

Exploring the novel “Zoo Station: the Story of Christiane F.” - the protagonist from a psychodynamic and sociocultural perspective

Explorando a obra “Os Filhos da Droga” - Christiane F. Sob uma perspectiva psicodinâmica e sociocultural

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ABSTRACT

Christiane F. was just a teenager when, in 1978, she became a widely recognized heroin addict through her autobiographical book “Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo” (translated in English as “Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F.”). In the late seventies, German society was confronted with the story of Christiane F., who made her way into the underworld of heroin and sex work, relentlessly portraying the reality of drug use in West Berlin. Despite its enormous popularity and richness of content, we identified a gap in literature regarding the analysis of this novel, both from a psychodynamic and sociocultural viewpoint. The authors propose an interpretation of this novel from a psychodynamic perspective, with particular emphasis on family ties and interpersonal relationships, and how they decisively shaped the protagonist's world. This article also analyses the sociocultural influences and how the female gender imposes its differences in the atmosphere of drug consumption.

Keywords: drug use, attachment, psychoanalysis, drug policies, sociocultural influences, gender.

RESUMO

Christiane F. era apenas uma adolescente quando, em 1978, ela se tornou uma viciada em heroína amplamente reconhecida através de seu livro autobiográfico “Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo” (traduzido em inglês como “Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F.”). No final dos anos setenta, a sociedade alemã foi confrontada com a história de Christiane F., que entrou no submundo do trabalho sexual e da heroína, retratando incessantemente a realidade do uso de drogas em Berlim Ocidental. Apesar de sua enorme popularidade e riqueza de conteúdo, identificamos uma lacuna na literatura a respeito da análise deste romance, tanto do ponto de vista psicodinâmico quanto sociocultural. As autoras propõem uma interpretação deste romance a partir de uma perspectiva psicodinâmica, com ênfase particular nos laços familiares e nas relações interpessoais, e como eles moldaram decisivamente o mundo do protagonista. Este

artigo também analisa as influências socioculturais e como o gênero feminino impõe suas diferenças na atmosfera do consumo de drogas.

Palavras-chave: consumo de drogas, apego, psicanálise, políticas de drogas, influências socioculturais, gênero.

1 INTRODUCTION

Two journalists from the German magazine Stern, Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck, met then-teenager Christiane Vera Felscherinow in 1978, when she was testifying against “John”, who was accused of paying underage prostitutes with heroin.

Reporters were shocked by the escalation of drug use among teenagers and spent about two months interviewing Christiane and other “junkies” and prostitutes (of both sexes) who used to gather outside the Bahnhof Zoo station in Berlin.

From the recorded conversations, several articles emerged, which afterwards culminated into a book – “Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo” (original title in German), autobiographical in nature and with a first-person narrative, portraying the childhood and adolescence of Christiane from 6 to 15 years of age.¹ The novel, originally published in 1978, has been translated into multiple languages, selling millions of copies worldwide. In the English version, it was published under the title “Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F.”.

After the huge initial success of the book, this story was adapted into a movie in 1981, directed by Uli Edel and produced by Bernd Eichinger and Hans Weth. The producers declared their intention to keep the film's story as faithful as possible to the original version of the book².

2 NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE GREAT CITY OF BERLIN

Christiane F. was born on the 20th of May 1962 and spent her first years of life in a village in the Hamburg region of Germany.

The narrative begins when, at the age of 6, Christiane moves with her parents and younger sister to West Berlin, eventually settling in a small apartment that was part of a residential complex located in Gropiusstadt, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Berlin (Table I – *The neighborhood of Gropiusstadt*). Apropos of this great change, the protagonist highlights the happy and carefree experience in the village until then, in contrast to the harsh and suffocating reality of the big city (Table 1 - *The prohibitions*).

The wall that is mentioned in the story (Table I – *The wall*) corresponds to the famous Berlin Wall, built in 1961 by the communists of East Berlin, to prevent the population from

escaping to the capitalist side. This wall divided physically the western and eastern Berlin sectors until its fall in 1989.

