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SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER:
THE PORTRAYAL OF DAUGHTER-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS
BY CONTEMPORARY WOMEN WRITERS
FROM GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the complexities of daughterhood as portrayed by nine contemporary women writers: from former West Germany (Gabriele Wohmann, Elisabeth Plessen), from former East Germany (Hedda Zinner, Helga M. Novak), from Switzerland (Margrit Schriber) and from Austria (Brigitte Schwaiger, Jutta Schutting, Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch, Christine Haidegger). Ten prose-works which span a period of approximately ten years, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, are analysed according to theme and character.

In the Introduction we trace the historical development of women's writing in German, focusing on the most significant female authors from the Romantic period through to the rise of the New Women's Movement in the late sixties. We then consider a definition of 'Frauenliteratur' and the extent to which autobiography has become a typical feature of such women's writing. In the ensuing four chapters we highlight in psychological and sociological terms the mourning process a daughter undergoes after her father's death; the identification process between daughter and mother; the daughter's reaction to being adopted; and the daughter's decision to commit suicide. We see to what extent the environment in which each of these daughters is brought up as well as past events in German history shape the daughter's attitude towards her parents. Since we are studying the way in which these relationships are portrayed, we also need to take into account the narrative strategies employed by these modern women writers.

In the light of our analysis of content and form we are able to examine the possible intentions behind such personal portraits: the act of writing as a form of self-discovery and self-therapy as well as the sharing of female experience. We conclude by suggesting the direction women's writing from German-speaking countries may be taking.

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DEDICATION

To my parents and sister

With love

INTRODUCTION: 'FRAUENLITERATUR' AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The intention of this introduction is to examine the term 'Frauenliteratur' and to pinpoint the part that autobiography has played and continues to play in prose works written by women from German-speaking countries. In order to be able to recognise and understand the way in which 'Frauenliteratur' and autobiography have merged and overlapped, it is necessary to look briefly at the historical development of women's writing in German by charting its growth during the past two centuries. We shall then be in a position to consider the problems which nowadays surround a clear-cut definition of each of these literary terms and to acknowledge the extent to which contemporary women's writing in German has been influenced and shaped by the features to which these terms refer. Without doubt it is a phenomenon which, as we shall see, typifies recent developments in German literary trends and is, therefore, of great interest to writers and critics alike.

Women who write works of literary rank are not a peculiarity of contemporary life. If we look back at the history of women writers, a process of gradual liberation has been evident. In the nineteenth century, for example, the literary careers of two great authors ran parallel. Ironically, both women hid their identities by adopting male pseudonyms. In England, Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880) became George Eliot and wrote fiction which dealt with the social and moral problems of her time, her purpose being primarily didactic. The popularity of works such as *Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner* made her one of the greatest novelists in world literature. In France, Baroness Dudevant (1804-1876) used the pen name of George Sand to further her career, and so became one of France's literary successes. It is somewhat surprising to note that even today, in spite of the Women's Movement and

feminism, some young writers do contemplate using a male pen name because "writing novels is still not considered a respectable pastime for women".¹

Nevertheless, the intellectual, rather than the political or social, emancipation of women could already be noted in the Romantic period of German literature. The wives of the Schlegel brothers were artistically inclined: Friedrich Schlegel's wife, Dorothea Veit, published her first novel *Florentin* in 1801. Brentano's sister, Bettina von Arnim, also wrote a number of works during the 1840s and was a radical campaigner for human rights. Many other women such as Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, Fanny Lewald, Ida Hahn-Hahn were searching for independence by making a career of writing, publishing works without the help of their husbands and making their names as exponents of literature, rather than writing for and about women. In cultural circles all these women began to have some influence, but concern for their social and political status was still a long way off. Only towards the end of the nineteenth century did a new phase in the history of women writers indicate a more radical women's literature, when the emancipation of women became a central theme of the Naturalist movement in German literature. The pioneers of women's literature associated with this movement were prose writers and social critics such as Clara Viebig (1860-1952), whose literary success lay in her realistic presentation of everyday workers and their poverty; and Gabriele Reuter (1859-1941), who belonged to the proletarian Women's Movement. In 1905 an Austrian woman writer, Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914), was the first woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for her novel *Die Waffen nieder!* (1889), in which she portrayed the fate of a woman who lived through the Prussian wars of 1864-1871.

For the last century or so German-speaking women writers, amongst others Else Lasker-Schüler, Ricarda Huch, Gertrud von Le Fort, Isolde Kurz, have played their roles in the

many literary trends and schools of thought, but the significance and relevance of women's literature has only come to light with the social and political emancipation of women during the last few decades. This is hardly surprising when we consider that German women were first permitted to study at university level at the turn of the century: 1901 in Baden, 1903 in Bavaria, 1908 in Prussia. Equality in education, especially higher education, only began to develop in the 1920s, after the women's right to vote was introduced in Germany in 1918.²

With the onset of National Socialism in the 1930s all efforts aimed at obtaining equality between the sexes came to an abrupt but only temporary end, when women's associations, apart from those belonging to the National Socialists, were banned and women were once more confined to the roles of dutiful daughters, wives and mothers. This disruption to the progress the Women's Movement had made was shortlived, and only in force as long as the National Socialists were in power, so that after the Second World War equality was once again a bone of contention. By 1949 the matter had been partly resolved on paper in the form of the Basic Law with the statement that "Männer und Frauen sind gleichberechtigt" (Art.3, Abs.3 GG). A notable change in attitude towards women's literature was also taking place at the same time, as women realised that the country's industrial and social restoration could not, and would not, succeed without their aid. This aspect of increasing independence in the field of economics formed an important part of the process of women's emancipation.

During the Third Reich many established writers, including women, had gone into exile. One such woman writer, who was Jewish and belonged to the Communist Party, was Anna Seghers (1900-1983). After being arrested and questioned, she emigrated to France in 1933 and to Mexico in 1941, where she completed one of her most well-known novels *Das siebte*

Kreuz (1942), in which she not only presented fascism realistically, in the shape of a concentration camp, but was also highly critical of it. In 1947 she returned to Germany and settled in East Berlin, where she continued to write about life as an exile and the uncertainty of one's identity. Her writing served as active opposition to National Socialism.

Luise Rinser (born 1911) was similarly banned from writing during the period of Nazi rule but she chose not to go into exile. Instead, her refusal to join the NSDAP resulted in her imprisonment in 1944. During her captivity she kept a diary, *Gefängnistagebuch*, which was published in 1946. This was Rinser's first attempt at writing an autobiographical text which revealed life in a women's prison. In her later work during the 1960s and 1970s she has shown a preference for the diary-form, which culminated with the publication of her autobiography, *Den Wolf umarmen*, in 1981. This development from diary to autobiographical novel already anticipated the emergence of autobiographical works in the 1970s and 1980s and brings us closer to the complex relationship of women's writing to autobiography, which will be examined shortly.

If we return briefly to our historical overview of 'Frauenliteratur', we see that women's literary output emerged very gradually during the twenty years after the end of the Second World War. Two women writers who were able to achieve critical acclaim were Ilse Aichinger (born 1921) and Ingeborg Bachmann (1926-1973), whose literary careers began to flourish with the establishment of the 'Gruppe 47'. This was not an organisation as such, but a series of annual meetings at which authors read from their new works. The majority of those invited to read were male writers, hence the fact that Aichinger and Bachmann both received the 'Gruppe 47' prize in 1952 and 1953 respectively, was an indication of their determination to succeed, as well as much-needed recognition of being on an equal footing with their male colleagues. In fact, at one such meeting in 1967 a

sense of threat was evident in Günter Grass' comment: "Diese Frauen fangen an, uns an die Wand zu schreiben".³ The women to whom he was referring were Barbara Frischmuth, Helga M. Novak and Renate Rasp. All three had read from their works and were on the brink of making their mark on the literary scene. In the same year, 1967, the 'Gruppe 47' disbanded.

A year later the student movement advocated in specific terms reform of the university system and in general terms equality and fairer opportunities for all. Within the German Socialist Student Organisation (SDS) female students began to create 'women's committees', in which they addressed women's issues, in particular the discrepancy between the public, emancipatory rhetoric of their male colleagues and their chauvinistic behaviour in personal relationships with women. At the same time women's voices were not being heard at the student rallies and demonstrations, and whenever they did manage to express their opinions publicly, they were not taken seriously. On the public platform these female students continued to be only the girlfriends or wives of SDS members and were not looked upon as independent thinkers or activists.

In the wake of such blatant discrimination seven women activists of the SDS founded the 'Aktionsrat zur Befreiung der Frau' in January 1968 in West Berlin, in order to expose the disparity between the anti-authoritarian, Marxist rhetoric of their male colleagues and their authoritarian behaviour towards women on a personal level. At the second conference of the SDS in Hanover the 'Aktionsrat' demanded:

The abolition of the bourgeois separation of private and social life: the task is to understand the oppression in the private sphere not as anything private but as politically and

economically determined. The task is to effect a qualitative change in the private sphere and to understand this change as political practice. This act of cultural revolution is part of the class struggle.⁴

By the time of the third conference in Frankfurt in September 1968 the continuing hypocrisy of the male delegates of the SDS resulted in the representative of the 'Aktionsrat', Helke Sander, first accusing them of being authoritarian and patriarchal and second pelting the male dignitaries with tomatoes. Sander's action marked the onset of a new era in the Women's Movement and heralded the birth of feminism amongst the post-war German left.

Initially, however, there were divisions in this New Women's Movement. Some women's groups, such as the West Berlin Socialist Women's League, which arose from the 'Aktionsrat', continued to base their convictions on the texts of Marx and Engels. Other women's groups turned to American feminists and writers, such as Kate Millett and Juliet Mitchell, and formed 'self-experience groups'. Noteworthy is also the fact that Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) appeared for the first time in paperback in German in 1968. The 'Aktionskreis Frau' in Nuremberg and the 'Aktion Emanzipation e.V.' in Ulm concerned themselves with equality in the workplace: their membership consisted not of students but of working women. Two decades after the Basic Law had promised equality, discrimination was still rife.

The origins of the New Women's Movement can, thus, be traced back to the 1968 student movement out of whose political context an autonomous Women's Movement began to stir in German-speaking countries. In contrast to the Women's Movement at the turn of

the century, which could be divided into the demands of women from the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, this new movement became within three years a coherent political entity, when it campaigned to reform the law on abortion and remove Paragraph 218 (in Austria Paragraph 144). All the women's groups merged to form 'Aktion 218' after the publication in *Stern*, Nr.24, 1971 of Alice Schwarzer's article 'Ich habe abgetrieben', in which 375 women, some of them well-known and prominent, admitted publicly to having had an abortion. The issue proved to be the unifying factor for the disparate strands of the Women's Movement. Furthermore, these women had in common the desire for self-realisation, the search for one's identity and the wish to free oneself from the constraints of patriarchy, for, as Marlis Gerhardt pointed out in 1977, patriarchy

bedeutet ja nicht einfach Männerherrschaft, sondern Herrschaft der Väter, die Ordnung und Gesetz symbolisch repräsentieren und weiblichen und männlichen Kindern ihre spätere gesellschaftliche Rolle entweder als 'Erbe' oder als 'Tauschobjekt' und 'Gebälerin' zuweisen.⁵

The propagandistic nature of documentary literature and reportage, which became predominant during the late sixties and early seventies in German writings as a result of the writer's wish to renounce bourgeois literature, was reflected in the titles given to works written by women, who were aware of the anti-authoritarian movement's concept of cultural revolution: Erika Runge's *Frauen. Versuche zur Emanzipation* (1969); *Frauen gegen den §218. 18 Protokolle, aufgezeichnet von Alice Schwarzer* (1971); *Liebe Kollegin. Texte zur Emanzipation der Frau in der Bundesrepublik* (1973); Alice Schwarzer's *Der kleine*

Unterschied und seine großen Folgen. Frauen über sich. Beginn einer Befreiung (1975).

Such was the predominance of reportage, protocol literature and proclamations about the death of literature from the student movement that in its review of the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1971 *Die Welt* posed the ominous question: "Droht das Ende der Literatur?"⁶ This state of affairs was even referred to as a literary-theoretical "Nullpunkt".⁷ However, just three years later the Book Fair was celebrating the so-called "Herbst des autobiographischen Romans".⁸

According to Sigrid Weigel, 1975 was the "Nullpunkt" for women's literature.⁹ This conclusion is based on her charting of documentary literature by women up to the mid-1970s, followed by a chronological development of women's cultural sphere after 1975, in particular the founding of women's publishing companies and feminist magazines. Certainly, it cannot be denied that women's literature did begin to flourish in the second half of the 1970s, yet to say that 1975 was a "Nullpunkt" for women's literature seems dubious. Weigel herself goes on to illustrate the move from politics to literature, from the public to the personal, via Karin Struck's *Klassenliebe*, published in 1973. Admittedly, 1975, which also happened to be 'International Women's Year', did see a surge in the production of women's literature as well as an increased desire on the part of the female public to read women's works. Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* was a bestseller; Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Liebhaberinnen* met with criticism on account of its satirical tone; Margot Schröder's book *Ich stehe meine Frau* was altered during its conception in order to meet the demands of her feminist publishers.¹⁰ Thus, initially, success for women writers depended on depicting feminist issues which corresponded to women's experiences.

The term 'Frauenliteratur' could, therefore, be looked upon as having acquired a new impetus with the founding of the New Women's Movement. Indeed, its impact on the

literary scene has only come to the fore during the last two decades. The reasons for this increased popularity are manifold and need to be examined in detail. For the moment, it suffices to say that we should not ignore the marketing potential of such a concept. Feminist publishers, be they in Britain, for instance 'Virago', or in Germany, publishing houses such as 'Frauenoffensive', 'Frauenbuchverlag' or 'Verlag Frauenpolitik', to name but a few, have been able to establish themselves as a result of a sellers' market.¹¹ In fact, feminism itself has become a marketing tool which has made women's writings commercially more attractive. Along with the book publications came the feminist magazines *Courage* and *Mamas Pfirsiche*, making their first appearances in 1976. Not only have the the new publishing houses been able to prosper from this literary trend, but the established companies have also thrived with publishers such as 'Rowohlt' starting the series 'die neue Frau' in 1977 and creating the general concept of 'Frauenbücher' in 1983. The publishers at 'Suhrkamp' recognised the value of their many women writers, past and present, with the publication of an almanac in 1980 entitled *Im Jahrhundert der Frau*. In 1991 the 'Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag' published its new series 'Frauen lesen', consisting of numerous women writers of the twentieth century from various countries. These male-dominated publishing houses are continually in search of new women writers because 'Frauenliteratur' has become such big business.

But what do we actually mean when we refer to 'Frauenliteratur'? There is no hesitation over the translation: 'women's literature'. Virginia Woolf had no doubts in her mind when she wrote about 'Women Novelists' and 'Women and Fiction'. In America Ellen Moer's study entitled *Literary Women* (1974) has become a classic of women's literary criticism along with Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of their Own* (1978) and Patricia Meyer Spacks' *The Female Imagination* (1976). All three books feature analyses

of works by English, American and French women writers but there are no German women writers. Indeed, German equivalents are nowhere to be found and, what is more remarkable, is the fact that in German literary circles critics, and even the women writers themselves, have no clear-cut definition of the term 'Frauenliteratur' and continue to debate its origin and implications.

It is probable that some ambivalence arises as a result of a difference in perception of the terms 'women's literature' and 'Frauenliteratur'. Generally, both terms refer to literature by women and in recent years have become predominant in the literary market on account of their association with feminist culture. In Germany, however, the term 'Frauenliteratur' has been tarnished with a somewhat negative aspect, namely 'Trivialliteratur', since the majority of women's novels which appeared in the late nineteenth century were often serialised and sold cheaply. The reasons for their popularity were thus questionable, and, moreover, such literature has never been regarded as meriting significant literary status:

Im deutschen Sprachraum hat der Terminus 'Frauenliteratur' mit einer umgangssprachlichen Bedeutungseinschränkung zu kämpfen - man versteht hier unter Frauenliteratur häufig epigonale, systemstabilisierende Unterhaltungsliteratur für Frauen; unter diesem Gesichtspunkt findet sie sich schon seit längerem als ein Gebiet der Trivialliteraturforschung. Diese Art von Literatur spielt im deutschen Sprachraum seit der Jahrhundertwende (Stichwort Courths-Mahler) eine wichtige Rolle, in der Gegenwart findet man diese Art von Literatur

primär auf dem Gebiet des Illustrierten- und des Heftrromans, aber auch bei den programmierten Bestsellern (Danella, Parretti).¹²

From the outset contemporary German women writers have had to battle against this inherited negative concept, not to mention the fact that

especially in women's media, a critique of women's literature is largely tabu. Women's fear of criticizing one another ultimately allows them to leave criticism to the men, where it is not uncommon for 'Literaturkritik' to degenerate into a festival of slaughter.¹³

It is no wonder, therefore, that when faced with such a vulnerable position the German woman writer of today is forced to defend her work, even to the extent of denying any links, however tenuous, with 'Frauenliteratur'. Some writers, namely West Germany's Gabriele Wohmann and Austria's Jutta Schutting, would prefer to dismiss the term 'Frauenliteratur' completely, rather than have their works associated with a term which for them conjures up feminism and all its socio-political trappings. Austria's Brigitte Schwaiger, too, points out that at the time of writing her first novel *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer* (1977) she was unaware of the term 'Frauenliteratur' and the New Women's Movement. Moreover, she did not want anything to do with words ending in '-ist'.¹⁴ Other writers, such as the Swiss writer Gertrud Leutenegger, are quick to point out the non-existence of 'Männerliteratur'. And this is the starting-point for the complexity

surrounding 'Frauenliteratur' because reference is never made to men writers or men novelists. For this reason it is not surprising to discover that 'Frauenliteratur' can be easily dismissed or ridiculed, even by the very women writers whose works are published and sold under this term:

Intimidated by the ill-repute of women's literature and dependent upon the feuilleton - but also shaken by the market success of confessional literature and its enthusiastic reception by many women readers - women authors increasingly distance themselves from women's literature, instead of openly criticizing regressive tendencies and using productive literary strategies to create resistance and counter-offensive.¹⁵

Furthermore, as Sigrid Weigel suggests, "women authors fear identification with and relegation to the social periphery that comes with special status".¹⁶ It seems that whilst this argument may ring true of some women writers, this particular critic is playing her part in perpetuating the myth that women are in some way weaker than men when it comes to expressing their point of view in writing. It is quite possible that some women writers would enjoy the exclusivity and attention, as long as this did not imply conformity. The East German author Irmtraud Morgner, for example, regards the parallel expression 'Männerliteratur' as absurd:

Was ich ablehne, das ist lediglich der Ausdruck "Frauenliteratur", weil der parallele Ausdruck "Männerliteratur" mit

Recht als absurd empfunden wird. Es gibt eine Literatur von Frauen geschrieben - und es gibt eine Literatur von Männern geschrieben. Die von Männern geschrieben ist ungeheuer vielfältig, man könnte sie auf keinen Fall unter irgendeinen Nenner bringen.¹⁷

We must recognise, though, that Morgner was brought up in a socialist country where, in Marxist theory, men and women are equal, so that she cannot even begin to accept the notion of a 'Frauenliteratur'. She avoids, or perhaps even solves, the problem by advocating a 'Menschenliteratur', which either has the viewpoint of a woman or of a man. In any event, her explanation highlights that there is a difference between the two.

The suggestion is that women, compared to men, write about different things and have a language and style of their own. And yet the following questions continue to be posed:

Is there such a thing as a "woman writer"? Is women's writing qualitatively different from men's? Are the style and subject matter of women's literature radically different from those of male writers, and can we generalize about women's language and style? These are vexed questions, hotly debated by linguists, psychoanalysts, critics and writers themselves.¹⁸

Works on 'female aesthetics', such as Silvia Bovenschen's article 'Gibt es eine weibliche Ästhetik?' of 1976, have emerged to engender and foster such a literary trend.¹⁹ Women critics are able to present their opinions on the basis of a feminist perspective, although

there is a tendency in Germany for feminist research to be content-based, rather than a distinct analysis of aesthetic theory, which is indicative of a weakness in the development of German feminism.²⁰ Nevertheless, the whole issue of the existence of a women's literature has become a critic's nightmare:

Enthält der Begriff "Frauenliteratur" den Hinweis auf Autorschaft, Adressatenkreis, Darstellungsgegenstand, oder geht er darüber hinaus und deutet eine spezifische Weise des Wahrnehmens und der Ausdrucksformen an? Wenn von "schreibenden Frauen" die Rede ist, steckt darin nicht der Versuch, den ästhetischen Fragestellungen zunächst auszuweichen?²¹

A most basic interpretation of 'Frauenliteratur', one which is seen as applicable to the women's writing analysed in this study, is that it is a literature by women which is explicitly about and speaks to women's lives and imaginations. As will become evident, contemporary women's writing focuses on female experience to the extent that 'Frauenliteratur' evokes solidarity amongst a sisterhood of writers and readers. This brings us to the relationship between women's literature and feminist writings.

The fact that contemporary German women's literature coincided with the development of the New Women's Movement in the 1970s should not come as a surprise, but what is surprising is that the Women's Movement did not pay any attention to these women's works. This may be partly due to the fact that many of these literary works were not sufficiently concerned about politics and emancipation to be of any significance to

feminism. It is interesting to note that response to the publication in 1971 of Ingeborg Bachmann's novel *Malina* was unremarkable, yet today the same book has almost a cult following amongst feminists.²² Such was and is the dependency of women writers upon women readers. Another factor was the poor reception of the novel by critics at the time, who failed or did not want to appreciate Bachmann's sensitivity in her portrayal of the female identity within the literary world, as well as her radical style of writing, the use of 'I' and total subjectivity. The work itself underlines reasons for the dearth of German women's literature during the early 1970s, in particular the woman writer's unsuccessful struggle to articulate herself in a world of male-dominated traditions and culture.

It is at this stage that we are confronted by the dilemma of distinguishing between the literature of a feminist and that of a female writer. Of course, the feminist and the female writer could be one and the same. It is safe to say, however, that although there is a marked difference between the sociological writings of feminists and the artistic work of women writers, they are not beyond separability. The one can quite easily refer to, or even influence, the other. Rita Felski argues that there are notable overlaps between the two:

Although not all women-centered texts are feminist, however, it is certainly true that most feminist literary texts have until now been centered around a female protagonist, a consequence of the key status of subjectivity to second-wave feminism, in which the notion of female experience, whatever its theoretical limitations, has been a guiding one. It is precisely because present-day feminism has emphasized those realms of experience which are traditionally considered to lie

outside the "political" (that is, public) domain, that the novel, as a medium historically suited to exploring the complexities of personal relations, has been so prominent in the development of feminist culture.²³

According to Manfred Jurgensen, we are able to differentiate between feminist literature and literature which is influenced by feminist ideas:

Eine Frau, die bewußt als Frau über sich "selbst" schreibt (womit sie zugleich, geschlechtsbezogen, ein geteiltes Schicksal zeichnet), schafft Frauenliteratur. Eine Frau, die sich als Ergebnis eines Bewußtseinsprozesses entschieden hat, kämpferisch für die Sache der Frau zu wirken, leistet beim Schreiben einen Beitrag zur feministischen Literatur. Es gibt, wie gesagt, Überschneidungen: grundlegend bleibt jedoch das agitatorisch ausgerichtete Anliegen aller feministischen Literatur.²⁴

Moreover, women writers are not automatically feminist writers of literary rank.²⁵ There are those female writers who consciously write as feminists and wish to be thus understood (Verena Stefan, for example).²⁶ On the other hand, there are those women writers who, as we have said, disassociate themselves from 'Frauenliteratur' and feminist aesthetics. We must not be misled, however, into thinking that we can categorise the one group into a modern phenomenon and describe it as politically-orientated; and place the other group in

a higher literary realm and suggest that it has no social or political message.²⁷ Whilst feminism in West Germany became prominent in the late 1960s, its roots were to be found elsewhere, especially in America and France, in the influential works of Germaine Greer, Alice Schwarzer, Kate Millett, Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous.²⁸ There is no doubt that the New Women's Movement in West Germany has over the years gained strength in social and political areas. Yet the relationship of women writers to ideologically-orientated feminism remains problematic. Their interests may correspond, but many women writers are reluctant to commit themselves to the radical aims of feminist politics. It is more often the case that they share similar intentions, but they use a different approach modelled on works by writers such as Virginia Woolf, Anaïs Nin, Erica Jong and Doris Lessing.²⁹

Certainly, modern works subsumed under the term 'Frauenliteratur' would never have come about if it were not for feminism. Such terminology is bound to the socio-political emancipation of women. A change in the political status of women paved the way for literary independence based on a new self-appreciation. At the same time literary criticism underwent significant changes:

The ways in which we now raise questions of gender and sexuality, reading and writing, subjectivity and enunciation, voice and performance are unthinkable without the impact of feminism, even though many of these activities may take place on the margin or even outside the movement proper.³⁰

Just as feminism is a modern-day phenomenon, 'Frauenliteratur' is a new trend in German literature. What is 'new' about it is not the fact that German women have suddenly, during the last ten years or so, put pen to paper in an artistic form. On the contrary, as has been shown, women have been producing literary works for at least the last 150 years. The innovation of 'Frauenliteratur' is a direct result of the number of women writers who have flooded the book market and the number of women writers whose works have been 'rediscovered'. The fact is that they, more than ever, are representing to a greater extent contemporary literature in German. The quality and quantity of their works is such that these women writers have become worthy of a literary study based on their own merits. It is there that the 'newness' of 'Frauenliteratur' lies, for only recently have the works of writers such as Brigitte Schwaiger, Barbara Frischmuth, and Gertrud Leutenegger achieved critical appraisal. A new generation of women is discovering that the mass consumption of their works is liberating both the woman and the writer, for modern works of literature have undoubtedly become consumer goods. At the same time we should not underrate the contribution of women's literature towards giving clearer insight into the roles of women and men in society.

As the number of literary works by women has rapidly increased, so too have the themes and styles of writing. It was already noted when we looked at the origins of the New Women's Movement and its influence on women's writing that the female activists of 1968 were intent upon politicising private matters, in order to remove any discrepancy between the anti-authoritarianism of their male-colleagues in public and their chauvinism in private.³¹ The self-experience groups, women's centres and newspapers, all contributed to women's efforts to speak about and make public their individual experiences, and, in so doing, recognise the extent to which their personal concerns were in fact common to many

women. The slogan "das Private ist politisch" became one of the most fundamental principles of modern feminism, whereby the political was no longer restricted to male-dominated party politics, government and class struggle. Whatever happened in the domestic sphere was not just a private matter, but a topic for collective discussion. Similarly, writing about oneself became a popular mode of publicising what at first appeared to be personal thoughts, worries, interests, but to which other women did relate.

A turning towards the personal sphere in writing also indicated a reaction against the documentary literature of the early 1970s. Furthermore, writers of both sexes responded in a similar way with introverted perspectives. "Das Private ist politisch" could, therefore, be deemed appropriate for bridging two literary styles and at the same time imbuing the personal sphere with political relevance:

Indem in dem Satz "das Private ist politisch" der Familie, der Erziehung, der Liebe und Sexualität eine politische Bedeutung zugewiesen wird, ist damit zugleich auch die Rede über diese Themen aufgewertet.³²

An exploration of one's life could not be considered a private matter because once committed to paper and published, it became public property. Moreover, readers were able to identify with many of the author's emotions and turmoils in such a way that what appeared to be a personal account acquired representative significance, hence its 'politicisation'. It was not always clear, therefore, whether the writer was intending his/her personal life to pertain to politics in a wider context, or whether the process of publication and the role of the reader 'politicised' private issues. Sigrid Weigel suggests two further

considerations when interpreting this slogan with reference to women writers. First, that it "verbalises the refusal of many women to tolerate the existing divisions any longer".³³ This rings true of women writers, such as Brigitte Schwaiger, whose autobiographical accounts are often highly critical of the subservient role women play, in particular in marriage.³⁴ If we take this concern a step further, we can see the link with the Women's Movement and feminist works which depict personal relations and sexual politics rather than socio-political questions - the traditional domain of male writers. Second, Weigel points to the fact that such a slogan is misleading "if it promises a political solution to personal suffering".³⁵ The likelihood of a female author writing with this in mind seems far from credible for, as we shall see later, any attempt to solve problems of personal pain and anguish lies in the act of writing itself and its possible therapeutic effect and not in the reception of the published work. As Weigel herself comments:

There can, thank goodness, be no political - that is, organised, formal - solution to the really personal, for that would mean the suspension of individual self-determination.³⁶

The politicisation of the personal realm, although primarily a concern of female writers, could also be related to the German literary trend of the 1970s, namely the phenomenon of 'Neue Subjektivität', whereby male writers, too, were revealing their innermost selves, overcoming personal conflicts and baring their souls to the reading public.³⁷ At the first meeting of writing women, organised by the publishing company 'Frauenoffensive' in 1976 in Munich, the participants called for 'radical subjectivity' in their writing to illustrate the ways in which the female identity was undergoing a process of change.³⁸ This move

towards an expression of personal experience, individuality and authenticity gave autobiography a new lease of life, since it appeared to be the predominant choice of writers for making the private public. It should not be overlooked, however, that autobiography was just one of a number of selected forms during this new trend. Lyric poetry as well as belletristic publications underwent a boom. Whatever the literary form, all had in common:

Spontaneität, anti-institutionelle bzw. alternative Lebensformen, Ungezwungenheit, Natürlichkeit, eine neue Konkretheit von Beobachtung und Ausdruck, die Wendung zum Phantastischen und Irrationalen, zu Gefühlen und psychischen Vorgängen - all diese Merkmale sind Äußerungsformen der Neuen Sensibilität.³⁹

Throughout the 1970s the author's almost obsessive preoccupation with himself/herself dominated the German book market. Amongst others: Peter Handke's *Wunschloses Unglück* (1972), Max Frisch's *Montauk* (1975), Wolfgang Koeppen's *Jugend* (1976), Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* (1976) and Elias Canetti's *Die gerettete Zunge* (1977). For both men and women writers autobiography provided the medium for discovering one's identity, especially in terms of psychology, whereby the author attempted to interpret himself as well as those around him. This was an apparent shift from the classical origins of autobiography, where the author, frequently someone known to the public, had reached a stage in his life when he felt it was time to capture his memories on paper and reflect on his past. A general, all-embracing definition of autobiography might, thus, be:

"Lebensbeschreibung eines Menschen durch ihn selbst", which at the same time presupposes knowledge and/or recognition of the identity of the person depicting his life.⁴⁰

Any such clear-cut definition causes problems for an interpretation of the autobiographical writings flooding the German book market during the seventies because for the most part the identity of the narrator/protagonist, who usually speaks in the first person, occasionally in the third person, is elusive. According to Philippe Lejeune, there is a distinct, unequivocal dividing-line between autobiography and fiction, which is made known to the reader, either through a title or introduction or through the identity of names.⁴¹ If none of these criteria are met by the author, then even if there are certain parallels, the text, so Lejeune believes, cannot be regarded as an autobiographical work. If this were applied to the prose writings of 'Neue Subjektivität', many would no longer be termed autobiographical. Yet literary critics of this period constantly refer to the authenticity of these narratives, which suggests that another aspect has to be considered in defining these modern 'autobiographies', and that is one of reception. Many of these writers, in particular the women, as we shall see, are encouraging the reader's identification with his or her life, be it similar or different, because of the subjective and revelatory nature of what they are writing. For women writers it has also been important that their works are read as representative in such a way that female readers are able to identify and empathise. For this reason some critics view writings such as Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* (1975) and Karin Struck's *Kindheits Ende* (1982) primarily as "acts of confession".⁴² This interpretation will be deemed appropriate for a number of the works selected for analysis here and will, therefore, be considered more fully at a later stage. For now it should be recognised that, in order to make their works as representative and exemplary as possible, there has been

a tendency on the part of women writers to deliberately omit proper names, whilst remaining true to their emotions as well as to socio-historical facts.

In the classical sense of autobiography women writers are not reflecting on a long, public career of significance. Instead, aged between thirty and forty, they are writing about themselves in order to come to terms with their lives, their losses and love. The impression should not be given, however, that all modern German literature by women is autobiographical. But autobiography does offer these writers the possibility of discovering their identity and, above all, of communicating with themselves: "It is as if the written text has acquired the function of guaranteeing the author's identity: 'I write, therefore I am'.⁴³ Sylvia Schwab stresses that it is the actual search for, or path towards, one's identity which typifies these new autobiographies, the fact that during this process of discovery the author develops a new self-awareness:

Der Schriftsteller wird frei, weil er nicht als Objekt, sondern als Subjekt agiert, weil er Ort, Zeit und Handlung auch in autobiographischen Schriften selbständig bestimmt, auswählt und reflektiert, statt von ihnen dirigiert zu werden.⁴⁴

Whilst we shall see that a number of the women writers, particularly in the works concerned with bereavement, do undergo a process of self-discovery, the prospect of achieving freedom through their autobiographical writing seems doubtful. It is more likely a case of "Schreiben als Rettungsaktion".⁴⁵ They may be able to convince themselves that they are fully in control but, more often than not, emotions run high and family ties prove so strong that one might question to what extent their choice of material is influenced by

wishful thinking and high expectations. However honest the writer thinks she is, years of learning and experience are bound to have coloured her perspective on life:

Die behauptete Realitätsnähe des Dargestellten wird damit jedoch zur Fiktion, denn Ereignisse wie das Scheitern einer Beziehung oder eine ungewollte Schwangerschaft verlieren in der Retrospektive ihre ursprüngliche Bedrohlichkeit und können dann, durch die Erinnerung neutralisiert, zu wichtigen Erfahrungen werden, die die eigene Persönlichkeitsentwicklung geprägt haben.⁴⁶

In addition, the creative imagination will prove difficult to curb, since these writers are, after all, aiming to have their works published.⁴⁷ Thus, the label of 'autobiography' appears to become less appropriate and less purposeful. Furthermore, the reader can be confronted with a variety of subtitles which suggest that a work might be autobiographical: 'memoirs', 'autobiographical novel', 'reminiscences', 'self-portrait', 'journal'. There are also many times when a work of fiction contains parallels to the writer's life. This is, then, justified by saying that the writer's choice of material is based on his/her own experiences. Gabriele Wohmann explains the merging of reality and imagination in her works in the following way:

Allerdings gibt es wohl kaum einen Schriftsteller, der alle Erfahrungen seiner Protagonisten tatsächlich selbst gemacht hat. Auch sitze ich nicht in einem Sozialbüro und sammle

dort meine Erfahrungen. Die Realität in meinen Büchern erschaffe ich mit Hilfe meiner Phantasie, durch mein Einfühlungsvermögen in die Menschen und mein Interesse an ihnen, durch meine Neugier auf sie und durch meinen Instinkt für die Kniffligkeiten zwischen den Menschen. Schließlich kommt noch meine Selbstbeobachtung dazu. (...) Alles, was man über den Menschen zu schreiben vermag, kann man in sich selbst finden.⁴⁸

Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch does not consider her novel *Die Züchtigung*, analysed in Chapter Three, to be autobiographical, since this would imply that every detail could be proved as fact. Nevertheless, she admits, like many authors, that she 'borrows' from her experiences because this makes the story more plausible:

Die Mutter beispielsweise besteht aus Frauen von denen mir erzählt wurde, aus Frauen, die ich selber kenne, aus der eigenen Mutter und aus mir selbst. Daher würde ich es ablehnen, den Roman als autobiographisch zu bezeichnen, da ich Mißverständnisse verhindern will. Selbstverständlich habe auch ich als Kind hin und wieder Schläge bekommen, aber ich kann mich daran nicht mehr erinnern. Alle diese Szenen habe ich erfunden. Es wäre aber andererseits auch falsch, wenn ich behaupten würde, der Roman trüge keine autobiographischen Züge.⁴⁹

A wish to combine both fact and fiction is evident in Karin Struck's *Kindheits Ende*, subtitled "Journal einer Krise", which for the most part documents the break-up of Struck's marriage and her painful development of self-understanding during the years 1977-1981. The crisis refers to the dangers a woman may face in all areas of society and the difficulties incurred by the woman writer who is also a wife and mother. Thus, this work does achieve representative significance, even though it is an intensely personal documentary of Struck's own experiences. The author integrates many dreams into her work, which are critical of society in that they illustrate the possible extent to which the artistic imagination of a woman may be repressed, since it can only find expression in dreams:

Nur in den Träumen probiere ich Handlungsmöglichkeiten.

In den Träumen spiegeln sich meine Fehler. Die Träume warnen mich. Die Träume schreien: Handle!, handle doch endlich!, wann handelst du?⁵⁰

It is noticeable that dreams and fantasies do feature fairly frequently in contemporary women's literature in German, for example, in Barbara Frischmuth's novels *Die Mystifikationen der Sophie Silber* (1976), *Amy oder Die Metamorphose* (1978) and *Kai und die Liebe zu den Modellen* (1979). The three works form a trilogy, in which Frischmuth combines fairy-tale and reality to relate the story of a fairy who has become a real person - a writer and a mother. Interestingly, the title of Struck's autobiographical work *Kindheits Ende* is taken from the lyrics of a Pink Floyd song which highlights a certain interdependence of fact and fiction: "childhood's end: your fantasies merging harsh realities". Throughout the book Struck is conscious of the fact that what she is writing falls between

the categories of documentary and fiction: "Dokumentarisches fiktionalisiert sich, so wie sich die Fiktion dokumentiert".⁵¹ In her journal she openly comments upon the writing process, the choice between autobiography and fiction. She is prepared to scrutinise herself and even change to meet the requirements of modern autobiography, but an underlying tone of doubt is evident:

Autobiographisches Schreiben, sagt man behelfsweise. Sich selber zum Objekt seiner Kunst machen: sich selbst bearbeiten, ja verarbeiten zu etwas *anderem*.⁵²

Struck is quite definite, however, about her reluctance to write fiction only, preferring to remain true to herself and face the challenge of discovering her identity, not wanting to be as objective as a male writer:

Ich denke an das Wort *Fiktion* und sehe sofort eine Milchglasscheibe vor mir, hinter der ein Kind liegt, das man nicht berühren, nicht besuchen darf. Fiktion *ist* Entfernung, Distanz, Abstand.⁵³

The association of the child with the literary product in terms of creation is a familiar one. The parallel here, though, is that the child (the work of fiction) is separated from its mother (the author). In other words fiction would not be a true part of the writer, since imagination would have played its role in the creation of the work. Manfred Jurgensen similarly comments about Struck:

Sie will es nicht erlauben, daß sich zwischen ihr und ihrem Werk ein Abstand auftut. Die eigene Schöpfung soll wie das Kind Bestandteil ihrer Selbst bleiben. Es kann auch bei seiner eigenständigen Existenz nichts Subjektiveres geben.⁵⁴

Evidently, in her journal, Struck has every intention of undergoing her own rebirth, hence the likelihood of an end to her childhood remains remote: childhood is both her past and future.

This desire on the part of women writers to express private issues, such as the break-up of their marriage and the consequences, is an aspect which permeates and characterises their autobiographical writing and is all the more important because they are successful in doing this. As previously mentioned, traditionally a reader of autobiography would be expecting a review of the writer's life, usually based on some claim to notoriety. For these young women writing their *début* works this is not the case, as Sigrid Weigel explains:

Wenn Frauen zu schreiben beginnen, steht ihnen oft kein anderer Stoff zur Verfügung als der der eigenen Lebensgeschichte. Deshalb ist die autobiographische Schreibweise bei Erstöffentlichungen besonders häufig. Stärkere Fiktionalisierung und Literarisierung ist nicht selten an die Professionalität der Verfasserin gebunden.⁵⁵

Autobiography is, thus, chosen by many 'inexperienced', new female writers, which does contradict the traditional autobiographies by male writers with long-standing literary

reputations. Young women, unknown at the time of writing, write about their everyday lives in anticipation of overcoming some personal conflict or crisis, or coming to terms with the situation in which they find themselves. The motivation for writing is also to be found in the desire to search for one's identity and in the sense of solidarity amongst women, who experience similar wishes, fears and suffering.

