalf of this character: she remains distanced from the reader and the speaker, withholding her personal thoughts and opinions for herself, protecting a private realm that is detected in this text but not accessed.

4.3.2 *Nacht*: Silence as connector to the gods and the failings of language

The title of Kolmar's first drama describes the setting: all action takes place at night on the island of Rhodes. Kolmar's first dramatic work was written between 17th March 1938 and 15th June 1938. Kolmar sent the play to her sister Hilde in Switzerland, which ensured its safe keeping. In 1994, a bilingual (Italian and German) publication signalled the first publication of the play. The play was performed at the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus in 2000; the performance received mixed reviews citing Kolmar's skill as a lyric poet as both an advantage in terms of the quality of the language and a disadvantage, as this language was perceived to be too ornate for the stage (cf. Nörtemann 2005, p. 290-292). Regina Nörtemann's publication of Kolmar's complete dramatic works is the only other publication of the play to date. Kolmar's work correlates with reworkings of the story of Tiberius in the early part of the twentieth century such as Ludwig Strauß' drama *Tiberius*, which was written in 1924 (cf. Nörtemann 2005, p. 267).

Kolmar uses the framework of antiquity to engage with issues that can be understood as timeless. The play opens with the portrayal of the protagonist, Tiberius,

as a loner, searching for meaning beyond his earthly environment. This search for sense and meaning leads him to explore the world of the gods. In a conversation with his close friend Nerva, Tiberius is introduced as an unsettled figure, discontent with his position in the world. He sees the source of his solace in the world of the gods:

NERVA *behutsam* Und du? Und dein Schicksal?

TIBERIUS Ein dumpfer Schlund mit zwei Munden. Ich bin durch den ersten eingegangen und stocke nun und taste und habe in Düsternissen die Fackel des Gottes erfleht. (Kolmar 2005: 107)

Tiberius expresses his desire for guidance and wisdom and signals that the gods provide what he is searching for and the gods will determine the nature of his fate. The theme of attributing meaning to existence is at the core of the play, as Tiberius' engagement with the world of the gods is expressive of his search for a sense of purpose in his environment.

Silence represents the existence of a higher power that cannot be accessed within human realms of perception. The gods are present throughout the entire play, yet their presence is a silent one, as they are not characterised in the play. Tiberius and the priest indicate the presence of the gods, as they believe that they have received messages from them. In reference to a dream he had in which flames spelled out the letters I, S, T and A, Tiberius describes the communication from the gods as taking the form of "Lautlosen Zungen" (Kolmar 2005: 108). This description accurately portrays the silent communication that the gods have with Tiberius and the priest: the gods are present, communicative but inaudible to the majority of people.

In keeping with the role of silence in religious traditions as an agent to foster communication with divine powers, silence in *Nacht* is a key factor in allowing

Tiberius to access the immortal world of the gods and to observe the infinite, cyclical processes of his natural environment. In the opening scene Tiberius advises Nerva to remain silent so that he can hear the language of nature and the gods:

Wenn auch du verstummst, wirst du fern eines Vogels klagenden Ruf vernehmen. Und im Emporschaun die Weisungen der Gestirne. Zu uns redet die Nacht, wenn wir schweigen. Ihr Wort ist karg und groß. (Kolmar 2005: 106)

Silence, portrayed as a prerequisite for connection with the world of nature and the gods, is invested with meaning linked to realms beyond the human bounds of perception. The implication that silence facilitates access to the gods indicates that higher powers are located in a non-linguistic realm.

This is demonstrated when Tiberius prepares to communicate with the goddess, Ishtar. The scene takes place at night where the silence of the natural environment facilitates the connection to the gods. There is a full moon: “*Vollmondnacht. Leichte Wolken, Wind*” (Kolmar 2005: 112) and only Tiberius’ dumb slave accompanies him as he silently prepares the area for a burnt sacrifice: “*Stille, während der Sklave in seiner Arbeit fort fährt*” (Kolmar 2005: 112). The description of this scene draws the reader’s attention to the existence of something that may not be visible but is nonetheless present. Stillness signals the presence of the gods with whom Tiberius seeks to communicate. The pivotal action of the play is the sacrifice of the young Jewish girl, Ishta. The description of this event focuses on the silence and stillness of the night:

TIBERIUS Es ist Nacht.
Ishta Ja, Herr ...
TIBERIUS Ohne Sterne.
ISHTA *schweigt.*

TIBERIUS Es ist still. Und wir sind allein in der Stille. (Kolmar 2005: 136)

The references to silence and stillness signal the presence of an external force, which, in the context of the imminent sacrifice that is to take place, can be understood as the presence of the gods. The priest directly associates silence with the gods calling out to Ishtar revering her as the “Mutter der großen Stille, des lebenden tiefen Schweigens!” (Kolmar 2005: 113). Tiberius associates this higher power with the natural world. As he calls out to the goddess Ishtar, Tiberius references his solitude in respect of his natural surroundings: “Einsam stehe ich vor dem unendlichen Himmel über der schwarzen Erde” (Kolmar 2005: 113). The sea is described as silent but breathing: “dem schweigend atmenden Meere” (Kolmar 2005: 113). These references diminish the status of Tiberius and augment the importance of the natural world, which has a silent attribute. Once more, the reader is led to acknowledge the presence of a silent power, which, in this instance, stems from the natural world. These references imbue silence with significance, as the state of silence is portrayed as necessary for fostering communication with the gods. The representation of the presence of the gods through silence and stillness contributes to the mystery of the power of the gods. The potential powers of the gods are depicted as limitless, as their covert presence means that it is not possible to comprehend the nature of godly powers within normal realms of perception. Consequently, the power of the gods cannot be tainted by the human world so that silence represents a pure, divine realm.

The play engages with religious beliefs, whereby silence is depicted as an untainted state while language is perceived as corrupt and unreliable. Tiberius bases his mistrust of his slaves on their ability to communicate through language: “Meine

Sklaven haben fast alle Augen, Ohren und eine Zunge, die, was Augen erblickten und Ohren erlauschten, verrät" (Kolmar 2005: 111). Instead, Tiberius chooses a dumb slave to aid him in carrying out the sacrifice, as his silence means that he is trustworthy. The unreliability and therefore corrupt nature of language is also demonstrated in the inability of the characters to successfully communicate with their peers, which leads to prevailing misunderstandings. Representatives of different nations and religions interact with one another verbally, yet remain distanced from one another because of the misperceptions they have of each other (cf. Colin 1994, p. 208). Furthermore, Tiberius exhibits his misconception of the Jewish people, which is overtly anti-Semitic:

Das alles weiß ich. Ich weiß, daß sie hochmütig sind und knechtisch zugleich, verächtlich und verachtend, beschränktes, starrköpfiges, ungebildetes Volk mit sonderbaren, törichten Bräuchen ... So sind sie in Rom, die Judäer. (Kolmar 2005: 123)

This exposes a fatal flaw in Tiberius' search for wisdom and knowledge as he accepts stereotypical images as truths without question; his preconceptions taint any new information he is to learn, thus preventing him from fully achieving new insight. The irony of the fact that Tiberius expresses this view of the Jewish people as he is on the way to meet the wise Jewish man Oreb for advice, underscores the notion that verbal communication amongst the inhabitants of the island is futile. Oreb's advice is filtered through an existing negative image of the Jewish people and thus cannot be communicated successfully to Tiberius. Tiberius also fails to connect with the gods, presenting an animal sacrifice in the first instance, which was unwanted by the gods. It is only when the priest advises him to make a human sacrifice that Tiberius realises

what is required of him. Ischta presents herself at an opportune moment for Tiberius and he is thus in a position to make the desired sacrifice to the gods. Moments before the sacrifice takes place, Tiberius is still unsure to whom the sacrifice is intended (cf. Kolmar 2005: 135). While Tiberius is determined in his desire to connect with the gods, he does not successfully communicate with the gods, sacrificing Ischta to an unknown god, a sacrifice that is later exposed as futile. While Ischta is the victim of Tiberius' communication difficulties, she is the only person who is connected to her beliefs, and thus aligned with the God/gods, to whom she is sacrificed. Ischta's strong faith opens paths for communication beyond the linguistic realm. As linguistic communication is exposed as unreliable, Ischta's silent connection to the gods represents a dependable and affirming realm. Ischta's final words are affirmative: she answers "Ja" to Tiberius' prompts and refuses to flee when given the chance (cf. Kolmar 2005: 134-5). Ischta's belief in God allows her to accept her fate willingly and with confidence, a transaction that is not verbally denoted but conveyed in the silent act of sacrifice.

4.3.3 *Cécile Renault*: the dangers of language and the purity of silence

Silence and language interact in Kolmar's play *Cécile Renault*, which thematises the legend of French revolutionary Robespierre. The play was written between 24th November 1934 and 14th March 1935. It was published for the first time in Regina Nörtemann's aforementioned publication of Kolmar's complete dramatic works in 2005. As well as the poetry cycle on Robespierre, Kolmar wrote an essay on this historical figure who was a source of much intrigue for Kolmar. The text is

characterised by lengthy monologues; language is presented as a powerful medium and a political tool, as decorative rhetoric enthralls and captivates eager listeners. The title figure, Cécile Renault, is part of an audience that meets weekly to hear the inspiring words of Catherine Théot, known as ‘die Mutter’. She consoles her attentive audience as they face daily struggles with poverty and hunger and she promises that an unnamed person will come to save them. The effects of her speech on the listeners are expressed in the stage directions. The silent response represents the attentiveness and awe with which the audience receive this oration: “*Sie schließt das Buch wieder. Stille*” (Kolmar 2005: 18). Referring to his son Jean’s enthusiasm for the rhetoric of the revolution, Cécile’s father comments on the captivating and inspiring nature of words that would also have affected him when he was younger.

Was er hören will, hätte ich auch gern gehört mit sechzehn Jahren. Da fingen mir all die schönen, klingenden Worte mit großen Buchstaben an, und die Buchstaben standen in goldenem Schein wie die Köpfe der Heiligen auf den Bildern. (Kolmar 2005: 37)

The power of words is vividly portrayed as the father’s speech is infused with wealthy, religious imagery elevating the status of words to a medium of endless possibilities and boundless supremacy. Significantly, language is referred to arbitrarily, so that words are perceived solely as signifiers and what they signify is not instrumental in creating the impact. Cécile’s father refers explicitly to the sound and appearance of the words and letters drawing the reader’s attention to the power of words to entice and attract listeners. The potential of language to impress and attract young people can be understood as dangerous, when the context of Nazi Germany is taken into consideration. The power of propaganda was taking effect when Kolmar

wrote this play in 1935; by establishing untruths as facts, the aggressive propaganda campaign of the Nazis assisted the widespread marginalisation and persecution of Jewish people and other victims of the new political order. In the above quotation, the allure of ornate speeches is shown to take effect, irrespective of the content of these speeches, implying that language does not have to reflect truth to be attractive and enthralling. The fact that Jean is only sixteen also underscores the potentials of ornate rhetoric to captivate a young and likely vulnerable audience.

The dangers of language to construct inaccurate representations is exemplified in the portrayal of Robespierre. Although his name is never explicitly mentioned at the meetings of Catherine Théot, forceful rhetoric creates a thwarted image of the man, attributing him with divine characteristics. Significantly Robespierre is only introduced to the play in the third act. However, the image of Robespierre as an indestructible bringer of justice and peace has already been established before his appearance in the play. Catherine Théot, who does not mention Robespierre by name but whose references to revolution cause her listeners to assume that Robespierre is the subject of her speeches, refers to the revolutionary figure as a man with messianic qualities.

Er wird in der Linken die Waage halten und in der Rechten das Schwert. [...] Er wird nicht gewaltig schreiten wie Simson noch strahlen wie Absalom. [...] Doch eines Tages wird er gekleidet stehn mit der Farbe des Himmels, und Blumen bringt er in seiner Hand und die Garbe aus der uns das Brot kommt. Und seine Namen sind: Der Reine. Der Unantastbare. Der Unbestechliche. Und wenn ihr nicht wißt, so schweiget; verrätet ihn nicht. Denn es muß alles verborgen bleiben bis zur Stunde des Urteils ... (Kolmar 2005: 17)

Robespierre is elevated beyond an earthly existence. There is a fusion of biblical, natural and fantastic images used to characterise this mysterious figure. The fact that

he is not named increases the sense of mystery and thus compounds the excessive description of Robespierre as a saviour. The absence of Robespierre's name and the reference to the necessary secrecy of his location allow for representations of the man which deviate from reality, as the claims made in the above speech cannot be proved nor disproved. When we are finally introduced to Robespierre in Act III, Scene I, he reveals characteristics that do not meet the expectations of an invincible saviour. He is described as a "klein und schlank" and his lodgings are modest, comprising of "ein schmaler einfenstriger Raum mit bescheidener Einrichtung"(Kolmar 2005: 52). The unreliability of language is exposed here as Robespierre's physical appearance does not meet the expectations created by the excessive rhetoric of Catherine Théot and other followers. Robespierre also reveals his disdain for rumours and idolisation, which are a perversion of the truth. In England he feels misrepresented as images of him depict a vicious and ruthless leader: "In London zeichnet man Bilder von mir, wie ich dürstend über den Menschen liege und an ihren Adern sauge" (Kolmar 2005: 54). Robespierre also feels misunderstood in his own country: "Ich kenne all ihre Reden. Sie schelten mich Tyrann" (Kolmar 2005: 54). These quotations no doubt play a part in defending the historical figure that Kolmar greatly admired and who she felt was misrepresented and misunderstood (cf. Shafi 1995). The quotations are also examples of the potential dangers of language as it is merely through words that Robespierre feels his reputation has been tarnished. Language is shown to be an unreliable medium of communicating truths. Furthermore, the disparity between expectations and reality underscores the extent to which language can deviate from truth and the powerlessness of misrepresented persons in the face of inaccurate

images. The fact that Robespierre's tarnished image is portrayed outside of his country indicates the extensive influence that language can have, while also signalling the inability of Robespierre to control his representation.

The misrepresentations of Robespierre, which have been constructed by decorative language contribute to the death of the title figure, Cécile Renault. Having been captivated by the words of Catherine Théot, Cécile brings a knife with her and attempts to martyr herself before Robespierre in an act that expresses her worship of him as the Messiah. Cécile is condemned to death as her act is misunderstood as the attempted murder of Robespierre. As in the play *Nacht*, dialogue fosters miscommunication which is the impetus for the tragedy that unfolds.

While language is revealed to be a dangerous medium, indirectly causing the death of the innocent Cécile Renault, silence is depicted as a pure, incorrupted realm linked closely to nature and eternity. Significantly it is Robespierre, known as a ruthless, violent tyrant by some, who expresses his admiration for the natural world which is given silent and peaceful attributes. Robespierre speaks eloquently about the beauty of roses which, "blühen so still" and when the noise of the world is silenced the roses, "singen mit ihrem Wohlgeruch ein Lied, das nur Freunde vernehmen" (Kolmar 2005: 56). This peaceful, serene image contrasts starkly with the violence with which Robespierre is associated and contributes to the defence of Robespierre as a man who is perhaps often misunderstood. The description of Robespierre defies expectations, which can be understood as a warning that language is unreliable, particularly when it is used as a political tool to impress certain images on the public.

Robespierre indicates his belief in an alternative sphere outside the normal realm of perception. Again, this defies expectations, as Robespierre is removed from the political framework that he is traditionally associated with and given attributes such as philosophical insightfulness. Robespierre contemplates his position in the world, using imagery of silence to investigate the purpose of his existence:

Ich strecke zuweilen die Hand hinaus aus meinem Leben ... und suche die Wand, daran ich mich stützen mag und suche vergebens ... Da ist nichts Sicheres. Nur die schweigsame Erde unter den Füßen, nur das stumme Blau unterm Haupt. In dieser Erde werde ich liegen, und in diesem Himmel werde ich sein. Der Tod ist Beginn, nicht Ende. (Kolmar 2005: 57)

Silence is depicted as the source of security and meaning, which is linked closely to the natural world. Silence is associated with death, which consequently is embraced as a state of calm and peace. The earth and sky are given silent qualities; thus, silence can be understood here as a figurative term that denotes calm and peace, as silence cannot be attributed to the sky and the earth in the literal sense. Robespierre alludes to the existence of a higher natural power which offers him comfort. Again, this defies expectations, as Robespierre signals that his true purpose is located beyond his immediate environment. This contradicts the image a man wholly devoted to his political cause, whose purpose is to bring justice and save his people. Robespierre's deviation from the constructed images that misrepresent him expose the weaknesses of following passionate and convincing rhetoric in a political context. As the subject of emotive and exaggerated speeches, which lead young people such as Cécile and Jean to devote themselves to a political cause, Robespierre negates the validity of such political causes in his revelation that he sees no sense of purpose within his

environment, and, therefore, within the framework of the political cause that he advocates.

While silence is portrayed here in positive terms, it must be noted that it is Robespierre's silence that condemns Cécile to death. Aware that the knife was not meant for him, Robespierre does not speak to defend her, as doing so would confirm his status as saviour. It is his silence that seals Cécile's tragic fate. In his refusal to free Cécile, Robespierre also loses his long term friend and advisor Julien, who cannot accept Robespierre's decision to condemn Cécile, who is dealt a similar fate to Ischta in *Nacht*, namely, that of the senseless sacrifice. While it is Robespierre's silence that seals Cécile's fate, it is the dangerous power of words that leads her to Robespierre initially. Against the backdrop of an aggressive propaganda campaign that was raging when Kolmar wrote this play, the theme of dangerous or unreliable language is brought to the fore, while silence is associated with purity and peace, which are also attributed to an afterlife.