Christiane lived in West Berlin, an autonomous city and political enclave surrounded by the city of East Berlin and other East German territories. This city existed between 1949 and 1990, with North American, British, and French occupation, established in 1945 after the end of the Second World War and the consequent defeat of Germany.³

Table I – New beginnings in Berlin.

<i>The neighborhood of Gropiusstadt</i>	“Gropiusstadt: the projects. Home to 45,000 people, but mainly just a forest of high-rises, with some patches of green and shopping centers in between. From far away, it looked new and well taken care of. But when you got up close, you realized that the whole place reeked of piss and shit – because of all the dogs and kids that lived there. The stairwells smelled the worst.”
<i>The prohibitions</i>	“In the projects, we all eventually learned the same lesson: you couldn’t have fun without breaking some rule. All of our best games were forbidden – whether it was fun or not. There was as sign at every corner in Gropiusstadt. The “recreational parks” between the high-rises were really just sign parks. And most of the signs were directed at kids, prohibiting one thing or another.”
<i>The wall</i>	“What we considered to be our paradise playgrounds were just a short walk away, so even we younger kids could get to by ourselves. The most beautiful spot was near the Wall, which wasn’t far from Gropiusstadt. (...) But inevitably, one day, it was discovered that kids from the projects were playing over there. Then the troops arrived again to create order and clean up. And they put the all-too-familiar signs. (...) The policemen, who were lurking around the area anyway because of the Wall, made sure that the new rules and regulations were obeyed.”
<i>Prefabricated existence</i>	“In a high-rise housing development like the housing projects in Gropiusstadt, where approximately 45,000 live, any problem is automatically magnified, just due to the sheer concentration of people in a relatively small area. There’s an abundance of the unemployed, of dropouts, of dissatisfaction, and of conflict. Financial hardship, high rents, and a constant rising cost of living impose a steadily increasing workload and the necessity for both parents to have a job and bring in money. (...) Nobody can seriously dispute that a direct connection exists between the increase in drug abuse among working-class teens and the deterioration of their quality of life.”

Excerpts taken from “Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F.” – pages 13, 22, 23, 34, 35. 102, 103¹.

3 EARLY BONDS IN CHRISTIANE'S WORLD

Christiane lived with her parents and younger sister in Berlin. The protagonist and her sister attended school, while her mother worked as a typewriter and accountant. Her father, however, after failing to establish a marriage agency in the city and finding himself unemployed, began to increasingly shift his frustrations onto his wife and daughters and take refuge in alcohol consumption (Table II - *Father*). Meanwhile, Christiane's mother decided to file for divorce, taking her daughters to live with her and her new boyfriend Klaus. However, after a failed attempt of their mother to integrate stepfather Klaus into the family system (Table II - *Mother and stepfather*), Christiane's sister chose to leave to stay with her father and his girlfriend (Table II – *Sister*).

Table II – Christiane’s family.

<p><i>Father</i></p>	<p>“In the evenings, I always asked my dad (as sweetly as I could) if he had any plans for the night. He went out a lot, and the first thing we did after he left was breathe a very deep sigh of relief. (...) But when he got back later on, there was the threat of another disaster. Usually, he was drunk by then, so just one small thing could cause him to go totally apeshit.”</p> <p>“I told him how the mouse got away on the playground. My dad looked at me like a lunatic. I knew that now he’d go totally psycho. He screamed and immediately started beating me. (...) When he also started in on my sister, I got a couple of seconds of air and instinctively tried to get to the window. I believe I would have jumped, right of that eleventh-floor window. (...) My mom probably stood crying in the doorway again, but I didn’t see her. I only became aware of her when she threw herself between my dad and me. (...) He’d completely lost it. He was punching and beating my mom in the hallway.”</p>
<p><i>Mother and stepfather</i></p>	<p>“Klaus was a permanent fixture now, and even though I still thought he was kind of nice, he was always getting in the way. (...) I just didn’t accept him as one of us. (...) I responded pretty badly to the situation – with a lot of anger (and a lot of yelling). My sister, however, got more and more quiet and was clearly hurting inside. (...) But she started to talk more and more often about moving back in with my dad. I thought that idea was totally crazy after all that we’d been through with him.”</p>
<p><i>Sister</i></p>	<p>“she did what for me was the unthinkable: She moved back in with my dad. In so doing, she deserted my mom and left me behind as well. So I became even lonelier, and our mom was totally distraught. (...) She was torn between her kids and her boyfriend and she didn’t have any idea what to do or who to choose.”</p>