As already suggested, there are autobiographical works by both men and women writers, which can be categorised under the term 'Neue Subjektivität'. Men writers have also been attempting to write from a subjective perspective so that occasionally the subject-matter of male and female writers do coincide. This is especially evident from the quantity of 'Väterbücher' written by sons and daughters in the seventies and eighties and has, therefore, warranted a separate chapter to analyse some of these works. Whilst approximately the same number of men and women have chosen to write personal accounts about their relationships with their fathers, comparisons can be drawn between the extent to which the writer is subjective; what it is that actually interests him/her about the relationship; what the purpose is of writing such a work. Generally speaking, in the case of men writers, historical events play an important part as well as the acquisition of as many facts as possible so that, although the son may be searching for his identity and may be revealing hidden truths, the writer still includes a certain amount of objectivity in his work which emerges as aloofness, as if he is uninvolved:

Ich sehe Dein Alter, ich sehe Deine Krankheit, ich sehe
Deine Verzweiflung, und finde das interessant. Ich notiere
alles, was Du sagst und tust. und in meiner Erinnerung,
unterstütze mein Erinnerungsvermögen durch Tonband und

Merkbuch. Aber je ähnlicher ich Dir werde, desto besser glaube ich Dich zu verstehn.⁵⁶

The majority of these German writers, male and female, were aged between thirty and forty when they decided to write about their fathers, in particular the role they played during the Third Reich. For the sons this aspect does seem to be of primary importance. Not only are they learning to come to terms with the inherited guilt of the past, but they are also often critical of their fathers' activities or passivity. Characteristic gender roles do emanate from these 'Väterbücher'. The sons home in on their fathers' professions, the daughters depict the fathers' family-role and concentrate on the lack of love shown by each father. There will, of course, always be exceptions to such a generalisation, writers who try to show all sides of their fathers, good and bad, such as Peter Härtling in *Nachgetragene Liebe* (1980) or Heinrich Wiesner in *Der Riese am Tisch* (1979).

In his book *Frauen Schreiben* (1982) Jürgen Serke observes a difference in the resulting effect of these subjective writings on the male and female writer:

Doch die neue Subjektivität, die bei den Schriftstellern mit Peter Handke in die männliche Literatur eingezogen ist, hat eine andere Qualität als die der Frauen. Die Frauen gewinnen sich in ihr, die Männer gehen schreibend in dieser Subjektivität verloren.⁵⁷

On the one hand, Serke's remark is understandable in view of the overall success women writers have had during the 1970s and 1980s with the emphasis on self-expression and

self-awareness. Writing with ease about issues which concern them and with which they are familiar has given these women writers greater confidence. They have achieved recognition individually and as a group, privately and publicly. For men writers this path to self-discovery has been neither a comfortable experience nor an easy choice. They are more likely to stray off this path and find their footing in facts rather than openly admit to feelings. The application of subjectivity has been one of trial and error; a new venture for the male writer which has not provided the same success, maybe on account of its innovative stance which the reader has not been prepared to accept from an established writer of fiction. On the other hand, Serke's remark is questionable when we consider individual writers and individual works. It will become evident during this analysis of novels by women writers that only a few women will, in fact, succeed in discovering their true inner selves; the majority will have the courage to probe, to open up wounds and start a painful process of recollection, but the end result will not appear in writing, the implication being that the process is ongoing. Furthermore, not one of the works of the women writers selected for analysis here ends on a positive note. The reader is left to surmise about the writer's future progress. For this reason the supposed success of each female writer in coping with her personal life proves difficult to establish, unless she chooses to write sequels (Brigitte Schwaiger and Helga M. Novak, for instance).

Like Serke, Renate Möhrmann highlights the different meanings modern autobiographies have for men and women writers:

Die plötzliche Herauskehrung des weiblichen Ich hat nicht denselben Stellenwert wie die Ich-Zentriertheit in den Werken der Männer, denn niemals in der Literaturgeschichte waren

weibliches und männliches Ich wertadäquat. (...) Hat man hinsichtlich der Gestaltung des männlichen Ich von einem Rück-Zug gesprochen, so ließe sich bei der Literarisierung des weiblichen Ich im wortwörtlichen Sinn von einem Vor-Zug reden. Denn hier ist keine nostalgische Reprivatisierung am Werk, sondern - im Gegenteil - ein Öffentlichmachen von jahrhundertealten Beschädigungen, eine Zurücknahme der zur Gewohnheit gewordenen Verstummung. (...) Die Geschichte der neuen Frauenbewegung ist die Geschichte der weiblichen Ich-Findung.⁵⁸

It will be shown in the following chapters that for many of these women writers the act of writing for the first time is akin to a form of self-therapy with the function of rescuing the woman from her passive, subordinate role, either as a wife or daughter, as well as helping her to deal with emotional crises. It could be said, therefore, that the subject-matter of these modern autobiographies is determined by the gender of the writer. Moreover, we have to take into account not only what interests and concerns the writer, but also what purpose these autobiographical texts serve and what expectations they are intended to fulfil. Even within the abundance of autobiographical works by women it is possible to identify prevalent, representative themes. Examples of childhood would include amongst others: Angelika Mechtel's *Wir sind arm, wir sind reich* (1977), Maria Wimmer's *Die Kindheit auf dem Lande* (1978), Karin Reschke's *Memoiren eines Kindes* (1980) and Monica Streit's *Joschi. Eine Kindheit nach dem Krieg* (1984). Women writers also look at their role within history and the effect of historical events upon generations of women in their families:

Ingeborg Drewitz' *Gestern war heute. Hundert Jahre Gegenwart* (1978), Marie-Thérèse Kerschbaumer's *Schwestern* (1982). Of more immediate historical relevance are the events of the 1930s and life under the Hitler regime: Helga M. Novak's two-part autobiography *Die Eisheiligen* (1979) and *Vogel federlos* (1982), Katja Behrens' *Die dreizehnte Fee* (1983). Marital relationships, particularly separations, also come to the fore with works such as Brigitte Schwaiger's *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer* (1977), Hannelies Taschau's *Landfriede* (1978), Karin Petersen's *Das fette Jahr* (1978). The works selected for this study are likewise indicative of themes about which women, above all, have something to say, namely relationships between parents and children.

Up until now we have viewed these recent personal writings by women as having a positive message, that is, as being representative in terms of reception and therapeutic for the writer herself. We should not overlook the fact, though, that this upsurge in self-expression by women has not always been seen in a favourable light. The desire, even the need, for women to examine their selves on paper has been met with accusations of indulgence in self-pity and self-justification. These writings are supposedly too personal to be regarded as 'literary' and contain too much pathos. The sheer quantity of 'confessional' works by women during this period of development in women's literature in German does encourage the application of negative generalisations, such as self-indulgence and lachrymosity, to all contemporary women's literature from German-speaking countries:

An der selbsttherapeutischen Absicht ist meist nicht zu zweifeln. Selbstmitleidung, Selbstrechtfertigung, ein narzißtisches und (oder) exhibitionistisches Bedürfnis können sich in den Schreibprozeß mischen.⁵⁹

The obsessive nature of a number of new women writers in German to focus on the negative aspects of their lives can, thus, lead to "charges of narcissistic self-consumption".⁶⁰ Whilst the act of writing is intended to provide a cathartic experience, the final product - the published work - is a constant reminder of past turmoils. Will this woman writer, therefore, ever be able to break free from pain and suffering and make a fresh start? The implication is that she will learn and gain insight into her own being as she reflects. In *Kindheits Ende* Karin Struck sees the relevance of pain as part of the writing process in the following way:

Du mußt leiden, damit du schreiben kannst! Sagt man dem Schriftsteller, und keine noch so fundierte Kreativitätsforschung kann das Vorurteil aufheben und die Einsicht allgemein verbreiten, daß der Schriftsteller schreibt, obwohl er leidet. Manchmal wissen das die Schriftsteller selbst nicht, weil sie nicht wissen, daß sie nicht schreiben, weil sie leiden, sondern leiden, weil sie schreiben. Denn was heißt schreiben anderes als: wahrnehmen, beobachten, denken, fühlen, und dies mit allen Sinnen, und geht das alles, ohne zu leiden, ohne Schmerzen? Es ist kein Denken möglich ohne Schmerz. Mit dem Zusammenhang will die Welt sich nicht beschäftigen.⁶¹

Suffering, then, according to Struck, is not the reason for writing, instead it is the actual writing which causes the author suffering. In the case of the woman writer it would be

possible to support both sides of the argument, as Johanna Wördemann points out: "Das Wiedererkennen, das Anerkennen des eigenen - mitgeteilten - Leidens im Leiden anderer ist sowohl Selbstaffirmation als auch 'Ausweg'".⁶² The loss of a parent or a child can be seen to be the catalyst for writing, whilst the act of coherently expressing feelings on paper proves equally painful, yet cathartic. The writer, perhaps subconsciously, calls on the reader's empathy and sympathy. Although the subject-matter could be considered depressing, even morbid, the reader might in fact feel better about his/her own situation, having read about someone else's misfortunes.

It should at this point be reiterated that these women writers are appealing to other ordinary women to acknowledge that their problems are common, as well as to share and understand their position. This notion of making one's writing as representative as possible is, however, on shaky ground, when we note that most of these writers stem from middle-class backgrounds and have had a university education. It is perhaps already a sign of their emancipation that they are in the privileged position of being able to analyse themselves on paper. It is also more than likely that such works will only be read by someone from a similar background because otherwise empathy would be unlikely. And, in contrast to a writer of fiction, these women writers are not providing a make-believe world where dreams come true and into which the reader can escape. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Schwaiger's first autobiographical novel *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer* (1977) has been the most successful post-1945 début novel by a German-speaking author since Günter Grass' *Die Blechtrommel* (1959).⁶³ Clearly many female readers have been able to identify with Schwaiger's portrayal of the breakdown of her middle-class marriage, the failure of a love affair, an abortion and thoughts of suicide, which appear as central issues in 'Frauenliteratur'. In an interview in 1984 Schwaiger herself makes the following point with

regard to the reception of her first novel: "Es war nur zufällig, daß ich, wie so viele Frauen, meine Erfahrungen in einer sehr unglücklichen Ehe benutzen konnte beim Schreiben".⁶⁴

To conclude, we are not seeking to place all women writers of German into one category when we refer to 'Frauenliteratur'. This modern trend is such that it incorporates so many different aims and styles, which at times run parallel to the general trends of men and women writers. In a collection of essays on women and German literature the traditional expectations of what and how men and women are supposed to write are commented upon thus:

It has become commonplace of German literary history that only men are capable of mastering the so-called objective genres (drama, epic poetry, historical novels, experimental novels, Bildungsromane, novellas) or of using sophisticated stylistic techniques (irony, satire, metaphor, symbolism, rhetoric), while women were relegated to the so-called subjective genres (lyric poetry, romances) and non-literary or pre-literary modes of writing (letters, diaries). In such a context a male author who opts for a subjective mode would be expanding his horizons in order to become a total person, whereas a woman who indulges in the male genres would be censured for her presumption.⁶⁵

Nowadays, 'Frauenliteratur' offers a varied scope of themes and techniques which underline the superfluousness of a simple definition. We have to do away with the concept of literature by women, about women and for women, and concentrate on the fact that this is a literature written by women who are writing from a female perspective founded on social conditions and areas of reality, which are naturally different from those of men. Hence, this is not a literature fighting for the rights of women, but one which portrays the everyday existence of women in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. As we have seen in this survey of 'Frauenliteratur' and autobiography, women's self-definition clearly has strong ties with her social status, as the literary critic Elaine Showalter aptly summarises for us:

Women writers should not be studied as a distinct group on the assumption that they write alike, or even display stylistic resemblances, distinctively feminine. But women do have a special literary history susceptible to analysis, which includes such complex considerations as the economics of their relation to literary marketplace; the effects of social and political changes in women's status upon individuals, and the implications of stereotypes of the woman writer and restrictions of her artistic autonomy.⁶⁸

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

- 1 Sally Emerson considers using "a male pen name to deflect criticisms that women's writing displays a louche disregard for housekeeping". 'Personal View', *Sunday Times*, 19 June 1988.
- 2 Details from Manfred Jurgensen, *Deutsche Frauenautoren der Gegenwart* (Bern: Francke, 1983), p.12.
- 3 Lottemi Doorman, ed., *Keiner schiebt uns weg* (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz, 1979), p.243.
- 4 Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), p.137.
- 5 Marlis Gerhardt, 'Wohin geht Nora? Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Frau', *Kursbuch*, 47 (Berlin: Rotbuch, März, 1977), pp.77-89, p.86.
- 6 H.D.Schäfer, 'Droht das Ende der Literatur?' *Die Welt*, 13 October 1971.
- 7 Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'Politisierung der Kunsttheorie: zur ästhetischen Diskussion nach 1965', in *Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965*, ed. by P.M. Lützeler and E. Schwarz (Königstein/Ts.:Athenäum, 1980), pp.282-299 (p.290).

- 8 Sylvia Schwab, *Autobiographik und Lebenserfahrung: Versuch einer Typologie deutschsprachiger autobiographischer Schriften zwischen 1965 und 1975* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1981), p.9.
- 9 Weigel refers to the year only in the footnotes. Sigrid Weigel, '"Woman Begins Relating to Herself": Contemporary German Women's Literature (Part One)', *New German Critique*, 31 (1984), 53-94 (p.59).
- 10 For further details see Weigel, p.65.
- 11 'Frauenoffensive' was the first women's press founded in Munich in 1976 by a group of women who had been publishing a series of feminist works since 1974 for the 'Trikont Verlag'. In the same year (1976) the 'Verlag Frauenpolitik' was founded in Münster, followed by 'Frauenbuchverlag Antje Kunstmann' in Munich, 'Frauenselbstverlag' in Berlin and 'Amazonenverlag' also in Berlin.
- 12 Sigrid Schmid-Bortenschlager, 'Beiträge österreichischer Schriftstellerinnen zur Literatur seit 1945', *Moderna Språk*, 2 (1981), 149-162 (p.149). During the period 1905-1948 Hedwig Courths-Mahler produced over 207 novels of which over 40 million copies have been sold world-wide in various languages. She wrote her first novel *Scheinehe* at the age of seventeen and was known to have written up to fourteen books, each over three hundred pages long, in one year, that year being 1920. She is just one example of a woman writer whose works are today categorised under the term 'Trivialliteratur'.

- 13 Weigel, pp. 82-83.
- 14 Eva Koch-Klenske, '"Solches Sprechen ist auch eine Heilung ...". Gespräch mit Brigitte Schwaiger', in *Die Sprache des Vaters im Körper der Mutter*, ed. by Rolf Haubl, Eva Koch-Klenske and Hans-Jürgen Linke (Giessen: Anabas, 1984), pp.153-162 (p.156).
- 15 Weigel, p.82.
- 16 Weigel, p.54.
- 17 Manfred Jurgensen, 'Was ist Frauenliteratur?' in *Frauenliteratur*, ed. by M. Jurgensen (München: dtv, 1985), pp.13-39 (p.27).
- 18 The Bristol Women's Studies Group, eds, *Half the Sky. An Introduction to Women's Studies* (London: Virago, 1979), p.239.
- 19 Silvia Bovenschen, 'Über die Frage: Gibt es eine weibliche Ästhetik?' *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, 25 (1976), 60-75. Two years later the same question is posed by two other writers: Friederike Hassauer-Roos, 'Gibt es eine weibliche Ästhetik? Über den verrückten Diskurs der Sprachlosen', *Theater heute*, 78 (1978), 116-123, and Hiltrud Gnüg, 'Gibt es eine weibliche Ästhetik?', *Kurbiskern*, 1 (1978), 131-140.

- 20 See for example Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979); Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel, *Die verborgene Frau* (Berlin: Argument, 1985).
- 21 Magdelene Heuser, 'Frauen-Literatur-Sprache', *Diskussion Deutsch*, 12 (1981), 383-405 (p.393).
- 22 *Malina* (1971) was the first novel in Bachmann's trilogy, entitled *Todesarten*. Only fragments remain of the two sequels, *Der Fall Franza* and *Requiem für Fanny Goldman*. *Malina* was, in fact, her only novel to be published whilst Bachmann was alive.
- 23 Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), p.14.
- 24 Manfred Jurgensen, 'Was ist Frauenliteratur?', p.19.
- 25 Manfred Jurgensen, *Deutsche Frauenautoren der Gegenwart* (Bern: Francke, 1983), p.311.
- 26 Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* (1975) is frequently cited as "a symbol for the breakthrough of women's literature" (Weigel, p.61). Stefan herself was an active member of the Women's Movement and intentionally wrote in such a way that readers could identify with her experiences and at the same time she would speak

on behalf of women. By the mid-80s over 250,000 copies of her first book had been sold.

- 27 In her book about the narrative strategies of twentieth-century women writers Rachel Blau Du Plessis remarks that "while hardly all of the writers would describe themselves as feminists, and some, indeed, resist that term, one may assert that any female cultural practice that makes the 'meaning production process' itself 'the site of struggle' may be considered feminist". *Writing Beyond the Ending* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p.34.
- 28 Significant feminist works include Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (trans. and ed. by H.M. Parshley, 1953). Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1977), Luce Irigaray's *Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre* (1979), Hélène Cixous' 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, 1, 1976).
- 29 Rosalind Coward separates so-called feminist novels into four categories: novels which make their allegiance to the women's movement very apparent; novels which have as their central theme the aspirations of feminism; novels which are written by female authors who have theorised about feminism in other works; and novels which illustrate women's oppression but do not deal with feminism as such.
- Rosalind Coward, "'This Novel Changes Lives": Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels? A Response to Rebecca O'Rourke's Article "Summer Reading"', *Feminist Review*, 5 (1980), 53-64 (p.58).

- 30 Andreas Huyssen, 'Mapping the Postmodern', *New German Critique*, 83 (1984), 5-52 (p.51).
- 31 See page 5 of this chapter.
- 32 Sigrid Weigel, *Die Stimme der Medusa*, (Dülmen-Hiddingsel: tende, 1987), p.55.
- 33 Sigrid Weigel, 'Double Focus: On the History of Women's Writing', *Feminist Aesthetics*, ed. by Gisela Ecker (London: The Women's Press, 1985), pp.59-90 (p.72).
- 34 See for example Brigitte Schwaiger's first autobiographical novel *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer* (1977).
- 35 Weigel, 'Double Focus', p.72.
- 36 Weigel, 'Double Focus', p.72.
- 37 Other names for this literary trend include: 'Neue Innerlichkeit', 'Neue Sensibilität' and 'Tendenzwende'.
- 38 Johanna Wördemann, 'Schreiben um zu überleben oder Schreiben als Arbeit. Notizen zum Treffen schreibender Frauen in München, Mai 1976', *Alternative*, 108/109, (1976), 115-118 (p.115).

- 39 Schwab, p.10.
- 40 Ingrid Aichinger, 'Probleme der Autobiographie als Sprachkunstwerk', *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur*, 14 (1970), 418-434 (p.427).
- 41 Philippe Lejeune, 'The Autobiographical Contract', in *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, ed. by Tzvetan Todorov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.202.
- 42 See Rita Felski's chapter 'On Confession', *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), pp.86-121.
- 43 Felski, p.112.
- 44 Schwab, p.248.
- 45 Albert von Schirnding, 'Schreiben als Rettungsaktion. Gabriele Wohmanns *Ausflug mit der Mutter*', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11 November 1976.
- 46 Karin Richter-Schröder, *Frauenliteratur und weibliche Identität* (Frankfurt a.M.: Hain, 1986), p.155.
- 47 Sally Emerson makes the interesting point that "a novelist often writes his first book better than his subsequent ones because he does not believe that his first will be

published. He can therefore write freely of his emotions, his friends, his lovers. He does not believe that anyone he knows will be studying his work".

Sally Emerson, 'Personal View', *Sunday Times*, 19 June 1988.

- 48 Adelbert Reif, 'Ohne Todesangst würde ich keine Romane schreiben. Gespräch mit Gabriele Wohmann', *Die Welt*, 6 July 1992.
- 49 Birgit Leonhardt, 'Interview mit Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch', *Buchreport*, Nr.23, 5 June 1985.
- 50 Karin Struck, *Kindheits Ende* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), p.188.
- 51 Manfred Jurgensen, 'Das Ende der Sucht?' Zu Karin Strucks "Journal einer Krise" *Kindheits Ende*', in *Frauenliteratur*, ed. by M.Jurgensen (München: dtv, 1985), pp.171-186 (p.173).
- 52 Struck, *Kindheits Ende*, p.444.
- 53 Struck, *Kindheits Ende*, p.497.
- 54 Jurgensen, p.185.
- 55 Weigel, *Die Stimme der Medusa*, p.154.

- 56 Peter Henisch, *Die kleine Figur meines Vaters* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), p.76.
- 57 Jürgen Serke, *Frauen Schreiben* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1982), p.10.
- 58 Renate Möhrmann, 'Feministische Trends in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur', in *Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. by Manfred Durzak (Stuttgart: Reclam. 1981), pp.337-358 (pp.340-342).
- 59 Paul Konrad Kurz, *Zwischen Widerstand und Wohlstand* (Frankfurt a. M.: Knecht, 1986), p.16.
- 60 Sandra Frieden, *Autobiography: Self into Form* (Bern: P. Lang, 1983), p.107.
- 61 Struck, *Kindheits Ende*, p.14.
- 62 Johanna Wördemann, 'Schreiben um zu überleben oder Schreiben als Arbeit. Notizen zum Treffen schreibender Frauen in München, Mai 1976', *Alternative*, 5 (1976), 115-118, (p.116).
- 63 Details from Christa Gürtler, *Schreiben Frauen anders?* (Stuttgart: Akademischer verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1985), p.74.
- 64 Eva Koch-Klenske, p.156.

- 65 Susan L. Cocalis and Kay Goodman, ed., *Beyond the Eternal Feminine* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982), pp.35-36.
- 66 Josephine Donovan, ed., *Feminist Literary Criticism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), p.13.

CHAPTER ONE: DEATH OF A FATHER: START OF A STORY

A comparison of Elisabeth Plessen's *Mitteilung an den Adel* (1976), Brigitte Schwaiger's *Lange Abwesenheit* (1980) and Jutta Schutting's *Der Vater* (1980) illustrates the ways in which three daughters write about their fathers' death and try to come to terms with the loss of this parent. These three books have been selected for a number of reasons: first, they present the daughter-father relationship, about which little has been written, either in primary or secondary literature; second, all three have in common the fact that the father has recently died prior to the opening of the narrative. Clearly the immediacy of death does have a significant influence on the thoughts of these daughters and, as will be shown, the loss of the father plays a crucial part in each daughter's search for her own identity.

The three works and their authors are also representative of the literature being published in Germany and Austria today by writers, who are analysing themselves and their relationships with their families in order to understand who they are. In contrast to the 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' and the collective responsibility of the German people depicted in the works of Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll and Siegfried Lenz, amongst others, these younger writers turn to the personal sphere, exploring intimate relationships as well as highlighting the generation gap between parents and children. Plessen's female protagonist, on hearing of her father's sudden death, travels home for the funeral, which she ends up not attending. The story is of her four-day journey by car from Munich to Schleswig-Holstein, during which the daughter reflects on her relationship with her father: the conflict between a conservative, authoritarian landowner from the aristocracy and a radical, politically-motivated student, who participates in the student demonstrations of 1968. Conflicts of opinions between daughter and father is also evident in Schwaiger's work, where the daughter, in trying to come to terms with her father's death, recalls her father's

antisemitism and her affair with a Jew, Peter Birer, who is old enough to be her father. Whilst both Plessen's and Schwaiger's works do suggest that the politics of a German/Austrian past influence the attitude and behaviour of daughter and father, there is no such political impetus in Schutting's *Der Vater*. Once again the narrative opens with the daughter having just heard of her father's death and describes her reaction to this news and her ensuing efforts over the next three days to organise the funeral service, which she attends with the rest of the family. Naturally, she, too, considers the extent to which her father influenced her upbringing and meditates on their relationship. As in the two other works featured here, love/hatred of the authoritarian father is presented in graphic terms by the writer.

In this chapter we shall explore the relationship between father and daughter by looking at the development of the father's authority within the German home since 1945 and the psychoanalytical theory surrounding the daughter-father relationship. We will look briefly at the international literary scene to recent works by Elaine Feinstein, Sylvia Fraser and Germaine Greer to recognise that the daughter-father relationship is not just a trend in modern literature from German-speaking countries, but is of global interest and significance. We shall also reflect on the possible similarities that these father-portrayals by daughters from German-speaking countries have with those written by sons, such as the 'Abrechnung' with the Nazi past. We will then be in a position to consider the extent to which psychoanalytical and historical traits are evident in the relationships portrayed by Plessen, Schwaiger and Schutting. In order to be able to understand the possible effect of a father's death on his daughter, the role of the father should be considered first, before analysing these literary texts.

The word 'father' conjures up several analogies, such as 'God, the Father', 'fatherland', 'kingdom' and 'patriarchy'. Indeed, the head of the family (pater familias) can trace his roots back to the chief of the clan, to representing his wife and children in public, to commanding over them but also to carrying the responsibility for them. He had the right as well as the duty to educate his children. His control was total, as indicated by the fact that his family name became the name of his own family. Up until as late as 1977 and the implementation of the new marriage laws this had still been the case in West Germany. In Christianity (including Judaism and Islam) God has always been a father-figure. Any attempt, therefore, to do away with patriarchy might suggest a renunciation of religion in particular and security in general. Yet, as a result of women's demands for equality, the state of patriarchy is in the process of gradually disintegrating. The role of the father is likewise changing and a new father image is emerging. As mothers go out to work and the size of the family shrinks, the father no longer rules the clan.

The period after World War Two and up until the 1970s heralded the end of a German father's supremacy in the home. He had been defeated in war and had to carry the blame. Within the family he initially attempted to assert his authority in order to compensate for his sense of public humiliation:

Gerade weil die Werte und Ideale, für die sie gekämpft hatten, zerstört waren, suchten die heimgekehrten Väter um so verzweifelter Haft und Lebenssinn in ihren Familien zu finden; als Erzieher wenigstens die Autorität zu behaupten, die sie als Staatsbürger auf lange Zeit verloren hatten.¹

The father believed that he could redeem himself by continuing to bring up his children according to strict Prussian standards. He was certainly not prepared to tolerate any questions or criticism from his children. With the rebuilding of West Germany his thoughts turned to work, to creating prosperity and achieving success. As Jessica Benjamin explains in her discussion of Max Horkheimer's conceptualisation of the problem of fatherlessness: "The father's authority derived not from any intrinsic admirable characteristics, but by virtue of his status as breadwinner, his power of the purse".² In the 1950s and 1960s everything became so materialistically oriented that even children were regarded as suitable status symbols but not necessary. In fact the tendency of fathers to become ambitious, so wrapped up in their work and detached from their families has meant that the term "vaterlose Gesellschaft", first coined by the psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich in 1963, is still applicable today.³ At the time Mitscherlich was referring to a generation of children whose fathers could no longer influence their lives, once these children learnt of their fathers' guilt-ridden past:

Zwar ahnten sie, taub geschlagen von der Propaganda des "kalten Krieges" und eingeschläfert vom Konsum-Zauber des "Wirtschaftswunders", lange nicht, was hinter der großen Schweigemauer lag; und doch lebten sie in dem dumpfen Gefühl, daß bei dieser Generation, die eine derartig hektische "Wiederaufbau"-Munterkeit an den Tag legte, irgendetwas nicht stimmte - nicht stimmen konnte.⁴

With the reforms of marriage and family law in 1977, whereby women were no longer solely responsible for the household and marriage was intended to be a partnership of equals, fathers began to take an interest in their family role again.⁵ A new divorce law was introduced which

allowed for divorce on the basis of marital breakdown without a 'guilty' sentence for either party, provided that a couple had lived apart for at least one year (...) women's rights to their share in the family possessions remained unimpaired even if they 'walked out'.⁶

After 1976 a wife's maiden name could also be chosen as the family surname. Realising that their authority, responsibility and rights were being undermined by women's insistence on equality, fathers began to fight for their rights, particularly with regard to custody of their children in divorce cases.

During the last decade or so the number of single fathers has been increasing steadily but it is still relatively small.⁷ Evidently there are signs of a 'new father' on the horizon. He participates in the birth of his child, helps to feed and bathe the baby, even changes nappies, but an equality which implies a readiness to take on the role of househusband is in reality a long way off. For their book entitled *Sagt uns, wo die Väter sind*, published in 1991, Cheryl Benard and Edit Schlaffer, both sociologists, spent two years interviewing mothers, children and, above all, fathers. Nearly all the men agreed that they wanted to be different from their own fathers and had every good intention of becoming actively

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involved in the upbringing of their children. But these findings show that such wishes have never been put into practice: the desire for recognition at work is far too great:

Vereinzelt sei ihnen der als kulturelle Neuerscheinung vielgepriesene "aktive Vater" begegnet, erklären die Soziologinnen, doch meistens redeten die Männer lediglich davon, daß ihre Kinder das Wichtigste in ihren Leben seien. Wenn es darauf ankomme, hätten sie leider eine Sitzung, einen Termin, eine wichtige Besprechung.⁸

In his analysis of the changing role of the father in the twentieth century Reinhart Lempp comes to the following conclusion: "Eine tatsächliche Gleichberechtigung von Vater and Mutter in ihrer Beziehung zum Kinde entsteht nur dort, wo die Mutter wirklich fehlt".⁹ Ironically, though, it seems that in modern Western society it is the father who continues to be an absent or peripheral figure in the family.

According to classical psychoanalytic theory, a child acquires identification with his/her sexual role as a result of the so-called Oedipal phase or phallic stage between the ages of three and six, whereby the child has to repress his/her sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex by learning to identify either with his father and masculinity or her mother and femininity. At the outset both son and daughter identify with the mother as the primary love object, but expression of sexual feelings towards the mother by the son is prevented by the father and incest taboos. By competing with his father for his mother's love the son fears losing his father's love and being punished by him (possible threat of castration),

hence he identifies with his father's strength and power in order to become like him. He thereby resolves any conflict and establishes his proper sex-role identification.

To date little attention has been paid by psychoanalysts to the significance of the father-daughter relationship. This may stem from the fact that Freud himself was uncertain about how girls resolved the equivalent Electra complex, that is, rivalry between mother and daughter for the father's love, because the daughter did not face the threat of castration:

Although the psychoanalytic theory of female development has not yet recognized the importance of the missing father, clinicians have begun to realize the girl's equal need to identify with her father and the consequences if he is unavailable for such identification.¹⁰

Benard and Schlaffer have made a similar discovery with regard to the effect of a father's absence on a girl:

Für die Tochter ist der Vater - und die Gründe seiner Abwesenheit, ob durch Tod, Scheidung, Bürosucht oder inneres Desinteresse, sind dabei erst zweitrangig wichtig - ein männliches Phantom, das sie noch sehr lange als trüber Schatten auf ihrem Lebensweg begleiten wird. Ein engagierter Vater leistet einen Beitrag zu Erziehung und Sozialisation, aber auch von einem abwesenden Vater kann

man eine Menge lernen, z.B. Männern nicht zu vertrauen, sie aber andererseits übermäßig zu idealisieren.¹¹

This aspect of the father-daughter relationship is of particular interest and relevance to this study, because each daughter portrays a certain quest for her identity whilst writing about her father. The significance of the father in the daughter's life will, thus, become apparent.

Another consideration for interpreting the relationship between father and daughter is the suggestion that the Oedipus complex is appearing at a later stage of a child's development, namely during puberty, and is adopting a different, almost dangerous form inasmuch as parents are reluctant to let their children go. Certainly, as we shall see, sexual innuendos do occur between father and daughter in these literary portrayals:

Das neue und offenbar zunehmend häufigere Problem ist das Bemühen der Väter bzw. der Mütter, ihre Töchter bzw. ihre Söhne als Töchter und Söhne bei sich zu halten und an sich zu binden. Da die Söhne und Töchter aber inzwischen keine kleinen Kinder mehr sind, sondern ihre Geschlechtsreife erworben haben, bringt dieses Festhalten an der engen emotionalen Beziehung und Bindung für die heranwachsenden Kinder die Gefahr und Bedrohung nach wie vor streng tabuierter sexueller Nähe mit sich.¹²

Recent psychoanalytic theory, however, does not place such importance on the Oedipus complex and its sex-role identification, instead it concentrates on the emotional relationship between a child and two adults, the creation and maintenance of this triangular relationship.

Traditionally the natural world is represented by the mother, whilst the father represents the world of business, law and order, and travel. He can guide his child into the world, a reality outside of the family unit. Nancy Chodorow also observes these stereotypical parental roles:

Fathers are on the outside of the family of the self; while mothers are defined by their role in the family. Fathers symbolize autonomy and independence; mothers symbolize nurturance and dependence.¹³

It will be interesting to note that the daughters in these selected works want to be anything but dependent on someone else. Furthermore, similarities between father and daughter do exist. A possible implication is that these daughters have no intention of becoming mothers. Each daughter seeks education, a profession and flees the family. To the father is ascribed not only the importance of influencing her sex-role development but also her autonomy:

It is the father who encourages the child to relinquish her symbiotic attachment to mother; he who reinforces her urgent yet tentative need for independence; he, in short, who imparts the inherent value of being a separate person.¹⁴

Similarly, Erich Fromm believes that it is possible to differentiate between fatherly love and motherly love: the former being conditional, the latter unconditional. On the one hand, a child has to earn its father's love, normally by being obedient, otherwise there is the possibility that his love might vanish; on the other hand, unlike motherly love which is beyond a child's control, fatherly love can be acquired by actually doing something to deserve it. This type of love is dependent upon merit and implies "that one is loved only because one pleases, that one is, in the last analysis, not loved at all but used".¹⁵

During their own critical reflection the daughters in the literary works to be considered come to a similar conclusion. In *Lange Abwesenheit*, for instance, the narrator stresses that as a daughter she served no other purpose in her father's life than to comply with his orders: that was her existence. Such filial submission, as well as the refusal to play the part of the dutiful, passive daughter before and after the father's death, will be shown to be features of these particular relationships. In fact, each daughter portrays not only the family-man, the father at home, but also the professional man, the father at work. In this chapter we shall, likewise, focus first on the personal realm, the love/hate relationship between daughter and father highlighted by the process of bereavement as well as the daughter's own identity crisis. The theme of identity leads to the second area of analysis, namely the social background of the daughter, her criticism of her own upbringing as well as her father's professional conduct during the period of National Socialist rule. It is this latter aspect which, in contrast to the general psychological theme of father-daughter relationships, makes these works specifically and uniquely German. Somewhat ironically, then, the private issues are of general significance and target or appeal to a wider relationship, whilst the public issues in the form of collective guilt and shared responsibility for past atrocities are aimed at a German readership. It will be necessary to unravel these

two strands separately in order to understand the importance of the daughter-father relationship and to discover to what extent these writers are their fathers' daughters.

Although we are concentrating here on women writers from German-speaking countries, it should be pointed out that this interest on the part of daughters in publishing works about their fathers in recent years has not just been a Germanic phenomenon. The following three works are cited to indicate the type of daughter-father relationships featured in novels by English-speaking female authors and the extent to which the father/daughter theme continues to be of international interest and relevance. Elaine Feinstein's novel *Mother's Girl* (1988), for example, depicts two stepsisters who come face to face on the day of their father's funeral. The older daughter, Halina, recalls the events of her upbringing as a Jew in Budapest in the 1930s, her exile in England and her loneliness thereafter without her parents. Her mother had disappeared after remaining in Budapest to help rescue Jews; her father had eventually left for America where he remarried and stayed for ten years before searching for his first daughter. The conversation between the two women reveals family secrets, though the narrative is biased towards Halina, since she had nursed her father during the last years of his life, when a brain tumour was discovered and he became bedridden. Halina attempts to explain the identity of the man whom her American half-sister never really knew, never loved, only hated and despised for the fact that he had left her and her mother. Although the title of this novel suggests a work concerning the mother, it is the father who plays the most significant role in Halina's life. On his deathbed, with Halina by his side, he seeks forgiveness of his first wife: the daughter becomes the mother, as her father explains how he left Budapest without his wife, believing that she was dead. The novel concludes with the funeral service and Halina's discovery that her father's belief had been correct. His action was thus vindicated.

As in the case of the Germanic daughter-father portrayals, Feinstein uses the death of the father and the funeral service to bring together two estranged sisters and to trigger the recollection process of both daughters. The one daughter finds herself justifying the behaviour of the father for whom she had learnt to care, even love:

Halina found herself trapped into defending Leo. "Please. You didn't know Father. You always saw him through your mother's eyes. I can't believe he deserved such implacable hatred".¹⁶

Mother's Girl is not a novel with apparent autobiographical features. Instead Feinstein depicts two daughters who respectively embody the emotions of love and hate towards their deceased father, but who are both tormented by the pain they experience. Like the daughters in the works to be analysed, these daughters have to come to terms with the past in order to face the future. Communication, understanding, sympathy and anger take place between Feinstein's two female protagonists. In contrast, the German-speaking writers present narrators who appear to have no one with whom to communicate other than themselves and eventually the reader. The fact that the reader is not faced with a one-sided perspective makes Feinstein's novel different from these almost 'confessional' works.

Two books which do invite the reader to see the father through the eyes of the daughter only are Sylvia Fraser's *My Father's House. A Memoir of Incest and Healing* (1987) and Germaine Greer's *Daddy, We Hardly Knew You* (1989).¹⁷ Both books are autobiographies with the writer narrating in the I-form and revealing personal, sometimes highly emotional memories. For forty years Sylvia Fraser was unable to recall the truth behind her

relationship with her father. She had during that time managed to push to the back of her mind feelings of fear, pain and guilt until the day her father died, when she suddenly experienced freedom, a sense of release. Her recovery from amnesia resulted in this memoir in which the writer relates her painful past, the fact that from the age of seven her father had raped her continually: he had never kept his distance from his daughter. During the process of recollection the daughter acknowledges that she confused love and hatred for her father because the two emotions seemed inseparable. The fear of losing her father's love, if she disobeyed him, conflicted with the knowledge that he was betraying and destroying the father-daughter bond:

My arms stick to my sides, my legs dangle like worms as my daddy forces me back against his bed. I love my daddy. I hate my daddy. Love hate love hate. Daddy won't love me love me hate hate hate. I'm afraid to strike with my fists. I'm afraid to tell my mommy. (...) Guilt fear guilt fear fear dirty dirty fear¹⁸

Yet *My Father's House* is a true story of love and forgiveness, as Sylvia Fraser willingly admits, once both she and her mother have realised and accepted the truth:

Though I don't understand him, I can pity him and forgive him. I forgive my father so I can forgive myself, (...) I also forgive my father because I love him. That is the biggest

shock of all. Not only that I once loved him but that I love him even now.¹⁹

Recognition of their fathers' faults followed by some form of forgiveness is something which is experienced by all these daughters who attempt to understand their once powerful fathers. For the German-speaking writers it will be shown that the recognition occurs during writing as thoughts and impressions are developed. This is not the case for Fraser who has recorded retrospectively how she survived her father's sexual abuse and coped so many years later with the realisation of what had happened. It becomes clear to the reader that the death of the father does provide each daughter-cum-writer with the opportunity of confronting the inexplicable love/hatred she felt for this man. This notion is supported by Barbara Taufar, once a journalist and diplomat, who, in an interview about her deceased Nazi father, an Austrian SS-officer, made the following comment which, as will become increasingly evident during this study, typifies the feelings of all these daughters and signals the relevance, even the necessity, of their fathers' death for their post mortem portrayals:

It needed the eternal drama of death for me to see that here was a man - not a father - that I had no right to judge. It's easier to hate than to understand, yet against all my expectations I lost my feelings of revenge and started to cry. I was losing my father, my enemy, the man who shaped me with his silence. I think when he died I finally loved him.²⁰

In her autobiographical work *Daddy, We Hardly Knew You* Germaine Greer records her two-year search to discover the background of her deceased father, Reg Greer, and notes: "In my obsessional way I have become hypnotised by the father-daughter relationship".²¹ The same could apply to each one of these female authors who has chosen to write about her father. It is particularly true of the writers selected for this chapter because, as in the case of Greer, the 'obsession' illustrates a desperate need on the part of the daughter to learn who she is and where she belongs. Germaine Greer wrote to Greers all around the world, travelling to Australia, Britain and India to establish the facts about her father's past. The lies which emerged frightened this daughter so much that she began to doubt her own identity, especially since the hero her father had conjured up for the outside world as well as for his family, belied a coward and revealed a fraudster. As in the case of most of the daughters in this study Greer emphasises in this work her father's absence from the home; his inability to embrace her; his lack of interest in her life to the extent that she was even omitted from his will. As this chapter will indicate, each daughter's emotions of love and hatred towards her father become confused:

"You're so worried that he didn't love you. Have you ever considered whether you loved him?"