4.3.4 Privileging the voice in *Cécile Renault*

Throughout Kolmar's oeuvre, voices of the oppressed are given space to speak, sing shout and cry. This is most evident in the cycle of poetry *Das Wort der Stummen* (1933), where each poem voices the needs, wants and expressions of oppressed groups such as Jewish people, women and unwanted animals. Poems such as 'Lied der Schlange' and 'Die Kröte' present animals in the first person who voice self-articulation from a marginalised place. In 'An die Gefangenen', the speaker of the poem expresses a past desire to sing an earth-shattering song: "Oh, ich hab' euch ein

Lied singen wollen, das die Erde erregt” (Kolmar 2003: 362). The voice symbolises the existence of an outlet for expression; however this voice is not always available. Paradoxically, the voice is heard in the silence of the night and animal world — a space impenetrable from corruptive outside forces and offering the opportunity for self-affirming articulation, leading to the conclusion that: “nur im geheimen, im Raum der Nacht, wenn niemand zuhört, ist solidarisches Sprechen möglich” (Müller 1996: 61).

The voices of the oppressed are also given space to be heard in Kolmar’s dramatic works. In *Cécile Renault*, the depraved Jewish man Jom-Tob delivers a lengthy monologue, expressing his ill-treatment as an individual, which also serves as a defence of the collective Jewish community. As Shafi observes, the perspective of the outsider is given primary place (cf. Shafi 1995, p. 159) exemplified in the length of Jom-Tob’s monologue. Jom-Tob’s speech is significant as he represents marginalised people, who are traditionally silenced. Through the figure of Jom-Tob, the reader is given insight into the struggles of the Jewish people, who, stifled by civil and social restrictions, were unable to fulfil career plans and who were forced to resort to whatever means possible to survive. In his monologue, Jom-Tob also engages with the prevalent anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jewish usurer. He offers explanations for his traverse to this trade which place the blame on the anti-Semitic society that stifled him with so many restrictions so that no other industry was available to him:

Dann kam ein Erlaß und noch ein Erlaß, eine Beschränkung und noch eine Beschränkung und dann ein Verbot und noch ein Verbot; der Handel hat nicht mehr gelohnt. Ich hatt’ mir ein wenig Geld erspart; das hab’ ich ausgeliehen

auf Zinsen. Ihr sagt: Wucher! Was sollt' ich denn tun? Wenn einen hungert und wer kein Brot hat, der kratzt den Abhub vom Boden. Ich hätt' gern ein anderes Handwerk getrieben, wenn ich gekonnt hätt'. (Kolmar 2005: 21)

While Jom-Tob's monologue is an expression of the voice of the marginalised and his comments offer the reader insight into the struggles of marginalised Jews, who are normally silenced, language does not alter the injustices that Jom-Tob experiences as a Jew. On the contrary, Jom-Tob's speech attracts the attention of the guards who subsequently silence him. In his final speech, Jom-Tob speaks out in defence of his people, describing the suffering that the Jewish people have endured throughout the ages and the consequent fearlessness of death.

Die jungen Männer! Die jungen Christen! Die sind neu, die haben noch nichts gelernt; ich bin das gewohnt, das Sterben! [...] In Polen hat uns das Schwert erwürgt, in Deutschland hat uns der Knüppel geschlagen, in Spanien hat der Holzstoß gelodert und uns lebendig verbrannt. (Kolmar 2005: 81)

In what are his final words of the play, Jom-Tob raises his voice triumphantly declaring the eternity of the Jewish people and heritage: "Israel ist wie der Staub der Erde; alle treten den Staub mit Füßen; der Staub aber überlebt alle!" (Kolmar 2005: 81) This scene offers Jom-Tob the chance to speak, and it appears to have no other function in the play. Along with a soldier and a cobbler, Jom-Tob is before the authorities in connection with his associations to the cult of Catherine Théot, something which does not necessarily require a scene of its own as Cécile is subsequently before the courts and the fate of the other cult members could easily have been incorporated into Cécile's court scene. Thus, this scene is open to Jom-Tob, the soldier and the cobbler to express their views and opinions. It is Jom-Tob who has the most dialogue by a large margin. As in poems such as 'An die

Gefangenen' and 'Wir Juden', Jom-Tob is given the chance to raise his voice above the normal volume of speech, which attracts the attention of the police officer:

*Er hat bei den letzten Worten so sehr die Stimme erhoben, daß einer der beiden Gendarmen aus seinem Druseln aufgewacht ist und ihn anschreit:
Jud! Halt's Maul!
Stille. (Kolmar 2005: 81)*

This abrupt interruption by the police officer ends the scene and simultaneously ends the performance of Jom-Tob, who does not reappear in the play. The silencing of Jom-Tob by the police officer allows for an interpretation of this scene in relation to the Nazi realities at the time Kolmar wrote the play. As a figure of governmental authority, the guard successfully silences Jom-Tob, signalling the oppressive forces of Nazi Germany that effect the silencing of marginalised people such as Jews. The guard refers to Jom-Tob as 'Jud' linking the enforced silencing of him directly with his Jewishness. The silencing of Jom-Tob also questions the effectiveness of loud, demagogic rhetoric. His speech offers him an outlet for his sentiments; however, these sentiments do not appear to impress his listeners. While rhetoric has been shown elsewhere in the play to be a dangerous, unreliable medium, which communicates untruths, here rhetoric is portrayed merely as background noise, which irritates rather than impresses the listeners. The prevalence of rhetoric in political contexts can be perceived as a reason for its ineffectiveness, as the content loses its uniqueness and appeal. Once more language is portrayed as an ineffectual form of expression and communication while the purity of silence reflected in Robespierre's reverence for a silent, peaceful afterlife is presented as a reliable, incorrupted realm.

4.4 The presence of silence: reflections on German-Jewish existence

The presence of silence in Kolmar's *Briefe an die Schwester* and in her dramatic works has a particular significance when the political and social context is taken into consideration. Silence is an accurate representation of the challenges facing Jews when Kolmar wrote her letters and her dramas. Representative of absence, silence can be understood as symbolic of the marginal place in German gentile society that the Jews occupied. However, the potential of silence to convey information and as a form of resilience, challenges the effectiveness of the dominant form of communication of language. Silence is shown to be a virulent mode of communication, which operates covertly and can only be detected when the absence of language is considered as a communicative strategy. Silence, then, as symbolic of Jewish existence in Nazi Germany presents the opportunity for articulation and resistance in spite of enforced restrictions on expression and communication. The ability of silence to communicate, when communication is forbidden, is demonstrated in Kolmar's letters to her sister. Silence is crucial in relaying meaning, as language is an inadequate medium to transmit important information. Language, on the other hand, is exposed as a flawed medium of communication. In *Möblierte Dame*, language ridicules and trivialises the position of the speaker and in the process corroborates the meaninglessness of Jewish existence, expanded by the Nazis. The dangers of language are explored in *Cécile Renault*, as language cannot communicate truth, which ultimately leads to the tragic death of the title figure.

The inadequacies of language are contrasted with the potential of silence not only to communicate in an incorrupt and subtle manner, but also in its inherent

possibilities for connection to a higher power. Silence is linked to a transcendental power which has attributes of the natural and godly world. Kolmar employs established theological beliefs in her exploration of the powers of silence. The possibilities of peace and contentment are shown to be linked with a silent realm that cannot be accessed within the normal realms of perception. The portrayal of silence as a pure and effective form of communication and language as an unreliable, inadequate medium underscores the power relations between both modes of expression. The associations of silence with absence and nothingness are subverted as silence is shown to relay significant information, while language consists of nonsense — this is particularly evident in the play *Möblierte Dame*. The crucial role of silence in the processes of communication in Kolmar's works challenges the dominant position of language in conventional structures where the language/silence binary denotes the supremacy of the former as a mode of communication. The nonsensical nature of the speaker's chatter in *Möblierte Dame* and the misleading rhetoric and ineffectual speeches in *Cécile Renault* depict language as a dubious method of communicating truths. The absence of language in silence means that such insincerities and impurities do not taint the authenticity and effectiveness of silence as a form of communication. The purity of silence is enhanced by the possibilities for connection with divinity that silence presents, demonstrated in *Nacht*, for example.

The use of silence as an active form of communication relates Kolmar's texts to the context of their production. Kolmar subverts the authorities that sought to silence her as a writer by employing silence as a conveyer of meaning in her works. The prevalence of silence in the letters and the dramatic works provokes the reader to

explore realms of existence outside the linguistic framework. Furthermore, the reliance on silence leads the reader to question the validity of language. In this respect, Kolmar's works transcend the context of their production as the exploration of silence and language is relevant beyond the specific German-Jewish framework.

Chapter V: Sacrifice in the dramatic works and *Die jüdische Mutter*

5.1 Sacrifice as a theme in Gertrud Kolmar's life and works

The concept of sacrifice was incorporated into Kolmar's personal life, as she perceived her life as an artist came at the expense of motherhood and a family life. In a letter to Hilde, Kolmar acknowledges the "sehr sehr hohen Preis" (Kolmar 1970: 10) that she paid for living as a poet and author. Kolmar's unfulfilled longing for a family life was partially compensated for by her accomplishments as an author; however, the distress caused by the inability to combine family and creativity is expressed in letters to Hilde, and is thematised in many poems. In the letters, Kolmar acknowledges that what she has gained as a result of the personal sacrifices she made was worth it: "Heute freilich weiß ich, daß ich beim Kauf nicht betrogen worden bin, daß was ich empfang, wert war" (Kolmar 1970: 10). In letters to Hilde, Kolmar refers to other sacrifices that were made or that may be made in the future. The sacrifices referred to here are not those that she personally chooses; rather, she is referring to what she has been *forced* to sacrifice at the hands of a persecutory, anti-Semitic society. The selling of the Chodziesner home and the compulsory factory work are just two examples of how Kolmar's personal and civil freedom was forcibly sacrificed to fulfil the requirements of the fascist regime that dominated in her time. While these sacrifices were beyond Kolmar's control, she was in control of how she reacted to them. Thus, she writes of her acceptance of her fate and in her embrace of all the suffering she endures, Kolmar engages with Jewish tradition and beliefs:

Ich will es tragen ohne Jammern und irgendwie finden, daß es ist, was zu mir gehört, das auszuhalten und irgendwie zu überstehn ich geschaffen ward und gewachsen bin mit meinem Wesen. (Kolmar 1970: 188)

While the letters to Hilde indicate that Kolmar was strengthened by her Jewish faith as her living conditions worsened, it is also clear that Kolmar was knowledgeable in religions and traditions of various cultures. Kolmar's philosophical approach to her fate and the purpose of her being is not limited to a Jewish tradition. The theme of sacrifice in Kolmar's dramatic works engages with sacrificial rituals of Greek and Jewish traditions, offering an insightful perspective on the purpose and validity of sacrifice in a modern environment.

The German word 'Opfer' encompasses the English words victim and sacrifice; the former meaning denotes the powerlessness of the subject while the latter meaning acknowledges the will of the subject: "Das Wort Opfer in der deutschen Sprache verbindet beide Verwendungsweisen, die passive juristisch-moralische und die aktive religiöse, zu einem Vexierbild" (Reiter 1991: 131). The 'Opfer' as sacrifice is traditionally a powerful figure; the use of sacrifices originates in ancient rituals where the sacrifice "ist ein Zug im Spiel der Reziprozität, das mit einer höheren Macht angeknüpft wird" (Reiter 1991: 130). The connection to a divinity that the sacrifice facilitates endows the sacrifice with an element of power so that "das Opfer zugleich einen subversiven Charakter [hat]" (Reiter 1991: 130). The subversive nature of the sacrifice is, then, always present in the word 'Opfer': a simple transition from passive to active mood endows the victim with the power of the sacrifice. This duality is important when we consider how sacrifice is treated in Kolmar's works. Sacrifice is a prominent theme throughout Kolmar's oeuvre, one that has received

limited scholarly attention (cf. Brandt 1994, Nörtemann 2005, Erdle 1988). There is not one common use of the motif of sacrifice in Kolmar's works: the act of sacrifice takes place for different reasons and with varying consequences. What is common to almost all of the sacrificial events in Kolmar's works is that the sacrificed person is female. Brandt points out that male sacrifices only take place to enact social change in Kolmar's poetry cycle *Robespierre* and her essay *Das Bildnis Robespierre*, where "das Opfer für die Revolution, also für gesellschaftliche Veränderungen gebracht wird" (Brandt 1994: 176).

In the two plays *Cécile Renault* and *Nacht*, the sacrificed person in each case is a willing, young, innocent and pure woman, whose sacrificial act is, however, prevented from taking place according to plan. Cécile's efforts at suicide are misinterpreted as attempted murder and the significance of Ischta's self-sacrifice is overruled by Tiberius, as he abandons his plans to seek immortality from the gods — the purpose of the sacrifice of Ischta. The meaning and purpose of the sacrifice is thus called into question, as both Cécile's and Ischta's death do not enact a reciprocal response from a higher power in accordance with the conventional meaning of sacrifice. The subversive power of this act is reflected in the word 'Opfer'; both women are willing participants in the sacrificial act and, therefore, powerful agents in the sacrificial process. The subversive nature of sacrifice lies in the potential of sacrifice to expose the powers of the divinity. In the cases of Ischta and Cécile, this power is questioned as the divinity does not respond to the sacrificial act. In *Die jüdische Mutter*, the brutal murder of five year old Ursa can also be viewed as a

sacrifice; however, in this case, Ursa is not a willing sacrifice, rather she is an innocent victim of a modern society.

The motivation for the sacrificed person is also different in each situation: Cécile's attempts at self-sacrifice are an expression of worship of Robespierre, who she believes has the power to change the political situation in France. Thus Cécile's attempted self-sacrifice is motivated by a desire to change the society in which she lives; however, her attempt is thwarted, preventing her from carrying out the sacrifice. For Ischta, her willingness to sacrifice herself is borne out of an uncontrollable love for Tiberius, which compels her to devote herself to him in this way. The second sacrifice in the play *Nacht* is carried out by Tiberius' mother, who kills her step-grandson in order to free the place of future king for Tiberius. This is the sacrifice that is effective in this play, as Tiberius, upon hearing of this event, returns to Rome with his mother to take up his royal duties. The male sacrifice takes place for practical, political reasons and it is the only sacrifice that retains its purpose within the social framework that contains the act, while the female sacrifice is shrouded in ambiguity and raises more questions about the nature and function of these acts.

An investigation into the use of sacrifice in Kolmar's works uncovers many questions such as the function and validity of sacrifice and the legitimacy of faith. Sacrifices are made in conjunction with their usage in both Christian and pre-Christian traditions; however, the results of the sacrifices do not reaffirm the existence of the divinity. Instead, the existence of a higher power is called into question. Kolmar engages with Jewish and Greek traditions in her employment of the

motif of sacrifice; the correlations with historical uses of sacrifice are explored in the following analysis. The deviation from the traditional representations of sacrifice in both the Old Testament and literature of Greek mythology invites further exploration into the significance of sacrifice within the context of Kolmar's time when she wrote the plays. The subversive potential of sacrifice is also exposed in the failure of the sacrifices to effect the desired change, which is the motivation for carrying out the sacrifice in the first place.

5.2 Sacrifice in Jewish and Greek traditions

Kolmar fuses Greek and Jewish traditions in the play *Nacht*; her use of the theme of sacrifice unites both cultural realms, as sacrifice features in ancient rituals of both the Jewish and Greek traditions. Because the sacrificial act is pivotal in two of Kolmar's dramas, it is useful to briefly outline the significance of sacrifice in the Greek and Jewish traditions. From letters to Hilde, we know that Kolmar was familiar with Jewish teachings as well as traditions from classical Greek mythology. She owned four bibles, including a Hebrew version, all of which she read regularly. In a letter to Hilde, dated 16th December 1941, Kolmar writes: "ich [kenne] und [ehre] die Bibel" (Kolmar 1970: 120). The employment of the motif of sacrifice is therefore imbued with the author's knowledge of its treatment in ancient practices. In Jewish tradition, sacrifices were divided into categories including burnt offering, sin offering and peace offering, with the idea of presenting a gift to God forming the basis of each act. The main functions of sacrifice were expitiatory and propitiatory: sacrifices were made to make amends for sins and to placate and appease God. One example of an

expitiatory use of sacrifice in the Old Testament is in the book of Job when Job offers burnt offerings to repent and make amends for the sins of his sons. Through the offering of the burnt sacrifice, Job hopes to compensate for the sins committed by his sons and pacify god as “the anger of God at sin may be placated by a burnt offering” (Buchanan Gray 1925: 86). This example indicates that God was powerful and feared. The burnt offering is a powerful tool, which connects with God and is instrumental in altering God’s mood. The sacrifice is an expression of Job’s devotion to God, who he does not want to anger. As a gift to God, the burnt offering is also a testament to the extent to which Job is subject to God’s power.