Excerpts taken from “Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F.” – pages 18, 40, 41, 42¹.

3.1 THE THEORY OF ATTACHMENT

Freud and Melanie Klein believed that the children's inner fantasies about the outside world played an important role in the formation of their relational models. In the 1960s, psychiatrist John Bowlby broke with this tradition and insisted that it is the reality rather than the fantasy of what is transmitted between children and caregivers that makes the difference. Each child develops their own set of internal models regarding the caregivers' ability to respond to their needs. These models are internalized by the child and develop into schemas of how in adulthood the person will see him or herself and respective interpersonal relationships.⁴ Thus, when the child does not receive the appropriate response from the caregiver, insecure binding styles are formed.⁵

This idea was further developed by Mary Ainsworth, who found that the attachment style that develops is likely to be one of three types: secure, avoidant, or ambivalent.⁶ A fourth category, the disorganized, was proposed afterwards by Main and Solomon.⁷

Later, Brennan suggested that attachment in adults would be processed according to two fundamental dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Each adult would vary along these two axes, modeling four styles: secure (low anxiety and avoidance), preoccupied (low avoidance and high anxiety), dismissing (low anxiety and high avoidance), and fearful (high avoidance and high anxiety – similar to the disorganized style proposed before by Main and Solomon).⁸

In the secure attachment style, relationships are characterized by high longevity, trust, commitment, and interdependence. In the preoccupied style, there is a high preoccupation with the possibility of being unloved, and these people are easily frustrated or angry when their attachment needs are not met. In the dismissing style, people avoid intimacy and conflict, having difficulty being close to others, trusting them, or depending on them. In the fearful style, they have problems understanding their experiences, feel unworthy of love or support, and have great difficulty in emotional regulation.⁹

Considering the verbal and physical aggressiveness towards Christiane, perpetuated by her father, the neglect experienced in relation to her mother and finally the abandonment felt in relation to her sister, it is considered that Christiane would be subject to high levels of both anxiety and avoidance, which could lead to the development of a fearful attachment style.

4 CHRISTIANE AND THE DRUGS

In high school, Christiane met her friend Kessi, who was spending time with a group of young people belonging to a local social center (Table III – *The group*). These young people

were alcohol and hashish consumers, and it was through them that Christiane was introduced to the world of drugs. First because of the group pressure, and later because of the curiosity associated with a certain glamorization of drug consumption by the young people of that time, Christiane started her own path in the search for psychoactive drugs, finding its maximum exponent in Sound nightclub, “the most modern discotheque in Europe” (Table III - *Sound and the glamorization of the status of “druggies”*).

Table III – Christiane and the drugs.