"I did. I do."

(...)

"You didn't hunt him down because you loved him, but because you hated him. He rejected you and you hated him."

"No, no. If I hated him why did it all hurt so much?
Nothing has ever hurt me so hard and for so long as his dying
did."²²

Insecurity about their fathers' love for them is an emotion experienced by these daughters after the death of their fathers and can, as will be discussed, be attributed to the mourning process. As Patrick Taylor-Martin also suggests in his review of Greer's novel, a daughter's lack of self-confidence in general can be linked to the father's reluctance, even refusal, to show his daughter any love:

If it is true that men who were truly loved by their mothers go through life with the air of conquering heroes, it appears that women who were not truly loved by their fathers carry a life-long burden of disappointment and self-doubt.²³

Such a suggestion places a great emphasis on the significance of the father-daughter relationship and could be viewed as somewhat exaggerated, although the daughters of these literary works do highlight the regrets and frustration they feel about their fathers' lack of love for them. After his death the daughter's sense of insecurity is likely to continue because the possibility of ever acquiring her father's love is removed once and for all, that is, unless she is able to reach a level of understanding which allows for forgiveness and a form of reconciliation with his memory. In order to achieve this, each daughter has to analyse her father's past, his private and public role, and recognise that both she and her father made mistakes in their relationship, that the blame could not rest solely with the

father. It will be worth noting, therefore, to what extent each daughter-cum-writer is able to reach such a level of understanding, since we may discover that some of these daughters only see the flawed image of their father and not their own faults. The ability of the writer to analyse her own self in writing may well depend on the extent to which she has come to terms with bereavement and accepted the loss of her father. When she initially wrote about her father Germaine Greer stated in her book that she could not forgive him for all his lies and that she could not feel sorry for him. At the same time she was unable to forgive herself for unearthing the past, thereby destroying the heroic image she had of him. Yet a short while after publication of the book Greer remarked during an interview that she had forgiven her father, but she was not sure that, had he been alive, he would have forgiven her for all her detective work.²⁴ The implication is that the rift between daughter and father would still be as wide as before.

Even after death the father can undermine the confidence of the daughter because she feels guilty for having revealed secrets about him; for having portrayed him in an imperfect light; for not respecting his authority; for making him look vulnerable. It is as if the daughter has gone behind her father's back and done something without his permission. Recollections of the father will, thus, haunt her in the form of guilt. I suspect that this is not the case for the sons who write about their deceased fathers. They are more likely to regard their father-portrayals and exposure of his faults as being morally justified and purposeful. A father guilty of committing grave mistakes in his role as a public figure would deserve criticism. The whole process of revelation might even clear the son's conscience by removing any association with his father's past. Peter Henisch wrote in his book *Die kleine Figur meines Vaters* (1975) that he was finding out about his father (Walter Henisch) in order to understand who he (Peter Henisch) actually was:

Lieber Papa, schrieb ich, ich frage mich, ob ich Deine Geschichte nicht dazu benutze, mich von mir selbst abzusetzen. Nicht total von mir selbst vielleicht, aber zweifellos von einem ganz gewichtigen Teil meines Charakters. Indem ich diesen Teil meines Charakters in Deinem Charakter wiederfinde, kann ich so tun, als hätte ich ihn verloren. Indem ich diesen Teil meines Charakters in Deinem Charakter dingfest mache, kann ich so tun, als wäre ich ihn los.

(...)

Ich muß mich, glaube ich, aus *deiner* Geschichte herausschreiben, mich *deiner* Geschichte gegenüber emanzipieren, um die *meine* zu finden.²⁵

As a result of this search for one's self and the need to break free from the burdens of the past and establish a sense of identity, the recognition as well as the rejection of the paternal role-model are frequent features of these 'Väterromane'.²⁶ The following prose-works belong to this genre: Peter Henisch *Die kleine Figur meines Vaters* (1975); Elisabeth Plessen *Mitteilung an den Adel* (1976); Bernward Wesper's posthumously published 'Romanessay' *Die Reise* (1977); Peter Meier *Stationen. Erinnerungen an Jakob Meier, Zugführer SBB* (1977); Fritz Zorn *Mars* (1977); Paul Kersten *Der alltägliche Tod meines Vaters* (1978); Gerhard Wagner *Die Tage werden länger* (1978); Sigfrid Gauch *Vaterspuren* (1979); Roland Lang *Die Mansarde* (1979); E.A. Rauter *Brief an meine Erzieher* (1979); Ruth Rehmann *Der Mann auf der Kanzel. Fragen an einen Vater* (1979); Heinrich Wiesner

Der Riese am Tisch (1979); Christopher Meckel *Suchbild. Über meinen Vater* (1980); Brigitte Schwaiger *Lange Abwesenheit* (1980); Jutta Schutting *Der Vater* (1980); Peter Härtling *Nachgetragene Liebe* (1980); Christoph Geiser *Brachland* (1980); Günter Seuren *Abschied von einem Mörder* (1980); Werner Bucher *Ein anderes Leben. Versuch sich einem Unbekannten anzunähern* (1981); Ludwig Harig *Ordnung ist das ganze Leben. Roman meines Vaters* (1986); Marliese Fuhrmann *Hexenringe. Dialog mit dem Vater* (1987); Sibylle Plogstedt *Niemandstochter. Auf der Suche nach dem Vater* (1991).

As children the writers of these father-portraits did not question their father's work; they were unaware of the power and influence exerted by these men in their professions during a crucial period of German history. German children who were born during the 1940s and who were now at the peak of their careers suddenly found themselves confronted by the undeniable fact of their fathers' complicity in the Nazi atrocities. These personal interrogations, however, occur after the death of the father, hence he is unable to reply. The reasons for this long overdue broaching of the subject of Nazism in their own family backgrounds are difficult to define. As Michael Schneider points out, one has to wonder,

warum die literarische Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit der Väter mit einer so offenkundigen Verspätung eingesetzt, warum keiner der schreibenden Söhne und Töchter die Väter schon zu Lebzeiten mit den Fragen bedrängt hat, die sie ihnen nun ins Grab nachschicken. Ist es nicht gespenstisch, daß jetzt Tausende ihre Bücher lesen - nur die nicht mehr, von denen sie handeln?²⁷

It does seem somewhat incredible that questions about each father's activities during Nazi rule and his method of bringing up his children were not posed before his death. Whilst alive their fathers (and mothers) had, of course, remained silent. Konrad Brendler, Professor of Education at the University of Wuppertal, suggests that it was not shame or feelings of guilt which silenced these parents:

More than anything else, our actions and reactions in Germany - then as now - are due to our 'Anständigkeit', propriety-mania. It both dictates and exalts conduct at the price of conscience.²⁸

It is plausible, therefore, that this same 'Anständigkeit' also silenced the children but once the physical presence of the person concerned vanished, the adult writer found the courage to reveal his/her family secrets. Others then felt more confident to do the same. Schneider is also suspicious of the reluctance of these children to ask questions, the fact that scarcely any of these writers of 'Väterbücher' have questioned their own lengthy silence.²⁹

There was clearly a market for such works, particularly after the showing on television of the film *Holocaust* in 1979. These post-war adults could not ignore their fathers' past and the silence because they had inherited the burden of guilt. Confrontation with the truth has been left to them, as Christabel Bielenberg notes: "The young have a conscience about the Holocaust but they feel their parents do not. For them it is a still undigested past".³⁰ The authors of these 'Väterbücher' used their writings as a means of putting their fathers on trial. By exposing the evidence they became judge and jury of their own fathers. Furthermore, a form of punishment is passed by publishing their fathers' mistakes in both

attitude and behaviour and making them known to the world. Indirectly, they were also experiencing the need to punish and hurt themselves in order to pay for having such a father. Hence, a book such as Niklas Frank's *Der Vater* (1987) also carries the title *Eine Abrechnung*:

(...) und Dein Herz schlägt mir ins Gesicht, und ich öffne meinen Mund, und ich beiße hinein, in Dein Herz, und ich spüre Dich schreien und schreien, aber der Schrei ist dumpf, denn Du bist ja nach innen gestülpt (...) ich beiß zu, bis ein Strom von Deinem Blut in meine Kehle schlappt, ich schlucke Dich und letzte Lügenflut, bis Deine Pumpe schlaff wird und Du im Zeugenstand, ein gräßlicher Fetzen Fleisch, zusammensackst, während ich, ein ewig kindliches Zombie, wohl davonspringe, immer wieder davonspringe.³¹

It has become evident that this generation felt the need for a reckoning. Now aged between thirty and forty, these authors reflect on what their fathers were doing at the same age during the Third Reich. They investigate their fathers' past in an effort to comprehend, as well as criticise, the power they had and thereby discover to what extent their fathers were carrying guilt. Brendler believes that this is not such a straightforward task, as one might expect:

I have come to ask myself whether the guilt of our parents' generation isn't finally much more encompassing than we

thought, with those who 'merely' did nothing only fractionally less guilty than those who were actively involved. But, facing that, I also have to look at myself: if my father was basically a coward, and, in his attitude towards me, his least assertive son, a bully, what am I? What - I say it deliberately, as a German - are my potentials under pressure?³²

For the daughters criticism of their fathers' political roles is not so clear and definite as that of the sons because they tend not to concentrate on the public figure but on the private man. They deal with emotions, which are difficult to define, with the personal relationship, which has its ups and downs. They need to understand the father's lack of love for them in order to continue with their own future:

Crucial to the girl's development is whether or not her father was available to her as a love-object and whether or not he was capable of offering his affection without being seduced by her fantasies, or seducing her with his counter-oedipal feelings.³³

This is very evident in later relationships with men, as Brigitte Schwaiger highlights in her choice of lovers and as will be illustrated later in this chapter: "In der Haßliebe zum Vater reflektiert sich das widersprüchliche Verhältnis zum Mann".³⁴ Certainly, emotions of love,

hatred and guilt do pervade these portrayals by daughters, distinguishing them from the portrayals by sons.

It is questionable whether any of these daughters will ever be capable of finding peace of mind and putting their fathers to rest for good because these works do have the appearance of being memorials to their fathers. The writing *per se* may only have been temporarily therapeutic. If there is no attempt at self-analysis, then the mourning process has not ended and progress is impossible. In the following analysis of Elisabeth Plessen's *Mitteilung an den Adel*, Jutta Schutting's *Der Vater* and Brigitte Schwaiger's *Lange Abwesenheit* we shall need to recognise the stage each daughter has reached in her bereavement and then see if the writer has managed not only to understand her father, but also to analyse herself on paper. It may well be the case that confused emotions will hamper or distort analytical thought processes so that accusations by some critics that these women writers merely wallow in depression may prove correct. We shall consider first the daughter's portrayal of the family man, her relationship with him as well as the bereavement process, before turning to the social and historical concerns voiced in these works.

Lack of demonstrative love is an accusation frequently made by all these children. The father who held a position of authority, such as a lawyer, doctor or officer, displayed similar authority within the home, that is, when he found the time to be at home:

Der Vater als verbissener, gequälter und quälender
Vorschriftenmensch, der die Gegenwart seines Kindes
mißbrauchte, um sich selbst ins Recht zu setzen; der Vater als
Übermächtige, strafende, einschüchternd-lähmende

Autoritätsperson, an dem die Liebes- und Zärtlichkeitsbedürfnisse des Kindes abprallen mußten.³⁵

In the eyes of their children most of these fathers failed in their paternal role because they were too busy elsewhere to take an interest in the problems of their son/daughter:

Wann hättest du dir Zeit genommen, mit mir zu reden? Als ich begriff, daß du sterben würdest, nahm ich es dir übel, daß du einfach fortgingst, ohne jemals für mich vorhanden gewesen zu sein. (L.A. 8)³⁶

For Schutting's narrator the father was always absent from the home, out on hunting-trips or enjoying himself in the pub. He showed no interest in his children, never went on walks with them, or to the church with them and did not join them for breakfast. He never gave his own children any affection, instead he bought their admission of 'love' for him with chocolates, oranges and money:

(...) weshalb er auch für die widerwillige Bejahung seiner oft wiederkehrenden Frage: "liebst du deinen Vater mehr als dich selbst, weil er zu dir so gut ist?" mit Recht ein paar Schilling Bestechung zahlt. (V. 73)³⁷

Schutting's "Unvater" (V. 93) also appears in Schwaiger's work where monetary value is similarly placed on love:

Diese Tante ist vielleicht schuld daran, daß Vater unsere Küsse abwies, weil er wußte, daß diese eine Tante sich als Kind auf dem Schoß ihres Vaters setzte, um ihm unter Liebkosungen die Geldtasche herauszuziehen. (L.A. 84)

The need to unmask the person behind the father-figure only arises as a result of the parent not being honest with his child in the first place. In this way misunderstanding arises from suspicion and mistrust on the part of the son/daughter. Lack of communication thus creates another barrier in this relationship:

Was ist das, wenn zwei sich kennen (und nicht kennen) wie Vater und Tochter, und sie gehen nebeneinander her, jeder wartet, daß der andere etwas sagt, und am Ende haben sie nichts herausbekommen, als daß es Punkte gibt, zwischen denen die Gerade den weitesten Umweg beschreibt?

(M.A. 155)³⁸

There is the suggestion in all the 'Väterromane' that these sons and daughters experienced deception and/or disappointment of some kind in their fathers, after having reviewed their own upbringing and having relived their relationship with their fathers, before committing the realisation to paper for everyone to read. However, the actual attempt at passing judgement on the relationship between father and son, father and daughter, does seem to occur during the writing process itself. That is not to say that the author reaches a definitive conclusion by the end of the book. Certainly there is always a fluctuation of

negative and positive thoughts as the author assesses facts and feelings towards his/her father. Whilst they do acquire a new and better understanding of their fathers, they all leave their novels open-ended: the suggestion being that the thought process is never completed.

The works by Plessen, Schwaiger and Schutting display an intense preoccupation with the dead father which may be regarded as indicative of the psychological mourning process of bereavement and adaptation to loss. The reaction to loss is represented by a departure from the bereaved's usual state of thought, feeling and behaviour. The death of the father results in a change of attitude by the daughter towards her father: generally speaking, an initially negative portrayal of the father accompanied at the outset by feelings of dislike, hostility and hatred becomes more positive as the daughter delves deeper into her father's past, ruminates over her upbringing and examines their relationship. At its most extreme this positive portrayal is illustrated by the daughter's admission of love as well as yearning for her father. Other indications of an improved attitude include understanding, sympathy, appreciation and regret about the lack of communication between parent and child. The writing process itself appears to assuage the daughter's originally hostile feelings towards her father and facilitates facing the reality of his death. The formation of an improved opinion of her father, once he is dead, may be due to a number of reasons. On the one hand, it is a common reaction of those recently bereaved to idealise the deceased and recall only good things about that person, thus complying with the belief that one should not speak ill of the dead. On the other hand, by reviewing the real memories and working through the positive as well as the negative aspects, a clearer understanding is reached which allows for the daughter's forgiveness of her father's wrongdoings.

Ironically, whilst these daughters concentrate on the faults of their fathers, their own imperfections come to the surface. Schirnding highlights the guilt which these authors of 'Väterromane' incur when judging their deceased fathers in literary form:

Es geht um die Schuld des Vaters, aber mache ich mich, indem ich seiner Schuld mit literarischen Mitteln auf die Spur zu kommen trachte, nicht des gleichen Vergehens schuldig?³⁹

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, these authors assume the task of judge and jury long after the crime has been committed and the accused is unable to defend himself. In their autobiographical accounts their criticism of their fathers is too introspective and comes too late. In the three books considered here each writer is highly critical of her father. She accuses him of being devoid of compassion and comprehension, yet she is capable of showing the same callousness and insensitivity. In *Der Vater* the narrator remarks that by the age of four she already understood what she saw: the bad-tempered drunk who shouted and exerted brutal power; who came home in the middle of the night and broke the door and furniture; who threatened his wife in front of the children and sold the daughter's favourite horse to be slaughtered. Thus the narrator blames her father for turning her into an adult too soon. She also sees the instability of her relationships with other men as her father's fault:

also habe ich mit höchstens vier Jahren, ohne zu begreifen, schon alles begriffen, und so ist er daran schuld, daß meine ersten Lieben rasch endende Lieben gewesen sind. (V. 140)

Clearly this daughter felt insecure in any love-relationship with a man because she had witnessed the ever-changing moods of her father, the way he had badly treated his wife and children.

On the basis of the father's inability or unwillingness to show his daughter any affection, the narrator of *Lange Abwesenheit* experiences problems in her relationship with her lover, Birer, a fifty-six-year-old Jew. Her choice of lover already indicates a replacement for her father; the narrator even refers to his paternal embrace. In fact, her affair with Birer proves to be nothing other than a substitute for the tabooed love-relationship with her father, as will be explained later in this chapter. For now it should be noted that whenever this daughter was in the presence of Birer her father's views about Jews constantly occupied her mind and in her heart she could not tear herself away from his prejudices:

Er ist Jude. Juden soll man nicht trauen. Warum habe ich meinem Vater nicht geglaubt? Juden halten zusammen und benützen uns. Der alte Jud verachtet mich, weil ich mit ihm ins Bett gehe. (L.A. 28)

The daughter's growing hatred for her lover merely proves how alike she and her father were.

Each writer's criticism of her father may well result from her attempt to distance herself from the subject-matter and present an objective portrayal of the father, yet the similar characteristics which they share bring father and daughter closer together. The daughter's own mistakes do manifest themselves in various ways. In her teenage years Plessen's protagonist, Augusta, was already unsure of her feelings towards her father: "Was will ich:

ihm nahe sein oder den Bruch?" (M.A. 44). She accuses him of being "der große Unsichtbare, der Fremde" (M.A. 30), yet she is the one who moves away from the family home, first to study in Berlin, then to work in Munich. Although it is her father's unrelenting authority and eventual threat to kill her and her friends which influence her decision to leave and stay away, the daughter never sees it as her duty to return home and makes amends with her father. She is equally stubborn and hard on him, as he had been to her. The daughter in Schutting's work also chooses to move away from home and becomes a stranger to her father: "Ich habe mit dem Vater (...) jahrelang so gut wie nichts geredet, seit ich in Wien lebe" (V. 62).

In contrast Schwaiger's narrator, as already indicated, is more exacting in the way she sets about 'hurting' her father and coming to terms with their estrangement.⁴⁰ On the one hand, she tries to form a link by choosing a lover of her father's age, someone who might fill the gap and fulfil the role of her father, thereby overcoming the distance between father and daughter. On the other hand, the choice of a Jewish lover causes more animosity and creates greater distance between the two of them. Schwaiger's choice of title for the work, "Lange Abwesenheit", encapsulates the rift between daughter and father: in their thoughts and opinions parent and child have always been apart; with the death of the father his absence from the daughter's life is physical and permanent. The narrator now has to overcome the estrangement of death.

In her state of bereavement the daughter is acutely aware of her own failings, the love which she never showed her father, the feelings of hatred which she expressed. Feelings of guilt do prove to be the consequence of an ambivalent relationship. Thus it becomes evident in these works that hate is an emotion never far from love, and it is a death in the family which brings about this recognition. The narrator of *Der Vater* regrets that she was

not loving towards her father. She criticises him for lack of affection, yet she admits to being partly to blame. The week prior to his death she had forgotten his birthday (just as he never remembered birthdays) and she had not been present at his death (just as her father had not been there when his father died). She is certain, too, that her father had not heard her farewell at the end of her last visit. Thus a sense of guilt on the part of the daughter does pervade the narrative:

vieles von dem, was ich dem Vater zuliebe tun können hätte,
habe ich unterlassen, obwohl ich wußte, daß mir das einmal
leid tun wird; manches von dem, was ich, mit dem Gedanken
an seinen Tod mich drohend, ihm zuliebe getan habe, hat sich
mir schon damals als viel zu wenig zu erkennen gegeben.

(V. 40-41)

Towards the end of Augusta's journey there is a note of regret that their relationship had not been better; she would have liked to have told her father, C.A., about her imaginary, ideal father: one whom she could touch and embrace, with whom she could play and fight, a father who displayed spontaneous feelings and behaved naturally. The implication is, of course, that her father had never allowed or done any of these things. The daughter in Schwaiger's work says virtually the same of her father but her words ring true of her father's expectations. In retrospect she is now able to understand that it was her father's training in the army which had made him so authoritarian at home:

Ein Vater, ein richtiger Vater, ist einer, den man nicht umarmen darf, den man nicht unterbrechen darf, wenn er spricht, dem man antworten muß, auch wenn er zum fünftenmal dasselbe fragt und es aussieht, als frage er zum fünftenmal, um sich zu vergewissern, ob die Töchter auch willig sind, stets zu antworten, ein Vater, der einem das Wort abschneiden darf. (L.A. 19)⁴¹

Due to grief, positive and negative aspects of a relationship become exaggerated, hence these aspects are gone over and over in the mind. If the relationship was particularly ambivalent in the first place, the bereaved is likely to concentrate on the disagreements, quarrels and disappointments. There may even be the thought of having in some way caused the death. In *Mitteilung an den Adel* Augusta is actually accused by her sister of having brought about their father's death, presumably because she had upset him so much with her rebellious nature. She is unable to react to the initial news of his death for a number of reasons. Firstly, the accusation forces her to admit to herself (and the reader) that she had often wished for her father to die so that she could be free from all the constraints he embodied. But his actual death did not seem real because she had imagined his death so often. Secondly, her father had himself spoken about his death year after year and never did die, hence the unexpected news clearly causes disbelief and shock which is aggravated by her sister blaming her for his death. Thus this daughter finds it necessary to clear herself of this charge, yet at the same time the feeling that she has her father's death on her conscience constantly haunts her. Correspondingly, the writer has the details of his life on her mind.

Other guilt feelings arise because the daughter was not present when the father died. This is emphasised by Schutting, whose narrator is painfully aware that her difficulty in accepting her father's death is further complicated by not having seen the corpse of her father. There is the suggestion that, if she had seen it, she would have felt some kind of relief, instead she feels insecure and unsure. As is the case in Plessen's novel, this daughter is informed of her father's sudden death from a heart attack by her mother over the telephone. Disbelief is her immediate reaction, partly because in her thoughts he had already died six months before when she last saw him. Recollections of their last encounter and an analysis of their past, precarious relationship follow the news of his death. Absence from the death, not being able to see the corpse, as well as the recognition of having failed to express love, all these aspects contribute to the sense of guilt experienced by the daughter. In her book *The Courage to Grieve* Judy Tatelbaum suggests that

guilt and the consequent self-reproach are invariably feelings that we must confront. We are so susceptible to guilt after a loss that we can turn any thought, feeling, experience, or memory to guilt, and others feel guilt mildly. Guilt may serve to deny the reality of death.⁴²

Certainly these writers do have a fixation about their deceased fathers. In both Schutting's and Plessen's works the death of the father is sudden and unanticipated. Unlike Schwaiger's narrator, who visits her father in hospital and awaits his death, these two daughters do not have any opportunity to prepare and come to terms with the closeness of death and the possibility of permanent loss. They have to learn to cope with grief during

a short space of time. Augusta's car journey from Munich to Schleswig-Holstein lasts four days. The drive from the south to the north of West Germany is sufficiently long for the memories to unfold and the imagination to play havoc. Her inability, however, actually to face the reality of the death of her father is evident from her last minute decision not to attend the funeral even though she has reached her destination.⁴³ In *Der Vater* the narrator records her actions and reflections during the three days between her father's death and his funeral. In fact she sends out the mourning cards, advises her family on how to formulate the words for the obituary notice in the newspaper and helps with suggestions for the eulogy. She also organises a wreath and accompanies her mother to the undertakers. The arrangements for the funeral bring about a gradual intellectual awareness of the reality and finality of the death, but it is only when she sees her father's name printed in black and white in the newspaper which publicly announces his death, that the daughter is eventually convinced that he has died. And yet even during the funeral service she still believes that as long as the bells do not ring, there remains a hope of the father being alive. During the next two years she consistently has dreams about her father, such is the magnitude of the trauma she undergoes. Tatelbaum explains the importance of dreams during the mourning period in the following way:

Dreams are a major means of re-experiencing and working through emotionally charged experiences and of problem-solving. Much grief work gets done in our sleep. (...) After a loved one dies, it is quite natural to dream about that person, often as if they never died at all.⁴⁴

Clearly this daughter finds it difficult to handle the emotional experience of bereavement. Her period of mourning, which can be described as a time of convalescence, lasted two years. In the postscript the narrator illustrates her psychological acceptance of the permanent loss of her father and her understanding of him as well as her own mixed emotions. In her mind she has only now been able to put the memories of her father to rest. The time for grieving, as we have seen, can thus vary from weeks to months to a period of years.

As mentioned before, Schwaiger's narrator anticipates her father's death. She has the opportunity to prepare both mentally and emotionally for his death because she watches him dying slowly from cancer in hospital. Whilst she is not present at the moment of his death, she is able to touch the corpse a few minutes later. Her immediate reaction is to cry and laugh simultaneously, whilst kissing his lifeless body. Death brings the father very close to his daughter. For the first time in her life she is able to express her emotions freely in the proximity of her father, to embrace and kiss him without being pushed away or believing that she was wrong in doing so. Hence her words are ones of gratitude: she no longer has to wait for a sign of affection from her father. Here death allows for an outpouring of all the daughter's pent-up frustrations and provides a sense of relief, since the tug of emotion between love and hate which she felt for her father could be laid to rest. This daughter is also involved in the funeral arrangements and does attend the service. The affirmation of the reality of death can no longer be denied. However, the very fact that the narrative opens with the daughter standing at her father's graveside, talking to him, as if he were alive, points to her inability to break free:

Aber sein Sterben war die letzte Falle in die ich hineingeriet
und in der ich noch immer stecke. Weil mein Vater
unsterblich ist. (L.A. 20)⁴⁵

Lange Abwesenheit can be regarded as an attempt by the writer to illustrate through the words of her I-narrator the extent to which the estrangement of death and the pain of permanent separation has affected her. As already indicated, it is a paradox that in death the daughter in the text is actually closest to her father. The narrative begins and ends in the cemetery where the daughter holds conversations with her father. Evidently the burial of her father does not/cannot put a halt to his influence. It will be shown later that this inability of the daughter figure to accept the death of her father may be an explanation for why the writer continues to recount such memories and relives the past.

Whilst the daughter in each book expresses her anguish in various ways, there is evidence of common emotions as indicated by her behaviour during bereavement; for example, tears help the bereaved to express and relieve their pain. Crying does seem to serve as an important cathartic function and can bring a sense of relief.⁴⁶ Schutting's narrator bursts into tears the first time she leaves the house and bumps into a relative. Thereafter she carries tissues around with her for their preventive effect, "prophylaktische Wirkung" (V. 35). During the funeral service she is determined not to shed a tear. She finds a way of halting the tears by concentrating on the movement of her eyelids. She also lets her mind wander, as if to escape the reality of the events taking place. In *Lange Abwesenheit* the narrator is conscious of not being able to cry. The suggestion is that, as long as she does not cry, her grief will remain locked inside. Her emotional response to

loss is one of confusion. As in the states of bereavement of the other daughters, the complexity of painful effects includes sadness, anger and helplessness:

Der gute Arzt. Ich trage dich in meiner Handtasche herum.
 So ein Vater, den man auseinanderfalten und herzeigen kann.
 Ich bin enttäuscht, wenn ich dich herzeige und die Leute, die
 dich nicht gekannt haben, schweigen. Ich möchte, daß sie
 dich bewundern, wie du es verdienst. Ich möchte, daß die,
 die dich gekannt und verehrt haben, dich hassen, wie du es
 verdienst. Ich möchte weinen können um dich. Wenn ich
 dich hergezeigt habe, falte ich dich zusammen und stecke dich
 wieder ein. Es hilft mir niemand, dich zu betrauern.

(L.A. 10)

Anger in the form of harsh criticism of the father appears to be another response to loss and also a method of coping with grief in these particular works. The narrator can disguise her pain behind her criticism. In their thoughts the daughters of *Mitteilung an den Adel* and *Lange Abwesenheit* continue to fight their respective fathers because they admit a certain dependence on him and are annoyed by this weakness. Yet the battle does seem necessary for their personal development so that they may recognise and understand their own identity. Augusta loses a sparring partner. She reflects on the lack of understanding between her and her father and uses the pathetic image of two stags locked in each other's horns, fighting until death, neither a winner nor loser. Daughter and father had found themselves locked in an unending conflict, not physically, but verbally and emotionally, a

conflict of opinions. Schwaiger's narrator believes that her father's death resulted from "Gottes Gerechtigkeit" (L.A. 50), a punishment for his arrogance.⁴⁷ Misunderstanding and eventual hatred grew out of lack of communication and denial of love. One moment the daughter is annoyed with her father for dying without ever having made time for her, the next she is thanking him for his death. Such is the paradox of emotions experienced by the bereaved daughter. Certainly anger is a common response during the mourning period because of the feeling that disagreements have been left unresolved and that time for reconciliation is no longer available and therefore not possible. The bereaved is angry with the deceased for having departed.

There is evidence in these literary works which suggests that the daughter-father relationship is akin to that of the pupil-teacher relationship, whereby the father uses his dominant position in the family to educate the daughter to serve his needs. In *Mitteilung an den Adel*, for instance, young Augusta sits under the table at her father's feet and tickles them at his request. On other occasions he orders her to gently scratch the fuzz on his nape, but not to touch his skin. If she did this well, he praised her. Thus, from an early age Augusta learnt to associate any closeness between her and her father with obedience and submission.⁴⁸ If she did as she was told, C.A. would be pleased and all would be well. The closeness of the relationship was, therefore, based on the father's terms: by being obedient the daughter proved her love: "Sie lernte die verlangten Worte. Sie lernte die richtigen Lügen" (M.A. 76). In Schwaiger's work the narrator notes that it was her father who was the driving-force behind her education, even if it involved learning to push a wheelchair:

Er hat immer gewollt, daß ich alles lerne, was man können muß. Autofahren, reiten. Einen Rollwagen schieben. Er sitzt da drin, damit ich wieder etwas Neues lerne. (L.A. 71)

This again would be on the father's terms because he would be the person in the wheelchair, giving his daughter instructions. In such a situation, however, it would be difficult to establish whether the daughter was still dependent on the father or vice versa and thus throws a somewhat different light on the relationship, signalling vulnerability in the father. It is an aspect which will need to be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

The bond between daughter and father is clearly many-faceted but the predominant concern of all three books is to show the extent of a father's control over a complying daughter. The narrator in *Lange Abwesenheit* recalls that as a child her very existence was determined by her father:

Ich höre Vaters Stimme. Er ruft meine Vornamen. Er will etwas von mir. Weit weg ist er, in einem anderen Zimmer. Und will etwas von mir, daher lebe ich. Er schimpft mit mir, daher gibt es mich. Er geht vorbei an mir, ohne etwas zu sagen. Überflüssig bin ich. Mich sollte es nicht geben. (L.A. 20-21)

It is hardly surprising, then, that the daughter is unable to accept the father's death because part of her being would also vanish, when he died. This notion of the father's absolute

control is highlighted in Plessen's novel by the father's threat to kill his daughter, if she does not obey his commands. Even though the threat may sound extreme and far-fetched, the daughter takes it seriously, as is illustrated by her decision to leave the family-home for good. Furthermore, it shows that the father believes that he has the right to end his daughter's life, if he so desires: such is his power. It is, therefore, ironical that the daughter is 'accused' of having killed her father. The constant influence of the father in his daughter's life is, however, undeniable, as more recent studies of the relationship readily acknowledge:

From her very earliest days, a girl's attitudes and expectations are being shaped by her father. Because of the powerful position he holds in her heart, in the family, in the world, he, more than anyone, is subtly conveying to her knowledge of who she will be.⁴⁹

The 'subtleness' of the father's imparting of knowledge is questionable, particularly in the relationships portrayed here, but he definitely does affect the development of her identity. In Schwaiger's first autobiographical novel, *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer*, the narrator used to think of herself as 'the doctor's daughter', so that when she moved away from home to Vienna, where no one knew her father, she experienced a sense of loss of identity: "Ich war nicht mehr ich".⁵⁰ Linked to this is the implication that the daughter in some way 'belonged' to her father, which also accounts for the possessive manner in which Augusta's father behaved towards her.

In contrast, Schutting portrays a father who was reluctant to pass on knowledge to his children, or perhaps he was merely indifferent about doing so. In comparison to the overbearing father, this uninterested and inattentive father is presented in an equally negative light because such apparent unconcern causes suspicion and mistrust on the part of the daughter:

solange ich in seinem Haus gelebt habe, ist mir der Vater,
und nicht nur als Vater, 'verdächtig' gewesen, und nichts von
all dem, was meine Verdächtigungen widerlegte, hat an der
Einschätzung des Vaters etwas geändert. (V. 53)

For the narrator it is already unforgiveable that her father was out hunting on the day she was born and that he only visited his wife days later. In his box of memorabilia she discovers a card which he had sent to his parents telling them in the first instance of the two stags he had killed and then announcing the birth of his daughter. To the narrator, then, the priorities of her father were self-evident; her dissatisfaction with his way of life is apparent throughout the narrative, yet she cannot accuse him of demanding obedience, only of being violent and cruel. And as previously indicated, it is the process of learning to recognise her father's violent streak which forces this daughter to grow up very quickly:

in seiner Küche seine Zigaretten rauchend, betrachte ich fast
so schonungsvoll wie als Kind die zwei Personen des Vaters -
der eine, der Alletagevater, war zwar anders als die uns

bekanntem Väter (uninteressiert an uns selber und noch mehr an dem, was uns beschäftigt) (...) (V. 86)

aber dann gab es auch noch den anderen Vater, den SchwarzerTag- und Ausnahmezustandsvater, der zwar ein Teil des einen war und manchmal auch in diesem zu erkennen blieb (...) (V. 89)

Whilst each writer portrays the father in a critical light on account of the way in which he treats his children, the daughter does actively seek her father's praise and approval, since this is one way of gaining her father's attention, but once again it does reveal that this attention has to be earned, otherwise it is not forthcoming:

Waren Augustas Leistungen bescheinigt worden, so war er stolz. Er liebte seinen Stolz und fragte nicht weiter (zum Beispiel, wie Augusta lebe). Er nahm nicht teil, oder nur obenhin. Er machte mit Augusta keine Ausnahme. Er telefonierte nicht. Er beantwortete keine Briefe. (M.A. 165)

Each daughter does disclose a desire for her father to be proud of her, thereby making some impression on the father so that he notices her. Erich Fromm's interpretation of fatherly love does ring true here.⁵¹ Faced with a father who is indifferent towards her, Schutting's narrator voices her doubts and lack of confidence: "Und dann frage ich mich, ob der Vater jemals wirklich auf mich stolz gewesen ist" (V. 31). These feelings of

insecurity continue for two years after his death until she is invited by the abbot of her father's former school to give a reading on the anniversary of his graduation. Only then is she certain that her father would have been proud of her, just as the occasion highlights her pride in her father and the fact that she has reached an understanding of him. Time, then, is the healer in this relationship. After the death of her father, the daughter in *Lange Abwesenheit* notes that she no longer has to make any effort to impress her father which points to the fact that she, too, had learnt how to please him, even if it meant wearing a dress to catch his attention.

All three daughters hold on to the lost relationship by acknowledging similarities between themselves and their fathers. Schutting's narrator notes that the many habits which she had acquired from her father include leaving wet towels next to the bath; cutting off half a slice of bread from a loaf; opening a packet of butter only at the corner. She had 'inherited' lips which were sensitive to the skin of a peach; the same facial expression when the sun shone in her face; the same handwriting. She could also compare his passion for hunting with her desire for writing. Augusta, too, could not deny her resemblance to her father:

Hinzu kam, daß Augusta dasselbe Gesicht hatte wie er,
dieselben großen Augen, dieselben großen Ohren, denselben
großen Mund. (M.A. 103)

Like her father she preferred to be alone; both showed the same stubbornness and refused to make compromises. In *Lange Abwesenheit* the daughter has absorbed her father's

obsession for economising. During hospital visits her father encourages her to eat more of his food, the suggestion being that he does not want to waste the expense of the food:

Muß ja alles bezahlt werden, auch wenn es für den, der bezahlt, tödlich ausgeht. So genau, wie Vater immer gerechnet hat, rechne ich jetzt aus, daß ich Essengeld spare, wenn ich Vater jeden Tag besuche. (L.A. 54-55)

These daughter-father portrayals thus serve to underline the closeness of the relationship. Any attempt by the writer to distance herself from her father is bound to fail because traits of his character, attitude, behaviour, even appearance are likely to have repeated themselves in his daughter.