The ritual of burnt offerings was a form of communication between the sacrificer, the victim and the divinity for whom the sacrifice is made. The careful steps taken in this ritual, such as ceremonial cleansing of the victim and sacrificer, and sometimes the communal eating of the sacrificed animal, foster the connections between the divine and man. The victim is the conduit that links man with God, playing a vital role in the ritual, as “the participants which come together in sacrifice are united in it; all the forces which meet in it are blended together” (Hubert 1964: 44). Through the act of sacrifice the victim is considered to have passed to the divine world: it has been consecrated.

While animal sacrifices were most common, there are cases in the Old Testament when a human sacrifice is referenced. The story of Abraham who intends to sacrifice his son Isaac, but is stopped from doing so by God’s intervention is one example. In this case, sacrifice is an expression of Abraham’s devotion to God. Sacrifice is used as a tool to force Abraham to prove his faith but it also provokes

God to prove his powers by intervening and stopping the sacrifice of Isaac. The intervention of God rewards faith and devotion so that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son is established as an example of admirable devotion and faith.

In the ancient Greek tradition the basic functions of sacrifice are similar to those of the ancient Jewish tradition. Sacrifices were made to repent for sins, to placate the gods, to request help in emergency situations such as famine or war and as part of initiation and cleansing rituals. Animal sacrifices were common, with human sacrifices being the exception. However, a human sacrifice was not considered to be of a higher value. In Greek mythology humans and animals were valued equally, with animals replacing human sacrifices in a similar way to the substitute of a ram for Isaac; however, incidents of humans replacing animals have also been recorded (cf. Burkert 1990, p. 25).

While sacrifices were based on an unwavering belief in and devotion to the divinity, the structure of sacrifice invites an interpretation into the subversive potential of sacrifice. The power that the sacrifice is endowed with provokes the power of God, as sacrifice is part of a reciprocal process, which requires a response from the divinity for whom the sacrifice is made. This process has a subversive element, as the divinity is subtly questioned through the act of sacrifice and provoked to prove the existence of divine powers. Furthermore, the willingness of the human sacrifice, for example in the case of Jephthah's daughter, attributes bravery and determination to the person being sacrificed, so that the meaning of sacrifice is altered. Sacrifice implies having to give something up or to do without something; if the person being sacrificed is willing, then the extent to which something is lost or

lacking as a result of the sacrifice, is diminished. The connection to divinity that the sacrificed person represents also aligns him/her with the divine powers; the uniqueness and supremacy of these powers are therefore threatened.

5.3 The setting of *Nacht*

The setting of Kolmar's first dramatic work is a world away from the environment in which she lived at the time she wrote it. Set in Rhodes in the year 2 A.D, the legend of Tiberius is reworked. From the letters to Hilde, we can deduce that Kolmar was familiar with the historical figure. She refers to Tiberius as belonging to "die großen Einsamen" (Kolmar 1970: 34). Close readings of the play also reveal Kolmar's awareness of other versions of the Tiberius legend (cf. Nörtemann 2005, p. 263). *Nacht* was written between the 17th March 1938 and the 15th June 1938; this is deduced from the information Kolmar transmitted in letters to her sister. Germany was expanding its borders, successfully occupying Austria during this time and continuing its campaign of segregation and persecution of the Jewish population, which was to culminate in the infamous Kristallnacht pogrom in November 1938. Themes of sacrifice, male thirst for power and seemingly senseless self-destruction feature in the play; these themes connect this work to the context of its production. The play can be read as an attempt to gain insight and understanding into the mechanisms of power, which result in the sacrifice of innocent victims along the way. Amy Colin argues that *Nacht* functions as an attempt, "Licht ins Dunkel der Gegenwart zu bringen" (Colin 1994: 199). She holds that this play represents the search for meaning spurned by Kolmar's increasingly stifling environment:

Auf der Suche nach einem Schlüssel zum Verständnis der ursächlichen Zusammenhänge zwischen Machtstreben, Aufopferung und Selbstzerstörung wandte sich die deutsch-jüdische Autorin Gertrud Kolmar im Jahr 1938, als das Schicksal der deutschen Juden bereits besiegelt war, der legendenumsponnenen Gestalt des römischen Kaisers Tiberius zu. (Colin 1994: 199)

The figure of Tiberius has been interpreted as a hero and ruthless tyrant by critics, contributing to the ambiguity surrounding him. In *Nacht*, Tiberius is presented as a misunderstood, lonely figure whose insecurity in his surroundings leads him to turn to the gods for answers. Tiberius craves knowledge of the world of the gods and explores this world in the hope of satisfying his discontented existence. When we are introduced to Tiberius, he has abandoned all political ambition and instead craves isolation and immortality. To achieve this aim he offers a sacrifice to the gods, under the advice of a priest. Tiberius then cannot be viewed as a figure, obsessed with power, which is a direct reflection of the Nazi leadership. Such a comparison overlooks the sympathetic light in which Tiberius is shown. Tiberius' expressed thirst for knowledge is spurned by his insecure position, in his seventh year of self-imposed exile. He desires immortality and lonesomeness: "Unsterblichkeit. In unerbitterlicher Einsamkeit, in selbsterwählter Gefangenschaft auf einem Felsen im Meer" (Kolmar 2005: 125). Tiberius does not seek power over people, he wishes to transcend the earthly realm and become immortal and isolated from other beings. Furthermore, Tiberius' sacrifice of Ischta is not motivated by anti-Semitism, weakening an identification of Tiberius with Nazi leadership.

While an identification of Tiberius with Nazi leadership is unjustified, the motivation for Tiberius' sacrifice of Ischta lacks sincerity and exposes Tiberius'

egotistical tendencies, which cause him to crave power for his own benefit. Sacrifices traditionally held a purpose for either the gods, if the sacrifice was intended as a peace-offering or expression of worship, or for the community at large, in the form of presenting a sacrifice to ask the gods for a good harvest or protection from famine, for example. In the case of the sacrifice of Ischta, the motivation behind it is Tiberius' egotistical desire for immortality. The ritual of sacrifice, usually preserved for significant events which affect the greater community, is exploited by Tiberius to satisfy his personal wishes.

The selfish motives for carrying out the sacrifice question the validity of the ritual of sacrifice as a sacred process which is a testament to the existence of a higher power. Furthermore, Tiberius is unsure for whom the sacrifice is intended. His initial plan is to make a sacrifice to the goddess Ishtar, after seeing the burning letters I,S,T and A in a dream. However, after conversations with the old Jewish man Oreb, Tiberius is interested in the prospect of making a sacrifice to the Jewish God. Tiberius remains indecisive resolving to make a sacrifice to whatever God accepts it: "Ich opfere dem, der sie annimmt, dem, der ist" (Kolmar 2005: 135). Tiberius' indecision raises, firstly, the question of the existence of a god and, secondly, the sincerity of the ritual of sacrifice that is to take place. As sacrifices were carried out based on an unswerving belief in the deity that accepts the sacrifice, Tiberius' indecision exposes his lack of faith. His flippancy towards the receiver of the sacrifice reveals his lack of commitment to a specific set of religious beliefs and subsequently his dubious acceptance of the existence of god. The above quotation symbolises a provocation of the gods to prove their existence by accepting the

sacrifice. Thus, the sacrifice of Ischta is an inversion of the sacrifice of Isaac; the sacrifice of Ischta is a test to the gods, an invitation to prove that they exist, rather than a test of Tiberius' faith. The function of the ritual of sacrifice to facilitate communication with higher godly powers is questioned not only because Tiberius carries out the sacrifice for selfish reasons but also because he displays a sceptical view of the existence of the gods. It is also significant that the sacrifice of Ischta is ultimately meaningless for Tiberius. After the sacrifice has taken place, Tiberius' mother Livia arrives on the island to inform Tiberius that he is now heir to the throne as she has sacrificed her step grandson to coax Tiberius to return with her. Tiberius chooses to return to Rome and to his political ambitions, conceding in reference to the death of Ischta that "ein anderes Opfer umsonst gebracht [ward]" (Kolmar 2005: 144). The sacrifice of Ischta fails to prove or disprove the existence of the gods as Tiberius departs for Rome with his mother, signalling the end of the play. The effectiveness of the ritual of sacrifice can therefore not be proven. While the existence of a higher power is not wholly refuted, the insincerity of Tiberius' beliefs and his subsequent abandonment of his aims for immortality cast doubt over the existence of a deity. This creates a dilemma for Ischta, as any meaning attributed to her death is challenged. The significance of the sacrifice of Ischta must also be interpreted therefore, in terms of the senselessness of the sacrifice.

5.4 Interpreting the sacrifice of Ischta

The sacrifice of the young Jewish girl Ischta by the egotistical Tiberius can be understood symbolically as female sacrifice at the hands of the male. The sacrifice of

Ischta has been interpreted as the necessary female sacrifice to ensure the affirmation and eternity of the male self: “Es bedarf jedoch der *weiblichen* Selbstaufgabe und Tötung, um das männliche Ich in geschichtliche Immanenz und göttliche Transzendenz einzuschreiben” (Shafi 1995: 187). However, this analysis overlooks the fact that the sacrifice of Ischta is deemed irrelevant — her death does not play any part in the affirmation of the legend of Tiberius. Shafi’s argument also overlooks the sacrifice made by Tiberius’ mother, Livia. The death of Lucius Cäsar allows Tiberius to be written into history, as his legend as King will outlive him. In this case, it is the sacrifice of the male that affirms the male self.

Livia embodies the figure of the all-powerful, ruthless mother similar to the role of Martha in *Die jüdische Mutter*, who also murders her child. The sacrifice she has made is considered the necessary duty of a mother. Like Martha, Livia associates her ability to carry out the brutal act of murder directly with motherhood. Livia’s statement that “eine Mutter kann alles” (Kolmar 2005: 144) is strikingly similar to Martha’s assertions on the potentially dangerous power of the mother: “Wenn man sein Kind sehr lieb hat, dann kann man alles. Man kann sich von ihm ermordern lassen. Man kann es auch töten” (Kolmar 1999: 74). Traditional expectations of the mother figure are tested here, as the unconditional love for her child, which is considered the essence of the traditional mother figure, can enable her to do anything, even murder. The mother figure is powerful and potentially dangerous, and the exit of Livia and Tiberius into the darkness of the night, signals the threat both figures pose as they return to Rome. Livia has the final words in the play, establishing her role in the reign of Tiberius, which serves as a reminder of the powers posed by the mother

figure: “Ich bin Livia, die Mutter des Cäsar Tiberius” (Kolmar 2005: 144). However, while Martha’s act of murder was motivated by mercy and necessity, Livia sacrifices her step-grandson for the benefit of Tiberius’ political future. Livia’s sacrifice confirms the continuity of the Roman state, while Martha’s destroys her lineage, which also represents the only Jewish lineage in the novel. The death of Lucius Cäsar triggers political change, while the deaths of Ursa and Ischta have no effect on the political structure, so that the death of the male is equated with political significance and the death of the female is deemed senseless. This argument is supported by Brandt’s analysis of the sacrifice of Ischta: she views the elimination of Ischta from the play as representative of the unsignifiable woman in a male-dominated world. The stage directions accompanying the sacrifice of Ischta complement the process of erasing Ischta completely from the scene: “*Der stumme Sklave erscheint nach wenigen Augenblicken, räumt auf, zieht die Vorhänge fort, löscht die Lampen und geht*” (Kolmar 2005: 140). Following her death, Ischta is never mentioned by name and her death is referred to only once by Tiberius’ friends:

FLACCUS An Neros Gewand war Blut?
 MARINUS Einige Flecken. (Kolmar 2005: 140)

Tiberius refers to Ischta only when he acknowledges that her death was in vain referring to her simply as “ein anderes Opfer” (Kolmar 2005: 144). The silencing of Ischta is demonstrated in her absence from the dialogue, in a process that Brandt refers to as “Tilgung der Rede vom weiblichen Opfer” (Brandt 1994:183). Brandt sees the sacrifice of Ischta as representative of the erasure of the symbolic female in the patriarchal environment. Ischta is erased from the text; the sacrifice takes place

off-stage and the stage directions that represent this event symbolise the destruction of Ischta at the hands of Tiberius. The sacrifice is denoted as follows:

ISCHTA Herr ... ich verbrenne...
TIBERIUS Komm.
Er zieht sie an sich, schlägt um sie ein Gewand und führt sie hinweg ins Dunkel. (Kolmar 2005: 136)

Ischta is led away into darkness and this represents not only the death of her being but also the end of her semiotic existence as she is not mentioned by name again. While Ischta's sacrifice is certainly portrayed as a senseless act at the hands of an ambitious male, the introduction of Livia disrupts the argument that the act of sacrifice in the play signifies the erasure of the female in a male dominated environment.

Although Ischta's death *appears* senseless, the sacrifice of Ischta is attributed significance when the details of the act are taken into consideration. By locating the act of sacrifice in ancient Greece, Kolmar engages with a world where sacrifice and self-sacrifice carry meaning. The ritual of sacrifice is an unquestionable form of communication with the divine, be this the numerous gods of Greek mythology or the Jewish God. The victim is consecrated and the act of burning represents the union of the victim with the divine. Ischta displays resolute faith in God, which gives her courage that surprises Tiberius:

TIBERIUS Und dir graute nicht vor den Geistern, den Bösen der Stätte?
Deine Neugier war größer als deine Furcht?
ISCHTA Ich habe zu Gott gebetet ... (Kolmar 2005: 120)

Ischta maintains this courage derived from her faith even as she is aware that she is moments away from death. She refuses Tiberius' urges to flee him as he warns her of his murderous intentions and she affirms that she is not afraid of him:

TIBERIUS Und dir bangt nicht vor mir? Ischta?
ISCHTA Nein. (Kolmar 2005: 135)

Ischta's strong faith allows her self-sacrifice to have meaning. She understands her death to symbolise both her devotion to Tiberius and her trust in God. Thus, for Ischta, her death is not senseless as she believes in the symbolic meaning of the ritual of sacrifice.

The correlation between her name and the goddess Ishtar is not to be overlooked. It links Ischta closely with the world of the gods and even Tiberius mishears Ischta's name as that of the goddess of Ninive. These associations are brought into direct contact when Tiberius first meets Ischta:

TIBERIUS Und der [Name] deine, Mädchen?
ISCHTA Ischta, Herr.
TIBERIUS *verwundert*. Ishtar?
ISCHTA Nein ... Ischta ... Vom Esch ist mein Name genommen ... Esch,
das ist: Feuer ... das Feuer ... (Kolmar 2005: 121)

In burnt offerings, fire represents the union between the sacrificed and the deity that receives the sacrifice. The fire and ash symbolism surrounding Ischta links her closely with the ritual of sacrifice and therefore the divinity that is to receive the sacrifice. Tiberius unwittingly alludes to the close connection between Ischta and Ishtar when he mishears Ischta saying her name. The fire symbolism also attributes Ischta with life giving and erotic qualities. Before her death she tells Tiberius that her blood is "glühend" and her final words are "Herr ... ich verbrenne ..." (Kolmar 2005: 136). These words serve as the only indicator of the burning sacrifice that she is to become as this event is not played out. These references also imbue Ischta's sacrifice with an erotic component signifying her total devotion to Tiberius, and locating her

death as a death of passion dedicated to Tiberius. The symbolism associated with Ischta removes her from the realm of victim into the role of willing sacrifice.

Ischta's sacrifice can be considered meaningful in the context of Jewish rituals and traditions. The sacrifice of Ischta engages with the sacrifice of the scapegoat, which, though employed in ancient rituals of many traditions, has its origins in the Old Testament. The scapegoat was a sacrifice described in the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement. Members of the community hand over two goats to a priest, who hands over one to Jahweh and the other to Azazel as part of purification sacrifice. Azazel is a supernatural figure in ancient Jewish rituals thought to be a representation of sin. The ceremony continues as follows:

The one for Jahweh is sacrificed in the normal way, though with an elaborate 'purifying' blood ceremony; the one for Azazel is placed alive in front of the temple, the high priest puts both hands on the goat's head and confesses the sins of Israel in order to place the sins on the head of the goat; then the goat is handed to a man who leads it away into the desert and leaves it there. (Burkert 1979: 64)

The ritual transfers sin from the people to the goats, with Azazel representative of an 'other' side from the Jewish people and the desert symbolising barrenness that contrasts with man's fertility. In Greek mythology, scapegoat rituals commonly involved human sacrifice — the victim was adorned with ceremonial trimmings such as sprigs and figs and chased or led out of the town, where he was killed. The act of killing varied from place to place, with stonings, burnings or fatal thrusts off the edge of a cliff, featuring among the practices (cf. Burkert 1979, p. 64-5).