<i>The group</i>	“Kessi explained that they were smoking hashish and told me that it was ok for me to go join them. I didn’t know exactly what hashish was supposed to be. I only knew that it was a drug and totally illegal. (...) I passed on it. I didn’t really want to say no, since I wanted so badly to fit in. (...) The idea of doing drugs still scared the shit out of me. I felt really insecure. I wanted to just sink into a hole in the ground and disappear. But I couldn’t leave the table (...)”
<i>Sound and the glamorization of the status of “druggies”</i>	<p>“I did, however, have a new goal: I wanted to get into The Sound. The Sound was a club on Genthiner Street in the Tiergarten neighborhood. (...) The Sound was the place to be. You could buy anything there – from pot to quaaludes to Valium and even heroin. I’d heard about a bunch of really cool people who hung out there and seemed almost magical to me. (...) Kessi told me some important news: Micha was shooting heroin. I was excited to meet him because up to that point I’d never personally met a junkie.”</p> <p>“I didn’t want any more than that, and Atze seemed to sense as much without us having to talk about it. But that was the difference between druggies and the drunks: Most of the druggies were really empathetic – at least when it came to their own group of friends. Meanwhile, the drunks would all become really aggressive when they were drunk. All they cared about was sex. For us, other things were more important.”</p>
Self-medication	And when I was really depressed, I couldn’t help remembering how effective drugs could be at banishing those kinds of feelings.”

<p><i>Self-image</i></p>	<p>“I started to look different, too. I got super skinny because I hardly ate anything anymore. All my pants were suddenly way too big for me. My face looked gaunt. I stood in front of the mirror a lot, and I liked what I saw, the changes I was seeing. I looked more and more like the others in my group of friends. The innocent look on my face had finally fallen away.”</p> <p>“I looked in the mirror, just like I did every day. A totally strange sunken face stared back at me. It had been a long time since I’d been able to recognize myself in the mirror. That face wasn’t mine. Neither was this emaciated body. It was a body that was totally foreign to me. I couldn’t even feel it when I was sick.”</p>
<p><i>Detlef</i></p>	<p>“I reasoned that if I hadn’t done heroin, then I never would’ve gotten back together with Detlef. I deluded myself into believing that I would be able to keep on being just a weekend user. (...) On top of that, I believed I could save Detlef from becoming a junkie. Those were the lies I told myself at the time.”</p> <p>“I said, Okay, you’re right. But listen: This is the way we have to handle it from now on. You can’t do it all by yourself anymore. We need too much dope. And I don’t want you to be the only one who works on the street. (...) I can probably make a pile of cash, especially at first. (...) Detlef didn’t say anything. He put his arm around my shoulder.”</p>
<p><i>The despair</i></p>	<p>“So it had come to this: end-of-the world doom and gloom. Thoughts of suicide. I recognized this situation, and I knew that it absolutely couldn’t go in this way. But I was still too chicken to give myself the golden shot, the overdose. I was still looking for some way out.”</p>

Excerpts taken from “Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F” – pages 48, 72, 73, 80, 104, 167, 301, 348¹.

4.1 ATTACHMENT THEORY AND DRUG CONSUMPTION

From a psychodynamic point of view, people who experience insecure attachment styles and traumatic experiences in childhood are at an increased risk of developing behavioral problems and a pattern of harmful drug use throughout adolescence and adulthood. In the 1970s, Edward Khantzian and David Duncan developed the so-called Self-Medication Hypothesis (Table III - *Self-medication*), according to which drug use is conceptualized not only as a pursuit of pleasure, but also as a means to deal with uncomfortable affective states, in a search for contact and comfort.^{10,11} Thus, low self-esteem and unsatisfactory or unstable interpersonal relationships can leave individuals predisposed to the effects of psychoactive drugs.¹¹ A drug can therefore create the feeling of having a secure base, and drug utilization can be understood

as an attempt at self-regulation.¹² A relationship with drugs can then become a kind of attachment, which acts both as an obstacle and a substitute for interpersonal relationships.¹³

Deprivation of developmental needs, as happened in Christiane's case, can result in vulnerabilities that, in turn, lead to attempts at self-repair, leaving the individual constantly looking for something to replace an inner emptiness. From a psychodynamic point of view, drug misuse “represents a failure to negotiate the transition from helplessness to competence in the social world” (Flores, 2004).¹²