As has been shown, bereavement does involve a high level of psychological arousal. All three books emphasise the powerful influence of the father in his daughter's life, even after he has died, as well as the daughter's dependence on him. Before the narrative begins in *Lange Abwesenheit* there is an appropriate and significant epigraph:

Die Stirne meines Vaters, ein Eisfeld, auf dem eine winzige Figur läuft. Das bin ich und laufe und laufe, aber der Kopf dreht sich. So komme ich nicht voran. (L.A. 5)

In this motto lack of emotions is symbolised by the "Eisfeld" of the father's forehead, his mind. The daughter sees herself as a very small figure - her father remains superior, he is foremost in her mind. Her attempts to make a break and move forward, away from his

influence, are unsuccessful. She goes round and round: her thoughts are of him; her recollections are repetitive. Her father will always be alive in her mind. Ultimately, the books themselves are testimony to the fact that in the thoughts of the writer her father is "unsterblich" (L.A. 20). Each author depicts a daughter who, like herself, faces difficulties in coming to terms with the death of her father: "Jetzt bist du tot, aber es erleichtert mich nicht" (M.A. 119). Emotionally these writers/daughters do not fully accept the loss because they are unable to undo the bonds that built the relationship, as Schwaiger explains in the words of her narrator/daughter:

Er ist tot, aber ich kämpfe gegen ihn, noch immer. Er hat viele Stimmen, viele Arme und Beine, ist unsichtbar und kann mir jederzeit und überall auflauern. (L.A. 88)

The notion of the father being immortal suggests religious connotations of the all powerful father being likened to the almighty Father. In *Lange Abwesenheit* the father is idolised, even worshipped by his family, friends and patients. Certainly the narrator does draw a tentative comparison between her father and Christ, who healed the wounded and sick, with her remark that after his death her father had been taken down from the cross, that he had been finally relieved from the pain of cancer and that it was "Gottes Gerechtigkeit" (L.A. 50). Here it is possible to see the two sides to his death: that in a positive sense he no longer has to suffer any pain, but in a negative sense, as noted earlier, death is also a means of just punishment imposed by God who in the case of Schwaiger's father takes his life as a form of retribution.⁵² The daughter also states that she believes in the resurrection, hoping that her father might perform this miracle. Similarly,

Schutting's narrator perceives the possibility of her father rising again because he was buried on the third day: "Werden wir am dritten Tag begraben, weil Er am dritten Tag auferstanden ist?" (V. 116). The narrative ends symbolically with what has been described as a "poetische Erlösungsvision".⁵³ It is a metaphor for the main themes of all these daughter-father portrayals, namely death, guilt and redemption, and parallels the ambivalence in the conflict of feelings depicted by each daughter for her father:

am Morgen nach der Nacht unter dem Erste-Nächte-
 Heimweh-Dach des Vaters gehe ich einmal noch die
 Prunkstiege hinauf; zu den all paar Stufen links und rechts der
 Stiege aufgestellten Fliederschalen schauend, ist mir, als
 welkten die Fliederbuschen unter meinen Blicken, Wunde des
 Toten, die blutet, wenn ihr Verschulder an ihm vorbeigeht,
 und dann eine Täuschung lang deine Erlösung: eine Schwalbe,
 eben noch hat sie sich, nicht und nicht begreifend und immer
 wilder den falschen Weg versuchend, an den Fensterscheiben
 gestoßen, steigt zu dem Deckenfresko auf und verschwindet
 in dem blauen Himmel der Gerechten. (V. 173)⁵⁴

Ambivalence in the relationship between daughter and father also arises from the sexual undercurrents evident in these three works. It is generally accepted that the identity of the daughter is closely connected to that of her mother, due partly to their natural bonds and the fact that the mother provides the role of femininity, nevertheless, "psychoanalytic thought seems united in its belief that father is the instrumental force in shaping daughter's

identity as a feminine person".⁵⁵ The father is a major factor in the daughter's sex-role development, which seems hardly surprising when we take into consideration that he is the first man the daughter has ever loved. As we have seen, the loss of the father has a profound effect on the daughter's self-image. When he dies a sense of rejection seems inevitable. This is made explicit by Schwaiger's narrator who is aware of the difficulty of pleasing and satisfying her father, even after his death:

Ich spüre, es wäre meine Pflicht, mich zu dir zu legen und dich zu wärmen. Aber würde ich es dir denn diesmal recht machen? Bald wäre es dir zu eng, bald zu kühl. Vater, wir liegen so schlecht miteinander. (L.A. 89)⁵⁶

Beyond the grave the daughter still seeks a close relationship with her father; the writer wants to show him warmth and affection. It is this inclusion of sexual innuendos in these books which does differentiate these father-portrayals from those of the sons. The above quotation paraphrases the tabooed incestuous relationship, where the father becomes the dead lover. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the narrator in *Lange Abwesenheit* responds to the death of her father by smothering the corpse with kisses, able only on his deathbed to show her love for him. There is the suggestion, too, that daughter and mother vie for this man's attention, the daughter regarding her relationship with her father as more important than that of husband and wife. Of significance is the fact that both women suffer under this male dominance because for neither of them love is reciprocated:

Doch besonders die Frauen sind lebenslängliche Opfer dieses intimen Machtanspruchs geworden; die unterschwellige Erotik der Konfrontation zwischen Vater und Sohn tritt im Verhältnis der Tochter zum Vater offen zutage: an der Liebe zum Vater orientiert sich die Liebe zum Mann, sie schließt von vornherein ein geschlechtliches Verhalten mit ein.⁵⁷

The affair the daughter in *Lange Abwesenheit* has with Birer is clearly a substitute for the tabooed love relationship with her father. She even expresses the wish to strip off in front of her father to show him that she is a woman and not just his daughter. She recalls her father's reaction to the white, lace dress she once wore: "eine kleine Geliebte, wie eine heimliche Geliebte" (L.A. 9) and chooses to wear this dress when she visits him in hospital. Once again the daughter is anxious to please her father but this time there is also the lure of sexual attraction. It is an area of the relationship which psychoanalysts are beginning to study more closely:

The father-daughter relationship seems to be fraught with sexual tension, whether or not it is ever acted upon. (...) If, as most professionals believe, father is the determining influence on his daughter's confidence in her sexual appeal, and if it is masculine approval that introduces her to the pleasure to be taken in her femininity, then it is a precarious balance indeed upon which they both tread. (...) Obviously, and fortunately, father-daughter incest is not a common

occurrence. But there it lurks, just beyond manifestation, as a palpable facet of the relationship.⁵⁸

In *Mitteilung an den Adel* alcohol influences the father's behaviour towards his daughter and reveals a vulnerable side to his personality. In his drunken stupor he is neither in control of his actions nor his feelings, but he sees his grown-up daughter as a woman:

Auf unsicheren Beinen verstellte er ihr den Weg, schüttelte den Kopf, um die Doppelbilder vor seinen Augen loszuwerden, zog Augusta in seinen Arm und küßte sie. Ich liebe dich, sagte er, aber - ich bin ein alter Mann. Er wandte sich schroff ab, (...) Er drehte sich nicht mehr um.

(M.A. 223)

When she was a child, he used to order her to kiss his closed eyelids and would only let her go, once she had obeyed his wishes. There was no indication of love between them, just a daughter having to submit to her father's will. The closest Schutting's narrator comes to demonstrating love for her father is when as a child she pretends to be a dog. She would lick her father's neck and nibble at his ears, acting merely as a replacement for one of his young dogs. In return the father would let her brush and comb his hair. Once again any closeness between father and daughter is on the father's conditions and dependent on his mood.⁵⁹ It becomes overwhelmingly apparent in all three works that spontaneity of feelings is non-existent. The father is a stranger who continues to be an indomitable force, setting an idealised standard and expectations which each daughter finds difficult to fulfil.

The fact that he is unapproachable is highlighted by the daughter in *Der Vater* who felt awkward and shy when alone in his company and unable to look him in the eye. The allusion to the possibility of sexual attraction, however, does re-emerge in a dream the narrator has at the start of her recollections in which she is wearing her father's pyjamas and he is wearing a nightdress. Here the daughter is in control of her father and tries to force him to sexual submission: he is her toy to do with as she pleases. The sexual act between daughter and father could not be more explicit:

"So komm nur!" wiederhole ich leise, aber auch nicht zu leise, denn wenn ich auch wieder ein Kind bin, streift mich doch, als der Vater langsam auf mich zukommt und dann zwischen meinen Beinen stehenbleibt, die Peinlichkeit, mit der ich zehn Jahre später die peinlichsten Augenblicke der ersten Erwachsenenabenteuer erlebt habe - was wird jetzt sein? hörst du mich, Vater?, frage ich ihn, als er etwas die Augen öffnet; erkennst du mich? als er, ganz ruhig gegen mich gedrückt, schwer atmet, ich bin es, das alles bin ich, du spürst mich doch, ach bitte, du mußt nur wollen! (V. 9)

In spite of the explicitness of language the suggestion of a sexual relationship is never mentioned again in this narrative. Schwaiger, in fact, produces further evidence of this forbidden relationship in a poem about her father in which she refers to their 'oedipal relationship'. Here her dreams bring to life the influence of this man:

Ich träume oft von meinem Vater.

Ich träume oft von Wänden

die Schlafzimmer verengen.

Ich versuche mir vorzustellen, was

geschehen hätte können in Madrid,

wenn ich in der San Bernardo Gasse

im Zimmer geblieben wäre

und ihn angesehen hätte ohne Lächeln.

Wie er saß im Pyjama, wie er mich

angesehen hätte

ernst, stumm.

Denn ich stelle mir vor, ich hätte

ihm die Zunge abgeschnitten.

Das Glied meines Vaters

hatte nie so viel mit mir zu tun

wie seine Zunge.

Unser ödipales Verhältnis

ging über die Wörter.

Der Geist meines Vaters ist schlecht gehegt.

Ich fühle mich verfault von

so viel Abfall in mir,

der aus Wünschen und Verwesung besteht,

der durch so viele Filter gegangen ist ...⁶⁰

Evidence of such sexual innuendos in these literary works should not imply that love between daughter and father is sexually-oriented. These are just three daughter-father relationships and it is predominantly the daughter in *Lange Abwesenheit* who is conscious of her father's role as a man and thus provides another level of interpretation of the daughter-father bond. Even the apparently innocent holding of his hand is intended to show the extent to which this daughter had longed for contact between her and her father:

Ich halte seine Hand, lege mir seine Finger zurecht, die gute Vaterhand, Finger um Finger, damit mein Gesicht hineinschmiegen kann, so nah und so lange wie im ganzen Leben niemals. Ich vergewaltige ihn zu Zärtlichkeit.

(L.A. 78)

During the funeral service she holds the hand of her father's grandson to see if she can find some comfort from the special, close relationship this boy had had with her father. In complete contrast Augusta does not see hands as a source of comfort; she is terrified of them:

Angst vor allen Händen, als sie elf wurde: Sie fuhr zusammen, wenn jemand nur die Hand hob. Keine Handbewegungen sehen zu müssen und selber nicht mehr sichtbar, nicht mehr vorhanden, unangreifbar zu sein, das wäre gut gewesen. (...) Hände streichelten nicht, Hände waren nicht zärtlich. (M.A. 36)

Although it is not made explicit, it does seem that Augusta learns to associate hands with suffering, and that it was probably her father who smacked her, hence her desire for revenge:

Unerträglich, wenn C.A. seine Hände im Gespräch betrachtete, mit ihnen spielte. In Träumen zersägte sie ihm den Hals. (M.A. 37)⁶¹

On his deathbed the once "goldene Hände" (L.A. 21) of the doctor, who helped others in their sickness and performed a skilled service, become red and swollen, thereby losing their power. The tables are turned, it is now the father who is the patient receiving treatment. It is the father who is at the mercy of others. For the daughter this realisation is of particular significance because for the first time she sees an ordinary person whom she can approach. Lying in hospital the once revered doctor, who was put on a pedestal by those around him, loses his authority: in his weak state his aggressiveness and anger are assuaged. He is reduced to the figure of a little man. In fact, the narrator refers twice to her father as 'Pinocchio'.⁶² The first reference occurs at the worst stage of her father's illness:

Ein holzgeschnittener Vater im Leinensack. Pinocchio, der Übermütige, hat nun seine Strafe. (L.A. 79)

And as a farewell address immediately following his death: "Leb wohl, Pinocchio, sei gut tot" (L.A. 81). A father sculpted out of wood points once more to his inability to

demonstrate feelings, or allow himself to be moved, or understand the emotions being expressed by his immediate family. The wooden puppet, Pinocchio, had no conscience but wanted to become a real boy. In order to do so he had to prove that he was brave, honest and unselfish. On a number of occasions the narrator accuses her father of being selfish and of not being a real father. The fact that Pinocchio received punishment in the form of his nose growing longer can be compared to the large, swollen hands of the father. The daughter regards this as the ultimate form of punishment for her father because he is no longer able to carry out his work. Furthermore, he becomes comparable to the puppet on strings, since he cannot do anything without the help of medical staff. The daughter recognises that her father is not different from any other person:

Wir sind gewöhnliche Menschen. Der, zu dem wir emporgeschaut haben, obwohl er kleiner war als wir, der, der uns erhöht hat, weil er sehr hoch stand, ist ein Gewöhnlicher, weil er eine Krankheit in sich trägt, die gewöhnliche Menschen haben. (L.A. 50)

It is death, however, which has the ultimate belittling effect, as Schutting's narrator remarks: "(...) und wundere mich wieder, wie klein ihn der Tod gemacht hat." (V. 156). In Plessen's novel the daughter accuses her father of being a "Grand Guignol" (M.A. 54) when she reflects on his threat to kill her and her friends. Like Pinocchio, "Great Punch" is a puppet, but here the name is used in a more pejorative sense, describing the father as a grotesque figure, who had a tendency to exaggerate and over-dramatise. The daughter, thus, ridicules her father's actions, after she has left home and is no longer under his

control. At the time she had taken his threat to be serious, but on reflection she is able to recognise the father's dramatic stunt, just as he used to say that he was dying and never did. When he does die, he, like Augusta, 'leaves' the family-home for good: there will be no return, hence the daughter's decision not to attend the funeral is based on her belief that she and her father are now on equal footing: "Wir befinden uns *Auge in Auge*" (M.A. 249). Death has brought them face to face on equal terms because the father has done the same to his daughter as she did to him, that is, leave the family behind. He is no longer superior or in control. Since her father cannot be physically present, she too chooses to be absent from the funeral service. Her return to "Einhaus" could also have been interpreted as a renunciation of her principles, because attending the funeral would have been her father's last demand. By not fulfilling the expectation of a dutiful daughter she also avenges her father's last action towards her. It is noticeable, though, that there is a tug of conscience because she has to run to the car and drive away quickly, the suggestion being that she might reverse her decision. It is possible, too, that in not attending the funeral, she has not accepted the fact that her father is dead, as pointed out earlier on in this chapter. Whatever the case, it is clear that the daughter believes that an understanding between her and her father has been reached, although it is a sad fact that the realisation by the daughter that her father is not so different occurs after his death, when it is too late for communication. Paradoxically, death removes the father from the world of which he was once in control and makes the daughter more powerful because she is still alive. The daughter/writer gains the courage and discovers the freedom to approach her father in literary form, thereby bridging the gap between them and forcing him to be part of her life, no longer a stranger who occupies a position of distance: "Der Vater wird aber auch immer wieder einige Atemzüge lang um mich sein" (V. 81).

Due to the autobiographical nature of these father-daughter portrayals, the writing process *per se* may be regarded as a form of therapy, a cathartic experience for the writers of these books because they confront the permanent absence of the father from their lives. Whether they will totally accept it, is another matter - hence the open-endedness of the texts. Interestingly, the reader can never know from the text itself how long it took for the writer-cum-daughter to reach this stage of the mourning process. Indeed, the process of recollection may be seen as a way of masking loss on a subconscious level. The writer lives in the past rather than the present because the memories keep her father alive. The finished literary product should provide the bereaved writer with the final word on the death of her father, the process of reflection and interpreting helping her to have come to terms with the loss. On a personal level the therapeutic effect appears self evident. Sandra Frieden suggests that texts, such as *Mitteilung an den Adel*, also serve communal therapeutic needs because they address wider social issues:

The openly autobiographical nature of these works undoubtedly was significant both for their writing and their reception. The pain of both the search and the discovery of such a communally shared hatred could thus be released and mediated by the acknowledged commonality of the experience.⁶³

Taken one step further, the need for therapy points to the writer's need to analyse her own self. In her novel *Schönes Gehege* (1975) Gabriele Wohmann explains what influenced

her decision to write about her father. I suspect that her explanation is indicative of the incentive behind many of these father portrayals:

Ich habe immer gedacht, DAS dürfte ich auch noch eines Tages zum Schreibstoff machen. Das: den Tod des Vaters und die Zusammenhänge, den Bruder, die Fassungslosigkeiten und die Gefäßtheiten der Mutter, das alles. Ich habe gedacht, es wäre gemein, prosaprofi-hundsgemein, es wäre verletzend. Eine schwere Kränkung. Jetzt denke ich das Gegenteil. Ich tue dem Vater den größten Gefallen meines und seines Lebens, ich tue das Wichtigste und Beste, was ich tun kann für ihn. Ich werde über den Tod des Vaters schreiben. Über mich selbst also doch wieder.⁶⁴

In his analysis of Plessen's *Mitteilung an den Adel* Jürgen Serke similarly comments that "die Selbstfindung der Heldin vollzieht sich fast ausschließlich über den Abbau des väterlichen Vorbildes".⁶⁵ The same can be said of Schwaiger's and Schutting's narrators - each of them finds it necessary to come to terms with the death of this influential figure in their lives, but can only do this once they have understood the man behind the different roles and analysed their relationship with him, otherwise they will never be able to break free from the shackles of the past and appease their conscience. The death of the father may, therefore, be regarded as crucial to the formation of the identities of these daughters, as Beverley Raphael aptly points out:

Identity is one of the factors most powerfully affected by the death of someone close. (...) The definition of self may rely strongly on the other, so that when he is lost, the self must find a new identity without him.⁶⁶

As already indicated, psychoanalysts do acknowledge that the father is in many ways involved with the development of his daughter's identity. All three works do prove the significance of the relationship: when he is alive, the daughter is clearly affected by his oppressive control or complete indifference; when he dies, part of her being also seems to disappear. With hindsight the adult daughter believes that she has been deprived of love. After the death of her sixty-two-year-old father in 1978 Schwaiger remarked: "Ich komm mir vor wie ein seelischer Krüppel. (...) Mein Vater hat mich nie geliebt".⁶⁷ Not only does the daughter experience the pain of permanent separation between herself and her father, but she also has to accept that she cannot change how things were between them. These portrayals could, thus, be seen as effort on the part of the daughter to put right a wrong, to pay her father the attention she failed to give him when he was alive, to acknowledge that he played his part in shaping her identity. Hence, the writing process serves to ease her own conscience and helps her achieve a form of liberation. In her book *My Father's House. A Memoir of Incest and Healing* Sylvia Fraser makes the following comment which pinpoints the therapeutic nature of capturing memories on paper, making sense of them, and experiencing the freedom of self-expression:

As I write, the world inside my head becomes more real than the physical world; feelings more real than facts; thoughts

more real than spoken words; my unconscious mind more real than my conscious mind; the visionary world of dreams more real than the waking world. Now, as I let go of the habits and rituals that anchor me to the here-and-now to explore the lost landscape of my childhood, I feel as if I've jumped off a cliff and am flapping my arms trying to learn to fly before crashing.⁶⁸

Up till now we have concentrated on the personal bond between father and daughter because it does dominate each narrative. Yet, whilst these women writers do show a tendency to depict their fathers in the privacy of their homes, they also recognise his failures in the public realm. It is here, too, that the specific 'Germanness' of these writings comes to the fore.

If we consider, for instance, Plessen's novel, we learn that the daughter travels to Schleswig-Holstein, to her family home, "Einhaus," where the father managed an estate passed down through the generations of the family. The title "Mitteilung an den Adel" already points to the aristocratic upbringing of Augusta and of the writer, who grew up in Schloß Sierhagen in Schleswig-Holstein, and whose full title is, in fact, Dr. Elizabeth Charlotte Marguerite Gräfin von Plessen.⁶⁹ The title of the novel suggests both public and personal criticism by the author. By means of her novel she communicates her disapproval of the aristocracy as a whole on account of its conservatism, but, in particular, she is critical of her father who had typified the landed gentry, patriarchy and eighteenth century feudalism:

Adel ist nicht nur ein Klassenbegriff. Adel deckt vieles andere ab, bis hin zur Regenbogenpresse. Mir kam es in dem Buch darauf an, das Patriarchalische jener Adliger darzustellen, die noch Großgrundbesitz haben. Ich wollte zeigen, wie Besitz herrisch macht.⁷⁰

Furthermore, no one had dared to question his authority, whether at work or at home, he was a person to be respected:

... das Oberhaupt der Familie, Familie auch im weiteren Verwandtschaftssinn, (...) er war der Arbeitgeber für viele Menschen, er hatte den größten Landbesitz im Umkreis. Hunderte von Augen blickten respektvoll duldend auf ihn, sogar dann noch, wenn sie sauer wurden; keiner machte ihm die Position streitig, er repräsentierte die aus länger Feudaltradition herangenommene patriarchalische Autorität.⁷¹

Throughout her childhood the protagonist, Augusta, is brought up to believe that: "Young ladies are to be seen but never to be heard" (M.A. 74). Whenever she misbehaved, she was punished by her governess, locked in a broom cupboard, smacked and then tied to her bed during the night. Later she is sent away to boarding-school. At the age of seventeen Augusta rebels for the first time when she resists continuing to behave like a robot which could be programmed according to her father's wishes and commands. She had had enough of the charade of kissing everyone's hand, of the pretence of such

affection, so she told her father that he made her sick. After three more years of leading a superficial life at "Einhaus" Augusta makes a physical attempt to free herself from the ties of her father, the privileges and restrictions of his exclusive world, by studying in West Berlin and Paris, later moving to Munich to work as a journalist. She thus opts for an independent life as remote as possible from her aristocratic origins: the free and easy lifestyle contrasting with the rigid and restricted way of life authorised by her father. The choice of Munich as her new home also highlights the physical distance between them, as well as the contrast between city-life and country-life.

Augusta rejects the lifestyle which she had experienced in her childhood, because she knew what lay ahead of her if she had stayed. She had no wish to grow into a passive woman, lazing around the house and participating in superficial society functions. She also recognises the extent to which her background is likely to mould her identity, insomuch as she would become an anonymous person, merely a representative of the nobility bearing the family name and being recognised and acknowledged on account of her status in life:

Hemmungen, C.A., die Tochter eines Großgrundbesitzers,
eines Rittergutsbesitzers, Schloßbesitzers, eines Junkers zu
sein, dazu die Qual der Anrede, so viele den Anredenden
festlegende Formeln wie Finger an einer Hand: Comtesse,
Fräulein von, Frau von, Gräfin Pe, Gräfin, und wer von den
fünfen bin ich? (M.A. 179)

It is worth noting that in reality the writer has chosen to drop the 'von' from her name, which appears to signify a distinct move to disassociate herself from her background and

to create more distance. Perhaps she also believes that she will be more objective, or that she has earned the 'right' to be more disparaging. A further implication is that she wants to be successful in her own right, just as her protagonist seeks freedom to express her opinions about matters which interest her, such as politics.

Dissension arises between daughter and father from a clash of differing socio-political opinions. This is highlighted in the episode concerning the war-diary entitled "Post festum", which Augusta's father wrote two years after the Second World War and decides to pass on to Augusta with the expectation that his daughter will, after reading the diary, understand him better.⁷² He entrusts her with a piece of work which he valued so much that he had never shown it to anyone else. His sister had originally encouraged him to write down his experiences of the war after he came out of prison in order to come to terms with the events; she tells Augusta that her father had never been a Nazi and warns her niece not to be too hard on her father. Augusta, however, analyses the content and form of the diary, criticising and questioning her father's reasons for writing it and presenting it to her.⁷¹ Initially she is appalled by the predominance of military jargon, clichés and self-deception, but it is the fact that her father, although he appeared to be an opponent of Hitler, had never considered actual resistance which upsets her most of all.

As is evident in other novels of this genre, the father is in a no-win situation with regard to the stance he took during the 1930s. In the opinions of their sons and daughters they were guilty of complicity, whether they actively supported National Socialism or not. Either they partook of the atrocities or they turned a blind eye and did nothing; either way their behaviour, according to their judgmental offspring, was incomprehensible and inexcusable. Augusta regards the incomplete diary as a sign of her father's weakness and failure to reach a conclusion; the fact that there was no concluding comment even two years

after the event. Thus the "Post festum" only succeeds in disappointing the daughter and does not have the desired effect of bringing daughter and father closer together; if anything it inspires her to become more actively involved in the student protests in West Berlin in 1968 and in the extra-parliamentary protest movement (Außerparlamentarische Opposition, APO):

Die Tochter erkennt mit fortschreitender Lektüre, worum es nicht geht, lehnt das Große-Männer-Pathos ab und findet allmählich ihre eigene politische Einstellung.⁷⁴

The belief of Augusta and for that matter, Plessen herself, that the family estate is steeped in aristocratic traditions, its people bound by social conventions, as if trapped in a time warp and cut off from reality, is made explicit in the novel. The first chapter is entitled "Unter dem Glassturz": the phrase occurs twice in this chapter and refers both to C.A.'s life (M.A. 60) and Augusta's life (M.A. 75) in "Einhaus". It clearly points to a separate, privileged class and suggests that "Einhaus" (the name of the estate is appropriate) is situated in an isolated time zone, unaffected by the events of the war and insulated against any adverse intrusions from the rest of the world.⁷⁵ In spite of the war "Einhaus" continues to be based on conservative tradition and custom; only modern technology and new business skills are allowed to penetrate the management of the estate and its farms. Here old methods do give way to new ones but solely on account of the benefits which these can yield in order to maintain the land for Augusta's brother and the next generation.

It is from this seemingly endless cycle of history that Augusta breaks free and rebels. The battle of opinions between father and daughter develops into a feud, which culminates

in her father's threat to shoot her and her friends if she brings any of them home with her from Berlin. This threat, which is indicative of her father's intolerance of anyone who does not comply with his way of life, proves to be the last straw for Augusta who never returns to "Einhaus" whilst her father is alive. In a draft letter to him she accuses him of being incapable of compromise:

So wie ich bin, nimmst du mich nicht hin. Ich leide darunter, daß ich, für was ich tue und denke, dein stillschweigendes Einverständnis nicht erlangen kann. So wende ich mich gegen dich. Was dein Einverständnis nicht hat, läßt du bei mir nicht zu. Es ist dir nicht möglich zu akzeptieren, daß ich einen Weg gehe als du, einen anderen, als du ihn mir vorzeichnen und vorschreiben willst, immer noch. (M.A. 221)

Even after travelling to "Einhaus" for the funeral Augusta is unable to go beyond the outskirts of the estate and cross the boundary between her new life and the one she left behind. It is her last act of defiance: if she did attend the funeral, she would merely be complying with her father's wish, doing what was expected of her, taking part in another ceremony. The writer's ultimate rebellion lay in telling the world about her upbringing, especially the role her father played in her life, and criticising in literary form what he embodied and how he behaved. This daughter of the aristocracy could not deny her background but she could reject the lifestyle by breaking away from the family-bonds and preventing suffocation by her father's authority.

It could be said of all these father portraits that the daughters-cum-writers are defying their fathers for the last time by going public and making private issues known to the rest of the world. I would see this defiance as a trait of female and not male writers because the women's writings are based primarily on mixed emotions, wavering between love and hate of their fathers. Certainly, as shown, Plessen's protagonist does comment on social and political aspects of the postwar period in West Germany. However, the overriding tone is one of bitterness towards the father: forgiveness cannot be expressed by either the daughter or the father. It is as if the power of the father has to be avenged, even beyond the grave. Thus, Plessen's 'Abrechnung' is first with her father and second with the attitudes embedded in the German aristocracy.

Of the three works considered in this chapter Plessen's novel contains the most obvious criticism of her father's role in society as befits the title. Closer analysis of the two works by Schwaiger and Schutting does also reveal criticism of the father's public life, usually in connection with his absence from the home or disinterest in his daughter. In his role as doctor in *Lange Abwesenheit* the father is constantly needed by his sick patients and is, therefore, too busy to pay any attention to his daughters. One result of this lack of affection from the father is to find a replacement, a fifty-six-year-old Jew. Conflict between daughter and father comes to a head in disagreement over the daughter's choice of lover. Knowing full well that both men will despise each other, her father having been a Nazi, the daughter clearly plays one off against the other, wanting above all to make her father react. Her choice of lover does have the desired effect of attaining her father's attention, even if it does reveal his prejudices.⁷⁶ In a sense the daughter punishes her father foremost on account of his indifference towards her, but also on account of his bigoted views. By loving a Jew she overcomes the Nazi, in particular because Birer could easily

have been amongst the millions of Jews murdered by the Nazis. She tries to hurt her father the only way she knows how, by selecting the worst imaginable fear her father may have, namely a Jewish son-in law. In public this daughter defies her father by her association with a Jew, and indirectly raises the question of ethical responsibility of the generation that followed Hitler. It is her form of spite, just as Augusta refuses to surrender to her father's wishes. In *Lange Abwesenheit* social attitudes and criticism thereof are interwoven in the personal concerns by the writer.

For both Schwaiger and Plessen writing serves the purpose of a reaction or protest against suppression by their fathers and the class-values they represent. Schwaiger's 'Abrechnung' is also to be recognised in her confrontation with past personal events and her open attack in public disclosing the private matters to the reader and criticising her middle-class upbringing:

Brigitte Schwaiger bedient sich der Literatur als Bewältigung ihrer Unterdrückung durch den Mann zugleich aber bedeutet ihr das Schreiben eine entscheidende Vorstufe Selbstbestimmung.⁷⁷

It is apparent in *Lange Abwesenheit* and in Schwaiger's first autobiographical novel *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer* (1977) that the path to discovering and developing her identity only occurs once the men in the daughter's life have been removed, that is, after the death of her father and after her divorce from Rolf.⁷⁸ Criticism of her middle-class upbringing is evident from the extent to which she is conditioned by these values, for example in *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer* she marries the man whom her parents regard as suitable and who

perpetuates the male authority embodied in her father. Within the family and marriage female individuality and self-expression are suppressed and not allowed any freedom to develop, as illustrated in Plessen's novel, too:

Ich bin fürs Zuhören erzogen, dachte Augusta, jemanden in seiner Rede zu unterbrechen, jemandem ins Wort zu fallen, ist nicht gestattet. Tue ich es, mische ich mich ein, ist es, als redete ich mit vollem Mund. (M.A. 163)

Yet due to their financial security all these daughters, including Schutting's narrator, are able to leave home eventually and study. It is noticeable, though, that having done so, they do decide to stay away from home in order to create a life for themselves. The emphasis Schwaiger places on the significance of the daughter's social background comes to the fore in her first novel: in fact "gutbürgerlich" is the very first word of the text and the suitability of Rolf is linked to this notion of maintaining middle-class standards through generations of the family:

Vater sagt, Rolf ist ein anständiger und tüchtiger Bursche, Mutter sagt, auf Rolf kann ich stolz sein, Großmutter sagt, das wichtigste ist eine gutbürgerliche Verbindung.⁷⁹

It is little wonder, then, that the relationship with Birer in *Lange Abwesenheit* is a shock for the daughter's family and unacceptable. After interviewing Schwaiger in 1977 Jürgen Serke made the following comments about her first novel which also ring true of *Lange*

Abwesenheit and do highlight the inadequacies of the father as depicted by all the women writers in this study:

Immer wieder quält der Gedanke an den Vater, der mit sich nicht fertig geworden ist. Der Vater, der sich arm geizte, weil er mit dem sparte, was er hätte geben können: Geborgenheit, Wärme, Vertrauen. Statt dessen Erziehung unter dem Vokabel Tugend. Tugendstam sollte die Tochter sein. Bürgerliche Anständigkeit, die alle starken Gefühle schleift.⁸⁰

Similarities have already been shown between the ways in which Plessen, Schwaiger and Schutting present the daughter-father relationship in light of the father's death and these are in spite of the fact that many personal matters surface which point to individual circumstances. On a more general level the writer's criticism of the society in which the daughter is brought up also serves a purpose, especially if the reader is to understand the role of the father and his behaviour towards his daughter. Such social criticism is not the main concern of Schutting, as *Der Vater* illustrates and as she herself has said:

Für einen Autor kommt etwas hinzu, was man sich kaum noch zu sagen getraut, das ist das Ästhetische. (...) Der Tod ist doch ästhetisch gesehen eine sehr triviale Sache, wie kann ich etwas daraus machen. Das ist ein Motiv, das für mich wohl mehr zählt als die Frage nach der Autorität. Also mein

Vater hatte keine Autorität. Ich meine, es sind doch ästhetische Überlegungen für einen Autor oft viel entscheidender als moralische oder gesellschaftspolitische.⁸¹

As explained previously in this chapter, when discussing the association of the father with God, the Father, Schutting does make use of religious symbolism in her work. Her interest in the language as a means of depicting death in aesthetic terms will be considered in Chapter Five, when we look at the narrative strategies employed in these writings. For now it is necessary to mention this writer's attitude and approach to her portrayal of the death of her father, which differ from that of Plessen and Schwaiger in that any criticism is veiled, and it explains the lack of socio-historical facts.

Schutting's father also had a profession which kept him away from his children: he had been a vet and he enjoyed hunting like C.A. in *Mitteilung an den Adel*. Whilst Schutting can accuse her father of having demonstrated scarcely any interest in her, she cannot, as Plessen and Schwaiger do, accuse him of enforcing discipline and demanding obedience.⁸² On the contrary, her father disliked order and duty to the extent that it probably influenced his decision not to join the Nazi party, the NSDAP. In this case Schutting does regret never having asked her father about his reasons for not becoming a Nazi. More importantly, there is no evidence in *Der Vater* of conflict between daughter and father over his standpoint during the thirties. Even during the war he had been out on hunting trips in France and Russia killing deer and wild boar, instead of fighting on the Front. This daughter's anger, as shown, is directed at her father's indifference towards her; socio-political and/or moral issues are not debated when he is alive, hence it is likely that the writer sees no purpose in referring to such matters after his death. For Schutting, then,

Der Vater is not an 'Abrechnung' because there is no sense of vengeance or punishment in the work, instead there is disappointment along with the need to understand her father and to come to terms with his death in order to make sense of her life.

For these women writers lack of communication, the inability to express oneself freely without inhibitions or fear of reprisals, causes the greatest rift between daughter and father, whether the writer portrays the head of the family or the man at work, whether she chooses to emphasise personal and/or public issues. Heinrich Vormweg sees the relevance of these 'Väterbücher' for the reader in both the personal story and the political/historical criticism, but at the same time he does question whether the more personal writings are just following a fashion, keeping up with a trend in contemporary German literature or whether these works are indicative of a changing father-child relationship.⁸³ As this chapter has illustrated, it is the latter, on account of the fact that apart from literature the daughter-father relationship is being recognised more and more as influential and equally as important to that of the daughter-mother relationship in the development of a daughter's self-awareness. At the same time the three works featured in this chapter can be regarded as representative of the trend in 'Väterbücher' as a whole because, like their male colleagues, they confront the legacy of the Third Reich embodied in their fathers, albeit posthumously. The three books also typify the authentic, personal perspective of the literature which appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, later termed 'Neue Subjektivität', in that each writer is very much enveloped in her own private problems and probes deep within herself to find a solution to her anxieties. For many Germanic women writers of this period the act of writing is central to self-definition, and, in order to find herself, the writer begins with an analysis of her father and/or mother, her creators. Analysis of Plessen's, Schwaiger's and Schutting's father-books has shown this to be the case. Moreover, their

writings illustrate specifically the right of the daughter to fight back against the values asserted by her father, as Reinhard Baumgart similarly concludes in his review of contemporary German autobiographical literature:

In den Vaterbüchern der späten siebziger Jahre hat die Wut Kreide gefressen. Ödipus ist gehemmt durch Melancholie, ja durch eine traurige oder auch böse Grazie. Man bewegt sich besserwisserisch in einer unverbesserlichen Welt. Väter, die zu nichts anderem zu taugen scheinen, als nachträglich, postum und auf dem Papier ihr falsches Leben bewiesen zu bekommen, machen ihre Söhne und Töchter merkwürdig kraftlos, traurig, und aus dieser traurig, kraftlos gewordenen Liebe wird eben zur Not auch Grazie, und die kann "ganz schön" bissig agieren, wie die mokante Beschwerdeprosa der Schwaiger am genauesten zeigt.⁸⁴

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

- 1 Michael Schneider, *Den Kopf verkehrt aufgesetzt oder Die melancholische Linke* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1981), p. 36.
- 2 Jessica Benjamin, 'Authority and the Family Revisited: or, A World Without Fathers?' *New German Critique*, 13 (1978), 35-57 (p. 46).
- 3 Alexander Mitscherlich, *Auf dem Weg zur vaterlosen Gesellschaft: Ideen zur Sozialpsychologie* (München, Zürich: Piper, 1989).
Eva Kolinsky refers to the "fatherless society of today" in her work, *Women in West Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 1989), p. 93.
- 4 Schneider, p. 14.
- 5 Since 1st July 1977 the Civil Code on Marriage and Family Law (Para. 1356) has read as follows:

Die Ehegatten regeln die Haushaltsführung im gegenseitigen Einvernehmen. Ist die Haushaltsführung einem der Ehegatten überlassen, so leitet dieser den Haushalt in eigener Verantwortung. Beide Ehegatten sind berechtigt, erwerbstätig zu sein. Bei der Wahl und Ausübung einer Erwerbstätigkeit

haben sie auf die Belange des anderen Ehegatten und der Familie die gebotene Rücksicht zu nehmen.

Uta Gerhardt, ed., *Frauensituation* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 8.

6 Kolinsky, p. 52.

7 Figures show that in 1988 approximately sixteen percent of single parents (1.9 million in total) were male.

Emil Hübner and H.-H. Rohlf, *Jahrbuch der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1990/91* (München: Beck/dtv, 1990), p. 33.

8 'Lästiger Gast': interview with Cheryl Benard and Edit Schlaffer in *Der Spiegel*, 16 September 1991.

9 Reinhart Lempp, 'Die Rolle des Vaters und ihre Veränderung im 20. Jahrhundert', in *Sturz der Götter? Vaterbilder im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Werner Faulstich and Günter E. Grimm (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp. 176-189 (p. 184).

10 Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* (London: Virago, 1990), p. 110.

11 Cheryl Benard and Edit Schlaffer, ed., *Sagt uns, wo die Väter sind* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), p. 141.

- 12 Lempp, pp. 185-186.
- 13 Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University Press of California, 1978), p. 195.
- 14 Elyce Wakerman, *Father Loss* (London: Piatkus, 1986), p. 21.
- 15 Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (London: Unwin, 1976), p. 40.
- 16 Elaine Feinstein, *Mother's Girl* (London: Arena, 1989), p. 9.
- 17 Interestingly, Greer's autobiographical work has been translated into German and was published by dtv in April 1992 under the title *Daddy. Die Geschichte eines Fremden*. The publishers must believe that there continues to be a market for such father-portrayals in German-speaking countries.
- 18 Sylvia Fraser, *My Father's House. A Memoir of Incest and Healing* (London: Virago, 1989), p. 14.
- 19 Fraser, p. 241.
- 20 Barbara Taufar was born in Austria but now lives in Israel, after converting to Judaism at the age of forty-five. She remained at her father's bedside for six weeks whilst he was dying of a brain tumour. She spoke to Rosalyn Chissick at the

- request of the Spiro Institute for the Study of Jewish History and Culture. *Options*, November 1988, pp. 43-44.
- 21 Germaine Greer, *Daddy, We Hardly Knew You* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), p. 81.
- 22 Greer, p. 247.
- 23 Patrick Taylor-Martin, 'A daughter writes', *Punch*, 24 March 1989, p. 45.
- 24 Interview with Anthony Wilson, *The Other Side of Midnight*, ITV, 2 April 1989.
- 25 Peter Henisch, *Die kleine Figur meines Vaters* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp. 75 and 109.
- 26 Keith Bullivant refers to these 'Väterromane' as being "a new sub-genre within the orbit of the social novel" during his analysis of 'Neue Subjektivität'. *Realism Today* (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, New York: Berg, 1987), p. 222.
- 27 Schneider, p. 9.
- 28 Gitta Sereny, 'The Sins of the Fathers', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 30 September 1990, p. 29.