Scapegoat rituals are not unique to the Greek and Jewish traditions, with the fundamental practice of these rituals, the "driving out of evil by means of animals or

even human beings [...] reported from many parts of the world” (Burkert 1979: 66). Though Tiberius’ intentions in sacrificing firstly the goat and then Ischta are purely personal, Ischta’s interpretation of her sacrifice can be linked to the process of the eradication of sin that is represented in the scapegoat sacrifice. Ischta’s ‘Opferbereitschaft’ is linked to her desire to repent for her sins. She tells Tiberius shortly before he sacrifices her: “Ich will alles leiden, alles” (Kolmar 2005: 135). Tiberius attempts to warn her of his intentions but Ischta interprets any harm that may be done unto her as penance for her sins:

Herr, was du tust, wird gut sein. [...] mein Herz tut übel und mein Auge sündigt. Es ist gerecht, daß mein Herz zerknickt und mein Auge gebrochen werde. (Kolmar 2005: 135)

Tiberius’ gesture as he prepares to sacrifice Ischta is the same as the gesture of the priest as he carries out the passing of sin from the people of Israel to the sacrificial victim, namely the laying of hands on the body of the sacrificial victim. The stage directions are precise and the similarities with the actions of the priest in the Jewish tradition are striking: “TIBERIUS Ischta ... *er legt mit langsamer Gebärde die Hand an ihren Leib*” (Kolmar 2005: 136). This action is similar to the priest who places his hands on the goat’s head in a symbolic gesture of passing the sins onto the goat. The incorporation of the scapegoat ritual as a process of expiation endows the sacrifice of Ischta with meaning. However, it is important to acknowledge the differences between the sacrifice of the goat in the scapegoat ritual and the sacrifice of Ischta: while the goat’s death symbolises the expiation of the sins of Israel, Ischta’s death represents the penance for her own personal sins. It is her eyes and heart that are sinning “Mein Herz tut übel und mein Auge sündigt” (Kolmar 2005: 135), implying

that Ischta's sin is her desire for Tiberius. Oreb's narration of the stories of Abraham, Jephthah and the history of the Jewish people to Tiberius in the preceding scene introduces a framework of Jewish beliefs and traditions into the development of the play. Thus, the Jewish concept of expiation is incorporated in Ischta's understanding of sin, and she considers her sacrifice as a process of expiation. The revelation that her sacrifice is unnecessary does not remove the significance of this act for Ischta, as she has been absolved of her sins through this act. Ischta's death through the act of self-sacrifice functions to attribute sense to what appears senseless, or as Kolmar expressed in a letter to Hilde, "dem scheinbar Sinnlosen einen Sinn zu geben" (Kolmar 1970: 116). This reference reflects the nature of Ischta's sacrifice, as it is deemed senseless by Tiberius; however, for Ischta her death represents her union with Tiberius and God. Ischta's unwavering faith allows her to attribute sense to what has been deemed senseless by others.

The significance of Ischta's sacrifice, is, however, restricted to a personal realm as the actions of Tiberius negate any purpose Ischta's sacrifice is to serve beyond a private meaning. Ischta's ignorance of Tiberius' actions following her death preserves the meaning of her sacrifice only in respect of Ischta's understanding of this meaning. The subversive potential of sacrifice is explored in Ischta's expressed 'Opferbereitschaft'. Ischta's willingness to be sacrificed is a testament to her faith and her devotion to Tiberius; however, the expression of faith through sacrifice is not reciprocated. Tiberius' departure from Rhodes signals his separation from and rejection of Ischta's devotion, which undermines the significance of her sacrifice, as this was the motivation for her 'Opferbereitschaft'. Furthermore, Tiberius' indecision

raises questions about the existence of a deity which resurface when the sacrifice of Ischta is examined in relation to the story of the near-sacrifice of Isaac at the hands of his father, Abraham. As a test of his faith, God orders Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. As Abraham prepares Isaac for the sacrifice, God intervenes and substitutes Isaac with a goat. In an inversion of this story, Ischta replaces the goat that Tiberius intended to sacrifice initially. Another significant deviation from the biblical story of Abraham is the lack of intervention from God. Unlike Isaac, Ischta is not saved; the sacrificial act takes place without any 'message' from God. In the case of Abraham and Isaac, God intervenes to reward Abraham for his expressed belief and devotion; the intervention is also an expression of God's merciful and righteous ways. Ischta's devotion is not rewarded by a divine intervention; there is no reciprocal gesture confirming the powers of God. The senselessness of Ischta's death also indicates the absence of a merciful and righteous God. The established structure of sacrifice, where a gift is offered to the deity that is unquestionably revered in return for divine intervention is subverted in the insincerity of Tiberius' motives and the lack of meaning that Ischta's sacrifice represents.

The investigation into the function of sacrifice questions the validity of religious rituals. The ritual of sacrifice is removed from its sacred context by Tiberius, as he does not commit to a specific set of beliefs and therefore does not believe unconditionally in a deity, as is essential in the ritual of sacrifice. The senselessness of Ischta's death and the engagement with and inversion of the binding of Isaac also questions the relevance of Jewish teachings. This can be related to the context of the text's production, as Kolmar's Jewishness was considered a mark of

inferiority by an anti-Semitic environment. In *Nacht*, Kolmar investigates the validity of Judaism in an environment that does not hold the practices in high regard. The senselessness of the young Jewish girl Ischta can be understood as the difficulties facing Jews who are left to attribute meaning to their existence, which is deemed meaningless in their environment.

5.5 Sacrifice in *Cécile Renault*

Cécile Renault was written between 24th November 1934 and 14th March 1935; it was first published in 2005. This play is the development of a familiar theme for Kolmar, namely the representation of the legendary French revolutionary figure, Robespierre. Kolmar's treatment of Robespierre is informed by her extensive knowledge of the subject matter: a fluent French speaker, Kolmar read widely both German and French documents about this period in history. Thus, it is not surprising that her play, featuring Robespierre as the protagonist, is based on actual events. The title figure, Cécile Renault, is based on a woman of the same name. She was a worshipper of Robespierre who was sentenced to death for an alleged murder attempt on Robespierre. Arguments ensued over the intended target: it was thought by some that Cécile was attempting to kill herself and not Robespierre (cf. Nörtemann 2005). The historical Cécile Renault was often depicted as insane due to her romantic visions of death. Cécile protested "daß sie entweder verrückt war oder daß sie aus einem Grunde sterben wollte, den sie nicht offenbaren mochte" (Lenôtre 2005: 220). Kolmar's Cécile differs somewhat from the historical figure. The first introduction of Cécile depicts an innocent, pious girl, who carries out the traditional duties of a

woman in the home: cooking and cleaning for her brother, father and ailing aunt. The stage directions which introduce Cécile to the play create this image:

Cécile geht während des Gesprächs hin und her, bereitet das Abendessen, klappert mit Geschirr in der Küche, deckt in der Stube den Tisch. (Kolmar 2005: 26)

Her decision to approach Robespierre is influenced by the encouragement of her aunt Sister Angélique, who believes that a young boy, who is languishing in prison, is the saviour of France. Sister Angélique urges Cécile to ask Robespierre to release him. However, Cécile believes that Robespierre is the saviour that her countrymen are desperately in need of. When Robespierre refuses to accept Cécile's worship of him, she produces a knife with which she intends to sacrifice herself as an act of martyrdom. In contrast to the historical figure, there is little doubt in Kolmar's play, that the knife was intended for Cécile and not for Robespierre. Robespierre concedes that he knows Cécile intended to kill herself: "Sie wollte sterben" (Kolmar 2005: 93). Thus, her consequent sentencing to death means that she is to die for no reason as she has been prevented from sacrificing herself to Robespierre, something that would have carried meaning for Cécile. In her act of attempted suicide, the theme of sacrifice is developed, exposing a paradoxical view of sacrifice as simultaneously necessary and pointless. This is revealed in the differing meanings of the sacrifice for Cécile and Robespierre.

Cécile's motivation for self-sacrifice is rooted in religious beliefs; she considers Robespierre to be the Messiah and her suicide in his presence would be an act of martyrdom confirming Robespierre's divine status. The subsequent senselessness of Cécile's death calls the validity of the ritual of sacrifice into question

while also disputing the existence of divine powers. The scene of Cécile's attempted self-sacrifice reinforces the religious qualities of the act. Cécile kneels before Robespierre and recites lines from the Lord's prayer: "Gib uns heute unser täglich Brot. Und vergib uns unsere Schuld" (Kolmar 2005: 75). The scene clearly portrays Robespierre as the Messiah with Cécile and Robespierre's aide Julien, kneeling before him:

Lange Stille. Der junge Julien und Cécile Renault knien mit gefalteten Händen. Robespierre steht eine Weile und starrt; dann fährt seine Hand ein paarmal langsam über die Stirn. (Kolmar 2005: 77)

The Christian symbolism locates the worship of Robespierre within a meaningful religious framework, where Robespierre is revered with the same veneration as Jesus Christ. However, Robespierre does not accept Julien and Cécile's worship of him; he gives a speech reflecting on his life after death, in which he reinstates his status as a mortal, devoid of messianic qualities: "Denn er war kein Heiland und Herr, kein Erlöser" (Kolmar 2005: 78). Cécile's subsequent attempt at self-sacrifice is stripped of its significance as Robespierre's rejection of her devotion negates the religious significance that her death as an act of martyrdom would have. Thus, Cécile is given no choice but to die in vain: her attempted suicide is misinterpreted as attempted murder and she is sentenced to death as a result. Had she succeeded in killing herself, Cécile's self-sacrifice would still have been meaningless as Robespierre did not accept her worship of him. Her death by the guillotine renders her death equally meaningless, as she is being punished for something that she did not do. As one critic explains, "Ihr bleibt nichts, als sinnlos zu leiden" (Nörtemann 2005: 260).

The senselessness of Cécile's death following an attempted ritualistic self-sacrifice with strong Christian symbolism questions the validity of the sacrificial ritual, and challenges the accepted belief in a divine power. If the ritual of sacrifice promises connection with the divine, then the ritual fails Cécile, as Robespierre refuses to accept his status as the Messiah. While Cécile's faith is strong and her 'Opferbereitschaft' indicates her fearlessness and determination inspired by her faith, this devotion is not rewarded. Instead, Cécile is left to die senselessly. The ritual of sacrifice is a subversive device as it questions the existence of divine powers. Traditionally an expression of unwavering belief in and affirmation of the existence of divine forces, the ritual of sacrifice questions the existence of God. As Cécile's faith does not unite her with God, in accordance with the religious function of sacrifice, the act of sacrifice can be seen as a provocative device that challenges the supremacy of divinity. Like in *Nacht*, it is the divinity that is tested and not Cécile as her faith is unswerving. However, Cécile's death is devoid of all meaning as she is aware of Robespierre's rejection of her worship, whereas Ishta died believing that her death represented union with Tiberius and God.

The senselessness of sacrifice can be understood as part of a gender discourse where the senseless death of the female has significance for the male. Robespierre's decision not to spare Cécile's life allows him to retain his status as "ein Bürger der Republik" (Kolmar 2005: 78), as pardoning her from a death sentence would equate him with the Messiah: "Ich rettete meine Mörderin und wäre heilig" (Kolmar 2005: 94). Thus, Cécile's death fulfils a purpose for Robespierre, namely the protection of his reputation as an ordinary man fighting for his cause, despite the lack of meaning

that her death carries for her. Cécile's death is, then, both senseless and necessary, representative of an imbalance of power, whereby the senseless death of the female can become meaningful for the male. Cécile's death represents the exclusion of the female from the political struggle. In the opening scenes Cécile is excluded from the political conversations of her brother and father; her attempts to spurn Robespierre to free a political prisoner are unsuccessful. Only through death does Cécile play a part in political development, as her death alters the image of Robespierre, negating perceptions of him as the Messiah. Thus the absence of the female allows for the continuation of a political discourse.

The failure of the ritual of sacrifice to attest the existence of God exposes an existential crisis. In the opening of the play, the followers of Catherine Théot express reverence for a higher power, Cécile and her family are convinced that a saviour will come to solve their problems and Robespierre's aide ultimately professes his belief in Robespierre's messianic status. Thus, the suggestion that divine powers do not exist presents a crisis for those who depend on the existence of a higher power for orientation and to attribute meaning to existence. Kolmar questions the validity and benefits of absolute faith as there appears to be no rewards for this devotion. The tragic consequences of blind devotion and the senseless sacrifice for the benefit of a political leader are significant observations that can be understood in relation to the rise of the Nazi party and the sacrifices Kolmar was forced to make as a result, at the time this play was written.

5.6 Sacrifice in *Die jüdische Mutter*

The theme of sacrifice is employed in Kolmar's novel in relation to the passive meaning of the word 'Opfer'. Five year-old Ursa Wolg can be interpreted as an innocent victim of modernity. The advancements in technology and in the emancipatory aims of women are portrayed as destructive forces which impact on the institution of the family as well as the natural landscape.

The violent assault on Ursa and her subsequent death is the central action in the novel, which also motivates subsequent events. The importance of this act is reflected in the profound effects Ursa's death has on her mother: Martha's subsequent actions are a direct reaction to what has happened to her daughter. Ursa is associated with a variety of symbols, which locate her in the realm of a sacrificial victim. Firstly, her name is striking as it is not typical, even as an abbreviation of Ursula. Ursa is the Latin name for a female bear and it is the common name for a star constellation that has its roots in Greek mythology. The beautiful nymph of Artemis, Callisto, was raped by Jupiter, as he was captivated by her beauty. Callisto then bore a son, which angered Jupiter's wife Juno, who changed Callisto into a bear. Callisto later met her son Arcas, and approached him forgetting that she was a bear. Zeus stepped in to prevent Arcas from shooting his mother, throwing both of them into the skies, where they resided as two bears; these bears are star constellations bearing the names Ursa major and Ursa minor. Ursa shares her name with a rape victim, foretelling the fate that is to befall her. In the opening pages, Ursa's untimely end is also predicted as she is described as "ein Flämmchen, das bald doch erlöschen soll" (Kolmar 1999: 13).

The symbolism of Ursa's name introduces the concept of victimhood into the interpretations of Ursa's death.

The rape of Ursa can be understood as a grotesque consequence of the sexual liberation that was a sign of modernity. Ursa is a victim of an aggressive assault by an unnamed member of the populous; the perpetrator is never caught, which means that the attack is never repented for and there is a possibility of further attacks. Thus, the rape of Ursa takes place within a society where the perpetrator cannot be identified, signalling the presence of danger within this society. Furthermore, the indifference of the authorities towards the attack on Ursa suggests that this crime is not an uncommon one or at the very least that the likelihood of catching the perpetrator is slim. The rape of Ursa indicates that the sexual liberation of modernity comes at the price of innocence.

The death of Ursa also signals the destruction of the institution of the family. Ursa is portrayed as a victim of the loss of tradition caused by the new focus on careers and technology, which characterised modernity. The discovery of Ursa following her attack symbolises the cost of modernity, namely the production of waste which destroys the landscape, and the death of the traditional family unit. Shafi focuses on the description of the discovery of the child, who is difficult to identify amongst the rubbish: "Sie fiel in den Winkel hin, wo es lag, in Unrat geschmissen, zusammengeknüllt, ein Papierwisch, ein Schuhputzlumpen" (Kolmar 1999: 51). Taking Shafi's argument further, we can see how the discovery of Ursa is delicately described in the text to signify the existence of shattered homes. As Martha approaches the area where Ursa has been identified by a neighbour, she has to

clamber over numerous damaged household objects which form the threshold separating Ursa from her mother. The description of the rubbish takes up almost a full page, which serves the purpose of creating suspense but also adds a further layer of symbolism to the discovery of the child:

Sie sah schon das rissige Drahtgeflecht, die grauen, verrotteten Hütten. In den Gärten wuchsen die Nesseln, Melde und Hühnerdarm. Dazwischen Teile zerbrochenen Geräts, Topfhenkel, Türgriffe, Bettspiralen, auch Stoffetzen, Flaschenköpfe, Papier und leere Konservenbüchsen. [...] Das nächste elende Ding, von dem Schuppen nur durch ein paar niedergetrampelte Stacheldrähte getrennt, sah fensterlos, Würfel, mit seiner hohen, bis an das Pappdach reichenden Tür fast einer Straßenarbeiterbude, eher noch einem Abort gleich. Sie pürschte heran: nicht Schlüssel noch Klinke; ein Griff war gewesen und offenbar gewaltsam herausgerissen. (Kolmar 1999: 50)

The topography described with its combination of broken pots, bed springs and empty food tins, is one of a dilapidated household, which has been left to rot on the outskirts of the city. The permeable structure of the shabby outhouse, lacking windows and a door handle symbolises the collapse of the secure home, which reflects on the disintegration of the idyllic home Martha shared with Ursa. There is also a fusion of private and public space here, as the sanctuary of the family unit is destroyed and displayed as lifeless waste in a public space. These detailed descriptions underscore the status of Ursa as an innocent victim of modernity, which produces waste and debris and thereby disrupts the private sanctuary of family.

5.7 Sacrifice as a subversive device to question divinity

During her lifetime, Kolmar was forced to make many sacrifices either to fulfil her creative urges or to guarantee her safety. The theme of sacrifice in Kolmar's works is an exploration of the relevance of sacrifice as a religious ritual that attests to the

existence of higher powers. In Kolmar's plays, the portrayal of sacrifice is complex, as it is both meaningless and significant. This aporetic situation can be understood as a reflection on Kolmar's life, as she was forced to sacrifice the prospect of motherhood for the sake of her writings. In this case, sacrifice is rewarded. However, in the plays, Kolmar explores the possibilities of meaningless sacrifices that are in no way rewarded or recompensed, thus challenging the superiority of divine powers. Sacrifice is shown as a powerful device that exposes existential challenges as a result of the unreliability of divine powers. Against the backdrop of Kolmar's living conditions at the time the plays were written, the test of faith is added a further layer of complexity, as even absolute faith does not prove the existence of divinity. The 'Opferbereitschaft' of both Ischta and Cécile is an unquestionable expression of devotion; however, the meaningless of their deaths casts doubt over the existence of the object of their devotion. In both plays, a male political leader marks the end of the play and the beginning of changed political direction, signalling the diminished role of religion as a source of direction and the rise of male-dominated political leadership.