Bearing in mind that the use of psychotropic drugs has often been associated with the three styles of insecure attachment, the treatment of addictions necessarily, although not exclusively, involves encouraging the individual to seek positive social experiences that allow him to develop a more secure attachment style, with consequent improvements in their emotional regulation.¹⁴

4.2 POLYDRUG USE

Most individuals that are undergoing treatment for drug dependence report polydrug use, which was also the case for Christiane. Epidemiological data reveal characteristic age-related trajectories, progressing from typical onset of drug use during adolescence to peak rates in young adults and with a progressive decline in adulthood.¹⁴

Like in the case of our protagonist, many individuals often seem to progress from “gateway” substances, such as tobacco, alcohol, or cannabis, to the use of other psychotropic substances. This common progression can be attributed to several factors, including a common propensity to use psychotropic drugs, an increased awareness of the use of other drugs due to the use of a previous drug, and a connection to a social network that promotes the use of multiple drugs.¹⁴

Several studies show that users of multiple drugs generally have a higher prevalence of insecure attachment and personality disorders, high levels of neuroticism and a greater presence of negative emotions.^{15,16}

4.3 WOMEN AND DRUGS

John Bowlby believed that attachment is essential for all people and that, therefore, it would be equally important for males and females, and would have the same consequences for both.¹⁷ However, recent studies point to gender differences either regarding attachment or the use of psychoactive drugs. We highlight in this article those that apply to Christiane's case:

- Boys with insecure attachment tend to engage in more aggressive and reactive behaviors in response to stress factors, while insecurely attached girls frequently try to please others.¹⁸ In the case of our protagonist, the propensity to give in to pressure exerted by her group of friends and her boyfriend Detlef was notorious, and she would give in, to ensure that she belongs to the group (Table III – *The group; Detlef*).
- Females are more likely to start using drugs at a younger age (on average, at 9 or 10 years old).¹⁹ Christiane also started experimenting with alcohol and tobacco at that age.
- Females use smaller doses and for shorter periods, but the progression to tolerance and subsequent dependence is also faster.²⁰ In Christiane's case, there was also a rapid progression to dependence, with a frequent mention of the so-called "turkey" phenomena, which corresponded to the deprivation effects of heroin.
- Having a family history of drug use is more common in females.²¹ For example, Christiane had a father with alcohol problems (Table II - *Father*).
- Female gender has higher rates of comorbidity with major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, eating disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder.⁵ Throughout the story, Christiane struggles with issues related to self-image, as well as traumatic experiences and depressive and anxious feelings, even presenting suicidal ideation (Table III – *Self-image; The despair*).
- Females who use drugs are more likely to have relationships with partners who also use drugs, who may be their main suppliers²², as was the case with Detlef, Christiane's boyfriend.

5 DRUGS AND THE REALITY OF WEST BERLIN

Throughout the story, we come to realize that drug use in Christiane's world is embedded not only in the context of her circle of friends but also in a cultural phenomenon that covered the entire city of Berlin and even beyond (Table 1 - *Prefabricated existence*).

Table IV – Society and the drugs.

<i>Society and politics</i>	“When we were together, the nightmare of the “real world” completely disappeared, and we were like our own little island of peacefulness and friendliness surrounded by a world of people living unhappy, miserable lives. We talked about music and pot. Sometimes about clothes, and sometimes about people who rebelled against what we viewed as a police state.”
<i>The syringe cult</i>	“I had a deep fear of the drug. Whenever heroin came up, I was suddenly conscious of just how young I was. On the other hand, I had that same weird admiration again for those people who were already shooting up. For me, that was the natural next step, just like pot and LSD had been before. The junkies looked down on us pot