- 29 Schneider, p. 12.
- 30 Maureen Cleave, 'In the Heart of the Enemy', *Observer Magazine*, 2 October 1988, p. 53. In November 1988 Christabel Bielenberg's book *The Past is Myself* was dramatised for the BBC by Dennis Potter under the title *Christabel*, which told of her survival in Nazi Germany.
- 31 Niklas Frank, *Der Vater* (München: Bertelsmann, 1987), p. 283. In his book Niklas Frank uses his father's diaries to address his father who had been Hitler's personal lawyer, head of the Nazi judiciary and 'Governor-General' of Poland in 1939. He had been tried as a major war criminal in the 1945-6 Nuremberg Trials. Frank's account is filled with bitterness and hatred towards his deceased father whom he describes as a typical German monster. Even though this father was 'well-known', Frank points out that 'ordinary' fathers at that time were just as guilty:

Wie arm sind Millionen anderer Kinder dran, deren Väter das gleiche Geschwätz voll Hinterlist und Feigheit, voll Mordlust und Unmenschlichkeit von sich geben, aber nicht so prominent waren wie Du. Bei ihnen lohnte nicht die Aufzeichnung ihrer Tiraden, ihre Tagebücher wurden nicht aufgelistet. Ich hab es gut, ich kann aus den Archiven Europas und den USA die Fleischfetzen Deines Lebens zusammenklauben, kann sie, unbehelligt von lügenhaften

familiären Geschwätz, beäugen. Wie immer ich sie auch mit Skalpell oder Hammer bearbeite, es kommt ein typisch deutsches Monster raus. (*Der Vater*, p. 19)

32 Sereny, p. 29.

33 Marjorie Leonard, 'Fathers and Daughters: The Significance of "Fathering" in the Psychosexual Development of the Girl', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47 (1966), 325-334 (p. 333).

34 Manfred Jurgensen, *Deutsche Frauenautoren der Gegenwart* (Bern: Franke, 1983), p. 325.

35 Schneider, p. 33.

36 Brigitte Schwaiger, *Lange Abwesenheit* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983). Abbreviated to L.A. with pagination in brackets.

37 Jutta Schutting, *Der Vater* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983). Abbreviated to V. with page numbers in parentheses.

38 Elisabeth Plessen, *Mitteilung an den Adel* (München: dtv, 1985). Referred to as M.A. with pagination in brackets.

- 39 Albert von Schirnding, 'Patre Absente', *Merkur*, 5 (1980), 489-497 (p. 496).
- 40 See page 111.
- 41 See page 50.
- 42 Judy Tatelbaum, *The Courage to Grieve* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 33.
- 43 This is one explanation for Augusta's decision not to attend the funeral of her father. See pages 100 and 109 for further details.
- 44 Tatelbaum, p. 31.
- 45 The suggestion that the father deceives his daughter is particularly apparent in *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer*. The text ends with the words "Alles Trick": whilst looking back at photographs of a happy father and daughter, standing next to each other, the daughter recalls how her father had led her to believe that the photographs would be printed in a newspaper, that was the reason for her smiles. Her father had succeeded in manipulating her, just as his death has the unexpected effect of bringing her close to him.
- 46 Beverley Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 46.
- 47 See page 91 for further details about religious connotations in this particular novel.

- 48 See pages 92-97 for sexual innuendo.
- 49 Elyce Wakerman, *Father Loss* (London: Piatkus, 1986), p. 19.
- 50 Brigitte Schwaiger, *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1984), p. 31.
- 51 See page 57.
- 52 See page 84.
- 53 Viktor Zmegac, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart: 1919-1980* (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1984), III, p. 821.
- 54 At the start of *Der Vater* reference is made to the human soul being like a trapped bird in a human body, a life-long cage. A woman's husband dies and she opens the window to let the soul out (V. 36-37).
- 55 Wakerman, p. 19.
- 56 Plessen uses a similar analogy for the lack of understanding between daughter and father when Augusta remarks: "Wir stehen uns schlecht" (M.A. 243).
- 57 Jurgensen, p. 307.

58 Wakerman, p. 20.

59 This notion of the daughter only being able to get close to her father when she is a 'dog' is reminiscent of Germaine Greer's remark about her relationship with her father when she was a child:

Man and dog are supposed to have a wordless attachment.

Perhaps my father thought of me as his kelpie. Maybe he believed a rough caress or a word of praise would have ruined me. I think it's no truer of a dog than a woman, actually.

Daddy, We Hardly Knew You (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), p. 201.

60 The poem appears in Jürgen Serke's *Frauen Schreiben* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1982), p. 303. The idea of cutting off the father's tongue suggests the ending of verbal domination. It is a reminder, too, of Günter Grass' drawing for the cover of his novel *Hundejahre* (1963), where the tongue resembles the penis, thus symbolising the eroticism of words. In Schwaiger's poem the implication is that any sexual bond has also been severed.

61 At one point Plessen makes the following comment: "Sie versteckte ihre Hände, weil sie sie an andere erinnerten" (M.A. 36). The suggestion is that Augusta's hands do look like her father's. Germaine Greer notices the similarity between her

hands and those of her father: "I knew as I held my father's old hand in my own, its exact replica, and watched my skull emerging through his transparent skin, that I am my father's daughter". *Daddy, We Hardly Knew You*, p. 14.

- 62 Translated from Italian "Pinocchio" means a 'pine seed'. The original story was written by Carlo Collodi and adapted for screen and text by Walt Disney. The actual puppet was made of pine wood.
- 63 Sandra Frieden, "'Selbstgespräche": Elisabeth Plessen's *Mitteilung an den Adel*', *Seminar*, 18 (1982), 271-286 (p. 286).
- 64 Gabriele Wohmann, *Schönes Gehege* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985), p. 276.
- 65 Serke, p. 352.
- 66 Raphael, p. 57. If we see a person's name as being closely linked to their identity, then it should be noted here that Jutta Schutting changed her name to Julian Schutting on 11 September, 1989. In fact, during the eighties she was known to her friends as "Justus". When interviewed in September 1989 a sex-change operation had been undergone:

Statt wie bisher Jutta Schutting heiße ich nach Erledigung
 letzter Formalitäten ab jetzt Julian Schutting. Dank einer

keineswegs sensationellen medizinischen Therapie (...) habe ich die rechtlich vorgeschriebenen Bedingungen erfüllt, um auch vor dem Gesetz als Mann zu gelten, in Übereinstimmung mit meinem lebenslangen Selbstgefühl.

sin, 'Lebenslänglicher Ohnmacht entflohen. Jutta Schutting wird künftig Julian Schutting sein', *Die Presse*, 12 September 1989, p. 11.

The first reason Schutting gave for this sexual identity change at the age of fifty-one was connected with her ability to write:

Ich hab' immer gedacht, der liebe Gott hat mir meine Begabung als Entschädigung gegeben, weil er mich nicht als Gewichtheber oder Holzfäller auf die Welt geschickt hat. Ich habe jahrelang Angst gehabt, eines Tages nicht mehr schreiben zu können.

Hilke Rosenboom, 'Das bin sozusagen ich', *Stern*, 28 September 1989, p. 327.

As a child Schutting had always felt like a boy but it was only when she began to write that she felt that she was able to express her true self. For Schutting the operation was a kind of metamorphosis because it meant that her external features would reflect her inner feelings. In interviews she made a point of saying that she had nothing against being a woman, but she just could not understand herself as a woman.

- 67 Jurgensen, p. 277. In *Lange Abwesenheit* the daughter also points out that the father had stifled his daughter's development and undermined their relationship with him: "Ich hätte es nicht zugelassen, daß er mich und meine Töchter verkrüppelt" (L.A. 52).
- 68 Fraser, p. 150.
- 69 Serke, p. 352.
- 70 Serke, p. 352. Not just ownership leads to power but also his role as head of the family.
- 71 Elisabeth Plessen, 'Abschied von den Vätern', in *Vatersein*, ed. by Hans-Jürgen Schultz (München: dtv, 1984), pp.19-41 (pp.25-26).
- 72 "Post Festum" is also the title of the second chapter of the novel. This Latin phrase can be translated in two ways: 'after the festival' or 'too late'. Augusta is given the diary after she has attended family festivities on the estate; the diary's title refers to 'after the war'; the diary is 'too late' because it was not written at the time of the events and therefore not a true diary; it also signifies that reconciliation between father and daughter is too late, since it does not achieve the effect the father had hoped for.
- 73 The questions are presented as imaginary discussions with her father, as "Anläufe".

74 Renate Möhrmann, 'Feministische Trends in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur', in *Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. by Manfred Durzak (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), pp. 337-358 (p. 350).

75 Another word for "Glassturz" is "Glasglocke" which is also the German title for Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, written in 1963. The bell jar is similarly a symbol of dissociation from reality for the protagonist, Esther Greenwood, who fails to kill herself. *Under a Glass Bell* is the title of a collection of thirteen short stories by Anaïs Nin, which was first published in 1948. One of the stories is entitled "Under a Glass Bell" (written in 1941) in which time appears to have stood still in a stately home:

The light from the icicle bushes threw a patina over all objects, and turned them into bouquets of still flowers kept under a glass bell. The glass bell covered the flowers, the chairs, the whole room, the panoplied beds, the statues, the butlers, all the people living in the house. The glass bell covered the entire house.

Anaïs Nin, *Under a Glass Bell* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 35.

76 See page 75 for how the daughter has absorbed her father's prejudices.

77 Jurgensen, p. 283.

78 In Schwaiger's autobiographical works the female identity appears to be dependent on the man who plays the most significant role at various stages in a girl's/woman's life. Her self revolves around his and is determined by him. Once married the narrator comments in *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer*: "Ich bin nicht ich. Ich bin Rolfs Frau" (p. 34). As in the case of the father, the woman is expected to submit and adhere to the husband's wishes. Even during her extra-marital affair she is subjected to the demands and commands of her lover, Albert.

79 Brigitte Schwaiger, *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer*, p. 13.

80 Serke, p. 300.

81 Heinrich Vormweg, 'Eine sanfte Art von Mord? Über die neueren literarischen Vaterbilder', *Loccumer Protokolle*, 6 (1981), 4-22 (p. 19).

82 Karol Sauerland comes to the same conclusion: "Die Autorin braucht sich daher nicht wie Brigitte Schwaiger zur gleichen Zeit mit der schlechten Vergangenheit ihres Vaters auseinanderzusetzen". Karol Sauerland, 'Jutta Schutting', in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold, 1 April 1985, pp. 1-8 (p. 6).

83 Vormweg, pp. 12-13.

- 84 Reinhard Baumgart, 'Dem Leben hinterhergeschrieben - Der Künstler vor dem Spiegel - Vom Nutzen und Nachteil einer autobiographischen Literatur', *Die Zeit*, 5 October, 1984, p. 72.

CHAPTER TWO: MY MOTHER LIVES ON IN ME

In this chapter we will analyse the mother-daughter relationship in Gabriele Wohmann's *Ausflug mit der Mutter* (1976), Margrit Schriber's *Kartenhaus* (1978) and Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung* (1985) by comparing the similarities and differences between daughters and mothers as presented by each of these German, Swiss and Austrian authors, as well as highlighting the possible similarities between the portrayals. Wohmann's novel comprises the adult daughter's reflections on her bond with her mother one year after her mother has become a widow, and thereby deals not only with the reaction of two different generations to the loss of the husband/father, but also the loneliness which elderly people may experience after the death of a partner. In a similar vein Schriber's female protagonist confronts the lonely existence of her divorced mother in a small Swiss community, when she pays her a rare visit, the duration of which constitutes the book. In contrast to Wohmann's daughter-figure, who focuses exclusively on the present-day relationship between daughter and mother, Schriber's daughter-figure recalls her childhood and adolescence in the village; the day her father left home for a woman of his daughter's age, and the effect this had on her mother and herself. As in Wohmann's and Schriber's works Mitgutsch, too, illustrates the extent to which guilt pervades the mother-daughter bond, this time through three generations of women living in rural Austria. *Die Züchtigung* is a chronicle of the repeated mistakes of each mother through the generations, the mistreatment of each daughter, the cruel and callous physical and mental torture passed down from one woman to the next. The narrator is the present-day mother who has resolved not to beat her daughter, but with whom she fails to have a happy relationship. Her analysis of her own upbringing and her mother's life in order to find reasons for this absence of happiness

and transference of hatred are the focus of Mitgutsch's account. For the daughters in all three books initial analysis of the mother merges into self-analysis.

Like the daughters writing about their fathers in the previous chapter, these three writers also discuss and question the nature of their relationship with their respective mothers in an attempt to discover their own identity. It will become evident that in the first instance each daughter wants and needs to understand her mother - in the case of Wohmann and Schriber the mother is still alive; that she has to analyse consciously her mother's every move in order to do so; that only then can she form her own thoughts about her mother and make judgements about her mother's behaviour and her mother's attitude towards her own position as a wife, a divorcee, or a widow. During and as a result of this process of analysis of her mother, the daughter gradually develops an understanding of her own self. It will be shown that the relationship between mother and daughter is central to the development of a woman's identity; at the same time it remains complex: "Von allen menschlichen Beziehungen, die ich kenne, ist die zwischen Mutter and Tochter zweifellos die geheimnisvollste, komplizierteste und emotionsgeladenste".¹ We shall see that the complexity of this relationship is indeed to be found in the ambivalence of unspoken feelings, the fluctuation between love and hate, as well as in the generation gap. Before analysing the literary relationship, we need to consider the role of the mother in our Western culture, her relationship with her child, in particular her daughter, in order to recognise and appreciate to what extent this relationship is fraught with problems, yet at the same time so vital for both mother and child. We shall then note to what extent all this theorising is evident in these three works of Germanic literature.

Just as the role of the father has been undergoing a change based on the development of new ideas from one generation to the next, so that nowadays househusbands are no

longer ridiculed, so the role of the mother has also been changing, but in the opposite direction. She is no longer confined to the domesticity of motherhood, instead the growing trend for Western mothers is to combine child-rearing with a career or part-time work. We could say, therefore, that the professional, middle-class father is slowly moving towards his child, trying to make time and putting more effort into the relationship; whilst the educated, middle-class mother is moving away from her child in that she continues to work and develops outside interests, while still bringing up children. Psychologists and psychoanalysts do actually acknowledge these changes as healthy moves, not only for the development of a child which needs to become an autonomous being, but also for the parents themselves who should both be responsible for child-raising and yet maintain an independent identity, one which goes beyond simply being the breadwinner or the nurturer. Of course, the changes in these parental role patterns have not only been influenced by the emancipation of women, but also by economic necessity. It is often the case that both parents have to work in order to be able to meet the financial demands of bringing up a family, or the husband is made redundant, whilst his wife continues working or succeeds in finding a job, or the husband chooses to 'stay at home, if the wife is happy to pursue a career, as a result of which she becomes the breadwinner. But, although it is evident that more and more women are becoming career-oriented, it is unlikely that motherhood will be forfeited and children neglected, since the working mother will never distance herself from her child in the way that the working father has done, on account of the strong symbiotic ties between the life-giver and the offspring, as well as the fact that women realise that motherhood affects their own development as a woman. Parental roles cannot be clearly defined anymore because they are dependent on the influences of personal choice, an individual's interpretation of child-rearing and on socio-economic conditions.

Traditionally, it was virtually inevitable that a girl would eventually assume the role of mother; her existence would revolve totally around her child because she was the object of its needs and desires. For centuries female individuation was discouraged so that each generation of mothers implanted the same expectation in her daughter, yet willingly and according to convention encouraged her son's independence. Whilst the Women's Movement with its demands for sexual freedom, financial freedom and independence has had a significant effect on altering habits of a lifetime, of creating a subject out of an object, psychoanalysts, such as Nancy Chodorow, believe that it is difficult "for daughters in a Western middle-class family to develop self-esteem" and claims, as do others in her profession, that "the mother inevitably represents to her daughter (and son) regression, passivity, dependence, and lack of orientation to reality, whereas the father represents progression, activity, independence, and reality orientation".² Chodorow reaches such a conclusion because on an individual basis blame still rests with the mother for 'pushing' sons in one direction, towards autonomy, away from her, and daughters in another direction, towards dependence, towards her, but also Western society as a whole holds the position of a mother in low esteem, regarding the housewife as outdated, and that progress, for the better, has been made. In *Guilt: The Grey Eminence behind Character, History and Culture* (1985), for instance, John Carroll points out that the mother-dominated family has been "the central agent of social change" in Western society, although it has existed in other cultures.³ A number of factors have contributed to this rise to 'power' of the mother: first, consumerism has played a far greater role in the life of the wife/mother, since she is the one who usually decides what to buy; second, the work of the father and, therefore, his status in the family, has been devalued because mothers can work equally well, thus there is no special respect for the original head of the household anymore; third, the father's

moral authority has also been reduced to the extent that he is no longer worthy of emulation by his children; and fourth, material affluence in the form of a washing-machine, a dishwasher or microwave oven, has enabled the mother to indulge in her own interests, so that she does not have to spend so much time doing what some people may have regarded as 'menial' tasks. Thus, with advancements in domestic technology and gradual changes in social attitudes, the mother has been gaining status and at the same time subconsciously undermining the position of the father.

Another positive move for the mother has been the recognition of her significance amongst psychoanalysts to the extent that psychoanalysis itself has become mother-centred, as Janet Sayers explains in her introduction to *Mothering Psychoanalysis* (1991):

Its focus has shifted from the past and individual issues concerning patriarchal power, repression, resistance, knowledge, sex and castration, to the present and interpersonal issues concerning maternal care and its vicissitudes - identification, idealization and envy, deprivation and loss, love and hate, introjection and projection.⁴

All these aspects inherent in mother-centred psychoanalysis will be taken into account when analysing the relationships between mothers and daughters in this chapter. In her book Sayers describes the lives of Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Anna Freud and Melanie Klein, and their pioneering work in the field of psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century. She also points out that such mother-centred psychoanalysis appeals to feminists because much more importance is placed on the love of a mother and the effects

of this being denied or abused, as well as the fact that such psychoanalysis "apparently valorizes women's work, at least as mothers".⁵ Contrastingly, Margarete Mitscherlich highlights the issue that for a long time many in the Women's Movement have expressed a great deal of hatred towards the mother, since they blame her for restricting a daughter's development and preventing female independence.⁶ Whilst the anger arising from such conflict with the mother has lately abated, some feminists continue to be concerned about the mother's powerful effect on female sexuality and identity as well as her underpinning of the cultural prejudices of male and female. Mothers are seen as primarily responsible for their children's gender roles, so they are the first to be blamed if development is in any way stunted.

Thus, on a psychological level problems do still exist with regard to society's recognition of the mother's ability to be independent, and also the part she plays in influencing her child's autonomous development: it is here that we see the extent to which the mother's existence is inextricably linked to that of her daughter and vice versa. For every child, female and male, the mother is the first, most important person in its life because she nurtures it, and the child depends totally on her. In order to grow up, each infant has to separate from its mother and learns about its sexual identity from its respective parent, hence a girl will have to identify with her mother so that she can learn from her about being female. This suggests, therefore, that she will be influenced by her mother's attitude towards sexuality, her methods of coping with emotions, her values. Yet each female infant must part from her mother in order to create her individual identity. Thus, the problems embedded in the mother-daughter relationship are already evident in early childhood. For every daughter her relationship with her mother is the first and probably the most important one in her life, at the same time the nature of the bond is highly

ambiguous and can create a stifling environment, not only for the daughter, but also for the mother. As psychoanalysts indicate, both daughter and mother have their own reasons for finding it difficult to separate from one another.

If we consider the daughter's inability to break free from her mother first, it is noticeable that part of the problem stems from the fact that the daughter does not need to part from her mother in order to achieve her gender identity, unlike the son who has to turn to his father, and in so doing separates himself from his mother. The daughter, therefore, has neither experienced the process of separation nor learnt how to break away from her mother at this crucial stage in her development. She remains attached to her mother and knows no difference. The daughter's initial identification with her mother is both physically and sexually related; the bond is later prolonged by emotional conflict and the pressure of societal expectations, as Signe Hammer explains:

In der Beziehung zur Mutter erfährt die Tochter erstmals, was es bedeutet, eine Person zu sein, oder aber sie muß erleben, daß sie nicht dazu angehalten wird, ein Bewußtsein der eigenen Identität zu entwickeln. Es sind die Reaktionen der Mutter auf den Körper der Tochter und dessen Bedürfnisse, welche bewirken, daß die Tochter selbst zu ihrem Körper eine Beziehung herstellt und damit die Grundlage für das wachsende Bewußtsein der sexuellen Identität legt. Und schließlich ist es die Mutter, die als erste der Tochter andeutet, welche Erwartungen die Umwelt an die Trägerin der weiblichen Rolle stellt.⁷

According to Hammer, three factors contribute to the shaping of the daughter's identity: first, the personality of the mother; second, the surroundings of the maternal home into which the girl is born; and third, the daughter's personal characteristics. All these factors interact to form the foundation for the mother-daughter relationship. For the daughter separation, that is, freeing herself from her attachment to her mother, which should start between the ages of three and four, is fraught with difficulties and becomes increasingly complex as she grows older. Furthermore, the process of achieving individuation is in progress more or less throughout the daughter's life.⁸ The women's novels to be considered here show that this is true, since in each book the daughter is in her late thirties or early forties, and still unsure about her life as an individual, independent being, and as a consequence lacks confidence in herself. Her uncertainty, as we shall see, has its roots in her relationship with her mother, which combines both conflict and deep ties.

In fiction and in reality there is no denying the strength of a mother's influence over her daughter's life: the more a daughter tries to deny this influence, the stronger its hold is likely to be over her subconscious. In attempting to achieve autonomy, feelings of love and hate for the mother vie with one another, so that the daughter is bound to suffer one way or another. If she does not break free she pleases her mother by complying with her wishes, but at the same time she increasingly resents her dependence as she grows older. If she does succeed in separating herself from the one person who loves her unconditionally, there is the fear that she might lose this love by hurting her mother, and she also begins to feel guilty for appearing to have deserted her. In *The Bonds of Love* (1990) Jessica Benjamin highlights the problems a daughter may encounter if fear of separating from the mother prevails, leading to compliance and self-denial on the part of the daughter:

To the extent that the mother has sacrificed her own independence, the girl's attempt at independence would represent an assertion of power for which she has no basis in identification. (...) The girl's sense of self is shaped by the realization that her mother's source of power resides in her self-sacrifice. For the girl the agony of asserting difference is that she will destroy (internally) her mother, who is not only an object of love but also a mainstay of identity. Thus she protects the all-good, all-powerful maternal object at the price of compliance. She becomes unable to distinguish what she wants from what mother wants. The fear of separation and difference has been transposed into submission.⁹

We shall see that Benjamin's explanation for the daughter's subordination to her mother is partly true of the daughter-mother bond in Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung*, where the daughter does agonise over her mother's self-sacrifice and also recognises that she cannot escape her mother's tyranny. In such situations the daughter often creates a 'false self' in order to be her mother's ideal child.

As briefly mentioned, another traumatic aspect of the daughter's effort to achieve individuation is the sense of guilt she experiences if she fails in her mother's perception of her duty as a "good daughter" and neglects her mother in any way:

Guilt is the name we give anxiety at the fear of losing symbiosis with mother. Guilt is what we feel when we leave

her ourselves. All our lives, whenever we say goodbye, there is this feeling we have not been able to give her something she wanted. (...) Next time we meet, we promise ourselves that we will try harder, we will be "a good daughter", we will give her this magic something that will make her happy. But the next time we fail again, and after she dies we know we have failed forever.¹⁰

Nancy Friday suggests that the word 'guilt' is being used by daughters in the wrong context. They have, after all, committed no crime when they attempt to break away from their mothers, but their mothers have imbued them with guilt feelings to the extent that it is the daughter, who is afraid that she will lose her mother as she tries to move away from her towards independence. For some daughters the urge to succeed in separating from their mothers, as they grow older, is such that they can become callous in their filial behaviour, refuse to have anything to do with their mothers, and end any communication between them in order to escape the mother's control. However, the tie between mother and daughter can never be completely severed, as these works of fiction illustrate. After interviewing 120 American women in the late seventies for her study of mother-daughter relationships entitled *Our Mothers' Daughters* (1979), Judith Arcana concluded that although daughters may reject their mothers consciously, they still follow her subconsciously.¹¹ This becomes particularly noticeable when the daughter has her own children, or when she has to 'mother' her own mother in old age and/or infirmity. Such a role reversal will be explained in greater detail when we consider the mother's identification with her daughter. For now, though, it should be stressed that physical departure from the mother will not

automatically break the bond of maternal influence and control gained through generations of mothers.

Friday comments on how common it is nowadays for adult women to reject their mothers as individuals and to claim that they do not want to be like her:

Traditionally we felt safety in being as closely tied to mother, as much like her as possible. We repeated her life out of fear that being different meant being separate, abandoned, the object of her disapproval and anger. Today we listen to our new voices, look at the visible differences between our lives and our mothers' and make the mistake of thinking we are New Women who have given birth to ourselves. It is practising deception on the maddest level. We think we are strong, big, putting our mothers far behind us, people of another place and time. It is a dangerous form of denial. In fact real strength will come from an almost daily reminder of how much, on the deepest level, we are still our mothers' daughters.¹²

This fear of resembling mother and becoming like her has been termed by Lynn Sukenick as "matrophobia".¹³ And as Adrienne Rich explains, this fear implies "the desire to become purged once and for all of our mother's bondage, to become individuated and free".¹⁴ It is a theme which does run through the daughter-mother relationships portrayed in the novels selected for analysis here. Society also affects the way in which

the daughter interprets her closeness to her mother. Since historically the position of the mother has been regarded as inferior and therefore devalued by society as a whole, the daughter is bound to come up against such external, negative criticism which will colour her inner judgement of her mother. Hence the comparison "you are just like your mother" is usually expressed in a critical tone of voice and implies a negative similarity between daughter and mother. If the daughter does not succeed in becoming an autonomous being, this failure will probably be reflected in her marriage. As we saw in the daughter-father relationship, the father can affect the daughter's choice of lover and/or husband. In the daughter-mother relationship the inability of the daughter to become independent suggests that she will need to be dependent on the person she loves because that is what she has been accustomed to doing: she will, therefore, transfer the dependence, normally to her husband, after her mother dies. She, thereby, defines herself in relation to him. Hence, another negative implication of the close relationship between mother and daughter is highlighted by Hammer, who also underlines the cycle of repeated dependence between these two women, from one generation to the next:

Abhängigkeit hat für die soziale Rolle der Frau eine besondere Bedeutung; eine Tochter, die von ihrer Mutter abhängig bleibt, wird ihr Abhängigkeitsbedürfnis auf den Ehemann übertragen und erwarten, daß die Tochter wiederum abhängig von ihr wird, womit sich der Kreis schließt. Das Weiblichkeitstraining wirkt also der Entwicklung von Bewußtsein der eigenen Identität des kleinen Mädchens

entgegen; da sie in der Identität der Mutter aufgeht, bleibt sie
ihr nahe.¹⁵

So far we have concentrated on the negative aspects of the daughter's identification with her mother, since these all point to the difficulties a daughter incurs in growing into an independent individual. They are more or less the same difficulties which impeded the mother's formation of a separate identity, hence the negative aspects do tend to outweigh the positive ones, such as learning to love unconditionally and to appreciate that no other relationship will ever be so closely entwined. The notion that mother and daughter nurture each other, and are interdependent on one another, has already been hinted at in the suggestion that the roles of mother and daughter are at times reversible. For the daughter this may be a defence mechanism in the face of criticism for remaining attached to her mother:

To buttress the argument that we have outgrown the need for mother, many of us smile and say we have reversed the roles - mother is now the 'child' in the relationship. This ignores the fact that the tie, the link through dependency, is still there. Just because we're now mother's protector doesn't mean we're separate.¹⁶

In the 1940s Simone de Beauvoir's study of women culminated in the now internationally renowned *The Second Sex* (1949), in which she too referred to the frequency with which a daughter would reverse her role with her mother's on account of her imitation and

identification with her.¹⁷ Certainly the three novels do underpin the fact that such role reversals still occur in this day and age and are inherent in the symbiotic relationship. It is worth noting at this stage, before analysing the mother's identification with her daughter, that psychologists' definition of 'identification' do vary, and usually fall into three categories: a child *wants* to be like the parent; a child *behaves* like the parent; or it *feels* closest to the parent.¹⁸ All three definitions could be perceived as having a positive ring to them and do not appear to be appropriate for the identification patterns which have emerged between daughter and mother. The implication is that the male child has some choice, some control, because he is allowed freedom to explore his identity, whilst the identity of the female child seems predetermined and inevitable.

Such conditioning arises from the mother's own uncertainty about her independence because she too will have been conditioned by the expectations of her mother, her husband and society as a whole. She is likely to convey her pent-up resentment and frustration about being undervalued, her self-doubt, to her young daughter, whom she will initially view as her double and to whom she transmits her role as a woman, her female identity:

The daughter is for the mother at once her double and another person, the mother is at once overweeningly affectionate and hostile towards her daughter; she will saddle her child with her own destiny: a way of proudly laying claim to her own femininity and also a way of revenging herself for it. (...)
Because she knows as yet only her childhood universe, her mother at first seems to her to be endowed with more authority than her father; she imagines the world to be a kind

of matriarchate; she imitates her mother and identifies herself with her; frequently she even reverses their respective roles: 'When I am big, and you are little' she likes to say to her mother.¹⁹

At the outset the daughter is perceived as an ally, since the mother's identification is so strong that she wants her daughter to be just like her: it is as if the female infant is an extension of herself, at the same time she confirms the identity of the mother. It is little wonder, therefore, that the mother will be reluctant to let her daughter go because it will adversely affect her own sense of identity, which only really finds its purpose of existence in the daughter through whom the mother will live her life. Furthermore, the daughter's dependence on the mother provides the mother with "her only source of emotional security", hence she will definitely not wish to lose her.²⁰ Through her female child the mother gains control and a sense of superiority. For this reason, as Chodorow convincingly argues, it is in the mother's interest to prevent her daughter from becoming autonomous; she will want the daughter to always have a childlike dependence on her because this will ensure that the woman's position as a mother is significantly powerful and influential.

Paradoxically, then, the mother is relying on her daughter's dependence: she finds it equally difficult to separate from her daughter. Many psychoanalysts and therapists have discovered that mothers and daughters view the physical boundaries between them as virtually non-existent, such is the extent to which their egos intermingle and are interdependent.²¹ Thus mother and daughter risk the danger of becoming one identity:

Nur zu oft bleibt die Beziehung zwischen Tochter und Mutter in jenem ungeklärten Zustand, in dem es der Mutter nicht gelingt, sich von der Tochter zu lösen, und die Tochter es nicht fertigbringt, sich aus der kindlichen Abhängigkeit von der Mutter zu befreien. In der Tochter wird sie dann bis zu einem gewissen Grade ihr eigenes Kindheits-Ich von neuem erleben und auch die Identität mit ihrer Mutter, wie sie sie in der Kindheit übernommen hat; sie wird also zugleich ihre eigene Mutter und ihr eigenes Kind.²²

In her relationship with her daughter, the mother, thus, relives her relationship with her own mother - such is the continuity and destiny of this bond - and it may offer her the chance of resolving conflicts. It is, therefore, possible that some women become mothers so that they can experience again the feeling of being mothered.²³ This is particularly the case for daughters, who believe that the baby will provide the love they did not receive from their mothers. Due to the strong sense of identification a mother may also, subconsciously, pressurise her daughter into becoming a mother because the daughter will interpret this as remaining attached to her mother by following in her footsteps and becoming like her, and so staying loyal to her role-model:

Sometimes a daughter will become too much a part of the mother's life which she cannot relinquish. Because the mother is lonely and unfulfilled, she clings to the daughter, as though she were a part of herself. To ward off feelings of

emptiness, she won't let the daughter go. Unconsciously, the daughter feels the mother's panic at being left. Leaving the mother, growing up, equals betrayal and abandonment of the mother.²⁴

As the daughter grows older, it is conceivable that her flourishing femininity will be interpreted as competition by the mother, a threat to her identity as a woman. She may even be regarded as a traitor rather than a confidante because the daughter will be wanting to break away to develop her individuality. It is then that the seeds of conflict begin to grow in number and strength. As already indicated, there is the likelihood that the mother's authority will be undermined. By denying independence she remains the dominant one. She may become jealous of her daughter, if she does achieve some form of independence; jealous also of her daughter's future and her own declining years.²⁵ This is not to say, however, that *all* mothers behave in the same way nor that *all* daughters are forced to choose between dependence/motherhood and autonomy, and hurting the mother. The issues which have been raised merely illustrate how complex and intricately interwoven the relationship between mother and daughter is. In her review of *Close Company* (1987), a compilation of short stories about the relationships between mothers and daughters around the world, Penny Perrick presents a very fatalistic view of the behaviour of mothers and daughters towards one another:

The battle between mothers and daughters, a battle in which both are engaged as long as they both shall live, is both remorseless and futile. Every daughter knows that she will

end up like her mother and yet she fights for a spurious sense of identity. Every mother knows that she wants her daughter to have a better life than she had had and yet she does all she can to prevent her daughter from making a dash for freedom.²⁶

Although such a description of the relationship may be applied in extreme cases, it does deny women their individuality and must, consequently, be regarded as an insult. The "battle" to which Perrick refers, should perhaps more appropriately be termed an 'emotional struggle', because, as has been illustrated, any conflict between mother and daughter always involves emotions rather than reason and is, therefore, unresolvable. The daughters portrayed in fiction reach the same conclusion. Certainly, the inevitability of a daughter becoming a clone of her mother would seem doubtful, if other factors, such as her father, brothers and sisters, friends and education, are taken into account, and especially nowadays with emphasis on the freedom of women in general. Nor does the daughter achieve autonomy merely through physical separation. Without doubt the mother's self is mirrored within her, so that, as Michael Moeller points out in his introduction to Barbara Franck's *Ich schau' in den Spiegel und sehe meine Mutter* (1979), the daughter has to deal intellectually with her own identity before she can handle the emotional conflict successfully: in other words, she has to be sure of her own self-image:

Die Mutter ist zum eigenen Ich geworden. Sie ist gar nicht mehr nur draußen, sondern in mir selbst. Deshalb hilft in späteren Jahren nicht eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Mutter,

sondern mit sich selbst. Man kann die Mutter nicht loswerden, indem man sich äußerlich von ihr trennt - so wichtig dieser Schritt nach den Pubertätsjahren für die aktuelle eigene Identität sein mag.²⁷

Seeking confidence in one's own self is reiterated by these daughters who in fictional form describe their relationships with their mothers. Detailed, analytical reflection is their method of discovering their identities; at the same time these works illustrate what analysts now regard as crucial to the healthy development of a mother-daughter relationship, in fact all human relationships, namely recognition and respect for one another's individuality. As Benjamin points out, "the child's ability to recognize the mother as a person in her own right, is as significant a goal as separation" and vice versa, the mother on whom the daughter has depended must learn to accept the daughter's autonomy.²⁸ Furthermore, there should be encouragement from both parents, as in their attitude towards their son. According to Jane Flax, for the young girl "the rift between identifying with the mother and being oneself can only be closed within a relationship in which one is nurtured for being one's autonomous self".²⁹ As will become evident from the three books under scrutiny in this chapter, if the ambivalences between mother and daughter have not been resolved by the time the daughter reaches adulthood, then the writing process for these women aids their understanding and appreciation of their mothers as separate persons, and thereby provides a starting-point for self-recognition. Hence Bell Gale Chevigny's following comment pinpoints the female writer's concern and purpose in writing about her mother:

The symbiotic quality of the relation between mother and daughter, whether we accept it or reject it, is such that it is difficult for us to know one another *both* intimately and clearly. Our difficulty in knowing our mothers dominates us as daughters and, to some extent, blocks our growth and self-knowledge. I am convinced that when, as daughters writing, we are moved to study a foremother, we are grappling with some aspect of this ignorance which is so costly to ourselves.³⁰

In Wohmann's *Ausflug mit der Mutter* the narrator does, indeed, appear to reveal the hidden intention of each of these women writers, when she confesses that "Schreiben über die Mutter ist die einzige Möglichkeit, über den Kopf der Mutter weg mit mir selbst zurechtzukommen" (A.M. 63).³¹ It will become apparent that each writer does intersperse her interpretation of her mother's life with her search for a self-image, so that Virginia Woolf's belief that "we think back through our mothers if we are women", first expressed in 1928, is revived and expanded upon by these contemporary writers.³² The narrator-cum-daughter in Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung*, for instance, comments: "Wenn wir versuchen, uns zu definieren, wenn uns andere mit Worten zu fassen suchen, greifen wir auf unsere Mütter zurück" (Z. 183).³³ In many contemporary autobiographical, quasi-autobiographical or confessional novels by women, the daughter does have to define herself in terms of her mother in order to develop her independence. Works by Margaret Atwood, Margaret Drabble and Alice Munro, amongst others, are indicative of the psychological journeys daughters undertake to achieve separation from their mothers and break free from their

dependence.³⁴ By writing about their mothers and their relationships with them, these daughters confront their own insecurities, their ambivalences and force themselves to make sense of these anxieties in spite of their deep-rooted fears: "Warum fange ich dann an zu stottern, wann immer ich mich ihr mit Worten nähere, wann immer ich sie als Spiegel benutzen möchte, um mich selbst schärfer zu sehen?" (Z. 133). As will be shown, the uneasy process of writing may well indicate a form of self-therapy and self-affirmation. By making predominant use of the first-person narrative, these writers illustrate how an adult daughter begins to realise the extent to which her past has been dominated by her mother, and how she has to learn to acknowledge and accept that her present continues to be influenced by that same woman. This is despite the fact that the mother has been dead for sixteen years (*Die Züchtigung*), that the daughter is working elsewhere and no longer living at home (*Kartenhaus*), that the daughter is married and has a career (*Ausflug mit der Mutter*). These writers thus show that total separation from the mother is impossible. Even death, as previously illustrated in the daughter-father relationship, cannot destroy the attachment because so much of the mother is incorporated in the daughter's own self, both physically and psychologically. The daughter in Mitgutsch's novel goes so far as to suggest that she belonged to her mother because she created her identity, so that when her mother died, she also died: their interdependence was such that she could not imagine surviving without her mother:

Sie hat sich in mich verwandelt, sie hat mich geschaffen und
 ist in mich hineingeschlüpft, als ich gestorben bin vor
 sechzehn Jahren, als sie mich totgeschlagen hat vor dreißig

Jahren, hat sie meinen Körper genommen, hat sie meine Gedanken an sich gerissen, hat sie meine Gefühle usurpiert.
(Z. 246)

There are a number of areas in which the adult daughter sees herself still identifying with her mother. One such area is the daughter's behaviour and attitude towards relationships with men. In Schriber's *Kartenhaus* the daughter, Hanna, realises that her sense of insecurity as a child has led to her inability to be totally independent in adulthood:

Ich wurde lebensstüchtig gemacht für ein Leben an der Seite eines Mannes. Jetzt, da ich mich selber schützen und durchsetzen muß, fällt es mir schwer nicht immerzu bei jemandem Rat and Halt zu suchen. (K.H. 125-126)³⁵

At the age of forty she is unmarried. She has not fulfilled the traditional expectation of becoming a wife and has, therefore, broken the cycle. However, it does not appear to be a positive step because the fact that she is still single is not as in Plessen's *Mitteilung an den Adel* a rebellious act or even one of choice, but illustrates the effect the father's departure from the family home had on the daughter, and her parents' subsequent divorce must have also shaped the daughter's opinion of marriage and the way in which men could treat women. Schriber portrays two women across two generations whose position within the family circle and in society in general continues to be weak and unstable. The daughter is able to recall the life of domestic servitude her mother had, whilst her husband lived at home. She remained in the background, lived in fear and was always at the beck and call

of her husband. As a woman she did not know any other life, for her own childhood had been dominated by a powerful father who imposed strictness, which was akin to violence. When seated at the dinner table he would strike his daughter's hands with a knife if she moved. Often, for no apparent reason, he would refuse to speak to either his wife or daughters for a whole month. Thus Hanna's mother developed into a shy and introverted girl. At the age of twenty-seven she married. When questioned by her daughter about her reasons for marrying, she can only reply that her husband-to-be made her laugh and was a good talker. She did not know the reason for actually consenting and had never really considered marriage. She admired him, yet was afraid of him right from the beginning. There was no mention of love. On a number of occasions Hanna comments upon her awareness that she was being brought up in the same mould as her mother; that she, too, would be dependent on men.³⁶ Since she was already forbidden to express her wishes and voice her thoughts as a young girl, her future prospects seemed bleak. In her games with Max, the only playmate mentioned in the book, who drowns during one of their visits to the grotto of Mother Maria Theresia, she would play at happy families, pretending that she and Max were husband and wife and had two children. Together they would act out their perspective of a typical married couple's life: Max would go out to work, Hanna would be the housewife and on Sundays they would have a special lunch followed by a walk to the lake with their children. Hanna would draw a house in the sand which, as a result of Max's boredom, would be wiped away by him. Thus, even in this world of make-believe Hanna's ideal family and idyllic homelife could not survive.