VI Appropriating the space: *Susanna* and *Die jüdische Mutter*

6.1 The significance of space

The interstice position of German-Jews in the early part of the twentieth century is characterised by a continuous engagement with multiple and often contradictory societal constructs that indicate belonging. The state of inbetweenness denotes recognition of borders that are at times crossed, yet are always close to the inbetween subject whose existence is defined by his exclusion from enclosed categories of belonging. An analysis of space and spatial markers complements the investigation of inbetweenness — the marker of German-Jewish existence in Kolmar's time. The multiple appropriations of space and the contradictory representations of spatial markers correspond to the state of inbetweenness, as space is shown to be subject to varying forms of appropriation and cannot be confined within one representation. Similarly, the inbetween subject engages with multiple and contradictory constructs and defies categorisation within societal constructs.

The German-Jewish context of both works allows for an interpretation of the representations of space and spatial markers such as borders in Kolmar's prose works, as a reflection on the complexities of German-Jewish existence. Expanding on the conclusions drawn from the application of post-colonial theories to Kolmar's prose works, space theories allow for the identification of inbetween spaces, as the representations of space are constantly shifting in accordance with the inherent duplicity of spatial markers. This process denotes the inbetween state, which is

defined by continuous engagement with various constructs. The varying appropriations of space and the multiple functions of spatial markers signal a process that can be seen as representative of the processes of the inbetween subject, as he engages with his environment.

The notion of space as the site of cultural and social processes has become popular in recent scholarship across a range of disciplines, including literary studies, social and cultural geography and linguistic studies. The description and appropriation of space is fundamentally considered a “representational strategy” (Crang/Thrift Introduction 2000: 1). The developments in spatial theory depart from the basic premise that space is not simply a container but rather an active agent in the workings of social and cultural processes. The representations of certain spaces reflect social processes at work within these spaces so that,

der territoriale Raum [wird] nicht als Container oder Behälter maßgeblich, sondern Raum als gesellschaftlicher Produktionsprozess der Wahrnehmung, Nutzung und Aneignung, eng verknüpft mit der symbolischen Ebene der Raumrepräsentation (etwa durch Codes, Zeichen, Karten). (Bachmann-Medick 2006: 284)

Space cannot be universally represented as representations of space are dependent on the subjective acts of perception and appropriation. Thus a house is not simply an objective container; it can be both homely and alienating so that “space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning” (Said 1995: 55). Furthermore, space can simultaneously mean different things for different people; spatial devices can therefore be used to represent contradictions, conflict and tensions.

The significance of space is linked to the representations of power that space is associated with. The inherent connection of space and power is particularly evident in post-colonial studies, where the act of colonisation is an act of claiming of territory, which involves marking the colonised space with the superior powers of the coloniser. Space, seen here as territory, is infused with meaning which reflects the imbalance of power in the colonial relationship. The post-colonial approaches also uncover the significance of analysing the appropriation of space: From the coloniser's perspective, the colonised space is the site of dominating and exerting oppressive, colonial power. As discussed earlier, this space is subversive. From the colonised subject's perspective the colonised space is the site of inversion of powers and the assertion of a hybrid existence through devices such as mimicry. By exploring the appropriation of space from different perspectives we can gain insight into the power relations of colonial discourse. The varying appropriations of the same space also contribute to the multiplicity of representations of space. Representations of space are thus loaded with often conflicting and contradictory meanings, which reflect the multi-faceted and complex nature of the power relations that the space represents. Markers of space complement the complex nature of spatial representations, as borders, margins, entrances, exits are all ambivalent indicators of space. A border is both the sign of freedom and enclosure, depending on whether the subject strives to be contained within the border or to escape beyond the border. On the other hand the construction of a border is often the desire to protect and enclose a space to ensure freedom within the space. Borders, fences and any other objects of delineation reflect the inherent duality of identified spaces as "such lines connect as much as they divide

those on either side of a boundary” (Allen 2006: 54). Markers of space become active agents in the development of the nature of existence within the space itself as the border serves to connect and/or divide. This duplicity is accompanied by ambiguity and contradiction, so that the spatial devices expose “die Komplexität von Räumen, ihre Überlappungen und Überlagerungen” (Bachmann-Medick 2006: 297). Analysing markers of space is a fruitful exercise as the multiple meanings allow for accurate representations of conflict and contradictions.

6.2 Space in Gertrud Kolmar’s life

The connection between space and power is overwhelmingly present in an analysis of the Nazi years in Germany, when Gertrud Kolmar wrote her prose and dramatic works. As Bachmann-Medick explains, space in Nazi Germany was at the core of the campaign and the delayed reception of spatial theories in Germany was largely due to “die nationalsozialistische Ideologisierung und Funktionalisierung des Raumkonzepts für die Propoganda- und Kriegspolitik des Zweiten Weltkriegs” (Bachmann-Medick 2006: 286). The expansion of German territory or “Lebensraum” was a primary goal of the Nazi regime, which saw the acquirement of territories as the articulation and affirmation of power. For the Jewish population in the Nazi years, Germany’s “Lebensraum” was something from which they were progressively excluded, culminating in the extermination of millions of Jews in the death camps. In the years preceding the ‘final solution’, effective measures ensured that Jews were marginalised. Restrictions on the civil rights of Jewish people meant that the

movements of Jews were contained within certain spaces. Kolmar's prose works were written when the persecution of Jews was developing as a national policy in Germany. When Kolmar wrote *Die jüdische Mutter* in 1931, the NSDAP had made significant gains in popularity. Emerging from detention in 1925, Hitler led his party, which progressively grew in popularity culminating with the "elections of September 1930, in which the NSDAP became the second largest party in the Reichstag" (Fullbrook 1990: 174). The rise in popularity of the fascist party reflected an increasing tendency towards extreme right wing policies, including an overtly anti-Semitic stance, which was to rapidly intensify in the years that followed. For the Jewish population the success of the NSDAP signalled the final failure of the Weimar Republic, a period in which Jews had wholly embraced the German culture. Among the prominent leaders of cultural movements in the Weimar Republic were many Jews, who achieved international recognition. Thus the success of the NSDAP in 1931 marked the end of Jewish prosperity in German culture and society with the intensification of anti-Semitism, which had been ever present in Germany for decades even during the successful Weimar years.

The concept of space for Jews also changed during these years, as Jews had occupied the same public spaces as their gentile peers in the Weimar republic; the success of the NSDAP marked a change for the mapping of Jewish space in Germany, as the latent anti-Semitism that had accompanied the co-existence of gentiles and Jews in the Weimar republic was to force Jews out of this space completely to a marginal space at the edge of German society.

While Kolmar's novel was written during a time of transition in Germany, her novella *Susanna*, was written after Kolmar had experienced the disastrous consequences of Germany's new leadership. The latent anti-Semitism which had existed in Germany for decades had intensified drastically; anti-Semitic beliefs had been cemented in laws, which were often ruthlessly enforced. On 1st April 1933, a national boycott of Jewish businesses was a public display of the persecutory policies towards Jews. The attack on Jewish livelihoods which served to exclude Jews from the market place was quickly followed by laws restricting the movements of Jewish people. In the same year, a law was passed forbidding 'non-Aryans' from holding positions as government employees; a separate law forbade Jews from using municipal swimming pools. (cf. Gay 1992: 254-264) These laws along with numerous others served to repel Jews from German society, limiting the space that Jews could occupy in the physical sense and appropriating the space of Jewish homes as prison-like, marginalised and under threat. Further infringements on the civil rights of Jews include the ban imposed on Jewish children in 1938, forbidding them from attending state schools. In July of the same year, "Jews were required to carry special identity cards; in August each man was made to add the middle name 'Israel' and each woman 'Sara' in official papers" (Gay 1992: 264). This labelling of the Jews served to reinforce the perceived inalienable otherness of the Jews, and the legalization of such persecutory moves cemented this perception so that it was viewed not as opinion but as fact.

When Kolmar wrote *Susanna* in 1939, she had experienced these infringements on her personal and professional movements. The infamous book

burning of 1933, the public destruction of works by Jewish scholars signalled the extreme exclusion of Kolmar from mainstream literary fields in Germany. The allocation of the 'Judenhaus', labelled dwellings for Jewish people whose properties had been seized by the Nazis is a prominent example of how living space for Jews was chosen for them and imposed upon them. When Kolmar wrote *Susanna*, she was living in a 'Judenhaus'. Kolmar and her father were forced to share the space with other tenants, increasing the noise level in the house and forcing Kolmar to write at night when the tenants were asleep and the noise levels were at a minimum. The cramped space of Kolmar's living quarters clearly affected the author's sense of ownership of this space. In a letter to her sister Hilde, Kolmar explained that "Seit nämlich mein Bett im Eßzimmer steht, habe ich eigentlich gar keine ‚Bleibe‘ mehr, keinen Raum für mich" (Kolmar 1970: 108). Kolmar's cramped living conditions mean that she is lacking a 'Bleibe', signalling her desire for a space that she can appropriate and call her own. However, the word 'Bleibe' implies that even this space is temporary. Thus, Kolmar desires to mark a space as her own, acknowledging that this space is also only temporarily hers. The need to attach importance to living space is clear as Kolmar's lack of a 'Bleibe' negatively affects her ability to write and feel a sense of home about her living space. Kolmar identifies one of the problems facing Jews who had been sent to live in these Jew-houses, namely the problematics of claiming ownership on space that has been assigned to you rather than chosen by you. Bachmann-Medick identifies the concept of temporary spaces, so-called 'Transiträumen', which are identified by "Identitätslosigkeit, Flüchtigkeit und einen provisorischen Status" (Bachmann-Medick 2006: 288). The civil restrictions imposed

on Kolmar signalled the instability of Kolmar's status in Germany; this instability is reflected in the 'Transiträumen', which she occupied. Lacking a space that can be claimed as a permanent site of ownership, the consequent 'Transitidentitäten' of people like Kolmar are often compensated for by a re-discovery of tradition. Forgotten traditions and practices, when rediscovered imbue the 'Transiträumen' with a sense of ownership, as the space is marked with indicators of belonging and stability. This process is described as the "Verortung kulturellen Praktiken" (Bachmann-Medick 2006: 288), in which a space is appropriated in accordance with the practices that traditionally identify a people, even if this space is distanced from the origins of such practices. The permeability of space is thus exploited as diaspora groups world wide appropriate vastly different spaces in accordance with the same cultural practices, which can be wholly alien to the space itself. As Bachmann-Medick explains,

Die zunehmend entterritorialisierten Raumverhältnisse und Beziehungsgeflechte haben auch das Raumverständnis transnationalisiert. Erst dadurch ist etwa das Phänomen zu erfassen, dass Diasporagruppen weltweit vernetzt sind und gemeinsame kulturelle Vorstellungen teilen, dabei aber doch in verschiedene Lokalitäten zerstreut sind. (Bachmann-Medick 2006: 295)

Bachmann-Medick underscores the significance of appropriation of space and the potential power derived from this process as even an assigned space such as housing for refugees can come to represent the traditions that define the occupants of the space. This process can be subversive if the space has been assigned as part of a marginalization or oppression process. By inscribing the space with traditions that affirm the existence of the inhabitants of the space, the marginalization process is subverted as the assertion of a collective identity defies the very concept of

oppression. This process of appropriation is explored in Kolmar's novella *Susanna*, and the subversive elements are brought to the fore when the context of the author's own engagement with assigned and imposed spaces is taken into consideration.

6.3 The significance of space in *Susanna*

The appropriation of specific spaces in *Susanna* reveals the function of spatial markers such as fences and railings in the process of inscribing the space with meaning. An exploration of spatial devices in Kolmar's novella *Susanna* offers an insightful analysis of the concept of freedom in relation to confinement, while the multiplicity of functions of spatial markers are explored and challenged. The title figure of the novella is a young woman who is kept isolated from society, by having her movements physically restricted. As the narrator recalls her time spent with Susanna, the problematic confinement of Susanna becomes apparent as her personal freedom is shown to coincide with her physical confinement. The story underscores the complexities of freedom and the functions of restrictions in this regard. Physical borders are shown to be ambivalent as they are both restrictive and liberating. The lack of borders is also shown to be troublesome, as this is not synonymous with physical liberation. The character's differing appropriation of space is significant in an analysis of the pertinent issues that come to the fore in this work, such as the problematic location of affirming space in the German-Jewish context of the text's production.

6.3.1 The narrator's 'Transitraum'

The opening of the novella clearly identifies the narrator's unstable position as the description of her living space reveals the narrator's provisional status. The narrator reveals her uncertain position with reference to cities in the USA, Mexico, China and Israel, which were key destinations for Jewish emigrants fleeing Germany. The narrator subsequently questions her own future location: "Shanghai, Tel Aviv, Parral, San Francisco. Wo werde *ich* einst sein?" (Kolmar 1993: 8) Significantly the narrator excludes any mention of European cities, reflecting the narrator's detachment from her own surroundings. A further indication of the narrator's unstable position is her description of her living space, where she sits in wait of an Affidavit to secure emigration to the USA:

Heute sitzt ich noch seit Wochen in diesem gemieteten Zimmer auf Möbeln, von grünem, verschabtem Plüsch, und im Winkel unter dem Riegelbrett wartet mein großer Koffer. Und hofft auf das zweite Affidavit aus Plymouth, Massachusetts. (Kolmar 1993: 7)

The rented furniture and packed suitcase represent the transitory status of the narrator; her living space is portrayed as dreary and decaying as the furniture is covered with frayed fabric. Her suitcase is large, indicating that its contents are the sum of the narrator's belongings. The narrator's room is a 'Transitraum', identified as such by the markers which denote the provisional, temporary and anxious nature of the space for the narrator. The subsequent transit-identities of the occupants of these transit spaces compels the occupants to rediscover and articulate traditions and practices that have a history of defining the occupants of transit-spaces. (cf. Bachmann-Medick 2006) Thus, the narrator's recollection of her trip to a small

Eastern town can be understood as an attempt to uncover traditional aspects that would have once defined the narrator. The description of the Eastern town, where the narrator had accepted the job in the internal narrative has been linked to the evocation of the Eastern Jewish shtetl. (cf. Shafi 1995: 206) The framework of the narrative also has significance in Jewish tradition, as the recalling of events from memory is deemed to have “zentrale Bedeutung im jüdischen Glauben, in der jüdischen Tradition und für die jüdische Identität” (Young 1991: 149). The overt introduction of Jewish tradition and the evocation of the space of the Eastern Shtetl, which is a site of Jewish traditions, can be read as the author’s re-evaluation of traditions in an attempt to compensate for the insecurity of the transit-space of her surroundings in Nazi Germany.

The narrator’s journey to the Eastern town can be read as symbolic of her desire to bridge her transit-space with an affirming ‘traditional’ space. The significance of Eastern locations for Jewish people is linked to the affirming properties of the Eastern Jewish shtetl in Jewish tradition and imagination. The polarity of the narrator’s original location and the site of her new job is enhanced by the author’s reference to the lengthy journey she undertook to arrive at her destination: “ich [...] fuhr quer durch Deutschland von Westen nach Osten, den ganzen Tag” (Kolmar 1993: 8). The narrator’s recollection of this story from her tentative position and provisional space imbues this bridging of space with meaning which relates to the narrator’s desire to compensate for her transitory status with a journey eastwards, symbolic of a rediscovery of Jewish tradition. The traditional elements of her new location in the East is further evinced in the method of transport

used once she has arrived at the town where she is to reside. Travelling on horseback to the site of her story, the method of transport used is distinctly old-fashioned, implying that the narrator's journey East is also symbolically a journey back to earlier times, when traditions were active. The focus on transport in the opening pages augments the transitory status of the narrator as she begins her story: her suitcase packed, she is still poised for a journey, despite her past trips to the Eastern town. The story of Susanna explores the possibility of the 'ownership' of space and an analysis of the spatial devices also uncovers insights into the definition of the self that is relevant beyond the specific context of German-Jews in Nazi Germany.