	smokers and pill poppers with enormous contempt. It was depressing to think that I'd never make it to the junkie group, into the real scene.”
<i>The David Bowie concert</i>	“David Bowie was our idol. Nobody made better music than him, and absolutely no one was cooler than he was. (...) And now here he was, coming to Berlin. (...) So, for my date, I'd chosen a total junkie. This concert was like the biggest event of my life (...) I couldn't have had any idea how significant it would actually turn out to be. Not when I offered the ticket to Frank, anyway. Somehow my attitude toward heroin must have changed during that time when I began to sour on pills, pot and LSD. Those solid, impossible barriers between me and the junkies seemed to have vanished.”
<i>Ideology of a "sweet-short-life"</i>	“I had to either quit H for good and all, or I had to give myself the golden shot. (...) I was no better and no worse than any of the other addicts. Why should I of all people belong to the lucky subset of people who were able to get away from heroin? I was nobody special. (...) I was obsessed with just two thoughts: (1) God wasn't ready for me to quit yet. And (2), the next time you try something like that, be sure to take a full gram. (...) I wanted to shoot up, wander around from person to person and group to group, and not think about it again, until it was time to end things for real.”

Excerpts taken from “Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F” – pages 69, 90, 94, 322, 323¹.

5.1 THE “UNDERGROUND”

From the mid-1960s onwards, a complex phenomenon called “underground” emerged in several European cities, such as London and Berlin. It was vaguely defined and characterized by presenting a highly communicative structure, facilitated by the so-called “underground press”, as well as music clubs and stores, especially bookstores. Pop and rock music (Table IV – *The David Bowie concert*) played an important role in the communication and expression of its members.²³

In West Berlin, the “underground”:

- Consisted of 3 different scenes: one focused on political issues, another on so-called “soft drugs”, such as cannabis and LSD, and another on so-called “hard drugs”, such as cocaine and heroin.
- Was concentrated in suburban neighborhoods such as Kreuzberg, Tiergarten (where the Sound nightclub was located), Charlottenburg (location of the Bahnhof Zoo station), and Schöneberg – those neighborhoods were characterized by having a high density of bars and high-rise buildings.
- In the 1970s, the “heroin junkie” became the popular demon of this decade and took the place of the long-haired cannabis-using hippie of the late 1960s. By 1977-78, social cohesion in cities affected by “hard drugs” practically disappeared, and it was at that time that the ragged, skeletal and aggressive “junkie” began to dominate the places of consumption, as described by Christiane.
- The so-called “syringe cult” emerged (Table IV - *The syringe cult*). The way heroin was typically administered changed from the late 1960s onwards. Until then, the

intravenous route represented a small minority among users of this drug, as 100% pure pharmaceutical heroin was widely available on prescription by the general practitioners. After the ban on this prescription, the market began to find shortages of this drug, appearing in 1968 a non-pharmaceutical heroin called “Chinese heroin”, of clearly inferior purity. The poor purity of this substance led to the need for the emergence of a “syringe cult”, which was brought to the younger sections of the population, with the injection process assuming more importance than the injected substance, which also popularized the injection of multiple substances, thus turning the heroin problem into a polydrug problem.

- It was associated with the cult of youth, through a “sweet-short-life” ideology (Table IV - *Ideology of a “sweet-short-life”*), in which its members accepted that they would have an early death.

5.2 POLICIES TO COMBAT ILLICIT DRUGS

In Germany in the 1960s, there was the so-called Opium Act of 1929, which was introduced because the Versailles peace treaty had forced Germany and other countries to introduce laws on the use of drugs in their legislation. This Opium Act had its main focus on the trade and distribution of drugs by doctors and pharmacists, not on their consumption. After the problems associated with its use increased during the 1960s, a new law came into force in December 1971, according to which possession and trade by any citizen became punishable. The regulations of this law were primarily focused on cannabis. As heroin use grew considerably in the 1970s and caused serious social tensions, a review of the law was carried out, introducing changes in January 1982, which focused on measures against large-scale organized drug trafficking. It introduced heavier sanctions and a special section dedicated to therapeutic measures rather than punishment for people with drug abuse or dependence, and no distinction was made between "soft" and "hard" drugs, contrary to the previous law.²³