Once the daughter did actually leave home, she was likely to be vulnerable on account of her lack of self-confidence, and what she had learnt from the way in which her father had treated her mother when at home, and the way he could just walk away from his wife

and daughter and choose another woman of his daughter's age to love, thus shattering the daughter's childhood vision of a perfect marriage. At the age of forty this daughter cannot confide in her mother about her own unhappy relationship with a married man, who intends to return to his wife having realised how much his wife loves him. The implication is that this daughter will not succeed in maintaining a steady relationship because she had never witnessed such a relationship between her parents, nor had she ever felt loved by them, hence it would seem unlikely that she would be able to reciprocate love in later relationships and have a family of her own:

Es gibt keine innigen Augenblicke, in die wir alle eingeschlossen sind. Ich habe vielleicht nie ein Gefühl von Familie gehabt, oder ich habe es irgendwann verloren.

(K.H. 151)

On the one hand, the adult daughter is able to identify with her mother because she, too, is living alone with her memories; on the other hand, she has broken the cycle of motherhood because she has no children, no daughter to whom she will pass on her gender identity. She has no intention of letting history repeat itself. Her decision, though, as we have seen, is based on bad experiences and suffering:

Nach so vielen Jahren Allein-am-Tisch-Essen werde ich wie sie über den Tisch hängen. Aber keine Tochter wird mit kaltem Blick jede meiner Bewegungen kontrollieren. Niemand wird mich an meine früheren Leben erinnern.

Meine Tage werden von Figuren statt von Menschen bevölkert sein. (K.H. 143)

Schriber's novel, thus, illustrates how the mother's submissive role as a child and as an adult has been absorbed by her daughter.

In *Die Züchtigung* the daughter is shown to repeat her mother's behaviour towards men in her adult relationships. The situation is the reverse of the one depicted in *Kartenhaus*, for in Mitgutsch's novel it is the mother who possesses power, and the father is weak and unable to stand up to his wife, or possibly just indifferent. Again there is no evidence of love between husband and wife in the daughter's recollections. The daughter, Vera, sees how her mother is able to slap her husband across the face without any response from him:

Sie lehrte mich die Männerverachtung. Männer brauchen eine starke Hand. Einmal gab sie ihm eine Ohrfeige. Ich hielt den Atem ein, aber nichts geschah. (...) Ich lernte die Einsamkeit von ihr und daß die Ehe ein Status ist, der einem mäßigen Schutz gewährt, nicht eine Gemeinschaft zwischen zwei Menschen. (Z. 149-150)

This 'inherited' disregard for men, and the inability to love and be loved, is reflected in the adult daughter's contempt for the men who do enter her life in that she changes her "Liebhaber wie Hemden" (Z. 115) and expects the relationship to be not only temporary, but also violent, since she had been brought up to understand punishment as a sign of love, as will be explained when we consider the history of child abuse in this portrayed family.

For now it is necessary to observe that in this novel Mitgutsch is intent upon illustrating the cyclical nature of the mother-daughter relationship, so that the daughter finds herself reliving her mother's behaviour towards men, as Maria-Regina Kecht also points out: "the heroine is doomed to reproduce her mother, to be hopelessly caught in a cycle of transmitted identity":³⁷

Aber das Schicksal der Mütter setzt sich in den Töchtern fort.
Einmal kommt die Mutter und sagt, so, mein Kind, jetzt bist du alt genug, jetzt zeige ich dir mein Leben. Ich schrie, du liebst mich nicht, du Schwein, und sah das verquollene Gesicht meiner Mutter, ich sah mit entsetzten Augen, wie sie meinem Vater ins Gesicht spuckte, aber es war der Mann, mit dem ich lebte, der sich den Speichel abwischte und mir ins Gesicht schlug. (Z. 10)

The daughter's recollections of her upbringing and relationship with her mother are, in fact, instigated by her own twelve-year-old daughter's question: "War deine Mutter so wie du?" (Z. 5). The narrator responds by denying any resemblance, yet the memories prove the contrary, and her future relationship with her own daughter does appear to be predestined. Due to her father's lack of influence in her upbringing she has no need of a man in her life, especially after the father of her child walked out on her when the baby was born. But it is now her young daughter who accuses her of not providing a proper sense of family unity and blames her mother for her feelings of insecurity. Thus, the narrator once again experiences the conflicting ambivalences of the mother-daughter bond,

which has come full circle. She identifies with her mother's attitude as a result of her upbringing, and she has herself become a mother of a female child who, like her own mother, will highlight her failures and at the same time be her future:

Ich habe sie sechzehn Jahre lang immer von neuem begraben,
sie ist immer wieder aufgestanden und ist mir nach-
gekommen. Sie hat nich schon lange eingeholt. Sie sieht
mich in den Augen meines Kindes an. (Z. 246)

Wohmann's narrator similarly comments on the belief that neither mother nor daughter will die because the female identification process is so strong that it guarantees their immortality: "In Wahrheit aber komme ich doch von der Gewißheit nicht los, daß auch sie, sie wie ich, unsterblich ist" (A.M. 54).³⁸

In *Kartenhaus* the mother refers a number of times to her relationship with her own mother and how she regrets not having visited her more often. Similar thoughts cross the narrator's mind with regard to her infrequent visits to her mother. Yet it is the mother of Hanna who envisages a better future for her daughter and now lives her life through her daughter, wanting to make amends for the poor relationship she had had with her mother and wanting to be a better mother. As Jenny Cozens points out, a past mother-daughter relationship does not inevitably have to be repeated: "Just because your mother was unloving towards you, it doesn't follow that you'll also turn out to be an unloving mother or a slave in relationships the way you used to be with her".³⁹ This notion of trying to improve on a past mother-daughter relationship and the daughter's hope that she may in some way even destroy the apparently foregone conclusion of repetition through generations

of women is stressed by Mitgutsch's narrator, who has every intention of breaking the cycle:

Liebe Oma, du hättest nicht einmal mein Kind geliebt, sage ich (...) und lache, weil ich die Macht habe, die Kette zu unterbrechen und alles ungültig zu machen, das Abendgebet und den Gehorsam, die Angst und vielleicht sogar den Haß.
(Z. 104)

This is already evident from the fact that she consciously does not smack her daughter. For this mother this seems a major step forward in introducing change, since it was her mother's excessive beating and punishing which characterised and bonded their relationship of oppressor and victim. But her daughter regards this absence of smacking as nothing unusual, as quite natural, instead she blames her mother for not providing a harmonious family environment in a permanent home with a father. The realisation by the narrator that her daughter is unhappy, is sufficient proof that she has not broken the cycle. The conflict, although not physical, continues on a psychological level between mother and daughter. According to therapists the patterns of the past are particularly visible in child abuse cases: "You can decide consciously not to be like your mother, but in times of stress you may well find yourself reverting to the familiar pattern".⁴⁰ Vera becomes so obsessed with being 'a good mother', so concerned about not making the same mistakes as her mother did, that she does not see what this continuous self-analysis has done to her daughter. However severe and cruel her mother's punishment of her had been, it had been a form of perverse attention. Having reflected on her past life with her mother, the narrator is able to view

her present relationship with her daughter critically and acknowledge that she has not been able to discard her mother's influence. Her thoughts had been of her mother and not of her daughter; her introspection had consequently isolated her child and caused her to be lonely, just as she had been:

Der Kampf zwischen uns war stumm und gewaltlos, aber nicht weniger schuldvoll, nicht einmal frei von Haß. (...) Du ziehst dich zurück, und nur wenige können dich erreichen, und ich sehe zu, stumm, hilflos und beschämt. Es ist mir nicht gelungen, die Kette zu unterbrechen. Ich bin auch hier die Tochter meiner Mutter geblieben. (Z. 156)⁴¹

It is the narrator's failure to bring happiness to her daughter's life which is indicative of her own miserable childhood. And it is this awareness of somehow having let down the person with whom you identified, and the sense of culpability, which dominate all these daughter-mother relationships, penetrating each generation, and could, therefore, be regarded as female traits because they lead to a woman's doubts about her worth and competence, both in the home and at work.

Feelings of guilt and insecurity pervade these three narratives, whether we focus on the mother or the daughter: their emotions are frequently indistinguishable. This is particularly the case when the daughter becomes a mother. In considering the role of mothers today Jane Swigart highlights the fact that mothers profoundly influence their children's lives by providing guidance on feelings and behaviour. Little wonder, then, that the mother conveys

her insecurities by example to her daughter, who in turn does the same to her children, especially her daughter who will, as a result, feel insecure in her femininity:

Guilt. Uncertainty. Trying to do it better this time around. Trying to give more. Trying to be a better mother than Mother was. In spite of such feelings or because of them, the guilt that many mothers feel is endless and tyrannical. Guilt for providing too much attention or not enough, for giving the child too much freedom or not enough, for spanking or not spanking - these feelings are common yet often hidden. (...) If we felt no guilt, we might never be moved to correct and learn from our mistakes. But the maternal *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa* is surely excessive; mothers tend to blame themselves for everything.⁴²

And if the mother does not initially blame herself then her daughter will certainly blame her, as *Die Züchtigung* illustrates. However, as will be explained later in this chapter, one of the reasons for portraying the mother-daughter relationship is that the daughter wishes to appease her guilty conscience. Wohmann's narrator goes to great lengths to justify this portrayal during the process of writing. Hence Swigart's suggestion that guilt is primarily a maternal feature is questionable, especially when we note the extent to which these daughters experience guilt, in retrospect, with regard to their treatment of their respective mothers. The main cause of guilt for the daughter, as indicated in earlier discussion of the mother-daughter attachment, is the daughter's desire to become autonomous. Whilst the

adult daughter still tries to break free from her dependence on her mother, she also feels as if she is abandoning her. The narrator in *Ausflug mit der Mutter* actually refers to herself as an "Überläufer", feeling guilty whenever she leaves her mother on her own: "Ich umarme meine Mutter. In meiner Begrüßung spüre ich meinen Abschied. Der liebe warme gutgenährte Körper ist plötzlich doch das Verlassenste, das ich weiß" (A.M. 117). The narrative opens with the mother standing alone, waving goodbye to her daughter and son-in-law as they drive away. The visit had had particular significance because it had been the first anniversary of the father's death. The solitary figure of the mother being left on her own strikes a chord in the heart and conscience of the narrator. Her memory captures this scene in such a way that she finds it necessary to go on to explain her attachment to her mother, thereby attempting to reconcile any conflict in their relationship. As long as there is this sense of guilt on the part of the daughter, she will remain tied to her mother:

My intellect tells me the guilt I feel whenever I say goodbye to her has nothing to do with what I did or didn't do. My mother is a reasonably happy woman, other people would say. I've been a reasonably good daughter, my mother would say. But until I understand my guilt, I will not be free of her.⁴³

In *Die Züchtigung* the mother even threatens her daughter twice with suicide, thus using emotional blackmail to prevent her daughter from leaving home. She cannot imagine living without her "Lebenswerk" and, therefore, losing the purpose of her existence, the extension of her persona, her double: "Wenn du fortgehst, das bringt mich um, sie wiederholte es

nicht, sie brauchte es nicht zu wiederholen, ich fühlte mich auch so schuldig genug" (Z. 227). Ironically there had been times when the daughter had wished her mother dead, so that when she did die the daughter felt doubly guilty: for having left her mother and for having wished for her death.⁴⁴ Throughout her childhood she had also been made to feel guilty by her mother for any trouble she caused her. Reflecting on her mother's death the narrator realises that she missed her chance to rectify this, hence her anxious concerns over her present relationship with her daughter. But, as noted in Chapter One, guilt is an emotion often experienced by all bereaved persons, not just daughters. Here, however, the emotion is heightened by the interdependence of identities:

Als sie tot war, wollte ich nicht mehr weiterleben. (...) Ich fühlte mich wie ein Krüppel ohne Krücken. (...) Meine Mutter hat sich für mich aufgeopfert, sagte ich, meine Mutter war mir alles. (...) Ich bin an ihrem Tod schuld, schrieb ich in mein Tagebuch. (Z. 9)⁴⁵

For all three daughters guilt is borne out of insecurity and fear of losing the mother, the one person to whom she is symbiotically tied. When we looked at the relationships between daughters and fathers the predominant causes of insecurity were lack of love and understanding. The same still applies to the mother-daughter relationships as presented in these novels. Although the love of the mother is supposed to be unconditional, both Vera and Hanna have to earn affection and see love as a reward for achievements:

Ich war ihr dankbar für ihre Liebe, die ich so selten zu fühlen bekam, aber es war ja meine Schuld, daß ich sie so selten verdiente, und ich drückte meine Dankbarkeit in Bastelarbeiten aus, die ich ihr zum Muttertag schenkte, in Zeichnungen und Gedichten. (Z. 136-137)

Liebe war schließlich ein dünner, kümmerlicher Ersatz, Lob und unbestimmte Zärtlichkeit für ausgezeichnete Leistung. Liebe kaufte man sich durch Selbstverleugnung, gute Noten und Übererfüllung der Erwartungen. (Z. 150)

During her childhood Hanna displays a need to achieve and succeed, to prove herself deserving of love: "Sich Mühe geben, um zu gefallen, diese Regel hat sich mir eingeprägt" (K.H. 138). She attempts to obtain her parents' attention by demonstrating her knowledge to them. She would prove her ability to read by reading aloud names on road signs during trips in the car. She would calculate sums aloud to exhibit her cleverness and to impress above all her father, who believed "Rechnen" was in his family's blood. The adult daughter comes to the conclusion that she must have failed in earning her parents' love because she can only remember receiving attention from them whenever she was ill or had injured herself. Her father would administer the dressing, whilst her mother comforted her. Both parents are portrayed as being incapable of expressing love demonstratively towards their daughter:

Ich wurde gemäßregelt, gelobt, getadelt, ermutigt,
angehalten, aufgefordert. Ein Kanon befehlender Stimmen
begleitete meine Kindheit und schied meine Wünsche,
meine Träume, meine Empfindungen, meine Taten in Gut und
Böse. (K.H. 143)

The warmth she did not receive from her parents she sought from the dogs her father owned for hunting. Whilst watching her father shoot a defenceless sparrow, Hanna feels faint because she realises that, like the bird, she is totally helpless: "Dieses Gefühl von Ohnmacht hat mich nie verlassen" (K.H. 163). Evidence of the daughter's need for the safety of her mother, who is unable to fulfil this need, is illustrated by Hanna's frequent nightmares. After having watched the Disney film *Bambi* she dreams that she is the fawn and thus compares her fear of being alone with that of Bambi, running away from the hunter - here her father - and crying out for her mother:

Und Bambis Angst war meine Angst. Mir galten die Fallen,
neben mir bohrten sich die Schüsse in die Stämme, ich mußte
durchs eisige Wasser schwimmen, ich rief nach meiner
Mutter. Ich war es, die allein auf der Insel stand und mich
nirgends verbergen konnte. (...) Der Gewehrlauf war auf
mich gerichtet. Und mein Vater war der Jäger. (K.H. 156)⁴⁶

The fact that it is the father whom the daughter fears, on account of his discipline and the control he has over the household, makes his permanent departure all the more significant

in its effect on her because it increases her uncertainty about his behaviour towards her and her mother. Tangible fear is replaced by fear of the future and the unknown without a figure of authority in the home.

The title *Kartenhaus* is symbolic of the insecurity the daughter and mother experience after the father leaves them. The likelihood of the walls caving in on them was already apparent from the direct reference to the narrator's childhood home, which was physically in a state of decay: "Wir lebten in einem faulenden, hohlen, zerbröselnden Haus" (K.H. 19). Schriber depicts a mother-daughter relationship which appears to be held together by the common denominator of the house. The house could be interpreted as a metaphor for their life together, on their own, completely reliant on one another within the confinements of the four walls. Marianne Burkhard highlights the predominant theme of the house in Swiss women's literature since the 1970s. She analyses a number of works by Elisabeth Meylan, Margrit Schriber, Maja Beutler and Gertrud Wilker and comes to the conclusion that

women assert themselves relatively late as writers due to the specific, historical continuity of traditional life patterns in Switzerland. And once a larger number of women emerges, they show a surprising unity in topical and symbolic orientation toward all forms of houses and places as closely structured living-spaces that define and confine existential possibilities.⁴⁷

The motif of the house is typical of contemporary Swiss women's literature, whereby the Swiss woman's social role has historically been defined by enclosure and prosperity, which in turn create a sense of security, described by Mary Stewart as a "Swiss disease".⁴⁸ This is very much the case in *Kartenhaus*, when we note that the mother since marriage has lived all her life in the same house and is content to shut herself away and be left in peace:

Wir betraten nie andere Häuser. Es war nicht Brauch einander zu besuchen. Wir trafen die Nachbarn am Gartentor, auf dem Weg zum Laden, zur Kirche oder zum Bahnhof. Nur bei Krankenbesuchen huschte jemand ins Zimmer, legte Blumen auf die Decke und verschwand. Bei Kondolenzbesuchen standen die Nachbarn für die Dauer eines Gebets vor dem Sarg. Gute Nachbarschaft bestand in Fragen über den Zaun oder von Fenster zu Fenster, in einer Schüssel mit Eiern oder Obst auf der Türschwelle, dem Ruf durch die offene Haustür, man habe etwas hingestellt. (K.H. 185-186)

Only one reference is made to "Kartenhaus" in the text, which alludes to the devastating effect the father's departure from the house had on his wife and daughter:

Und Mutters fieberhaftes Mühen um die Erhaltung unseres Hauses stützte meine Scheinbilder von Sicherheit. Wir bauten Attrappen um uns auf und wähten uns in Sicherheit. Irgendwann sturzte das Kartenhaus zusammen. Und ich

blickte auf ein Nichts, ein Loch, eine Leere. Ich mußte
versuchen, diese Sinnlosigkeit aufzufüllen. (K.H. 149)

Evidently the mother's attempts to reconstruct a new life for the two of them and to make up for the absence of a father do not succeed. Her preoccupation with alterations to the actual house provide her with sufficient security and happiness of a kind, but for the daughter it is a façade, an illusion of security: the reality is that mother and daughter are dependent on one another and that something/someone is missing from their lives. It takes twenty years before the daughter is ready to analyse the effect of her parents' divorce on her life. A return to her childhood home and the memories it evokes is indicative of the narrator's continuous search for stability in her life. Not only is she returning to the house but she is also returning to her mother. Having been brought up in an atmosphere of uncertainty, she is constantly on the move, unable to create a secure foundation for herself, to take root in one place and have a family of her own. The closing remark by the daughter underlines this unrest: "Ich habe mich viel zu lange aufgehalten, Mutter. Ich muß weiter" (K.H. 201).⁴⁹ She is once more on the move. Neither her mother nor the house with its memories are able to provide the mainstay she is seeking because with the passing of time changes have taken place: the house seems smaller, the mother much older. In broader terms the two generations of Swiss women have little in common and therefore little to discuss. The older woman is bound to the house and traditional values, whereas her daughter now partakes of public life by being an independent, career-minded woman for whom security at the age of forty can no longer be attained in modern-day Switzerland. Thus the security the mother and the house are supposed to represent appear to be illusory, in the sense that they cannot be applied to the reality of the daughter's life. The

recollections prove unhelpful and non-consoling: "Die Gestalten verdichten sich, spielen noch einmal ihre Rolle, verneigen sich und treten ab" (K.H. 37).

This concept of illusion and false security is to be found in *Ausflug mit der Mutter*, where the narrator is conscious of the fact that she perpetuates the role-playing between her and her mother, the artificiality of behaviour and falseness of feelings, because it provides a form of protection for each of them: the daughter protects her mother from harsh reality and at the same time she protects herself by not wanting to hear the truth, by talking about trivialities, by not allowing herself to get so close to her mother that she empathises with her and becomes too attached:

Das Kunstgefühl können wir einander zeigen. Die Tochter umarmt die Mutter übertrieben. Sie küßt die Mutter ab wie für immer. Sie demonstriert ihre Herzlichkeit in einer Verzerrung. Ein Gefühl muß erst künstlich und kann erst dann ein Ausdruck werden. (A.M. 9)

Hence a genuine relationship in adulthood seems impossible for this mother and daughter because, as will become evident when we consider the role-reversal of mother and daughter in these narratives, the daughter in Wohmann's novel, and for that matter in Schriber's novel, cannot accept the mother for what she is. Their relationship is "eine beendete Beziehung" (A.M. 76), since both daughter and mother hide their true emotions from one another, willingly participating in a "ritualized game-playing" on the stage of an "Erbarmungstheater" (A.M. 71) where gestures belie the insecurity of their relationship: "Eine falsche Bewegung genügt, und das ganze papierene Gebilde, unsere Verbindung, liegt

zerstört auf einem Bühnenboden" (A.M. 76).⁵⁰ It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that Wohmann has transformed the mother and daughter into characters in her book. In *Kartenhaus* the adult daughter also disguises the truth from her mother. On the one hand, she protects her mother by not wanting to cause her any unhappiness; on the other hand, they have grown apart, two different generations of women who have become strangers:

Was weiß ich von ihr? Was weiß ich von Vater? Was wissen sie von mir? Nur so viel, wie ich erzähle. Nebensächliches. Es geht mir immer gut, ich bin immer beschäftigt. (...) Ich vermittele den Eindruck, daß ich alles mit Leichtigkeit schaffe, daß ich alle Geborgenheit in mir selbst gefunden habe, daß ich nie flüchten möchte, zu keinem Platz auf der Welt. (K.H. 94)

The reader knows that the impression the daughter gives is far from the truth. The daughter's failure to find contentment in her life and peace of mind is common to these three portrayals and is shown to be directly linked to the ambivalences inherent in her relationship with her mother, as Mitgutsch's narrator notes: "Mama bedeutete Geborgenheit und Ausgesetztsein, sie konnte mich vor fast allem beschützen, außer vor sich selbst" (Z. 136). Whilst the mother personifies security, there is the danger that each daughter will identify too strongly with her, become trapped by the interdependence and never achieve individuation. It is, therefore, possible that barriers will go up between the adult daughter and mother as a defence mechanism and that distance will be created. In these fictional works each daughter does leave the mother and chooses to avoid attachment by visiting her

only occasionally. On a psychological level Jane Swigart presents possible reasons for the adult daughter's artificial behaviour towards her mother:

We may fear that empathizing with the mother will make us lose our identity or feelings of separateness. (...) If we were to truly understand what a mother feels on a deep level, we might feel engulfed in her pain, trapped in her frustrations, overwhelmed by the anguish of her guilt and ambivalences. Getting involved in the mother's emotional experiences may evoke the helplessness we once felt as small children. We idealize or blame the mother to maintain distance from the person who was once so close to us she seemed to be too much a part of ourselves.⁵¹

The implication is, then, that the daughter is not sufficiently sure of her own identity to withstand renewed closeness with her mother and is afraid of the mother's possible influence, even in adulthood.

The daughter's fear of losing an identity she has created whilst apart from her mother is deeply rooted in her fear of being dependent on the mother again, at her mercy: "Die Angst vor der Abhängigkeit, die Angst, von anderen etwas annehmen zu müssen, die Angst vor dem Dankbarseinmüssen, diese Angst in den Augen, diese Scham, ich floh vor diesem Blick" (Z. 239). It should be noted that throughout their childhood Hanna and Vera created 'false selves' in order to assume their subordinate roles and placate their parents. Influenced by her mother's wish to start a new life, a fresh beginning without her father,

Hanna showed her support by wanting to adopt a new identity, to be called Johanna, to change her appearance, her walk, her gestures. This superficial 'coming to terms' with her father's absence clearly reveals her inner insecurities. Vera learns the hard way: the only way that she will 'survive' the brutality of her mother is to be completely supplicant and 'wear' a mask to protect herself. Thus she makes her life bearable by recognising and identifying with her mother's needs, by conforming to her demands and finding some comfort in pleasing her mother:

Als ich vierzehn war, bekam ich die letzten Schläge. Wir wurden die besten Freundinnen, ich erzählte ihr nichts, sie mir alles. Ich war gut dressiert, meine Antworten waren spontan und entsprachen ihrer Erwartung. Ich brauche kein Fahrrad, es wäre zu gefährlich für mich. (Z. 9)

It is hardly surprising that the daughter consequently learnt not to express her true feelings and that as narrators each daughter's recollections serve as voyages of self-discovery. As we already saw in the case of Wohmann's narrator, she too will adopt a different persona so as not to destroy her mother's illusions or expectations.

This desire of the daughter to please her mother by submitting to her influence is made painfully apparent by Mitgutsch in her depiction of the daughter's attempt to hinder the development of her femininity, in order to abate her mother's increasing hatred of her. As the mother sees her daughter maturing physically, the eventuality of separation becomes threatening and imminent. Vera, sensing her mother's resentment, goes on an eating binge so that she becomes the fattest girl in the class, thereby pleasing her mother because her

fatness proves to the rest of society that her mother has been feeding her well - a sign of care and attention, of being well brought up. In fact, the eating disorders are a sign of the daughter's insecurity: she eats compulsively to oblige her mother, she then diets to please her lover and in the process becomes anorexic. Realising that her self-starvation emaciates her body so that it looks more and more unfeminine and shapes her into a child, she again satisfies her mother whose control over her daughter's mind and body is, thus, assured:

Ich betrachte meine knabenhafte Figur im Spiegel, die Brüste weg, die Hüften weg, die Regel weg, das Ärgernis war fortgeschafft, jetzt konnte sie mich wieder lieben. (...) Ich war wieder ein Kind, sie brauchte nicht mehr bedroht zu fühlen. Sie hatte gewonnen, ich hatte mich unterworfen.

(Z. 177)

Psychologists identify the characteristics of anorexics as being oversubmissiveness, lack of self-assertion and an extremely low self-esteem, which are all true of Vera. They also describe the mothers as being dominant and having an emotionally intense but ambivalent relationship with their daughters, whilst the fathers tend to be passive and detached from the family.⁵² Mitgutsch clearly provides the 'perfect' psychological case study of an anorexic daughter who, like other girls and women in a similar position, dominated by depression and anger, "internalise all their anxiety and distress and experience it via their bodies".⁵³ When we take the daughter's overeating into account we can appreciate the conclusion which feminist therapist Mira Dana has reached about women's eating disorders,

namely that they are the "effect of the mother's failure to validate her daughter's need".⁵⁴

This is because

it is our mothers who normally feed us when we are children, so any abuse of food can be read as a powerful communication about our nurturing. (...) Overeating may express a great need for parental attention which might have been scanty. And starving and stuffing also act on the body's biochemistry in a way that temporarily relieves emotional stress.⁵⁵

Sometimes the refusal to eat is regarded as an act of rebellion against the suffocating mother but this is not the case in Mitgutsch's novel, where the daughter eats/does not eat in an almost sacrificial manner and perpetuates the act of punishment, "eine fortgesetzte Selbstzüchtigung" (Z. 180), self-flagellation, thereby self-imposing her mother's will.

Further evidence of each grown-up daughter's insecurity is to be detected in the daughter's belief that she is still a child: "Ich bin noch immer ihr Kind. Eines mit ersten grauen Haaren, mit fremden Bekannten und unvertrauten Gewohnheiten" (K.H. 82-83), or that she wants to be a child again, and by that she does mean that she wants to return to a state of infantile dependence on her mother, as Wohmann's narrator comments: "Ich will dein kleines Kind sein, wie sich das gehört" (A.M. 31). It should be pointed out that this narrator does not present the reader with detailed recollections of her upbringing: there are no indications as to whether her relationship with her mother was good, bad or indifferent. Her concern lies in her adult relationship with her mother; in the contrast between the

modern, emancipated woman who is restless and the widow who lives in harmony and contentment; in her understanding of widowhood and coping with bereavement, so that her remark about wanting to be her mother's young child does indicate that she is in need of maternal support and highlights a regressive tendency in her relationship with her mother. There are times when she sees herself as an "altgewordenes Kind" (A.M. 75). The narrator, in fact, suggests that adulthood can be regarded as a betrayal of parents, in that children grow up to become separate persons who no longer behave naturally towards their parents, who lack frankness and turn the relationship into a masquerade:

In der Beziehung von Eltern und Kindern darf sich grundsätzlich am Lebensalter und an den mit ihm verbundenen Lebensäußerungen nichts ändern. Das Erwachsensein eines Kindes ist eine Verkehrtheit. Wer in seiner Kindheit sehr kindlich und völlig aufgehoben war, vergeht sich später als Erwachsener an den Eltern.
(A.M. 72-73)

Paradoxically, the daughter can accuse her parents of providing a home life which was so secure that she was not prepared for the 'real' world, yet there is the desire to return to that dependence on them.⁵⁶ Her sense of insecurity in adulthood, as well as her inability to accept the loss of her father even after a year of mourning, comes to the fore in a visit to the zoo, where she hopes to evoke nostalgic memories of childhood excursions with her parents, but instead the visit illustrates the extent to which she misses her father: "Sterbend hat der Vater so viel Welt mitgenommen. Sie ist restlos weg. Ein Vater fehlt" (A.M. 34).

Feelings of uncertainty are also highlighted by a trip to Karlsruhe where she appears to undergo a battle with her conscience: her thoughts are in a turmoil, set against the backdrop of chaotic city life. Paranoia is evident in her belief that everyone is watching her; panic-stricken she tries to escape their stares and in the process loses her way, which could be said to be symbolic of the loss of direction in her life. These two episodes also illustrate the extent to which mother and daughter differ in their handling of the mourning process. As already indicated, the daughter has not overcome her need of her father. On the one hand, his death has resulted in her idolisation of him: in her state of bereavement and melancholia she feels closer to him, able to understand him: "Ich habe es mit den Gestorbenen besser als mit den Lebenden, ich habe mehr von ihnen seit sie nicht mehr da sind und Angst verursachen" (A.M. 46).⁵⁷ On the other hand, her preoccupation with death means that she avoids reality and the fear of losing her mother, as Manfred Jurgensen comments: "Überall ist die Furcht vor dem Verlust der Mutter und damit der eigenen Identität spürbar".⁵⁸ In stark contrast the mother appears to have managed to adjust successfully to the absence of her husband on account of her positive attitude towards life, and has come to grips far quicker with widowhood than her daughter, as further analysis of the daughter's reasons for writing will reveal, since it is noticeable that the fictionalising of widowhood helps the daughter to understand her present-day relationship with her mother.

For the narrator in *Die Züchtigung* it is motherhood which in psychological terms brings her back to her mother. It is when she is pregnant that she starts to think about her mother: the identification process has come full circle. In the presence of her own screaming baby the adult daughter wishes that she was being nurtured once more. She does not want to face the responsibility of motherhood, the reality of another mother-daughter relationship

taking shape and the fear she has of being her mother all over again and repeating her behaviour:

Als ich mit dem Neugeborenen in die fremde, heiße Wohnung zurückkam und der Vater meines Kindes mich verließ, saß ich neben dem schreienden Kind und rief nach ihr. Ich wollte in ihre Arme zurück, ich schrie nach der Liebe, die ich meinem Kind verweigerte, ich wollte gewiegt werden, mich ganz klein machen in ihrem Schoß und nie mehr in die Wirklichkeit zurückmüssen. (Z. 7)

The daughter is conscious of how easy it would be for her to start mistreating her child. As a child she had pretended to be a mother, her dolls being her children. Imitating her mother and not wanting to be powerless in her world of make-believe, she beat her dolls. It is worth noting that psychoanalysts have in the past interpreted girls playing with dolls as a form of wish fulfilment, that the way the girl acts out her relationship with her doll is the way she hopes her mother will behave towards her, that by playing this game the wish becomes reality.⁵⁹ In *Die Züchtigung* Vera does not play the 'perfect', loving mother with her dolls, probably because she does not know the difference: for her the 'perfect' mother is the punishing mother. She is, after all, brought up to believe that love and torture are synonymous:

Die Strafe ist immer gerecht und wohlverdient. Wer sein Kind liebt, der züchtigt es. (Z. 19)

Kinder müssen unbedingt geschlagen werden, sonst wird nichts aus ihnen, wer sein Kind liebt, der spart die Rute nicht.

(Z. 101)⁶⁰

Just as the daughter is an alter ego for the mother, so the doll is both the daughter's double and her child. The doll must, therefore, suffer the pain she experiences at the hands of her mother, as Beauvoir explains:

When she scolds, punishes, and then consoles her doll, she is at once vindicating herself as against her mother and assuming, herself, the dignity of a mother: she combines in herself the two elements of the mother-daughter pair. She confides in her doll, she brings it up, exercises upon it her sovereign authority, sometimes she even tears off its arms, beats it, tortures it. Which is to say she experiences subjective affirmation and identification through the doll.⁶¹

It is not difficult to see, therefore, how the child's concept of motherhood filters through in later years and is transferable to a real baby. Scarred by her mother's sado-masochism the daughter risks expressing feelings of guilt in sado-masochistic behaviour towards her child. It is clear that Vera deceives herself in thinking otherwise and believing she can break the cycle, just as she noted in her relationship with men: "Ich bin keine Masochistin, es bereitet mir keine Lust, gequält zu werden, aber ich weiß, ich muß gezüchtigt werden, denn jeder kann sehen, daß ich schlecht bin und der Liebe unwürdig" (Z. 115). Consultant

psychologist, Jenny Cozens, focuses on the inevitability of the wounded mother, emotionally and physically hurt, repeating the patterns of her past:

The daughter will take it out on her own children, especially her daughters, because we pass on cruelty to those with less power to defend themselves and because her children will never be able to provide her with the love she needed from her own mother and she will resent them for that.⁶²

Certainly, Vera's mother had herself been beaten by her mother, tortured and abused by her father, a daughter who had been unwanted and, therefore, unloved from the moment she was born. She was made aware of this throughout her upbringing, made to feel ashamed of her own femininity so that marriage was her only means of escape, her only chance of gaining some self-worth and vengefully asserting herself over her meek husband and her own daughter. The narrator recalls that on one occasion she glimpsed her mother's own deeply buried fear of punishment:

Einmal riß ich ihr den Prügel aus der Hand und sah in ihren entsetzten Augen diesselbe Angst, mit der ich mich unter ihrem Arm duckte. Sekundenlang standen wir einander gegenüber, die tierische Angst vor dem Geschlagenwerden zwischen uns, bis uns beiden die Ungeheuerlichkeit der Situation ins angstgelähmte Gehirn fuhr und die natürliche Ordnung wiederherstellte. (Z. 164)

There are, indeed, moments in the lives of each of these three daughters when the roles of mother and daughter are reversed: the identification process is so complete and entwined once the daughter is herself an adult, and it also indicates that separation from the mother has never been achieved from a psychological standpoint. In *Ausflug mit der Mutter* the narrator assumes the task of responsibility for her widowed mother and thereby acquires a matriarchal identity to the extent that she is prone to treating her mother like a child. She does see her mother as vulnerable in her widowhood, especially when she observes her mother behaving like a girl whilst with strangers and not cocooned by her own family circle:

Auch meine Mutter ist im Rollentausch, der sie zum Pflegling degradiert, verlegen, und unsicher fühlt sie sich nicht sehr wohl. Es steht ihr gar nicht, wenn sie manchmal darin übertreibt, sich gehen läßt und infantilisiert. (A.M. 88)

It is no wonder, then, that the daughter belittles her mother's attempts at being an independent woman: "Es ist so ein herablassender Kindergartenon aufgekommen, von mir zu dir, Mutter" (A.M. 76).⁶³ This exchange of roles coincides with the artificiality of behaviour displayed by mother and daughter, which was discussed earlier, and does illustrate the lengths to which both these women go to 'protect' one another. Due to a strong sense of responsibility the adult daughter takes on the protective nature of motherhood as well as the mantle of punitive authority. She recognises that guilt feelings over not doing enough for her mother as a "Schutz- und Geborgenheitsspender" (A.M. 75) conflict with the desire for separation and are at the root of her almost tyrannical behaviour

towards her mother. Her thoughts of forcing her mother to behave like a dog, totally faithful, obedient and, above all, dependent on its mistress for survival, are a sign of the daughter's deep-concealed desperation for her mother's acceptance of her autonomy.⁶⁴ It is as if she has to show her mother that she is capable of being in charge in order to earn her mother's respect:

Ich verankere eine untilgbare Schuld in der Mutter. Unsere
Zusammengehörigkeit lernt sie jetzt als miese Pflicht kennen.
Ich zwinge sie in die Knie vor mir, sie soll auf allen Vieren
und winselnd angekrochen kommen, he Mutter, was ist denn
los, hast du nicht bedacht, daß jetzt mein Leben dran ist?
(A.M. 75-76)

However, the very fact that the daughter constantly needs reassurance and seeks approval continues to give the mother the upper hand. Moreover, both the role-playing and disguising of feelings indicate that the present-day mother-daughter relationship is without true compassion, real communication and acceptance of one another's autonomous self, that these two generations of women are on different wavelengths and have different expectations from life. The narrator points to their past relationship as a time when each of them fulfilled her 'rightful' role in a carefree manner: the young, naïve daughter nurtured by a naturally-behaving mother:

Unsere Kommunikation (...) bleibt am besten ein schönes
bräunlichverfärbtes Photo aus der schönen, im Gedächtnis

ermatteten Vorzeit, in der wir noch keine Wahrheit zur Pose umfrisieren mußten. Da konnten wir noch ohne Verkrampfungen und Lippenerstarrungen, unkontrolliert von unseren Köpfen, miteinander umgehen. (A.M. 79)

A reversal of roles is also evident in *Kartenhaus*. Here the mother is in need of her daughter's love and attention because she believes that she has failed as a 'perfect' daughter, wife and mother. Her daughter gives her life meaning and purpose, hence she relies on her visits:

Ihre Umarmung war ein Suchen nach Halt, sie hielt nicht mich, sie hielt sich an mir. Ihre Rippen drückten gegen mein Gesicht, ich drehte den Kopf zur Seite und war doch das einzige, was sie hatte. (K.H. 13)

Und ich war alles, was sie hatte. (K.H. 169)

The daughter recalls her mother's tendency towards moods of depression and regular tearful outbursts, before and after her husband left. In front of her child she displayed great weakness, so that Hanna considered herself to be the stronger person in their relationship, her mother giving the impression of being helpless. In later years, after the father's departure and whenever her mother did cry, Hanna would order her to pull herself together, just as she used to be told to do so by her father. She would encourage her mother to be

more confident and look the part. Like many of the mothers in this study, this mother's weak nature is attributed to her own upbringing and consequent outlook on life:

Sie hatte nicht gelernt, sich gegen ihre Eltern, ihren Mann, ihr Kind, ihre Umwelt durchzusetzen. 'Nicht geboren, um glücklich zu sein, sondern um eine Prüfung zu bestehen', würde sie antworten, wenn ich nach dem Sinn des Lebens fragte. (K.H. 27)

This idea of the mother that life constitutes a test has its origins partly in her belief in Catholicism and God's justice, partly in her experiences of having suffered under the cruel hand of her father and having been treated like a servant by her husband. During her marriage she had always imagined a future with children but no husband to terrorise her, so that she regards her divorce as a form of redemption. She finds comfort in prayers and the conviction that God is watching over her and knows best, which is highlighted by the picture she has of Jesus above her bed. She prays for her child every day and even recommends to Hanna that she should listen to the radio sermons which she finds helpful. It is interesting to note that both Hanna's mother (weak and submissive) and Vera's mother (strong and punishing) were mistreated as children by their fathers and both turn to God, seeing him as on their side, supporting their attitudes and actions towards their daughters as well as towards life in general. In Mitgutsch's novel beatings, according to the mother, are equivalent to God's wrath: "Sie waren ein Gottesurteil und kein zufälliges, sich entladendes Gewitter" (Z. 167). As previously mentioned, she punishes in accordance with the Old Testament's proverb: "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him

is careful to discipline him" (Proverbs 13:24). In her review of *Die Züchtigung* Maria Frisé focuses on this aspect of religion as being associated with punishment:

Der alttestamentarische Spruch wird lebensgefährdende Wirklichkeit. Der Schlagende und die Geschlagene vollziehen eine rituelle Handlung: Züchtigung als Gottesauftrag, als Rettung vor dem Bösen, die Folter als gottgefällige Geißelung.⁶⁵

The fact that it is the mother who executes God's will by serving him suggests to the daughter that her mother and God are one and the same. The narrator concludes her recollections with religious associations by evoking 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost': "Sie herrscht und ich diene, und wenn ich meinen ganzen Mut sammle und Widerstand leiste, gewinnt sie immer, im Namen des Gehorsams, der Vernunft und der Angst" (Z. 246).⁶⁶ If we transpose the religious concepts to the daughter's interpretation, we can understand the associations implied: the Father personifies obedience (he is usually the disciplinarian, here it is the mother), the son personifies reason (Christ is the explanation for life, here the daughter gives her mother's life meaning) and the Holy Ghost is fear (the environment in which the child is brought up). Reigning over all these aspects is the Mother's influence over the way her daughter behaves (submissive), thinks (reason for submission) and feels (cause of submission).