6.3.2 The garden: wasteland/exotic world

The garden outside Susanna's home is a significant site, which is perceived both as a decaying, deserted wasteland and the scene of a romantic, erotic encounter. The differing appropriations of the same space call for a recognition of the paradoxical and complex nature of the textual interpretations. As the narrator recalls her first morning in the house, she remembers the garden, which she viewed from inside her bedroom:

Unter mir lag ein kleiner Garten, bloßer Krautgarten wohl: modernde Kohlstrünke, tote Sonnenblumenstengel, die grüne strohumwickelte Pumpe und zwischen Sträuchern die Abfallgrube an dem vermorschten, bresthaften Knüppelzaun. (Kolmar 1993: 16)

The garden is depicted as a decaying wasteland rather than a fecund enclosure. While the garden is abundant with vegetation, the cabbage stalks are decaying and the sunflowers are dead. The presence of decaying vegetation signals the *former*

existence of something, as the remnants of the sunflowers exist only because they were once alive. Similarly the pump is covered with straw; the adjective “umwickelte” depicts an advanced stage of overgrowth, as the straw is wrapped around the pump. Again, the imagery denotes the existence of something past. The pump, as a symbol of life, is still standing but as it is covered in straw, it has presumably ceased to function, or at least it is not in use. The image of the “strohumwickelte Pumpe” is one of suffocation and suppression, indicating that the active use of the pump has been aggressively stalled. The imagery of waste and decay is enhanced by the reference to the rubbish pit, which is surrounded by vegetation. The presence of the waste in the garden complements the decaying nature of this site. As an effect of production, waste also represents life and action, or rather the *prior existence* of life and action, so that the site of the garden is both the site of decay and death but also of loss and regression. The description of the fence can be understood in a similar manner; while it is present in the garden, its function as a marker of an enclosed space has been lost. The fence is rotten and ‘sickly’; it is clearly an inadequate border to enclose and delineate the garden. The permeability of the fence echoes the ambiguity of borders; a border can enclose or entrap but a border can also be crossed in an act of liberation. Here, the fence serves no purpose other than to represent what was once an enclosed garden. What remains of the fence is decaying, indicating that it will soon have diminished amongst the rest of the overgrown vegetation in the garden.

The significance of the imagery of the site of the garden relates to the narrator’s situation as she recalls her experiences. As she awaits news of emigration

plans, the narrator's recollections can be understood as her desire to explore her past in an attempt to understand the circumstances which have led to her insecure, unstable present. Depicted as an isolated figure from the outset, the narrator lacks permanent affirming structures, including a stable home, a family and a Jewish community. The decline of the Jewish community has drastically intensified as the key destinations for Jewish immigrants are listed by the narrator as a possible future home for her. Recalling the garden, the narrator describes a site of decay and decline which can be understood as representative of the diminishing Jewish community. In her evocation of the Eastern Jewish shtetl, Kolmar introduces the context of a Jewish community. In *Susanna*, however, there is no community as all the figures are isolated and disconnected from any family or community ties. The images of decay and waste are symbolic of the community that once was but is now declining rapidly. Thus, the narrator's appropriation of the garden, recalled eleven years afterwards, is an insightful observation on the progressive nature of this decline, as any hope of the survival of a collective establishment has now faded with the mass emigration, of which the narrator plans to be a part.

The description of the fence as rotting and 'sickly' refers not only to the diminishing Jewish community but also to the necessity of clearly defined constructs to establish a sense of self. While societal constructs in Kolmar's prose works have been interpreted in this study as barriers and stifling agents of oppression, here, fixed constructs are shown to be necessary. As the fence is decaying, it does not serve the function of protecting and marking the site of the garden. Thus, the garden is not adequately delineated as a site of ownership, as the decaying fence blends this space

with the space beyond it. The existence of established constructs is shown here as necessary in order to clearly identify one's position within one's environment. Relating this to the Jewish context, we can interpret the loss of fixed structures to mean the loss of established traditions and practices within Jewish culture, which is detrimental to the assertion of a Jewish self. Without rigid structures, the existence of the Jewish community is threatened just as the space of the garden is permeable because of the rotting fence. The adjective 'brethafft', which is used to describe the fence, warrants investigation as it refers usually to people, who are in some way ailing. This complements the argument that an ailing Jewish community, suffering because of rapid decline, is represented by the decaying garden and fence. The word "brethafft" also implies that something is lacking and that this lack is the cause of an impairment. The imagery represents the damage that has been done to the Jewish community and the nature of Jewish identity, which has consequently been impaired. This interpretation of the site of the garden is added a layer of complexity, as Susanna's appropriation of the site of the garden differs greatly from what the narrator recalled seeing on the first day in the house.

The decaying garden is appropriated as a nocturnal underworld by Susanna when she and the narrator go for a night-time walk. Night can be perceived "als symbolischer Bereich des Unbewußten" (Hubig/Marx 1996: 135-6), which links Susanna's appropriation of the space of the garden at night with the articulation of her unconscious drives. Susanna describes the ground beneath her as "Seesand", she tells the narrator that "wir sind ertrunken. Wir sind hinausgefahren auf einem schönen Schiff; es stieß auf eine Klippe und sank" (Kolmar 1993: 26). The aquatic

environment that Susanna perceives has a structural similarity to the unconscious; both are kept hidden, yet they are both active under the surface. Susanna's appropriation of the garden as an aquatic underworld, though vastly different to the narrator's 'realistic' portrayals of the overgrown, decaying garden, is comparable: the underwater scene is hidden and therefore inaccessible while the decaying vegetation perceived by the narrator is symbolic of a Jewish community that is lost, and therefore also inaccessible. While the decay in the narrator's appropriation of the garden symbolises the death of an established Jewish community, the descriptive sea world is full of life (Susanna describes the sea-creatures that swim by), which is, however, hidden from view as it is underwater. This abundant sea world is also only accessible to Susanna, who is perceived as 'mentally ill', because of her alternative perceptions of her environment. Susanna's uniqueness as a proud Jewess coincides with her ability to access a space that is idyllic and enchanted. As she walks through the garden, Susanna echoes a fundamental belief in Judaism, namely the belief that "Alles Geschaffene ist Gottes" (Kolmar 1993: 27). Susanna links the aquatic environment with God, declaring that "er [Gott] hat auch den Meerkönig gemacht" (Kolmar 1993: 27). Susanna, representative of an idealised form of Judaism, appropriates the site of the garden in accordance with this simplistic, affirmative understanding of her self and her environment. The space of the garden becomes the location of the articulation of Susanna's alternative existence which is influenced by her incorrupted acceptance and assertion of her Jewishness. Both the narrator and Susanna's appropriation of the space of the garden can be perceived as an observation on the state of Jewishness; for the narrator, Jewishness as a collective, affirmative

identity is in decline, for Susanna, Jewishness grants her access to an enviable, innocent form of existence, closely linked to the realm of the unconscious. The duplicity of the site of the garden is complemented by the ambiguity of the borders that enclose the garden.

The decaying fence, described earlier by the narrator, is referred to once more as Susanna and the narrator return from their walk. The narrator “[zwängte] mühsam das Schloß vor die Knüppeltür” (Kolmar 1993: 28), a pointless act as the “Knüppelzaun“ has previously been described as fragile and rotting. This underscores the ambiguity of borders and the contradictory functions of enclosure and release. The lock symbolises security and the permanency of the border; however, the fragility of the fence negates the function of the lock. The narrator makes great efforts (mühsam) to lock the gate, indicating her desire to enclose the space of the garden and the house. Susanna’s uniqueness is perhaps worthy of protection; however, the decaying fence means that this task is impossible. Susanna has been represented as a most unusual person, whose unadulterated pride in her Jewishness and incorrupted expressions of unconscious drives are a source of envy for the narrator. That Susanna is a lonesome figure — we learn from the outset that she has no friends and can never marry — underscores her vulnerability. Thus, the attempts to protect Susanna are understandable, but the impossibility of the task, denoted in the permeable fence, heightens the danger that Susanna faces from the outside world, where her alternative existence is perceived as an expression of a mental illness. The lock may also symbolise a desire not to protect Susanna but to entrap and stifle her development. As a ‘mentally ill’ girl, whose illness however cannot be accurately defined, Susanna

threatens conventional structures and norms. Thus the enclosure of Susanna may also be an expression of the fears of the outside world, who wish to oppress the alternative existence of Susanna, as this is unsettling and unwelcome within the established structures of conventional society.

The duplicity of borders, which function to protect and restrain Susanna is explored once more when Susanna and her lover Rubin are observed by the narrator as they secretly meet in the garden. Like the night-time walk, the garden is appropriated as an enchanted, underwater location, with Rubin being described as “ein Meerwesen“ (Kolmar 1993: 31). Susanna’s position is significant as she is supported by a railing that separates her from Rubin: “Und auf dem Fensterbrett stand Susanna, hielt die Hände am Gitter, preßte den Leib an die Stäbe und drängte hinaus” (Kolmar 1993: 29). The function of the railing is manifold: it acts as a form of support as Susanna leans against the railing, it restricts Susanna from being with Rubin and it connects Susanna and Rubin. The railing accompanies Susanna and Rubin, when they finally connect physically and kiss: “ihr Gesicht suchte am Gitter entlang. Und ich sah einen Augenblick seinen Kopf an dem ihren, und beide waren eins” (Kolmar 1993: 32). The permanency of the railing in this scene raises the question of the necessity of fixed structures. If the railing represents a fixed structure that defines the self, then Susanna is supported by an affirmative understanding of her self, something which is demonstrated in her proud, uncomplicated assertions of her Jewishness. While Susanna transgresses conventional structures in her alternative approach to language and love, she also relies on firmly established structures to nurture her sense of self. These secure borders, representative of established markers

of existence are wholly lacking for the narrator and consequently the narrator is self-conscious and outside of fixed categories of belonging. The coincidence of the rigid structure and Susanna and Rubin's nocturnal meeting invites interpretation of the function of the railing as a form of protection; it is the presence of the railing that allows for the meeting to take place, as Susanna is not welcome in the outside world. The importance of the railing as a form of protection is enhanced further by the tragic outcome of Susanna's release from her protected environment. Her death in pursuit of Rubin significantly takes place in between locations. Susanna is found dead on a train track, a structure that represents transition and inbetweenness. The railing at Susanna's window does, however, hinder physical contact between the two; if this is understood to be a necessary consequence of preserving Susanna's innocent, enchanted existence, then it is clear that Susanna's personal freedom comes at a price. The paradox of Susanna's personal freedom and physical confinement is reflected in the complex functions of the railing: the railing serves as a supportive, nurturing structure for Susanna, which allows her to exist in accordance with unadulterated, unconscious drives. This personal freedom is restricted by the railing which limits the physical location of Susanna; however the railing as a protective structure allows for the endurance of Susanna's personal freedom. The focus on the limited physical space calls for an interpretation of the subversive nature of Susanna's freedom. The restrictive function of the railing is overruled by Susanna's appropriation of the site, which is in accordance with unrestricted expressions of love and desire. If the railing is symbolic of the restraint imposed on her by the outside world, then Susanna's meeting with Rubin in the garden, defies these restrictions, which are designed to

keep Susanna isolated from other people. The possibility of ownership of assigned space is explored here as Susanna's individual stamp on the garden is an expression of her ownership of this space, in the sense that she perceives it in accordance with her own understanding of the space, which ignores the restrictive function of the border. In the process, Susanna succeeds in affirming her self and defying the oppressive restrictions that have been imposed on her.

6.3.3 The house: freedom/constraint

The paradoxical nature of the borders that restrict, liberate and support Susanna are developed further in an analysis of the site of the house, in which Susanna lives. The governess describes Susanna's house from the outside as follows: "Ein größeres neues Gebäude beschützte je auf der Linken und Rechten das kleine ängstliche Haus; ich meinte, daß es da wie ein Kind zwischen zwei Erwachsenen stände" (Kolmar 1993: 16). The imagery is contradictory: the small anxious house is overshadowed by larger newer houses on either side, overshadowing the centre building in an overpowering and fearful manner. The description of the house as "ängstlich" relates to the restrictions imposed on Susanna which are mirrored in the entrapment of the centre building, Susanna's home, by the neighbouring buildings. Susanna is being forcibly constrained, which causes anxiety and fear. The above description of the buildings denotes an imbalance in power as the small house is obscured by the looming presence of the buildings. The larger buildings are described as new, in a manner that establishes a contrast with the smaller building, which is by deduction old. This allows for the link between Susanna and an older traditional lifestyle, which

is being usurped by a stifling, oppressive newness. However, the above description is not wholly negative. The buildings are compared to a child between two adults, an image which is positive and affirmative. The 'child' is flanked on either side by an adult and is therefore protected and supported by two adult figures: the complete picture resembles the traditional family unit. The large buildings then are both represented as oppressive and supportive. The contrasting imagery complements the thematic development of the aporetic nature of freedom within confinement. The building, described as like a child, symbolises innocence and the associated freedoms of childhood, which are both nurtured and curtailed by the 'adult' buildings. The necessity of adults to protect and support children restricts the movements of children but also facilitates the freedom of children, as this freedom is protected. If Susanna represents an idealised state of innocence, incorrupted articulation of unconscious drives, and total atonement with her Jewish self, then this existence can only be preserved and nurtured if Susanna is confined. The imagery, therefore, denotes the *necessity* of Susanna's confinement to preserve her freedom. This need to protect Susanna is also a reflection on the threatening nature of the outside world, which ruthlessly rejects her world view as the expressions of a mad girl. While the preservation of Susanna is positive, it is tinged with loss as Susanna is an isolated figure, who is denied the opportunity to have friends. She has no family and no prospects of a family, signalling the dismal outlook for the survival of the innocence and tradition that she embodies.

Within the house the spaces of the rooms are endowed with meaning that links them to the complex confinement of Susanna to both restrain and nurture her.

The description of the rooms also signifies the possibility of appropriating space in a manner that subverts the original purpose of assigning that space: Susanna's appropriation of her bedroom questions the stability of the borders that enclose the space, which were constructed to contain her. The kitchen is described as a bleak space with an emptiness that reflects lifelessness and entrapment. The narrator describes the kitchen as "leer und verdrossen, wie Küchen im Tagesgraun sind: die nackten Fliesen, der kalte Herd und hier noch das vergitterte Fenster, selbst das Aufgeräumtsein machte sie grämlich" (Kolmar 1993: 16). The barred window is evidently similar to the window at which Susanna stood when she spoke with Rubin in the garden. The word 'noch' implies that these railings appear in front of all the windows in the house, a feature that increases the level of confinement that Susanna is subject to. In the kitchen the railing accentuates the prison-like nature of Susanna's home and the organised space creates a depressing atmosphere. Firm structures are shown here to be a cause of lifelessness and entrapment, to which Susanna, the key occupant of the house is subject.

The narrator's room impresses her positively, however, representing the homeliness and security that comes with traditional, old-fashioned furnishings. The narrator perceives her room as follows:

Das Stübchen in weißen Mullgardinen heimelte mich an mit der niederen Decke, den wenigen und schlichten guten Möbeln. Sie waren älter als die Jahrhundertwende und ihre prunkhaften hölzernen Burgen mit Säule und Sims. Das Nußbaumschränkchen sah ich als Kind beim Großvater in Filehne. (Kolmar 1003: 11)

The description of the narrator's room in Susanna's house contrasts starkly with the room the narrator occupies as she recalls her tale. The narrator attaches meaning to

the furnishings in her room in Susanna's home by linking them to a specific time frame and to her family. The furnishings date back as far as the eighteenth century, which was a time of cultural success for Jewish people and the Jewish community. The reference to the narrator's grandfather in Filehne, East Germany, deepens the personal connection that the space offers the narrator. The site of the room is therefore a link to a past, which is evidently welcoming and homely. This contrasts with the impersonal surroundings of the narrator's present; while the narrator refers to her room in Susanna's home as "mein Zimmer" (Kolmar 1993: 11), her room where she sits as she recounts the story is simply referred to as a "gemietet[es] Zimmer" (Kolmar 1993: 7). The furnishings are worn and drab, whereas in Susanna's house the furnishings are adorned; there is limited furniture but it is described positively as good and simple. The space is strongly linked with the past, which can be understood as a Jewish past because of the Jewish context which frames the story. This adds to the significance of the narrator's story in relation to the state of Jewishness; access to an uncomplicated and affirming Jewishness is connected to the culturally and socially prosperous eighteenth Century. The location of affirmative Jewishness in the past reflects on the problematic nature of Jewishness in the narrator's present. The narrator's room, located within the confines of Susanna's house, offers her comfort and support, which is also a signal of the lack of this that is tangible in the outside world.

The site of Susanna's home as the location of an affirmative past, is further evinced in the description of Susanna's room, where the past site of positive Jewishness, is added an exotic element. Susanna's bedroom contrasts starkly with the

gloomy site of the kitchen, although it too has barred windows, which are referred to in the garden scene with Rubin. The narrator describes Susanna's room as "schummerig. Nur neben dem Sessel glomm ein buntes Tischlämpchen" (Kolmar 1993:11). The dimly lit room imbues the space with exoticism, complemented by Susanna who sits "im weinroten Seidenkimono" (Kolmar 1993: 11). The exotic setting enhances Susanna's 'otherness' and the warm colours in the room make this space inviting and appealing. The narrator views this space at night, which contributes to the warmth of the room, while the kitchen is empty and cold in the 'Tagesgraun.' Susanna appropriates the space of her bedroom in accordance with her alternative existence. Even Susanna's exotic beauty impresses on the space of the room as the narrator is arrested by the sight of Susanna, which prevents her from entering this space.