In Berlin, until 1977-78, the drug problem was mainly managed by non-specialized state entities (police, prisons, juvenile detention centers), psychiatric clinics and poorly funded organizations of former drug users (mostly therapeutic communities). In the psychiatric wards of hospitals, drug users were treated alongside people with alcohol problems and people with other mental disorders. There were no general guidelines or nationwide actions. There were no institutions involved in community work and this was considered a problem that had to be tackled without the help of the inhabitants of the local communities. More and more heroin users developed a “terror” of the police, and since the police played an important role in dealing

with drug problems in Berlin, conflicts with self-help institutions could escalate very easily. It was a situation without effective communication (Table IV - *Society and politics*).

In the last third of the 1970s, the number of dead heroin users was steadily increasing, prisons faced enormous problems in containing the spread of drug use, and the heroin market was increasingly dominated by gangs with deep roots in organized crime. Authorities and politicians then began to realize that close cooperation and improved communication with non-statutory self-help organizations was imperative. Plans for a therapy network close to the community that would promote social reintegration were quickly put into practice.

6 THE STORY OF CHRISTIANE F. – STILL A RELEVANT ISSUE?

In 1981, this story was told in the form of a film that, thanks in part to David Bowie's cameo, quickly became a hit and was considered a cult film. It didn't take long for the real Christiane F. to be catapulted from a reality of prostitution in West Berlin's public toilets to a life of a "junkie princess", using heroin while hanging out with artists and celebrities in Los Angeles.²⁴

Three decades later, at the age of 51 and living in Berlin again, Christiane published a memoir, "Christiane F. — Mein Zweites Leben" (translated into English as "Christiane F. — My Second Life"). Christiane is currently undergoing an opioid substitution therapy program with methadone and still uses alcohol and cannabis to the present days²⁵.

The story of Christiane F. and the "underground" phenomenon that began in the 1970s had an undeniable sociocultural influence, which continues to this day. An example of this is the so-called "heroin chic" trend²⁶, which emerged in the 1990s as a fashion trend that appropriated the visual images of heroin users and their environment for the photo shoot. Condemned as an immoral glorification of substance use, "heroin chic" has found itself embroiled in scandal and controversy over the years. More recently, in 2016, Gucci launched a fashion campaign that clearly alluded to various scenes portrayed in the 1981 film about the Christiane F. story.²⁷

Interest in reviving this story arose recently with the debut of a series in February 2021, broadcast on German television, with the same title as the book in its original version, "Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo"²⁸. According to the screenwriter, this new series did not intend to portray the divided German society of the 1970s, but rather to revive a timeless drama of the problem of drug use, now giving greater prominence to Christiane's other companions in this story. This series did not escape harsh criticism, having been accused of glamorizing the underworld of drugs and prostitution, both for the good looks of the actors and for the aesthetics

of the sets, which the original film tried to avoid, although not entirely succeeding in that purpose.

And Christiane, what does she think of all this? What image would she like to pass on to new generations about all the experiences she has had facing her addiction?

“I hope My Second Life will steer people away from drug use more than my first book. I'm sure yes. It describes how much pain I have felt throughout my life and [explains] that I will die a very early and painful death.”

“My liver is about to kill me. I have cirrhosis from hepatitis C. I'm going to die soon, I know. But I didn't miss anything in life. I'm fine with that. I don't recommend it, of course — this is not the best life to live — but it is mine.”

Christiane F.

7 CONCLUSION

The novel “Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F.” is worthy of a careful psychodynamic analysis, as it allows us to see the importance of early bonds in the structural formation of personality, and how the gaps created by an insecure attachment can lead to the path of drug use. This story also provides us with a comprehensive sociocultural perspective of this era and the social issues associated with drug use. Its undeniable sociocultural influence persists to the present day, being periodically revived in multiple forms of art and subject to multiple reflections and debates.

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