Although the portrayal of the mother is personal, it should not be regarded as unique, as Marianne Hirsch points out:

Female writers' accounts of the mother-daughter bond are the most articulate and detailed expressions of its intimacy and distance, passion and violence, that we can find; they are the most personal and at the same time the most universal.⁶⁷

As illustrated in the general introductory analysis of the mother-daughter relationship, and supported by details from the three works of fiction, any tension in this relationship is universally recognised and not peculiar to these portrayals. Each novel presents the problems grown-up daughters face when learning to understand their mothers on an emotional level. Whilst criticism of the mother is rife, these daughters are at the same time self-critical; clearly their mothers are part of them. A wider issue with which the writers of these three works concern themselves is the position of women in society, in particular Austrian, Swiss and German society. To a certain extent this has been touched on when we considered the negative image a mother has of herself, due to the maternal model with which she identified and the inherited lack of respect society has shown, and probably still shows, for the position of the mother. Furthermore, Mitgutsch, Schriber and Wohmann do not just depict 'ordinary' mothers. Two of the mothers have had other 'labels' affixed to them by society, namely that of 'divorced' and 'widowed', both of which are viewed in a negative light, whilst the mother in *Die Züchtigung* is depicted as a sadist. Thus, in the process of understanding her mother, the narrator also has to come to terms with these imposed identities for which society is partly to blame.

Mitgutsch portrays the monstrous mother as specific to the working-class farm labourers of the rural landscape between Austria and Czechoslovakia. This is made clear by the setting, the life of the village before, during and after the Second World War, as well as

the use of local dialect. The oldest of seven children, Marie is an unwanted daughter who is beaten and scorned, who has to help look after her sisters and brothers and work the farm with her father. She marries Friedl, a villager, with whom she had corresponded whilst he was a soldier and who becomes a tram conductor on return from the war. She marries him not because she loves him, but in order to escape farm-life in the hope of creating a new life on the piece of land Friedl owns on the edge of the town, and because there is a lack of suitors after the war. The mother is striving to reach a different social class but is looked down upon by the townspeople:

Es beginnt der mühsame Versuch der dominierenden Frau, den sozialen Aufstieg vom Bauerntum über das proletarische Kleinbürgertum in eine reputierliche Bürgerlichkeit fortzusetzen - ein Versuch, der sich an heile Fassaden und Statussymbole klammert, aber schon von der städtisch-bürgerlichen Umwelt blockiert wird.⁶⁸

The frustration the mother feels by not being able to climb the social ladder and continuing to live in impoverished conditions, starved of love, is taken out on her daughter. In this traditional, patriarchal system the mother is not a free agent but she does rule the home and her daughter is her servant. Whilst Mitgutsch creates the milieu of lower-class village-life and provincial town-life in Austria, it should be noted that many parents from all classes of society are inclined to beat their children, if they themselves were beaten, and that, according to the German equivalent of the NSPCC, beating one's child is still considered a legitimate method of bringing up children. The evidence in this book is that poverty and

hunger engender fear which is manifested in the mother's need to control and achieve a sense of power by beating her daughter. Mitgutsch depicts a Germanic reputation for 'Kinderfeindlichkeit', whereby there does appear to be a general failure to understand children. She even refers to Austria as "eine Nation geschlagener Kinder" (Z. 123).

In *Kartenhaus* the mother undergoes an identity crisis when her husband leaves her: she is no longer regarded as a wife but a divorcee, as a consequence the question is posed: "Wer war man als Geschiedene?" (K.H. 47). She loses her identity as a wife and has imposed on her the identity of a dishonoured or discredited woman, since it is usually the woman who is blamed for divorce and its damaging effect on the children. Within a close Catholic community her divorce is frowned upon: when shopping or entering a pub on her own, for example, she believes that people are pointing at her and talking about her behind her back. In their eyes she has damaged her respectability and is treated with suspicion. It is hardly surprising that she withdraws into the house and into herself. What worries the mother most of all is the possible damning effect on her daughter: "Der Gedanke, daß dieser Makel der Scheidung auch auf ihr Kind übergehe, daß die anderen mich ausschließen könnten, hat sie fast krank gemacht" (K.H. 175). She even interprets her first white hairs at the age of thirty-seven as a penance for being a divorcee in the eyes of the rest of society: "Buße für das, was sie in den Augen der anderen war: eine Geschiedene" (K.H. 24). Since she loses her identity and social status, she comes to the conclusion that divorcees are comparable with widows, the implication being that both are regarded as occupying a low social status. Both the divorcee and the widow experience social stigmas; they lose their spouses to another woman or to death; both experience some form of grief after the separation, even if, like Hanna's mother, the euphoric reaction is a way of handling the loss; both undergo emotional trauma; and both will have to regain their

independence, making decisions on their own. According to psychologists, it is, in fact, often the case that women experience divorce as a 'dying process' because their routine has been disrupted and their social role along with the relationships surrounding that role have 'died'. Such an analogy, however, does obscure the fact that the divorcee does often make a new life for herself.

Just as divorcees experience loneliness and isolation, so do widows, as highlighted by the daughter's preconceived ideas of what her mother's life must be like in *Ausflug mit der Mutter*: "Sie ist heiter, und ich habe sie mir niedergedrückt vorgestellt. (...) Ihr Weiterleben als Witwe sehe ich immer deutlicher, aber immer mehr nur aus meinem Blickwinkel" (A.M. 47). It is made apparent throughout the narrative that the adult daughter does not understand her mother, in particular her new identity. She is bewildered by her mother's ability to adjust to her new life, which implies that she herself has neither accepted her father's death nor come to terms with her emotions, as discussed earlier. Hence her feelings towards her mother, as a widow, are contradictory: one moment she is concerned, over-protective, the next, nasty, aggressive. Towards the end of the narrative the daughter questions why it has taken her almost a year to recognise the significance of her mother's widowhood, and wonders why her comprehension and acceptance of the word "Witwe" has taken so long. Her answer is that time has in some way played its part in helping her to separate her emotional response from the reality, and that the process of writing has forced her to look more closely at her mother's identity and understand her mother's new status: "Nur durch meine Sätze kann ich ein ruhiges Urteil über dich finden und JA, DU BIST EINE WITWE sagen" (A.M. 138). The implication is, though, that she can only accept the mother's widowhood through the process of fictionalising her life.

This notion of time and experience influencing the writer's judgement of past and present events is commented upon by Barbara Saunders and is applicable here:

As he writes, his view of himself may change as he discovers associations and patterns in his life which he had not previously recognised. (...) It is impossible to remember events, conversations and emotions exactly as they were at the time they occurred because the individual's assessment of them is in itself a 'memory', a reconstruction based on selection.⁶⁹

Certainly, the narrator in Wohmann's novel is aware that change is happening in her own perspective and attitude towards her mother's behaviour, so that their relationship continually fluctuates. The act of writing over a period of time about the mother-daughter relationship illustrates the extent to which mother and daughter can and will change one another, whether consciously or subconsciously. Added to this is the daughter's fear that as a writer she will alter her mother, even falsify her identity:

Ich bleibe in Seiten stecken, die ich vor ungefähr vier Monaten geschrieben habe. Die Beschreibungen von damals wirken steif, wie unaufgetaut. Wir haben uns miteinander verändert. (...) Auf der ersten Seite bin ich doch fast zynisch gewesen vor Angst, ich war lieber verklemmt,

verkleistert, vereist als jemand, der sich ausliefert und
überfallen läßt, jemand, der empfindet. (A.M. 70-71)

By writing about the mother, each daughter does actually give birth to a fictionalised mother: thus, the writer is the 'mother' of this new character in her fiction. Once again daughter and mother are shown to be dependent on one another because, if the mother were absent from the daughter's life, the author would not have the material necessary for writing her book or for exploring her own identity.⁷⁰ We can see, therefore, that all the theories about the mother-daughter bond are evident in these works of literature. The mother serves as a function in the writer's life, just as the daughter gives meaning to the mother's existence, as Wohmann's narrator comments: "Unsere Zusammengehörigkeit ist eine komplizierte Technik" (A.M. 71). This can be interpreted as a comment on the actual relationship between mother and daughter, or on the relationship between the writer and her protagonist: the complications incurred in creating a true-to-life mother-daughter bond in fiction. The psychological fact that the adult daughter has introjected her mother by becoming like her means that she can overcome her separation anxieties. The woman writer appears to have the additional 'advantage' of creating a mother and daughter who are "projections of psychological possibilities" in that they are the result of the writer's imagination and can be used to enact the ups and downs of the real mother-daughter relationship.⁷¹ The figures embody the conflicts, act out the difficulties: it is a way of providing the writer with the potential for talking through problems on paper. Whether the daughter introjects her mother, or whether the writer projects the mother, either way the bond is evident. As the narrator in *Ausflug mit der Mutter* explains, writing about her mother and analysing their relationship brings her very much closer to her mother: "Das

Schreiben über die Mutter bringt mich nicht in eine abkühlende Distanz, macht mich nicht neutral, relativiert nicht meine Empfindung. Es ist meine äußerste, noch verbleibende Anstrengung der Annäherung" (A.M. 63). At the same time it is a means of proving her love for her mother because of the attention she has to pay her in order to be able to write about her: "Der Artikulationsversuch über die Mutter als Witwe ist meine extremste Zuwendung" (A.M. 5).⁷² Furthermore, the writer is able to 'capture' her mother in her book so that the fear of ever losing her is assuaged. The writing process therefore brings some solace, just as the bereaved writer was able to find an outlet for her grief in artistic expression.⁷³ Moreover, the three novels do show that it does not matter whether the relationship between mother and daughter was or is loving or not, the similarities are there, the symbiotic tie does exist. Ultimately, for each daughter-cum-writer these fictional works are a testimony of the permanence of their mothers in their respective lives and encapsulate the mother for eternity, as well as guarantee the daughter's identity.⁷⁴ Thus, when compared to the Germanic works written about fathers, three of which were analysed in Chapter One, it is possible to identify differences and similarities between the concerns of the daughter writing about her father and the daughter writing about her mother. In both cases each daughter is trying to reach a better understanding of her parent in order to understand her own self. Whilst the father-daughter portrayals are more aware of the historical/political influences, the mother-daughter portrayals are more psychologically orientated.

To conclude, it has become apparent that without the theories on the mother-daughter bond, as explained at the start of this chapter, it would be impossible to appreciate the extent to which each of these female writers has found it necessary to analyse her relationship with her mother on paper. The three works of literature provide proof of

psychology interwoven into fiction as a form of therapy in the act of writing and as indicated by the reflections of each daughter on the relationship to herself and her mother. This psychological aspect points to the universal attraction and applicability of such writing to other women in general, whilst the images of Austria and Switzerland do place the works by Mitgutsch and Schriber in the countries which specifically shaped these women's lives. It is not possible to say the same, however, of Wohmann's portrayal, since this German writer does not allude to any historical or political concerns particular to Germany which may have influenced the mother-daughter dyad depicted in *Ausflug mit der Mutter*. But like Mitgutsch and Schriber she is concerned about society's attitudes towards women, in this case towards elderly divorcees. In a recent interview Wohmann repudiated the notion that she should be performing some socio-political function:

Bei meiner schriftstellerischen Arbeit interessiert mich das Aufspüren oder Darstellen von gesellschaftlichen Ursachen und Wirkungen offengestanden am wenigsten. Wenn ich aber von Kindern, Eltern oder Ehepaaren schreibe, ist meine Betrachtungsweise durchaus eine gesellschaftliche, auch wenn sich manche daran stoßen, daß ich nicht auf eine von ihnen gewünschte "deutliche Art" Stellung beziehe.⁷⁵

Furthermore, we are justified in saying of Mitgutsch's and Schriber's novels that whilst there is a quality pertaining to Austria and Switzerland, the conflict between mother and daughter, the lack of understanding between generations, is not peculiar to those countries, as Klaus Antes points out in his review of *Die Züchtigung*:

Ein Text, der sich keineswegs auf alpenländische Sozialisation beschränkt. Er vermittelt über die subjektive Verantwortung hinaus viel von der Heillosigkeit unserer Gesellschaften und davon, wie Menschen Geschichte gestalten, oder sollte man sagen, Schicksal spielen, ohne sich darüber im klaren zu sein? Und er lehrt, wie schwierig es ist, wenn nicht gar unmöglich, auszubrechen aus dem Gefängnis, das, errichtet von fremder Hand, oft in uns selbst ist ...⁷⁶

We can also conclude from our analysis that in contrast to the historical confrontation present in the majority of contemporary German works depicting relationships between fathers and sons, and to some extent, as illustrated in Chapter One, between fathers and daughters, recrimination between daughters and mothers is not historically or politically motivated. This is probably due to the fact that fathers were seen as primarily responsible for having created the Third Reich and having participated in its atrocities, whether actively or passively, so that they bear the brunt of their children's accusations. When it comes to the portrayals of the mother it is noticeable that modern German literature about mothers is being written by women from an extremely personal perspective with only a handful of exceptions, such as Peter Handke's *Wunschloses Unglück* (1972) and Hermann Burger's *Die künstliche Mutter* (1982). As we have seen in these works, the portrayal of the relationship with the mother is the terrain of the woman writer on account of the strong matrilinear tradition:

Vom antiken Mythos bis zur Gegenwart liegt der Akzent dieses Verhältnisses auf der Symbiose, der Gleichheit der Empfindungswelt und des Erfahrungskanons - einem Zusammenhang, der Abhängigkeit bedeutet, aber auch Vertrauen, Herrschaft, aber auch Hilfe.⁷⁷

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Felicitas Frischmuth, *Die kleinen Erschütterungen. Eine Mutter aus Wörtern* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1987), p. 43. According to the text the quote is by the Swedish film director, Ingmar Bergmann.

- 2 Nancy Chodorow, 'Family Structure and Feminine Personality', in *Women, Culture and Society*, ed. by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 43-66 (p. 65).

- 3 John Carroll, *Guilt: The Grey Eminence Behind Character, History and Culture* (London, Boston and Melbourne: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 197.

- 4 Janet Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 3.

- 5 Sayers, p. 11.

- 6 Margarete Mitscherlich, *Über die Mühsal der Emanzipation* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1990), pp. 34-35.

- 7 Signe Hammer, *Töchter und Mütter. Über die Schwierigkeiten einer Beziehung*, trans. by Monika Zapf (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1986), p. 17. Original edition in English, entitled *Daughters and Mothers: Mothers and Daughters* (New York: Quadrangle, 1975).

- 8 Nancy Friday, *My Mother/My Self: A Daughter's Search for Identity*, 8th edn (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978). This is the conclusion Friday reaches after four years of interviewing over 200 women in America, mainly mothers, all daughters.
- 9 Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* (London: Virago, 1990), p. 79.
- 10 Friday, p. 409.
- 11 Judith Arcana, *Our Mothers' Daughters* (Berkeley: Shameless Hussy Press, 1979).
- 12 Friday, p. 8.
- 13 Lynn Sukenick, 'Feeling and Reason in Doris Lessing's Fiction', *Contemporary Literature*, 14 (1974), 515-535 (p. 519).
- 14 Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 236.
- 15 Hammer, p. 46.
- 16 Friday, p. 68.

- 17 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. by H.M. Parshley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 310. Originally published in 1949 as *Le Deuxième Sexe*.
- 18 Carol Tavris and Carole Wade, *The Longest War: Sex Differences in Perspective*, 2nd edn (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).
- 19 Beauvoir, pp. 309-310.
- 20 Jane Flax, 'The Conflict Between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter Relationships and within Feminism', *Feminist Studies*, 4 (1978), 171-180 (p. 179).
- 21 In her study Flax comments that mothers

do not seem to have as clear a sense of physical boundaries between themselves and their girl children as do mothers of boys. Women in therapy have frequently said that they have no sense of where they end and their mothers begin, even in a literal physical way.

Flax, p. 174.

Chodorow reaches the same conclusion: "mothers experience daughters as one with themselves; their relationships to daughters are 'narcissistic'". Nancy Chodorow,

The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University Press California, 1978), p. 195.

22 Hammer, p. 46.

23 See Flax, p. 174.

24 Jane Swigart quotes Dr. Christina Wendel in *The Myth of the Bad Mother: The Emotional Realities of Mothering* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 82.

25 Beauvoir, pp. 534-535.

26 Penny Perrick, 'Too Close for Comfort', *Sunday Times*, 15 November 1989.

27 Michael Moeller, 'Einführung', in *Ich schau in den Spiegel und sehe meine Mutter*, by Barbara Franck (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1979), p. 29.

28 Benjamin, p. 24 and p. 52.

29 Flax, p. 179.

30 Bell Gale Chevigny, 'Daughters Writing: Towards a Theory of Women's Biography', *Feminist Studies*, 9 (1983), 79-102 (p. 94).

- 31 Gabriele Wohmann, *Ausflug mit der Mutter* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985). Parenthetical page references will be preceded by A.M. There is the suggestion the daughter and mother are accomplices: "Am wenigsten betreffen diese Seiten dann später dich, meine Mutter, denn du bist wie ich jetzt dran und jetzt steckst du mit mir tief drin" (A.M. 30).
- 32 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Grafton, 1977), p. 83.
- 33 Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch, *Die Züchtigung* (München: dtv, 1988). Abbreviated to Z. with pagination in brackets.
- 34 For further details about these particular writers see Lorna Irvine, 'A Psychological Journey: Mothers and Daughters in English-Canadian Fiction', in *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, ed. by Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner (New York: Ungar, 1980), pp. 242-252.
- 35 Margrit Schriber, *Kartenhaus* (Frauenfeld: Verlag Huber, 1978). Abbreviated to K.H. with page numbers in parentheses.
- 36 There are similarities with Augusta in Plessen's *Mitteilung an den Adel* who knew that she was being brought up to fulfil the role of a dutiful daughter and obedient wife, thereby perpetuating aristocratic expectations.

- 37 Maria-Regina Kecht, "In the Name of Obedience, Reason, and Fear": Mother-Daughter Relations in Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch and Elfriede Jelinek', *The German Quarterly*, 62 (1989), 357-372 (p. 358).
- 38 This is reminiscent of the fact that the fathers in Chapter One are also regarded as immortal: they are very much alive in their daughters' memories.
- 39 Victoria Secunda quotes Jenny Cozens in 'Should You Divorce Your Mother?' *New Woman*, March 1989, 198-121 (p. 120).
- 40 Sally Mouldsdales quotes Judy Hildebrand of the Institute of Family Therapy in 'Are You Your Mother All Over Again?' *Woman's World*, March 1990, 38-39 (p. 39).
- 41 The daughter makes another reference to the fact that the cycle has not been broken: "Der Kreis, aus dem ich auszubrechen gehofft hat, hat sich unentrinnbar geschlossen" (Z. 213).
- 42 Swigart, p. 66.
- 43 Friday, p. 28.
- 44 In Chapter One it was noted that daughters also wished for their fathers' deaths so that authority and control would be removed from their lives.

- 45 The image of the cripple without crutches is also mentioned by Brigitte Schwaiger in her reaction to the loss of her father. See Chapter One, p. 104.
- 46 It is interesting to note that like Jutta Schutting's father and Elisabeth Plessen's father, this father is in the medical profession and hunts. Like Schutting's father, he is a taxidermist. The father portrayed by Schriber is a "Wunderdoktor" respected for the miracles he could perform, such as making people walk again, stopping a child's bedwetting. Like the fathers in the previous chapters, he has the power to kill and to heal.
- 47 Marianne Burkhard, 'Gauging Existential Space: The Emergence of Women Writers in Switzerland', *World Literature Today*, 55 (1981), 607-612 (p. 611).
- 48 Mary E. Stewart, 'Margrit Schriber: Women and Fiction in Switzerland', in *Rejection and Emancipation. Writing in German-speaking Switzerland 1945-91*, ed. by Michael Butler and Malcolm Pender (New York and Oxford: Berg, 1991), pp.171-183.
- 49 I therefore do not agree with Jürg Altwegg who, in his review of *Kartenhaus*, is of the opinion that the close of the narrative "deutet leise an, daß die Erzählerin endlich von den Obsessionen der Vergangenheit loszukommen scheint und den Grundstein für ein eigenes Haus zu legen versucht". *Die Zeit*, 12 October 1979.

- 50 Yvonne Holbeche, 'Portrait and Self-Portrait: Gabriele Wohmann's *Ausflug mit der Mutter*', *Seminar* 20 (1984), 205-217 (p. 212).
- 51 Swigart, p. 106.
- 52 Details from Joanna Bunker Rohrbaugh, *Women: Psychology's Puzzle* (London: Abacus, 1981), pp. 412-413.
- 53 Judy Sadgrove, 'Why Food is Still a Four-Letter Word for Women', *Guardian*, 28 July 1992, p. 31.
- 54 Sayers, p. 13.
- 55 Sadgrove, p. 31.
- 56 Wohmann's own childhood was a happy one where she felt secure and loved: "Eltern, die so lieb waren, daß man sie zwischendurch kaum gemerkt hat". More detailed information is provided by Jürgen Serke in *Frauen Schreiben. Ein neues Kapitel deutschsprachiger Literatur* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1982), pp. 161-175.
- 57 The daughter suggests to the mother that she should mourn for the living, not the dead: "Hör mir mal zu, Mutter: über die Toten soll keiner weinen. Um die Lebendigen muß man (...) trauern" (A.M. 115). Like the daughter in Schwaiger's

Lange Abwesenheit one could imagine this daughter standing at her father's grave, talking to him.

58 Manfred Jurgensen, *Deutsche Frauenautoren der Gegenwart* (Bern: Francke, 1983), p. 166.

59 D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), pp. 47-52.

60 John Carroll's description of the punishing mother is appropriate and applicable here: "The *punishing mother* (...) is violent, castrating, murdering. (...) She punishes and yet she is devoted to her child. She scourges out of love rather than hate" (p. 203).

61 Beauvoir, p. 320.

62 Secunda, p. 120.

63 The narrator is very aware of the way in which she talks to her mother:

Wie rede ich denn auch mit ihr! Kann ich sie denn nur entweder ruppig zurechtweisen oder in einer blöden Babysprache, wie herablassend, wie unbeteiligt, nicht ernst nehmen? Wie verkrampft ich doch immer wieder bin, ihr

gegenüber (...) wieder ist mir die gelassene heitere Sprache
über sie restlos verlorengegangen. (A.M. 50)

- 64 The narrator even sees herself as the teacher: "Sie ist jetzt nur eine folgsame Privatschülerin der Tochter, mit großen Lernschwierigkeiten" (A.M. 7).
- 65 Maria Frisé, 'War deine Mutter so wie du?' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 April 1985.
- 66 Vera, in fact, prays to God not to take her mother away from her: "Lieber Gott, betete ich kniend im Dom, alles kannst du von mir haben, alles, ein Leben ohne Glück kannst du mir geben, nur laß mir die Mama, laß sie nicht sterben" (Z. 243).
- 67 Marianne Hirsch, 'Mothers and Daughters: A Review Essay', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7 (1981), 200-222 (p. 204).
- 68 Roman Ritter, 'Wer sein Kind liebt, züchtigt es. Der Roman *Die Züchtigung* von Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch', *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, 20 March 1985, p. 12.
- 69 Barbara Saunders, *Contemporary German Autobiography: Literary Approaches to the Problem of Identity* (London: University of London, 1985), p. 7.

- 70 Wohmann's narrator does regard her mother as "Arbeitsmaterial" (A.M. 59) and profiteers from their personal relationship: "Ich will immer einen Gewinn für mich rausschlagen" (A.M. 47).
- 71 Saunders, p. 12.
- 72 In an interview with Hans Fröhlich, Wohmann made the following comment: "Ich habe jetzt etwas angefangen. Es ist das Porträt der Mutter als Witwe. Es ist sehr privat. Und es erfordert für mich die äußerste Anstrengung, das zu schreiben, weil es mir sehr nahegeht und diese Person mir sehr nahesteht." Hans Fröhlich, 'So frei sind die Männer nun auch wieder nicht', *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 12 November 1975.
- 73 The daughter in Wohmann's novel is afraid that she will lose her attachment to her mother when she finishes writing about her: "Ich denke schaudernd an eine Zeit nach dem Bericht über die Mutter. Ich möchte ihn nicht abschließen. (...) Ich habe Angst, dich zu vernachlässigen, so oder so" (A.M. 126).
- 74 Interviewed in 1982 Wohmann remarked:

Schreibend tue ich mehr für sie im Hinblick auf Außenwelt und Nachwelt; kleine Unsterblichkeitsmachungsversuche sind das, von mir für sie. Ich finde das ja immer sehr wohlwollend von mir, wenn ich meine Lieben in meinen

Büchern auftauchen lasse, weil sie dann ein bißchen unvergänglicher sind.

Klaus Siblewski, ed. *Gabriele Wohmann. Auskunft für Leser* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1982), pp. 39-40.

75 Adelbert Reif, 'Ohne Todesangst würde ich keine Romane schreiben. Interview mit Gabriele Wohmann', *Die Welt*, 6 July 1992, p. 7.

76 Klaus Antes, 'Bilder aus einer betrogenen Kindheit: Waltraud Anna Mitgutschs herausragender Erstling *Die Züchtigung*', *Rheinische Post*, 27 July 1985.

77 Leonore Schwartz, 'Mütter und Töchter. Waltraud Anna Mitgutschs Roman *Die Züchtigung*', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 26 May 1985, p. 55.

In recent years a number of women writers have focused on the guilt and complicity of women from the Nazi era, especially those who were either victims or acted as informers, or who participated in the Resistance movement: works such as Marie-Thérèse Kerschbaumer's *Der weibliche Name des Widerstands* (1980), Elisabeth Reichart's *Februarschatten* (1984) and *Komm über den See* (1988), and Helga Schubert's *Judasfrauen* (1990). In her analysis of Erika Mitterer's *Alle unsere Spiele* (1977) and Reichart's *Februarschatten* Juliet Wigmore illustrates the fact that not all women under the fascist regime were merely bystanders and concludes that these two works by Austrian female writers do also contribute to the literature of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung', which has been to date primarily the concern of

German speaking male writers. See Juliet Wigmore, "'Vergangenheitsbewältigung" in Austria: The Personal and the Political in Erika Mitterer's *Alle unsere Spiele* and Elisabeth Reichart's *Februarschatten*', *German Life and Letters*, 44 (1991), pt.5, 477-487.

CHAPTER THREE: TWICE BORN: THE ADOPTED DAUGHTER

The title of this chapter is taken from Betty Jean Lifton's autobiographical work *Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter* (1975), who at the age of seven had been adopted during the depression years in America and who recounts the search for her 'real' parents, the many visits to a psychiatrist, and the eventual discovery of her parents' identity when she is thirty years old.¹ For this adoptee the ability to feel some kind of heritage proves to be very important to her. In addition, knowledge of her natural parents helps her to unravel confused emotions over her sense of identity, as her husband, a psychiatrist, explains:

All adoptees, whether they're on the same wavelength with their adoptive parents or not, suffer when they don't know the facts about their origins. They feel they cannot be complete human beings.²

Thus in this book the writer is the daughter who, like the daughters in the previous chapters, is trying to find her true self but she has to come to terms with the added complication of being adopted. The relationship with her adoptive mother is particularly strained, so that in retrospect the adult daughter suggests that the resentment she used to feel towards this woman had its origins in a well-hidden truth:

"Hold me," she would say. "I am your mother, hold me."
I would wrap her in a hug for a decent interval until I could escape upstairs. (...) At such moments she was asking from

me something she could not articulate, and which I could not give.

Could a natural daughter have given it? Is there a blood feeling between mothers and daughters that a changeling cannot experience?³

I believe that the answer to Lifton's first question is 'no' because, as we saw in Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung*, expression of love between a mother and daughter is not automatic. The answer to the second question is not so clear-cut because from the mother's perspective the answer might be a 'yes', since she has given birth to the child and there is a bond from the start of their future relationship, the child being proof of the reality of her own existence. Yet there are mothers who feel indifference, seeing the newcomer as a stranger; some feel emptiness; others feel hostile towards the baby because of the pain it has caused and the freedom it is likely to deny her. The mother may even reject her newborn child. A maternal instinct is not necessarily evident in the human species, hence "a blood feeling" does seem doubtful. Furthermore, as illustrated in the previous chapter, the natural daughter's feelings towards her mother are very ambivalent and very much dependent upon the way in which she is raised. Hence many adoptees may well be deluding themselves, if they believe that they have in some way been deprived of their identity by not knowing their true parents, as R. D. Laing points out:

There always seems to be the assumption that through establishing one's biological origin one will really know who one really is. Or at least the negative: if one does not know

one's parents, one cannot know oneself. (...) Yet the quest to discover who one's parents were, however understandable, cannot in itself lead to oneself.⁴

It is evident from our analysis of parent-daughter relationships that natural daughters are also searching for their own identity through their parent-portrayals. For both natural and adopted daughters there appears to be the desire to know oneself. The quest for identity on the part of the adoptee will be looked at more closely later in this chapter, since it does affect the relationship between the adopted daughter and her adoptive parents.

The adopted daughter does not just appear in contemporary Germanic women's literature. In 1920 Hedwig Courths-Mahler wrote *Die Adoptivtochter*.⁵ The heroine of this novel, Britta, is chosen by her father's ex-wife, a rich, high-society lady, to be her companion, her adopted daughter. The story is of how two cousins, one a lieutenant and a womaniser, the other a reliable chemist, vie for Britta's hand in marriage. Courths-Mahler's novels fall into the category of 'Unterhaltungsromane', more precisely 'Liebesromane'. She herself once referred to them as "harmlose Märchen" in which the reader is transported into another world where romance flourishes.⁶ Courths-Mahler's endings, moreover, are always happy, and this is what makes her novel *Die Adoptivtochter* less relevant in the present context. The two novels under consideration in this chapter are Gabriele Wohmann's *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* (1974) and Helga M. Novak's *Die Eisheiligen* (1979). In Wohmann's novel eight-year-old Paula, who is also known as Paul or Paulinchen, and whose grandparents are no longer able to look after her since her parents were killed in a car accident, is adopted by an intellectual couple, Christa and Kurt, who have no children of their own. For Christa and Kurt the adoption is akin to an

experiment in that they put theories on child psychology into practice, whilst the two years spent in this emancipated household prove to be unbearable for Paula. As in Wohmann's work, the narrator of *Die Eisheiligen* is the daughter who is adopted as a baby by an elderly, childless couple, Kaltiesophie and Karl, and who recounts chronologically the most traumatic events in her life between the ages of four and sixteen, the years 1939 to 1951. The narrative focuses on the conflict between the adopted daughter and Kaltiesophie set against the turmoil of social, historical and political events in Berlin. After analysing the relationship between adoptee and adopters, we will show that the society in which these daughters grow up also has a role to play in these works. Both novels are a far cry from 'Liebesromane' and their endings are far from happy. In fact, as will be shown, the absence of love between an adopted daughter and her adoptive parents is the common denominator.

With the introduction of the concept of adoption into the novel, *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* and *Die Eisheiligen* shed a different light on the daughter-parent relationship, providing another perspective. This is especially the case when we recognise that the narrators are not adult daughters reflecting on their past relationship with their mother and/or father from a present-day standpoint, but young daughters who recount events as they unfold. At the start of Wohmann's novel the narrator, Paula, is aged eight; at the close she is between ten and eleven years old.⁷ Novak's autobiography has a narrator who is aged four at the outset and is sixteen by the end of this narrative. The reader is thus 'invited' to see everything through the eyes of these young girls, to perceive the world as they do, as they grow up into adolescents. Needless to say, both works, just as in previously analysed novels, are biased towards the daughter's point of view. Nevertheless, the adoption aspect does raise the question as to whether this relationship between adopted

daughters and adoptive parents is so dissimilar from that of blood-related daughters and if so, in what way this differs. This analysis intends to suggest some answers to these questions by comparing the two adopted figures. In the first instance we shall look at the significance of each novel's title by investigating its relation to the text. The roles of the narrators will then be compared to see to what extent the lives of these two adopted daughters are comparable. Parental authority and attitudes towards their daughters will be illustrated in connection with the behaviour of each daughter, in order to try and establish whether the daughter deserves the treatment she receives and whether the parents have been conditioned by their upbringing and/or society. The role of adoption will be highlighted throughout this chapter with particular reference to each daughter's understanding of what it means to be adopted. It is worth noting that Wohmann's narrator knows that she is being adopted when she is eight years old, whereas Novak's narrator only finds out by chance when she is eleven years old. The aspect of identity and its psychological implications will be featured as an integral part of coming to terms with adoption. Finally, we shall highlight the social/historical setting of each narrative to see to what extent, if at all, the writer is expressing criticism.

On Christmas Eve, 1844, Doctor Heinrich Hoffmann presented to his son, Carl, a book of handpainted illustrations and captions depicting the virtues of a Biedermeier upbringing. Within a month 1500 copies of the book had been printed and were sold to parents who would use the stories in the book as a form of deterrent by scaring their children into obedience. The book was entitled *Der Struwwelpeter* and one such cautionary tale, *Die gar traurige Geschichte mit dem Feuerzeug*, features Paulinchen. The four stanzas quoted below form the beginning and end of the story:

Paulinchen war allein zu Haus

die Eltern waren beide aus.

Als sie nun durch das Zimmer sprang

mit leichtem Mut und Sing und Sang,

da sah sie plötzlich vor sich stehn

ein Feuerzeug, nett anzusehn.

"Ei," sprach sie, "ei, wie schön und fein!

Das muß ein trefflich Spielzeug sein.

Ich zünde mir ein Hölzchen an,

wie's oft die Mutter hat getan."

Und Minz und Maunz, die Katzen,

erheben ihre Tatzen.

Sie drohen mit den Pfoten:

"Der Vater hat's verboten!

Miau. Mio. Miau. Mio.

Laß stehn! sonst brennst du lichterloh!

(...)

Verbrannt ist alles ganz und gar,

das arme Kind mit Haut und Haar;

ein Häuflein Asche bleibt allein

und beide Schuh, so hübsch und fein.

Und Minz und Maunz, die kleinen,
 die sitzen da und weinen:
 Miau. Mio. Miau. Mio.
 "Wo sind die armen Eltern? Wo?"
 Und ihre Tränen fließen,
 wie's Bächlein auf den Wiesen.⁸

References to the origins of Wohmann's title are made a number of times in the text, in particular the fact that the narrator, Paula, also likes to be known as Paulinchen, usually when she feels like being cuddled, just as her dolls have diminutive name forms, for example, "Uddinchen" (P.H. 48) who has been shown so much love that she is disfigured from all the embraces and kisses.⁹ Paula uses the first line "Paulinchen war allein zu Haus" as the heading to the note she writes to her adoptive parents in which she expresses the wish to attend a boarding-school. Within the novel the title can be interpreted literally: Paula was physically alone in the house when she wrote the note. However, the wider significance is that she feels that she is alone all the time, even though one of her adoptive parents, if not both, is always there with her or in the vicinity. This apparent contradiction between Paula's feelings and reality will be discussed later, for now though it should be noted that both parents were outside when she wrote the note, so that one link between the 'Feuerzeug Geschichte' and Paula's note is that both sets of parents are not present when they are needed most. Paula, for example, reaches a decision about her future without being able to talk to her adoptive parents about this and on account of the lack of communication between them.

Wohmann does not conclude her novel with the daughter setting fire to herself. In an interview in 1974 she explained that she had decided on the title after she had written the novel and had, therefore, not intended to borrow too much from *Der Struwwelpeter*.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the novel does end with Paula describing her adoptive parents as "Ihr Armen" (P.H. 235), whilst in Hoffmann's text the cats question the whereabouts of "die armen Eltern". In both instances the description implies sympathy for the parents because they lose their daughters. However, in Wohmann's novel, Paula refers to her adoptive parents, Christa and Kurt, as "arm" a couple of times.¹¹ The use of 'poor' has nothing to do with their financial situation, instead it refers to their lack of emotions or their inability to express these demonstratively. Paula's final, parting comment is, therefore, one of pity. These adopters, who pride themselves on knowing so much and being so clever, cannot learn the lesson of compassion. This is evident from the daughter's comment that they do not respond to her need for sympathy: "Aber keiner sagte *Armes* und niemand sah mitleidig und auch nur annähernd nach dem Vorsatz, zu trösten aus" (P.H. 117). The reader can thus understand the reason behind Paula's use of "Idioten" as another reference to Christa and Kurt. In the eyes of their adoptee these intellectual, enlightened journalists are 'idiots' because they cannot communicate with her on her level of understanding: "Ihr seid ohne jedes Gefühl (...) *ihr Idioten*" (P.H. 116).¹² It should be noted, too, that the cats in Hoffmann's story warn Paulinchen verbally with "Der Vater hat's verboten!" Once the daughter has ignored the threat and disobeyed her father, punishment is inevitable. In Hoffmann's stories retribution for misdeeds is unrealistically grisly: death by fire or physical amputation, for example. As will be shown, the opposite is true of Wohmann's novel where punishment is intentionally omitted from Paula's upbringing. In Novak's work,

however, the daughter does know the meaning of punishment. Her upbringing is, in fact, reminiscent of Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung*.