6.3.4 Hovering at the threshold

The narrator's observation of Susanna in her bedroom is accompanied by a reference to the threshold that separates Susanna's space from the space that the narrator occupies. The threshold is referred to at different stages in the novella, drawing attention to spaces at both sides of the threshold. Arriving at her new work place, the narrator is greeted by Justizrat Fordon while she remains beyond the threshold: she has not yet entered the space of her new residence: "während ich noch auf der Schwelle das Weiße abschüttelte, trat jemand schon in den Hausflur, mich zu begrüßen. Das war der Justizrat Fordon" (Kolmar 1993: 9). The specific reference to the threshold draws attention to the difference between the space the narrator is in and

the space she is about to enter. This is particularly evident when the narrator observes Susanna from beyond the threshold as the narrator is captivated by Susanna's otherness. On her first evening in Susanna's home, the narrator approaches Susanna's room and significantly stays outside of this space, describing the vision from outside: "Ich entsinne mich noch des klaren klingenden 'Herein!', und ich klinkte und blieb im Türrahmen stehen und überschritt nicht die Schwelle" (Kolmar 1993: 11). Susanna's presence arrests the narrator and she remains outside of her space.

The focus on the threshold as a marker of Susanna's space invites analysis into the function of the threshold. While the threshold signifies delineated spaces and emphasises the difference between the spaces, it is also a porous border that is easily crossed. Thus, the threshold is as much a connector of spaces as it is a divider. The connecting function of the threshold is brought to the fore when the narrator comments on her own inaction as she witnessed Susanna and Rubin's nocturnal encounter. The narrator comments that it would have been easy for her to interrupt the meeting: "Das hätte ich ohne lautes Wort und erhobene Hand getan mit einem ruhigen Überschreiten der Schwelle" (Kolmar 1993: 33). The narrator's comments reflect the porous nature of the border as it can be easily crossed; however, the fact that the narrator does *not* cross the threshold reinforces the separation imposed by the border of the threshold. The threshold reflects both nearness and distance, as the narrator is aware that it is easy to permeate the border, yet the reasons for her hesitation remain unclear: "Ich frage mich heut, warum ich gezögert, und fragte mich damals umsonst" (Kolmar 1993: 34). The narrator implies that the reasons for her inaction are inexplicable: "Dichter müssen sich immer bemühen, die Gründe der

Handlungen aufzuhellen; das Leben spart sich die Müh' und läßt seine Gründe im Dunkeln" (Kolmar 1993: 34). The function of the threshold as a barrier is brought to the fore here, as the narrator is prevented from crossing it, although the exact reason for this is unclear. The narrator's comments portray the paradoxical nature of the threshold: it allowed the narrator to be close to Susanna and to observe her encounter with Rubin; yet the narrator remains distanced from Susanna as she cannot cross this border to make her presence known. Thus, the threshold represents a connection to the space of Susanna, which is, however, tenuous as the narrator is connected to Susanna, only from her observing position *beyond* the threshold. After Rubin has departed, the narrator retreats from the threshold towards the wall: "Ich trat von der Schwelle seitwärts zur Wand" (Kolmar 1993: 32). The wall, like the threshold, is a border; however, it is a more permanent, impenetrable border than the threshold. The reference to both spatial markers, underscores the connecting properties of the threshold, which have enabled the narrator to get close to Susanna's space.

If Susanna represents innocence and an incorrupted relationship with her Jewishness, then the narrator accesses this form of existence only as an observer. Beyond the threshold and therefore outside of Susanna's space, the narrator is not a part of Susanna's world. This is clear when the narrator is in Susanna's room with her; her presence, however, disturbs Susanna's unalienated understanding. Looking at Susanna's collection of precious stones and sea-shells in Susanna's room, the narrator prompts Susanna to listen to the sea from one of the shells. Susanna is perplexed: the narrator's presence has interfered with the sound of the sea that is otherwise present:

‘Nein’, sagte sie traurig, ‘ich verstehe das nicht, und es ist auch wahr. Es ist das Meer, das hat immer gerauscht, wenn ich allein war. Jetzt kann es nicht rauschen, weil du dabei bist und nichts von ihm weißt.’(Kolmar 1993: 23)

Susanna explicitly blames the narrator’s presence for the interference in the sound of the sea, underscoring the uniqueness of Susanna’s existence and the need to preserve Susanna’s space in order to protect this uniqueness. In this respect, the threshold functions as a marker of separation: although it can be easily crossed, the act of doing so corrupts the uniqueness that is otherwise preserved within the space, so that the threshold signifies the required barrier between Susanna’s environment and the outside world, which preserves Susanna’s alternative existence.

The threshold as both a marker of connection and separation reflects the complexities of the narrator’s existence in relation to her Jewishness. Comparable to the post-colonial subject, who is inbetween sites of belonging, the narrator comes close to accessing a form of existence that is wholly atoned with Jewishness and unconscious drives; yet, she is not a part of this. The narrator connects with this space only as an observer from her transit-space which is devoid of affirming properties. The threshold bears a structural similarity to the inbetween state of the colonised subject, as it connects to two spaces, belonging partially to both. The threshold can be understood as a representation of the narrator’s unstable position. The wholly positive descriptions of Susanna indicate the narrator’s desire to be like Susanna; however, her inability to cross the threshold and preserve this uniqueness signal the impossibility of such an existence for the narrator. The vulnerability of Susanna’s idealised existence is reflected in the permeability of the threshold: although the narrator

protects Susanna's uniqueness by staying outside the space, the threshold can easily be crossed.

6.3.5 Keys: freedom/entrapment

The symbolic significance of keys lies in the dual function of keys to entrap and set free. Keys prevent and enable access to a space so that a key can be seen as both a symbol of the security and fixity of spatial markers and a signifier of the fragility and permeability of perceived secure structures. The duplicity of the semantics of the key complements the perpetual negotiation of freedom within confinement in the novella. Susanna's home is represented as a confined space by the reference to the key used to lock her in. On her arrival at Susanna's home, the narrator is awoken by the sound of the key turning in the lock: "ich [...] wachte erst auf, als ich Milde Morawe an einem Türschloß arbeiten hörte, darin sich der Schlüssel nicht drehen ließ." (Kolmar 1993: 10-11) The turning of the key reflects the duality of the functions of the key; the act of turning the key temporarily weakens the border that encloses Susanna, while the difficulty in unlocking the door mirrors the extent of Susanna's restriction within the space of her home. The permeability of the borders that enclose Susanna subverts the authority that has decided on Susanna's enclosure, as her confinement does not prevent her from engaging with the outside world. This is demonstrated in the use of keys, symbolic of Susanna's entrapment, to allow for Susanna's relationship with Rubin. Susanna has a key to access a letter box, where Rubin deposits letters for her. It is the narrator who unlocks the letter box and collects the letters for Susanna:

Am nächsten Tag holte sie aus dem Nachttisch einen kleinen Schlüssel hervor und bat mich, im Briefkasten nachzuschauen. [...] Ich fand nun mehrmals Briefe im Kasten und gab sie alle getreulich ab, ohne zu fragen. (Kolmar 1993: 35)

The use of the key enables Susanna to communicate with Rubin, something which has been forbidden by her guardian, the agent of her confinement. Here, the key is symbolic of Susanna's freedom and defiance of the restrictions that have been imposed on her. The fact that the narrator is the one who retrieves the letters exposes her own complicity in Susanna and Rubin's forbidden relationship. The narrator's temporary possession of the key reflects her inbetween position: she helps Susanna by retrieving the letters; she is therefore an agent in the articulation of Susanna's freedom. However, she is unaware of the content of the letters, which keeps her distanced from the relationship between Susanna and Rubin. Like the threshold, the key symbolises the narrator's tenuous connection to Susanna, as her lack of knowledge of the content of the letters betrays the distance between Susanna and the narrator. Furthermore, the key, which allows for Susanna's communication with Rubin, is a subversive agent in Susanna's defiance of her confinement, as keys are also the objects used to enclose Susanna within her home. This questions the reliance on fixed structures as these structures are shown to be inevitably penetrable.

The dependence on fixed structures is thematised with reference to keys in the pivotal moment in the novella, when Susanna meets Rubin in the garden. As she awakens to an unknown sound the narrator expresses her fear of Susanna based on her status as mentally ill, and communicates her desire to lock herself in her room:

Ein Grausen vor der Wahnsinnigen flatterte hinter mir in der Nacht, eine höhende Angst. Ich wollte zurück, in mein Zimmer stürzen, den Schlüssel umdrehn, zweimal. (Kolmar 1993: 28-9)

The narrator clearly expresses her fear of Susanna's 'otherness', which has been categorised as a mental illness. The narrator's desire to lock herself in by turning the key twice underscores her need to separate herself from Susanna's otherness by reinforcing permanent spatial markers. Susanna's otherness threatens the unity of the firmly established structures that the narrator relies on, as Susanna does not regard these structures as such. The key is used here to reflect the function of permanent spatial markers as agents of protection and comforting supporters of selfhood. However the inherent duplicity of the key betrays the possibility of the breakdown of these structures that is always present.

The spatial markers in *Susanna* mirror the historical situation at the time the novella was written. The narrator's transitory position is indicated by the temporal nature of her rented room and the inbetweenness of spatial tropes such as the threshold. The inherent duplicity of spatial markers allows for representations of contradictory concepts such as freedom within confinement and simultaneous belonging and alienation within a specific environment. Fixed structures are restricting in that they delineate a specific confined space and liberating, acting as a form of support in the establishment of a sense of self. These conclusions take on significance when the context of the story is taken into consideration. The disintegration of borders which results in the loss of a sense of belonging can be seen to represent the diminishing Jewish community. The firm restrictive structures that coincide with articulations of unadulterated expressions of Jewishness indicate the

need to protect and nurture this existence while also underscoring the need for established structures that define the self. The existence of transit-spaces exposes the false notion of permanent, impenetrable spaces as transit spaces located at the threshold, for example, exist between perceived fixed spatial markers. The analysis of the ambivalence of spatial markers uncovers the complexities of the functions of structures in the definition of the self, which is particularly problematic within transit spaces, devoid of any structures that can be perceived as permanent.

6.4 Sprawling urban space: *Die jüdische Mutter*

The modernising Berlin metropolis is the backdrop of Kolmar's novel, the title of which, betrays nothing of the primary importance of this sprawling urban space to the development of plot and the protagonist, Martha. In the novel, industrialisation is shown to impact on the natural landscape that is overwhelmed with the abject waste of urbanisation. The space of the city is described in detail in the novel; it is shown to be expansive, constantly shifting its borders so that public, urban space impinges on private space, leaving little room for the preservation of traditional institutions such as family or community. Martha's engagement with the urban features that surround her show her to be indifferent to the developments of her time, while she is an agent in the processes of modernisation, in the form of her career, for example. An analysis of the public and private spaces reflects on the complexities of being a Jewish woman in Berlin in the 1930s. The importance of animal spaces in the novel raises questions about the concept of belonging within an urban space that has ramifications beyond

the specific Jewish context. The possibility of community within an urban metropolis and the difficulties of maintaining a private, family space are explored in the novel.

6.4.1 Public spaces: alienating the individual

The police station is presented as an impenetrable, unwelcoming and hostile public space, erecting a physical and metaphorical barrier which denies Martha the help she desperately needs in the search for Ursa. The police station is closed; Martha's persistent efforts to open the door are in vain: "Geschlossen. Sie drückte zwei-, dreimal die Klinke nieder und harrte dann in verbissenem Trotz" (Kolmar 1999: 45).

The inaccessibility of the police station signifies Martha's exclusion from public spaces. It reinforces Martha's outsider status and the distance between her and mainstream society. Although Martha is an urban dweller, she is outside of the public spaces of the city; this reflects on the alienating effects of urban life and the difficulty of belonging within an urban setting. When Martha finally gains access to the station, she is presented with an unwelcoming impersonal space: "Ein Schlüssel knirschte im Schloß. Sie zögerte eine Sekunde, trat ein. Ein enger Flur, dann ein düsterer, höhlenartiger Raum mit ein paar Spinden und Tischen" (Kolmar 1999: 45). The automatic nature in which the door is opened depersonalises the police service and the description portrays the mechanical nature of the public space that is characterised by alienating bureaucracy, as the cabinets and office furniture introduce Martha to the space, before she has even seen a police officer. The turning of the key, which in this instance should denote access to the desired location, only partially fulfils its function. While Martha is granted access to the station by the key, she is not greeted

by a person, which is the object of her visit. The tables and filing cabinets represent the constructed order of modern society, the room is devoid of natural sunlight and the vaulting ceiling portrays the unending nature of this gloomy space. The public space is thus defined by a *lack* of natural and human elements and the imposition of artificial constructs which symbolise organisation and structure. The ineffectual response of the police officers to Martha's predicament reflects the failures of these organisational constructs to respond to human needs. The police officer merely retrieves a piece of paper from a "wurmstichigen Schrank" with Ursa's birth details. The police officer is described as "erfreut, als sei mit dem Auffinden dieses Blattes das Dunkel schon halb geklärt" (Kolmar 1999: 46). The cabinet has been corroded and it is thus not regularly maintained, signifying the disregard with which its contents are treated. The ineffectuality of the police officer's assistance is not noticed by the officer himself who believes the piece of paper signifies resolution. Thus, the bureaucratic attributes of the space such as the filing cabinet merely create the illusion of order and resolution; the futility of Martha's visit to the station exposes the inability of modern concepts of structure and organisation to fulfil human needs. The lack of humane behaviour from the police officers corresponds to the cold environment of the station, just as the worm-eaten cabinet which contains the details of Ursa's existence reflects the disregard for the individual prevalent in a modern society. The fact that this is a space designed to accommodate all members of the public heightens the alienating effects of modern society, which are ill-equipped to deal with human needs, as Martha's exit from the station renders her hopeless and desperate "wie eine Dürftige" (Kolmar 1999: 47).

The hospital corresponds to the police station in the sense that it too is designed to meet the needs of the public but it is portrayed as incapable of doing so. The room betrays artificial, constructed objects, which are alienating and repelling. Martha is left standing in the waiting room as the doctors treat Ursa:

Nun stand sie und wartete in einer Halle mit Topfpflanzen, Zimmerlinden; auch Korbsessel harrten neben ihr; aber sie setzte sich nicht. Ein Mensch in weißem Kittel erschien, schlank gewachsen, bebrillt. (Kolmar 1999: 52)

The house plants and wicker chairs create an artificial atmosphere; the plants belong outside and the wicker chairs are transformed bamboo trees. Even natural objects such as the plants are displaced in an artificial setting that sets out to replace the natural location of the plants and trees. Similarly, the bamboo trees have been manipulated to fulfil a function removed from their natural role. The bespectacled man in the white coat lends this scene a sense of anonymity and alienation which is perpetuated by the unhelpful manner in which Martha is treated by the staff at the hospital. Like the police station, the hospital is characterised by features of a modern bureaucratic society. Martha is instructed to go to a room “darin Beamte an Pulten schrieben, mit Aktendeckeln hantierten” (Kolmar 1999: 52). The illusion of progress and organisation is created by the workers busying themselves with files and at desks; however, the space is impersonal and the workers are multiple and anonymous, referred to by the collective word ‘Beamte’. Thus, the space of the hospital does not cater for the needs of the individual and even in the wards, private space is not assigned. Ursa’s bed is separated from her neighbour’s only by a “braunlicher, länglicher Tisch” (Kolmar 1999: 219). Her private space is easily infringed upon; the table is a marker of the bureaucracy that characterises the reception area of the

hospital, signifying the imposition of impersonal agents of bureaucracy on the private space of the individual.

The alienating and impersonal nature of the public spaces compounds Martha's sense of exclusion from her environment. The disregard for the individual within public space leaves no room for a sense of community to develop, as the basis of communities is shared individual experiences. Developments in urbanisation such as an increased focus on bureaucracy are shown to be detrimental to the individual who is seen as an anonymous member of the general public. Despite being part of a large anonymous crowd, the individual is out of place as the structures that identify the crowd are artificial constructs that do not reflect natural human needs. This sense of alienation within one's environment is brought to the fore in the references to the animal spaces in the novel.

6.4.2 Animal spaces: representations of alienating effects of a modern society

The prevalence of animals in Kolmar's novel calls for an analysis of the spaces that the animals occupy. The zoo, a popular spot for Martha, has been interpreted as a source of comfort for Martha who is drained by the urban environment. (cf. Shafi 2009) The space of the zoo is, however, not a harmonious, affirming site. The animals are seen as misplaced and distressed by the alien nature of their habitat. The function of a zoo is to enclose animals in artificially constructed spaces that should resemble the natural environs. The artificial nature of the space of the zoo causes the animals to appear out of place in their environment. The description of the condor bird encompasses the artificial nature of the animal's habitat: "Er [der Kondor] war

gefangen hier, arm und fremd, und hockte, im kleinen, rötlichen Blick die frostige Trübseligkeit des Verbannten” (Kolmar 1999: 118). The bird is contained within a constructed space, far removed from his natural habitat. He is described as strange in his environment with the melancholy of an exile. The comparison with an exile compounds the sense that the bird is inappropriately located within the zoo; it also allows for an interpretation of the animal space as a reflection of human space, particularly within the German-Jewish context of the story. The sense of estrangement from one’s surroundings is both a feature of modern living and Jewish living in 1930s Berlin, so that the condor’s alienation from his habitat is representative of human alienation from the modern environment. As exemplified by Martha’s visits to the police station and the hospital, the urban metropolis estranges and eschews the individual so that he/she does not fit in his/her environment.

The conflict between artificial, imposed space and instinctive, natural behaviour is explored in the description of the space of the porcupines in the zoo. The porcupines are cramped together as they attempt to squeeze through a narrow entrance; they are described as not comprehending what is obstructing their path, signalling the unnatural enclosure of the animals that should roam freely, unaffected by spatial restrictions:

drüben die putzigen Stachelschweine wollten schlafen gehn: zwei drängelten sich gemeinsam zur Tür, und eins stieß mit seinen sträubigen Borsten das andre zurück; dann schienen sie dumm sich anzuglotzen, begriffen schwer, daß sie beide zugleich nicht durch die Klappe einfahren konnten, und versuchten die Sache aufs neu. (Kolmar 1999: 115)

The porcupines react to an instinctive desire to sleep; the imposition of spatial restrictions prevents the animals from satisfying this desire and renewed attempts to

respond to natural urges are thwarted because of the borders of the doorway that restrict their movements. The porcupines react only to natural instincts, which cannot accommodate for imposed spatial borders that hinder instinctive behaviour. The restrictive function of the spatial markers represents the conflict between natural instinctive drives and imposed constructs that impede instinctive behaviour. The spatial borders can be understood as representative of societal restrictions which mould existence irrespective of instinctive, natural drives. The sanctity of a natural habitat is lost as the porcupines' attempts to sleep are witnessed by the crowds at the zoo, underscoring the infringement of public space on private space. The lack of a natural habitat that supports and nurtures the development of the animals and the imposition of spatial restrictions that impede attempts to live in accordance with instinctive desires can be seen as a reflection of the disintegration of a supportive community and the difficulties of maintaining an affirmative, private space to nurture the individual within a modern environment. The infringement of public space on private space increases the need to establish a solely private realm, as demonstrated in Martha's preservation of her home.

6.4.3 Private space: Martha's home

Martha lives in a "rückwärtigen breitem Gebäude" (Kolmar 1999: 9), which reflects Martha's misplacement within her environment and her links to the past, as the backwards building may have been appropriate in a former time but it is out of place here. Martha lives intentionally secluded from the action of the metropolis, choosing instead to live in an area that is described as primitive and isolated. As Shafi explains,

“the description of Martha’s home, a small apartment in an old villa in Charlottenburg, metonymically conveys her anti-modern stance” (Shafi 2009: 125). Martha’s anti-modern stance relates to the preservation of her private, family space, underscoring the coincidence of former traditions and lifestyles and Martha’s role as a mother. The description of Martha’s private space links this space strongly with religious tradition and an idealised location: “Dies war ein Klösterliches, der Friede, die Abgewandtheit, Abseitigkeit eines Stifts, etwas Träumendes, etwas Vergangnes” (Kolmar 1999: 125). The comparison of Martha’s private space to a convent associates family with religious communities. While Martha has been distanced from her Jewish faith and the dissolution of Jewish communities is apparent in the sparse attendance at the synagogue, the desire to establish this sense of community in Martha’s private space is reflected in the above description. The space is also designated as isolated and dreamlike, reminiscent of something past, signalling that the establishment of an idealised community setting is not possible in the present modern setting. The dreamlike space of a traditional, religious community is a feature of the past, which Martha tries to recreate by choosing to live in this area. The links between Martha’s space and the past are reinforced when Albert visits Martha’s home and comments that Martha’s home belongs in a museum: “Sie sollten das Haus mal einem Museum als Leihgabe schicken” (Kolmar 1999: 144). Albert’s comments underscore the uniqueness of Martha’s home and the strong ties with former traditions that the space contains, which call for Martha’s space to be preserved as a representation of a former time. The differences between the modern public spaces and Martha’s ‘backward’ private space can be understood as the difference between

present and past, where the past is the site of tradition and community and the present is the site of alienating bureaucracy which repels the individual. This comparison underscores the difficulties of preserving a sense of community in an urban environment; the uniqueness of Martha's space enhances the vulnerability of this sanctuary, which is threatened by the sprawling urban spaces that enclose Martha's private space.

6.4.4 Trams, gates, fences and pathways: fusing private and public space

The concept of neatly contained, static spaces is refuted in Kolmar's depiction of Berlin. The constant interweaving of the tram throughout the city reflects the weak borders delineating private space and public space. Martha's home is connected via the tram to the centre of Berlin, which is abundant with the very features of urbanity that unsettle her. Martha is a frequent passenger on the tram, shifting between this abhorrent modernity and her idealised conventional family home. The tram is introduced in the opening lines, weaving its way through an urban landscape that is depicted as ugly, aggressive and sprawling:

Die Straßenbahn surrte rieselnd und spritzend bergauf. Am dunkelrotrußigem Backsteingebäude des Bahnhofs vorbei. Über die Brücke, von deren Geländer der Blick hinabsprang tief in den Schacht, mit seinem enteilenden, nicht zu fern sich verwirrenden Gleisgezücht wie eine Schlangengrube. (Kolmar 1999: 7)

The multiple, entangled tracks reflect the continuously shifting, expanding nature of the urban space that surrounds Martha. Her home is located a short walking distance from the tram stop, indicating the close proximity of the urbanised space that Martha

tries to avoid. The impingement of public space on private space is expressed in the frequent references to fences and gateways — markers that conventionally delineate enclosed spaces; however here they are shown to be porous borders, giving only the illusion of contained spaces. The fences and gates heighten the chaos and contribute to the sprawling nature of urban space. When Martha calls to the home of the young boy Max, the gate, marking the entrance to the house does not function as a protective barrier: “Das schmale Gittertor schien versperrt; aber der Bursche kannte den Pfiff, es auch von draußen zu öffnen” (Kolmar 1999: 30). When Martha arrives home, she pauses before unlocking the door, drawing the reader’s attention to the key that symbolises Martha’s seclusion: “Sie zögerte. Sie stand, ihre Schlüssel schon zwischen den Fingern, stand wie in Staunen” (Kolmar 1999: 9). The key underscores the seclusion and uniqueness of Martha’s private space; however the violent attack on Ursa represents the corruption of this private space, which reflects on the futility of Martha’s attempts to protect her private space from the ravages of her urban environment. Thus the key is also a weak spatial marker as it does not protect Martha’s private space from the violence of the outside world.

The opening of the novel introduces the motif of Martha traversing from the public space of the city to the private space of her home, which underscores the looseness of the borders that separate both spaces. Martha disembarks the tram and makes her way down “den ungepflasterten Weg, der zwischen das Kolonistenland und die Roßkaempfer-Wirtschaft rückte” (Kolmar 1999: 8). Shafi points out that this unpaved path is “suggestive of the transition between the urban and the rural world” (Kolmar 1999: 119). This transition is not delineated by a well-built, recognisable

border: the unpaved path signals how the boundaries that separate private and public space are weak and easily encroached upon. The sprawling space of the urban environment of Berlin is depicted negatively in the novel, alienating the individual and interfering with traditional sanctuaries such as the private space of the family home.

Martha's frequent travels through Berlin cause her to shift between public and private spaces, often by means of the tram, which connects both private and public space. The public spaces reinforce Martha's outsider status while signalling the death of community in the urban environment. Martha's private space, although presented as an idyllic haven for mother and daughter is vulnerable, as it is encircled by the waste of the city. The impingement of the public space on Martha's private space indicates the complexities of existence for a Jewish mother at this time; the difficulties of preserving a traditional Jewish family unit are compounded by the impossibilities of securing spatial markers that enclose private space. Communities and traditional family structures are thus shown to be dependent on spatial markers, which function as affirming and protective constructs. The necessity to differentiate between public and private spaces is based on the desire to maintain uniqueness within private space. Organisational constructs such as the features of the office space in the hospital and the police station alienate and repel the individual in an urban setting; however the lack of fixed structures allows for the fusion of private and public spaces that destroys the sanctity and uniqueness of private space.

6.5 Space and spatial markers: representations of German-Jewish existence

Space and spatial markers represent the inbetween position of German-Jews at the time Kolmar's prose works were written. The contradictory representations of space allow for an accurate reflection of complexities that characterised German-Jewish existence. Fixed structures, representative of markers of belonging such as community, tradition or religion are shown to be necessary to establish a secure sense of self. Imposed borders can be both stifling and nurturing as existence within a confined space is limited within this space but also protected. In *Susanna*, personal freedom is possible within confinement; this poses the question of the necessity of conformity within society. If Susanna was not isolated she would have to conform to societal expectations to be accepted, which in turn would limit the unadulterated innocence that Susanna possesses. An analysis of space strengthens the portrayal of the complexities of German-Jewish existence as space is subject to multiple and often conflicting representations.

Appropriations of space can be understood as projections of the core themes in *Die jüdische Mutter*. Martha's inbetweenness is the result of her alienation from society and the corruption of the maternal sanctuary. An analysis of public and private spaces reveals the nature of Martha's inbetweenness: she is repelled by public, 'modern' spaces such as the police station and the hospital, while her private space is reminiscent of affirming spaces such as those belonging to religious or traditional communities. The connecting properties of spatial markers such as the tram show how private and public spaces are easily infringed upon, while also accurately portraying Martha's inbetweenness as she is a regular passenger of the tram. This

inbetween state is shown to be a feature of German-Jewish existence, as the spaces are represented in connection with their significance within the context of the text's production.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

The complex nature of Kolmar's novel and novella align these works with twentieth-century works of fiction that were produced in Germany contemporaneously to Kolmar's works. In *Die jüdische Mutter*, Kolmar presents a figure that perplexes the reader because of her simultaneous engagement with and distance from her modern, anti-Semitic environment. The argument that Martha is a victim of Jewish self-hate, who is capable only of articulating the negative representations of Jewishness of her anti-Semitic peers, overlooks the ambivalence of Martha's relationship to her Jewish self. Martha and the narrator in *Susanna* see Jewishness as a contentious aspect of themselves, both reassuring and alienating. In addressing the difficulties of being Jewish in the 1930s and 1940s in Germany, Kolmar locates an inbetween state of existence comparable to the post-colonial self that is articulated on borders and margins. The use of space in the prose works reflects the tentative nature of this position: Martha's home is between primitive and modern, natural and industrialised. She is surrounded by abandoned garden allotments, unfinished building work but also green fields. The description of Martha's environment portrays the ugly side of industrialisation; however her environment is also described as a site of initial subjectivities: "... dies [war] eine Welt des Werdenden, des Unfertigen, der Gegensätze: auf unwirschem Wüsten – und Steppengebiet unregelmäßiges Bauen" (Kolmar 1999: 27). The landscape is unfinished yet we are told it is developing. Martha's inbetweenness, articulated through her simultaneous closeness to and distance from her modern, gentile environment, is reflected in the developing space

that Martha occupies, outside of contained spaces like the city centre. Kolmar's portrayal of this hybrid inbetween existence forces the reader to examine concepts of belonging that were particularly contentious for German-Jews when Kolmar wrote her prose works, but which can be applied to contemporary society and the modern condition in general. In *Die jüdische Mutter*, Martha escapes the aporetic situation of searching for belonging only through death. Kolmar does not offer a solution to Martha's dilemma. Kolmar's portrayal of Martha's story leaves all contradictions and complexities intact, even the perpetrator for Ursa's attack is never found, although a newspaper cutting reporting the death of a man possibly signals the identity of the attacker. Kolmar thus avoids presenting an affirmative solution to the problematics of identity, creating a story that is an insightful comment on the circumstances of Jewish mothers in Berlin in 1930, which is equally relevant for contemporary society.

The narrator in *Susanna* is the only hopeful character in the prose works. Her narrative exposes the fragility of the human condition and the failure of assimilation. Drenched with hindsight, the story of Susanna is told from the perspective of the narrator who appears to have learned something from her experiences with Susanna. Although Susanna's wholly simplistic, affirmative relationship to her Jewish self does not guarantee her a sense of collective belonging, the narrator realises that her rejection of her Jewishness and her embrace of a modern career role has caused her to lead a lonely, unfulfilled, loveless life. As the narrator prepares to emigrate, there is a sense that, although she is depicted as a solitary figure, she has gained an understanding of her relationship to her Jewishness and concepts of belonging in a modern world that will impact her future life. The modern human condition is

depicted as inevitably complex: Susanna's simplistic understanding of her self is shown to be incompatible with the outside world.

The negotiation of Jewishness in a modern environment is the overriding theme in Kolmar's prose works, which can also be understood as the investigation of the modern human condition. In Kolmar's letters to her sister Hilde, strategies of communication are explored that defy the restrictions imposed on Jews at this time. The use of silence to communicate with Hilde and to represent the realities of Kolmar's situation is a subversive act as the powers that restricted Kolmar's communication are threatened and the validity of language is called into question. This is developed further in Kolmar's dramatic works, where the potential of silence to represent a pure, sacred form of communication and existence is explored while the shortcomings of language are exposed. In *Möblierte Dame* language is shown to be an inadequate form of expression as it trivialises the speaker's situation. Only through silence is the significance of the context of the speaker's story relayed. The historical context of the plays is detectable in *Cécile Renault* as language is portrayed as a powerful medium in a political context, creating misrepresentations and ultimately causing Cécile's tragic death. The validity of language as a form of communication is questioned in the play *Nacht*, as language fosters misunderstandings and is seen as inherently corrupt. In contrast to this, silence is associated with theological teachings where silence is a pure and sacred state. Thus, in *Briefe* and the dramatic works, the supremacy of silence over language challenges the conventional language/silence binary where the former is a preferred form of communication. The historical and social context informs the interpretation of

silence, as corrupt language in the form of propaganda and enforced silencing exemplified in the censorship to which Kolmar's letters were subject, were part of Kolmar's daily life when she wrote *Briefe* and the plays. Against this backdrop, the works exploration of alternative methods of freedom of expression that is untainted by oppressive, manipulative powers, can be seen as subversive.

In the plays, Kolmar challenges fundamental religious beliefs in her treatment of the theme of sacrifice. By questioning the validity of sacrifice in its function to communicate with divine powers, Kolmar also explores the legitimacy of unswerving religious devotion. The senseless of the female sacrifice in *Cécile Renault* and *Nacht* indicates the fragility of divine powers. The ramifications of the challenge to conventional understandings of the supremacy of divinity in religious beliefs relate to the broader questions of attributing meaning to existence. Kolmar exposes a dilemma, when existential challenges cannot be overcome by religious devotion. There is no solution to the crisis and the senselessness of the sacrifice in both plays renders the question of the validity of religious beliefs open. However, the meaning of Cécile's sacrifice for Robespierre signals a gender discourse where the female dies senselessly at the hands of the male. Sense and meaning in the act of sacrifice is only possible if this relates to a private, personal realm as is the case with the death of Ischta. At the end of both plays, male-dominated political change is imminent, indicating that direction and orientation lies within human realms of perception, specifically with male leaders. Although Kolmar does not elaborate on the significance of male-dominated political leadership, the allusion to Hitler's Nazi party is detectable. However, Kolmar's plays are not a direct reflection of the circumstances of her time

as the questions on the validity of sacrifice and religion and the investigation into the motivations behind male thirst for power are timeless themes, evident in the setting of both plays centuries before Kolmar's own time.

The application of spatial theories to Kolmar's prose works exposes the textual techniques that contribute to the representations of inbetweenness, characteristic of Jewishness and modern existence. By looking at the differing and contradictory depictions of space and spatial markers, the complexities of existence are accurately portrayed. Space in Kolmar's prose works is representative of the strategies of engagement that are explored in Kolmar's oeuvre, as spaces are appropriated in accordance with differing perceptions of that space. The conflicting portrayals of the same space allows for depictions of the inbetween subject as space refuses to be fixed within one representation.

Spatial theories complement post-colonial approaches, as the nature of inbetween existence involves engagement with multiple constructs. Space can be seen to represent these constructs as the processes of appropriation of space are structurally similar to the processes of engagement and perception of societal constructs. In both approaches, conventional binaries are explored and in some cases subverted. The inadequacy of binary-based structures is revealed as inbetweenness is shown to be a perpetual state, which cannot be contained within existing categories that define existence. The conclusions drawn from the investigation of silence and sacrifice are similar to considerations on inbetweenness in the application of spatial and post-colonial approaches. Silence and sacrifice are shown to negate their conventional function. Silence, indicative of absence is portrayed as a virulent,

subversive mode of expression, which negates its position within the language/silence binary. Sacrifice is stripped of its sacred significance as it does not attest to the existence of divinity. In exposing the fragility of belief in divine powers, the structure of societies based on religious beliefs is challenged. The investigation of silence and sacrifice does not conclude with definitive statements; rather, the exploration of silence and sacrifice exposes alternative methods of dealing with existential realities. The considerations on the place of sacrifice and silence for modern existence and Jewish existence correspond to the identifications of strategies for dealing with inbetweenness, in the discussion of the prose works.

The investigation of the nature of Jewishness and modern existence in Kolmar's prose and dramatic works explores many questions without providing singular, definitive answers. The structure of Kolmar's prose and dramatic works can be seen to reflect the state of inbetweenness, which is characterised by perpetual searching and complex acts of conforming to societal constructs and simultaneously rejecting such constructs. The lack of resolution, for example in the unsolved rape of Ursa or the lack of significance attributed to the female sacrifice, can be considered a textual device, which accurately portrays Jewishness and modern existence in Kolmar's time. By acknowledging the complexities and contradictions prevalent in Kolmar's prose and dramatic works, the thematic richness and progressive nature of Kolmar's works can be truly appreciated.

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