The reasoning behind the idea of the "Eisheiligen" for Novak's title is revealed towards the close of the book when the daughter tries to explain the driving force behind her wish to leave home. According to the narrator, the 15th May, the birthday of her adoptive mother, whom she calls Kaltesophie, coincides with the last saint day of the Ice Saints, one of three or four saints whose day falls during what is called 'the blackthorn winter'.¹³ This is the second week in May when there can be an unusual change in the weather resulting in heavy frost. The significance of the title thus lies in its appropriateness with regard, firstly, to the adoptive mother:

Wer ist Kaltesophie?

Sie hat am 15. Mai Geburtstag.

Das verstehe ich nicht.

Kaltesophie ist die letzte Eisheilige, fünfzehnter Mai.

(E.H. 217)¹⁴

If we translate the Greek word 'σοφία' meaning 'wisdom', then 'cold wisdom' pertains to the cruel, dominant streak in the mother's nature conflicting with her role as a mother.¹⁵ There is the very fact that her birthday coincides with one of the Ice Saints' days as well as her lack of warmth, as indicated by the adjective 'kalt'. It should also be pointed out that the daughter contemplates altering the name to 'Herzog Alba' because this mother grew up in Belgium, and during the sixteenth century this particular duke had earned himself the title of 'Iron Duke' of Alba as a result of his military dictatorship. The daughter likens her

adoptive mother to this tyrant, but opts to continue calling her 'Kaltessophie'. The plural use of the noun 'die Eisheiligen' suggests the inclusion of the adoptive father, Karl, who, as will be shown, is also capable of being aggressive towards his adopted daughter in a given situation; by playing the role of parent he shares the responsibility for her upbringing, although his lack of compassion and understanding for his daughter's eventual rebellious nature stems in the main from his long absences due to frequent hospitalisation. Thirdly, the narrator has become one of the family through being adopted and has, therefore, become one of the Ice Saints. The reader is made aware of this gradually. Initially, she is able to empathise with these saints: "die Eisheiligen schienen mir besonders vertraut" (E.H. 157), then she sees herself as one of them: "ich bleibe lieber bei den Eisheiligen, den Gestrengen Herren, den schrecklichen Frösten im Mai, weil ich mich selber dazurechne" (E.H. 168) and finally, she adopts the name of one of these saints, the pseudonym of 'Pankracia' for her writing.¹⁶ 'Pankratius' or 'Pankraz' is, in fact, Greek for someone who fights with all means and St. Pancras is one of the Ice Saints.¹⁷ We shall see that this adopted daughter grows up in circumstances which engender no knowledge of love of mankind, as her bouts of depression indicate. She even channels her aggression into attempts at self-destruction and is capable of being cruel towards others. Furthermore, she does fight back in her own way: through writing a diary and poetry. Ultimately, she rebels against her upbringing, as will be explained. Novak's title, thus, befits the people whose relationship to one another is the subject of her book. All three are liable to show angry outbursts, spontaneous violence and fiery vehemence. The predominance of the mother-figure, however, is most noticeable, as well as the way in which this title may be regarded as a contradiction in terms: 'ice' suggesting coldness and hardness, 'saint' warmth and kindness.¹⁸ It is a contradiction in accordance with the peculiarity of heavy frost during

mid-May but it is not made explicit in the book, unless we are supposed to regard Kaltesophie as a saint for having adopted a young orphan. Interestingly, Simone de Beauvoir comments on the comparability of motherhood and sainthood, the fact that men, in particular, confer such praise upon mothers on account of their generosity towards their children, expecting no return for what they give. Beauvoir sees the dangers of such laudation: "the distortion begins when the religion of maternity proclaims that all mothers are saintly".¹⁹ It will become clear that Kaltesophie is anything but a saint.

Novak has written a second autobiographical novel, *Vogel federlos* (1982) which is a sequel to *Die Eisheiligen*, since there is no break in the story and it highlights the narrator's life as a seventeen- and eighteen-year-old in a cadre boarding-school in East Germany. As in the case of *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus*, *Vogel federlos* originates in poetic form, this time from a riddle:

Es flog ein Vogel

- federlos

der setzte sich auf einen Baum

- blattlos

da kam eine Frau

- fußlos

und nahm ihn gefangen

- handlos

Sie hat ihn gebraten

- feuerlos

und hat ihn gefressen

- mundlos.²⁰

Each of the six chapters in the book is headed by one couplet. There are no other references within the text itself to the "Vogel federlos". It must be assumed that the bird without feathers alludes to the daughter who manages to free herself from her adoptive parents, yet has no power to use that freedom. She swaps the discipline at home for the regime of a Communist state-run boarding-school. The state becomes her 'father', the Communist party her 'mother'. The solution to the original riddle is that the "Vogel" is a snowflake, the "Frau" is the sun. The idea of 'ice' might, therefore, be seen to be continued in the imagery of the 'snowflake'. The implication is that the young girl is likely to become swallowed up by a Draconian system, since the 'sun' is probably in this case symbolic of the Communist party, whose identity the daughter assumes. If Courths-Mahler was able to describe her novels as "harmlos", the origins of the titles of Wohmann's and Novak's novels may be found in fairy-tale circumstances but they are far from "harmlos". The protagonists, for example, find themselves in near fatal situations, such as attempted suicide. At the same time, as will be shown, Wohmann and Novak are intent upon revealing the dangers behind theory and practice, be it within the home or in society.²¹

The protagonist-cum-narrator of *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* is the adopted daughter, Paula. Since her parents and sister were killed in an accident, Paula has been living for five years with her grandparents.²² At the age of eight, when the narrative begins, she is adopted by Christa and Kurt, two journalists who have been married for sixteen years and who want to put progressive theoretical approaches to child-raising into practice.²³ After

approximately three years their adopted daughter wants to leave to attend boarding-school so that she can escape the gaze of these over-zealous "Erklärungsprofis" (P.H. 10), "Erziehungsfanatiker" (P.H. 234) or "Freiheitsverfechter" (P.H. 169). This book is based on the daughter's continuous reflections on her interaction with her new parents. These are not childish thoughts, everything she says is articulate and what she does or feels is premeditated. It seems to be a test of how far she can push Christa and Kurt before they react spontaneously and show their true emotions, without referring to their child-psychology books to understand their adopted daughter:

Austausch einiger fast befriedigter, fast triumphierender
Lehrbuchblicke zwischen Christa und Kurt. (...) Verdammt
machtlos bin ich, dachte das Kind. Wie kann ich diese Leute
denn mal wenigstens ein bißchen nachdenklich und ratlos
machen, wie kann ich sie denn wenigstens mal aus ihrer
Reserve rausbringen, wenn schon keine Verwirrung und keine
Verstörung bei ihnen geht. (P.H. 21)

Throughout the text the narrator refers to herself as "das Kind", and it certainly appears to be the child who attempts to teach the parents a lesson and not vice versa.²⁴ Whilst Christa and Kurt are studying Paula's behaviour and analysing her actions, as if she were a guinea pig for experimentation with new educational methods, she is the one watching their every move, listening in on conversations, overhearing telephone discussions, anticipating their reactions.

Wohmann has been criticised for portraying an unrealistic daughter-figure because Paula is far too clever for her age. Hans Wagener, for example, suggests that the author does not know what the intellectual capacity of an eight-year-old is: "Was Paula in Inneren Monologen und Erlebter Rede auf mehr als 200 Seiten ausdrückt bzw. aufzunehmen imstande ist, wäre sprachlich und intellektuell höchstens von einer Vierzehnjährigen zu leisten."²⁵ The writer's response to this has been that she does not consider the age of her protagonist to be of importance or of relevance - this probably explains the confusion over Paula's age at the close of the narrative.²⁶ She also believes that no one child is like another and that Paula is an untypical child because she is her artistic creation. Furthermore, she points out that she has actually put a lot of herself into this daughter-figure.²⁷ On the one hand Paula behaves like a child, on the other hand her ability to analyse and her use of language are on a par with that of an adult, in this case Wohmann. This accounts, therefore, for Paula appearing to be advanced for her age and the maturity with which she reveals the flaws of her adoptive parents. It should not be forgotten, too, that Christa and Kurt treat her as an adult and want her to behave accordingly, as will be illustrated later. Similarly, the effect of traumatic past events on the young child should be taken into consideration, as Wohmann informs us: "Zu dem Vorwurf der Altklugheit wäre auch noch zu sagen, daß es schließlich eine besondere Vorgeschichte hat (...) es kann sich nirgendwohin zurückziehen als in sein eigenes Denken."²⁸ This notion of focusing on one's inner self as a source of comfort will be discussed, when we consider what role writing plays in each of these daughter's lives. It does seem that through the guise of her narrator Wohmann is presenting a study of how not to raise children, though at the same time she fails to provide an alternative, better method. Ironically, she too is the theorist, since she has had no children of her own.

In complete contrast to all this theorising, Novak's *Die Eisheiligen* is the autobiographical story of the upbringing of a young girl by her adoptive parents during the period 1939-1951 in the GDR. The narrator is once again the adopted daughter, giving an account of her life from the age of four to sixteen as a first-person narrative. Her name is never mentioned in the text. The strength of Novak's novel lies in its chronological assimilation of autobiographical material set against a background of historical events and the overwhelming assumption that life goes on, whatever happens and whatever circumstances one has to face. Novak depicts the effects of National Socialism in Berlin-Köpenick, the Russian occupation, the development of the GDR and the cold war in both her autobiographical novels by highlighting everyday existence during this period. The destruction of buildings by bombs, the continuous streams of nameless people on the move, hunger and despair, all are common features of this novel. As Ursula Bessen points out, Novak presents private issues as having political relevance, which recalls one of the main tenets of the Women's Movement "das Private ist politisch", although in this case the woman writer does not just depict a domestic setting and family squabbles for their own sake. Instead she makes it very clear that events beyond the four walls of the house have their impact on family relationships and impinge on people's attitude and behaviour to one another:

Der Faschismus bildet nicht nur den allgemeinen politischen Hintergrund dieser privaten Biographie, sondern er wird sichtbar gerade in seiner gelebten, konkreten Alltäglichkeit, in der Familie, in der Schule, der Nachbarschaft.²⁹

The crash of a fighter-bomber in front of the house; witnessing the removal of the pilot's crushed body; sirens during the daytime; dead animals littering the streets; evacuation; the occupation by the Russian army, such are the events which fill this child's life. The relationship between the daughter and mother is in fact intensified by these daily occurrences. The narrative becomes poignant when the reader recognises the extent to which violence and horror are not confined to the outside world: it exists and flourishes in the family circle and eventually destroys any human bonds. Conversely, it might have been expected that such external events would have brought the adopted daughter and her adoptive parents closer together, since tragedies during times of conflict do tend to bring people together. However, in the case of *Die Eisheiligen* mother and daughter fight like hostile soldiers, as the teenager herself notes in one of her poems:

Warum ist von allen Müttern
gerade diese meine
wo wir doch wie zwei feindliche Soldaten
aufeinander stoßen
und uns zerschmettern
und dann für immer auseinanderfliehen. (E.H. 196)

Racism and anti-communism are even evident in the mother's punitive threats, such as when she tells her daughter that Russians are coming to nail her tongue to the table; the only time her father, an anti-communist, hits her is the result of her decision to join the FDJ. Their relationship, one in which the daughter battles against her mother's tyranny and misuse of power, is clearly interwoven in the social concerns of the time:

Erlebnisse dieser Art verstärken die Identifizierung des eigenen Neu-Anfangs der DDR-Gründung mit dem ein deutscher Staat geschaffen werden sollte, der frei von der verhängnisvollen und reaktionären Tendenzen der bisherigen Geschichte wäre. Schließlich ist dieser neue Staat ihr bei ihrem persönlichen Befreiungskampf auch behilflich: sie bekommt einen Platz im Internat einer Landesoberschule ...³⁰

The issue of adoption, then, does not appear to be of primary concern in Novak's novel. Yet the conflict between the adopted daughter and her parents highlights the constraints of dictatorial discipline upon an individual, whilst Wohmann depicts the constraints of theoretical rules and the ensuing damaging effects. The one is so authoritarian, the other so liberal, but both sets of parents live by a set of rules. There is no comfort or security to be found within the four walls of either family. No words of affection are ever uttered by the mother, father or daughter in the context of their relationships in *Die Eisheiligen*. In *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* Paula does attempt to display feelings of love, such as holding hands, embracing Christa and Kurt, even reading stories to them, but she soon gives up when this love is unrequited. A child who is brought up without any indication of love and who cannot turn to her parents for support and understanding has to learn to deal with feelings of bitterness and resentment, as well as recognise the failures of its parents before blaming itself, otherwise suicide may well become a yearned-for escape route. In each novel both sets of parents are shown to fail their adopted daughters because each girl has no wish to stay any longer at home than she has to. In Wohmann's work the two adults, described by Paula as "Schreibmaschinengespenster" (P.H. 116) are so clever

with words, writing articles for magazines and radio programmes, and so knowledgeable about the rights and wrongs of how to raise a child, consulting the up-to-date psychology books, but at the same time they are devoid of emotions. They cannot respond to their adopted daughter's need for love and security because they are so dependent on reason and discussion. For them the answers are all in black and white, as Wohmann stresses:

Die Adoptierenden (...) sind vollautomatisch bewußt - aufgeklärt - modern. So wissen sie selbstverständlich alles Einschlägige über Kinderpsychologie, und sie handeln nach den Informationen, nie aber nach einem spontanen Gefühl.³¹

Hence, these adopters believe that they do understand their "Problempaula" (P.H. 127). Their intentions are well meaning because they do want their adopted daughter to be sensible and mature so that they can treat her as an equal and not as a child. In the process, however, they fail to give her any warmth, understanding or love. Recognition of this failure is encapsulated in Paula's quotation from Graham Greene: "*Das Böse ist ein Mangel an Liebe*" (P.H. 108 and 184).

This penchant on the part of Paula's parents for theories as well as their inability to express any feelings of love for her are apparent in other areas of their life. Toys, for example, must have a didactic purpose in their daughter's life: "Christa und Kurt hatten neue Sachen angeschafft, didaktisch funktionelle Spielsachen, mit denen das Kind konstruktiv bauen, ineinanderfügen, herstellen, insgesamt: durch Spiel *lernen* sollte" (P.H. 48). Her old dolls are no longer allowed to be cuddled, either for hygienic reasons or on account of their value - they are also a sign of Paula's past and are indicative of the fact

that she is still a child. Her dolls' kitchen and dolls' school are 'rescued' by her new parents because they are valuable and regarded as "abbildungsreifes, ausstellungsreifes Spielzeug aus einem vergangenen Jahrhundert" (P.H. 50). Thus, the child's toys serve as ornaments in the new home where Christa and Kurt want everything to look aesthetically pleasing: "Der gesamte kindliche Kram war gut organisiert. Penibel und nach einem ästhetischen System in die Erwachseneneneinrichtung gemischt" (P.H. 52). The emphasis on modernness and aestheticism in the context of house furnishings is meant to illustrate the fact that the daughter's surroundings are sterile and thereby create a stark contrast with the warmth and cosiness of her grandparents' home, where Paula felt safe and loved.³² The physical environment clearly intensifies the daughter's sense of desolation because it underlines the parents' liking of modern ways and ideas which correspond with their treatment of Paula:

Alles Diskutieren und Verhandeln endete auch diesmal mit dem *dir zuliebe*. (...) *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus*, dachte das Kind wie immer, wenn es sich nach einer von diesen sogenannten Bewußtseinerweiterungen und Aufklärungen im Stich gelassen fühlte. Nach dem letzten Wort, nach dem abschließenden befriedigten Ausdruck Christas und Kurts, war es immer besonders allein. Am alleralleinsten.

(P.H. 175-176)

Discussion is impossible in the household depicted by Novak: here actions do speak louder than words but the actions do not illustrate care and affection. Kaltesophie and Karl,

like Christa and Kurt, are unable to show any signs of love for their adopted daughter. Lack of communication is an obvious problem in both families. Although it seems that Christa and Kurt are keen to discuss problems with Paula, she does not confide in them, instead she becomes more and more introverted. In *Die Eisheiligen* the silence is broken by either the daughter's screams as she suffers yet another beating, or by Kaltesophie's angry demands, orders and criticisms - all intended for the good of the child, as noted in the analysis of Mitgutsch's novel. All the parents do appear to execute their methods of child-raising with the best intentions. There is an additional, potential area of conflict in Novak's novel and that is the generation gap between adoptee and adopters: Kaltesophie and Karl are in their mid-fifties when they bring up their adopted adolescent daughter.

Novak's narrator goes to great lengths to show the adoptive mother's powerful hold over her adopted daughter. Kaltesophie handles her child by using either an implement, such as a broom or birch, for corporal punishment, or by voicing threats. She can thus frighten and force her child into being submissive and obedient. The first time she suggests throwing her daughter out of the house along with a letter addressed to an orphanage, the child cannot comprehend her mother's words or actions. All she knows is that, unless she behaves, her mother will not want to keep her any longer. She had not known hitherto that she was adopted, hence the confused child faces the danger of her 'real' mother's rejection and loss of security. Kaltesophie is able to use the well-hidden truth to her advantage. Verbal threats have their substance as she reveals the truth to her terrified daughter whom she calls "das Biest":

Obgleich sie meinen Fall behandelt, gibt es keinen Blick,
keine Brücke zwischen uns. (...)

Nein, schreit sie, nie und nimmermehr. Ich bin nicht genötigt, das Biest einen Tag länger unter meinem Dach zu behalten. Damit du es weißt, du bist nicht mein Kind, und bist es in den ganzen zwölf Jahren auch nicht geworden, die Möglichkeiten dazu hattest du. Wer hat dich denn aus dem Heim geholt? Ich, ich, ich und nochmal ich. Und nichts warst du, und nichts hast du gehabt, nicht mal eine Mutter.

(E.H. 143)

Kaltesophie's belief that her daughter should be eternally grateful to her for having chosen her from all the other orphans is one that permeates her narrative. According to Beauvoir, it is in fact a characteristic of punishing mothers in general that "frequently they expect too much in the way of gratitude for their care" and certainly this was evident in *Die Züchtigung*.³³ This attitude is probably due to the mother's own deep-seated fears about eventually losing her child, her sense of vulnerability and lack of confidence. In *Die Eisheiligen* the mother implies that she has done her daughter a favour, by adopting her: just as we noted in other daughter-parent relationships, the suggestion is that obedience and respect can be purchased. The child's pleas for forgiveness are futile, so that by the time she reaches her teens she appears to have become indifferent. The mother is no longer a person to be feared, but ignored and even ridiculed. Hence the situation between mother and daughter is reversed:

Du hast keinen Namen, du heißt einfach Nichts.

Suche ich mir selber einen.

Na, denn man los, unsern Namen behältst du jedenfalls nicht.

Paaah. Wer von euch beiden wollte eigentlich ein Kind adoptieren?

Ich nicht, da kannst du sicher sein.

Na, siehst du. Es ist also gar nicht dein Name, den du mir wegnehmen willst. (E.H. 211)

This aspect of the obligation of gratitude for having been adopted is one which does distinguish these two novels from other daughter-parent relationships in this study. In some way these two adopted daughters are supposed to regard themselves as privileged to have been selected by these adults, though it should be pointed out that this is not a general attitude on the part of the adopters towards their adopted children. In the case of Wohmann's novel, Christa comments upon the fact that they are forfeiting much of their private life for the sake of Paula: "Wir machen es uns nicht leicht. Wir nehmen es ernst mit dem Erziehen, womit wir Einbußen unseres Privatlebens in Kauf und auf uns nehmen" (P.H. 112). For these parents the act of adoption not only means that they are sacrificing some part of their own lives but it also signifies doing something good and beneficial for society in general: the adoption of Paula serves as a "gesellschaftliche Alibifunktion":³⁴

Adoptierenwollen, das ist schon sowieso eine gute Eigenschaft, sie spricht für sich. Daraus kann man schließen, daß Leute, die ein Kind adoptieren wollen, auch noch andere gute Eigenschaften haben und daß sie es ernstnehmen - mit

dem Leben, mit der Not, die es unter den Menschen gibt, daß sie gute Vorsätze haben und so weiter. (P.H. 17)

For Christa the adoption of this young girl serves another purpose: she is wanting to improve her career prospects by writing a book for children, hence the "Übernahme" (P.H. 5,49,61) of Paula is seen as a scientific experiment, whereby Paula is "ein besonders ergiebiges Anschauungsobjekt, ein richtiges Schaustück, ein Lernmaterial erster Klasse" (P.H. 51). By highlighting these functional purposes of adoption, Wohmann does show that Christa and Kurt are primarily concerned with themselves and that they will not be able to understand the needs of an adopted child, which is hardly surprising after having been married for sixteen years and having concentrated completely on their respective careers.

These two intellectuals cannot comprehend how any child would be unhappy or dissatisfied living with them because they believe that they provide the ideal ambience in which a child can develop. They tell Paula that she is free to go where she pleases in this open-plan house; she does not need a room of her own, she has an entire house:

Du hast doch überallhin freien Zugang wie jeder von uns.

Du bist nirgendwo im ganzen Haus nicht zugelassen. Du

kannst gehen, stehen, sitzen, spielen, wo du willst. Du

kannst leben wie wir Erwachsenen. (P.H. 61)

Their wish to treat Paula as an adult pervades this narrative and manifests itself in various ways. For example, they celebrate the signing of adoption papers by all three of them drinking champagne; they allow her to stay up late to watch adult movies; they encourage

her to watch them as they exercise in the nude so that at the same time she is taught by Christa to recognise the physical and sexual differences between men and women. As Hermann Burger explains, the parents' obsession with nakedness results from their own prudish upbringing: "Nur weil für die Adoptiveltern in ihrer Jugend die Nacktheit etwas Verbotenes und Skandalumwittertes war, glauben sie nun, das Versäumte nachholen und Paula lebendigen Anschauungsunterricht über den männlichen und den weiblichen Körper erteilen zu müssen".³⁵ Their emphasis on sexual freedom is also indicative of the liberated attitudes of society in the late sixties and early seventies. Certainly, Christa and Kurt do regard themselves as "liberale und tolerante Anhänger des Prinzips der persönlichen Freiheit" (P.H. 199) and believe that they never make mistakes with regard to their upbringing of Paula because they live according to the book.³⁶ They will merely give good advice and only disallow something, if it were to harm Paula in some way. They refuse to be authoritarian and will not inflict punishment, which they see as a factor for happiness in their household:

(...) weißt du, andere Kinder, wenn man andere Kinder aus ihrem Verbots- und Bestrafungsalltagsleben reißen würde und zu uns retten würde nur für ein paar Tage, hierher in unsere besondere freiheitliche Kameradschaft, diese anderen Kinder, *die* allerdings würden dafür, wie hier zusammengelebt wird, von der ersten Minute an dankbar sein, doch ja, dankbar.
(P.H. 113)

The concept of freedom is continually pounded into Paula's thoughts and yet she is watched most of the time by either Christa or Kurt. When groups of friends get together in the evenings, she is the topic of conversation; on the phone Christa discusses her adopted daughter's behaviour with a friend. It is somewhat ironic that on the one hand, these parents are of the opinion that they offer a perfect, harmonious setting where there are "keine seelischen Erpressungen, keine geistigen Vergewaltigungen, keinerlei Begrenzung" (P.H. 210) but on the other hand, they make too many demands on an eight-year-old girl: they want her to be independent, not to play with dolls, not to use her chamber-pot, not to be embarrassed by her sex. She is even sent to a psychologist for a few weeks to improve her speech. As Wohmann herself explains, these two parents allow most things but what they definitely do not allow is the spontaneous expression of emotions, good or bad:

Einiges machen die adoptierenden engagierten Schöngelster auch richtig. Oder *zu* richtig. Verboten ist z.B., im herkömmlichen Sinn, grundsätzlich nichts, es gibt aber Sperren, Regeln, Spielregeln, Gesetze. Es gibt die Grenzwerte, über die Gefühle nicht hinaussollen.³⁷

Paula's reaction to all the theorising and endless explanations is to put herself on guard and retreat into her own thoughts. She would, in fact, prefer to be told off or even punished by her adopted parents because at least that would be a form of attention and would indicate the presence of emotions. She feels that she is "ein geprügelter Hund ohne Prügel" (P.H. 87), since she suffers more from having to fulfil Christa's and Kurt's expectations, and cannot behave naturally in an environment where she is not at ease. There is so much

freedom that it has the opposite effect on her: she spends great lengths of time in the bathroom, the only place that has a door and key: "Das Kind fühlte manchmal, wie ein Atemkrampf, der ihm den Hals und die Brust einengte, sich plötzlich löste, wenn es einen Schlüssel hinter sich herumgedreht" (P.H. 63). Behind the locked door Paula is able to relax, away from prying eyes. Not only does she physically retreat but, as mentioned before, she turns to her thoughts where she can find privacy in an atmosphere, which is otherwise so overwhelming that it proves to be suffocating, despite the fact that the emphasis is on freedom and openness: "Aber so oft merkte das Kind, daß es ganz verkrampt war and nicht richtig atmen konnte" (P.H. 75).

In *Die Eisheiligen* the daughter's desire for freedom is to be found in faraway countries and is a longing which pervades the narrative from start to finish.³⁸ In the opening scene the child stands with Kaltesophie on the harbour quay, watching a ship sailing, its loud sirens upsetting the four-year-old. In this first paragraph the narrator introduces her first recollection of her childhood. It must be assumed, therefore, that this scene made an enormous impression on her. The incident contains keywords such as "Kaltesophie", "Wasser", and "Heulen" (E.H. 5), although their significance can only be appreciated after the whole narrative has been read. Water is a crucial element, since it provides an escape route: one can sail the seas to distant shores or one can commit suicide by drowning in the local river.³⁹ The concept of freedom linked to sailing away to foreign places with exotic names is revealed in conversations between the adopted daughter and her aunt, Concordia. It is her aunt's tales about Africa which bring hope of another lifestyle elsewhere. The suggestion is that looking to the West for a better lifestyle is not, necessarily, the solution to everyone's problems in East Germany. This young girl dreams of going south, to countries of warmth and friendliness, which is understandable, given the coldness and

austerity of her upbringing. She longs for her own release from captivity: "die Freiheit, für immer das Fenster offen zu lassen" (E.H. 227). Contrastingly, then, the daughter who has no freedom wants to get away as far as possible from home, whilst the daughter to whom so much freedom is offered searches for a safe haven within herself.

In addition to the mental stress both daughters also suffer physically. As a young child Novak's daughter-figure is often sick and confined to bed, sometimes as a direct result of her mother beating her senseless. When the five-year-old has a fit of coughs, the doctor is called in but there is no medical reason for the coughs. It becomes evident that sickness functions as a way of attracting the parents' concern. It may even encourage them to show some feelings of love towards their adopted daughter. In Novak's novel it also highlights the weakness and vulnerability of the child in comparison with the strength of the mother. The only attention the child does receive when she is sick is Kaltesophie's temper. On other occasions she cries so hysterically that she cannot breathe: here she purposely plays up so that her parents calm her down with a lullaby and tea brewed specially for her. The nine-year-old has an endless list of reasons for howling:

Wenn mir was wehtut, muß ich heulen.

Wenn ich was nicht darf, muß ich heulen.

Wenn ein anderer heult, muß ich auch heulen.

(...)

Wenn mich einer beim Heulen überrascht,

heule ich erst recht. (E.H. 69-70)

Comparing the noise of the ship's sirens to 'heulen' is appropriate when the child's frequent bawling is taken into account. The deafening sound of the sirens announces the arrival or departure of the ship; the hooting attracts everyone's attention. In a similar vein the daughter screams to announce her presence and expects immediate action in the form of parental attention. It is no wonder that Kaltesophie refers to her as "eine richtige Heulsuse" (E.H. 136), a quite harmless description compared to other names she shouts and screams at her daughter: "Idiotin", "Satansbraten", "Biest", "Miststück", "Diebin", "Hurenbaby", "Rumtreiberin", "Scheusal", "Dreckschleuder", and many more. Psychological abuse is shown to be just as violent as the physical abuse this adopted daughter suffers at the hands of her adoptive mother.

Paula is not such a sickly child. The one time that she does have the flu, she tries to hide the fact from Christa and Kurt because she does not feel comfortable enough in this new home, with new parents on whose reaction she cannot depend. Ironically, she had gone through a phase of wanting to be ill in order to cause her adopters to worry in the expectation of receiving tender, loving care.⁴⁰ To pretend to be ill she would lie in bed with her face painted white with flour and refuse to eat so that she might be encouraged to eat all the things she would normally not be offered. Paula, however, decides against this plan of action because she realises that her sickness would merely be another curiosity for analysis by the parents and the doctor would be called in. Nevertheless, her desperate need for affection is evident from the fact that she does swallow many of Christa's stimulants and tranquillisers which only have the effect of causing headaches and disorientation - this is hardly surprising when she takes the pills with strong black coffee made from Nescafé and hot tap water. The desired effect of causing concern is not achieved.

Novak's daughter-figure also has a penchant for pills, poisonous ones used for bathing feet. Her idea is to mix these with peppermint tea and saccharin tablets to try and kill herself, thereby arousing pangs of guilt and remorse in Kaltesophie and Karl. She does drink the fatal brew on Christmas Day but is immediately sick after sticking four fingers down her throat and being given salt water to drink. She had no intention of dying: she just wanted attention and love. Her action, however, changes nothing: her adoptive parents merely ridicule her. Two years later she swallows ten sleeping tablets, all in one go, but is saved by her aunt who puts her in a bath of cold water. Frequent states of depression had driven her to this decision. Research by doctors and psychologists into attempted suicides by children and adolescents does show that tablets are the predominant means of killing oneself, especially amongst girls.⁴¹ The main causes for suicide by adolescents are problems with parents, a lack of warmth and security and, above all, conflict between the generations.⁴² It is not difficult to understand, therefore, the motivation behind the daughter's wish to end her life in *Die Eisheiligen*. In Wohmann's novel Paula talks herself out of committing suicide by focusing on all the things she has to live for, in particular God and art. As we shall see in the next chapter, not only adopted daughters reflect on suicide as a means of escape from unhappiness.

Other evidence of suffering in Novak's and Wohmann's novels is the fact that both daughters wet their beds. In *Die Eisheiligen* the four-year-old is beaten for not using her chamber-pot, yet when she visits other families and stays the night she never wets the bed. The six-year-old tries to stay awake all night, she even tries lying under the bed. Nine years later Kaltesophie threatens to tell the whole neighbourhood that her daughter still wets the bed. The issue of bedwetting opens the narrative in *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus*. Paula's progressive adopters regard the eight-year-old as too old to still be using a chamber-

pot. They replace the pot she had always used at her grandparents' house with a bowl in the shape of a dog so that it does not interfere with the interior design of their home. Paula refuses to use this new pot. Her nights are sleepless ones as she considers whether to use the pot or not, and how to reach the bathroom without waking Christa and Kurt.⁴³ Psychologists recognise that "bedwetting is so common a problem among troubled children (...) nearly always caused by some stress or tension over which the child has no control. He really cannot help it".⁴⁴ Both daughters clearly do suffer from stress and tension caused by the tense atmosphere in their respective homes and the demands placed on them by their adopters. Paula even goes so far as to wet the bed on purpose for three weeks in the hope that these adults will respond according to their psychology books, where she had read: "Bettnässerei ist ein Alarm. Mehr Hinwendung und Liebe und Zärtlichkeit wird unbewußt auf diese Weise herbeigefleht" (P.H. 192). She, thus, reverses the psychology to try and use it to her own advantage, however, this attempt to attract concern and affection from her adoptive parents fails because they decide to turn to the experts, instead of solving the problem themselves, and consider sending Paula for specialised treatment. It is thereby made very apparent that Christa and Kurt cannot show any "Liebe und Zärtlichkeit".

The two girls contend with unhappiness and loneliness. Paula's isolation is emphasised by the falling snow which she likes to watch because she finds it comforting: she has no wish to play in it, to throw snowballs or to go sledging. Watching the snow on her own has the effect of intensifying her feelings and giving her time to think: it makes her more melancholic and illustrates the extent to which she becomes more and more introverted. This eight-year-old girl never laughs nor does she play with other children.⁴⁵ In bed she cries after trying unsuccessfully to show her love for Christa and Kurt: she cries louder but no one pays any attention. She finds comfort in humming to herself and saying the Lord's

prayer. Sometimes she wishes that she could cry more easily because afterwards she senses relief. The suggestion is, therefore, that she is unable to express her sadness openly and spontaneously because it is not expected of her, and the adoptive parents would not respond naturally. Thus, she consciously attempts to keep her true feelings well hidden. Tears are usually a result of hopeless efforts to please her new parents. She buys two books for Kurt which turn out to be identical; Christa stresses the mistake Paula has made and that she should learn from this; she should not expect praise or thanks for the gift. In the process the adoptive mother overlooks the fact that Paula merely wanted to give Kurt a surprise. A hug from Paula is misconstrued as being an exaggerated demonstration of emotion; an attempt to hold her parents' hands is seen as an interruption during a trip to the circus because watching the circus requires concentration.

Whilst Novak's young daughter-figure goes through a phase of screaming for attention, as noted earlier, there are never any tears of sadness, only ones of pain. Even when the narrator is recalling what seems to be her lowest ebb, there is no mention of tears during her state of depression:

Oft überfällt mich eine solche Niedergeschlagenheit, daß ich kaum aufstehen kann und das Haus nicht verlasse. Ich fühle mich verletzt, durchlöchert, zerschlagen und denke immerfort im Kreis herum. (...) Ich haue mir den Kopf ein an etwas, das ich nicht erkenne. (...) Nur wenn ich schlafe, hört der Schmerz auf, versiegen die Kränkungen, vergesse ich die Unzufriedenheit, aus lauter Ohnmacht reißen die brennenden Bilder ab. (E.H. 173)

This daughter is prone to depression and on a number of occasions her aunts tell her that there is no drug to cure melancholy. In fact "sommerliche Concordia" (E.H. 202) contrasts starkly with the ice saints. As her name implies, she embodies understanding, sympathy and ultimately love. Intermittent references to this particular aunt highlight the absence of love within the immediate family circle. She is the one person in the novel who is attributed with goodness and prudence; she introduces her niece to other countries and, thereby, encourages her to see beyond her confinement and unhappiness. Her love for the narrator is evident and is stated:

Ich habe niemand, der mich leiden kann.

Bin ich niemand?

Naja, wie lange noch.

Ich bin immer für dich da. (E.H. 157)

The one and only mention of the future by the narrator involves her aunt: fifteen years after these childhood recollections Concordia accompanies her niece to the theatre. Their friendship does prove to be honest and lasting and does illustrate the fact that the adopted daughter is not destined to be a true ice saint.

Whilst she is in the company of Kaltesophie and Kurt, feelings of non-existence prevail:

Da ist wieder das Gefühl, daß es mich gar nicht gibt. Ich existiere nicht, bin überhaupt nicht da, bin nicht wirklich am Leben, nicht jetzt. (E.H. 165)

Paula also experiences this sense of non-existence when she refers to herself as standing "atemlos" (P.H. 75) between Christa and Kurt, the implication being that these two people are so wrapped up in their own interests that they cannot see what is troubling Paula. Boredom and sadness set in as demonstrative love is constantly omitted from both family circles. One emotional outlet which proves futile for each daughter is aggression. During one of her nightly trips to the bathroom Paula intentionally knocks things over, makes a noise with the kitchen door and runs up and down the steps - anything to awaken the adults, to catch them off guard with no psychology books in their hands. She is all the more angry when they continue to sleep:

Es war wütend, und dann wartete es auf den Zustand, nach der Wut. So, da habt ihrs mal wieder, ich bin verlassen und allein, keiner versteht mich, ich bin sehr traurig. (P.H. 71)

She resorts to imagining that her real mother would take her to bed and that her real father would tell her a story and wipe away her tears. When she is left on her own during the day Paula turns to stealing money from Kurt's drawer, hiding it elsewhere or even throwing it in the dustbin. She pours alcohol down the sink; she cuts a wound into the face of one of her dolls, one of the porcelain dolls which her adoptive parents only keep for their monetary value; she purposely breaks an expensive Chinese vase and throws to the floor a Baroque glass. All these incidents are premeditated because they are supposed to provoke natural emotions in response to the damage. However, in Wohmann's work the parents do not react spontaneously, instead they discuss the incidents with the young girl and show no emotions. They see no need for Paula to cry because they never punish her. Even when

Paula bites Christa's hand after she has had enough of keep-fit exercises, there are no words of anger and no punitive action. The response is to type up their adopted daughter's behaviour and consult the child psychology manual. Paula's desire to be brutal goes unnoticed: she escapes into the garden where she vents her fury by hitting the neighbours' four-year-old boy - someone who is younger and even more vulnerable than she is.

The parents in *Die Eisheiligen* do not discuss. The mother beats her adopted daughter for any misbehaviour: for sticking a safety-pin into a teacher; for inscribing her name in all the furniture around the house; for breaking a window at school. She is spanked for supposedly breaking a plate, her denial being interpreted as lying, which makes matters worse. She is whipped for ruining Kaltesophie's dress and shoes. She is accused of stealing the silverware and is beaten with a stick after stealing a fir tree from the cemetery to use as a Christmas tree. Paula has her ears boxed once by Christa. The physical attack does not result from naughtiness as such. Christa catches Paula standing in front of the mirror, backcombing her hair. She tears the comb out of the girl's hand and smacks her, supposedly to stop Paula making a mess of her hair. However, as Gerhard Knapp points out, Christa's incomprehensible violent outburst is provoked "durch die Bloßstellung eigenen Rollenverhaltens".⁴⁶ It is probable that Christa sensed some kind of threat to her own femininity because she clearly did not like the idea that here was a young girl copying her own behaviour, and that Paula would have been watching her in order to learn how to backcomb her hair. Prior to this incident Christa had been ridiculing her adopted daughter's grotesque hairstyle and the fact that she was dressed as a boy. The suggestion seems to be that Paula's appearance is comparable to that of "Struwelpeter", in particular the unkempt hair which can be regarded as symbolic for thoughts being out of control and the imagination playing riot. The emphasis on hair does, indeed, highlight Paula's

unconscious thoughts and fantasies.⁴⁷ It is not surprising that she is upset when she has to have her hair cut short to look neat and tidy. Whilst Christa's criticism of Paula's appearance has its origins in the young girl's identification with her adoptive mother, Kaltesophie is critical of her adopted daughter's unkempt appearance, the fact that she walks around barefoot and wears torn clothes, because of the impression this makes on the neighbours and how this will reflect on the mother's raising of this child:

hast du dich jemals im Spiegel betrachtet
 sieh dich mal im Spiegel an und sage mir ob du sowas
 Häßliches schon gesehen hast sag mir das
 neulich habe ich beobachtet wie du auf der Straße
 gespuckt hast (...)
 ich gehe keinen Schritt mehr mit dir über die Straße
 ich schäme mich so verloddert bist du. (E.H. 117)⁴⁸

By ignoring her appearance this daughter deliberately goes against her mother's wishes: it is one way that she is able to retaliate. Interestingly, there is one moment when this daughter, like Paula, sees through the mother's femininity. Kaltesophie's beauty and the dress she wears arouses feelings of jealousy in the daughter. This is probably because the young girl recognises that there is a different woman here other than the mother-figure, who has known another life and could, therefore, abandon her adopted daughter at any time, just as she frequently threatens to do so:

Vor Bewunderung hielt ich mich etwas abseits, verfolgte aber trotzdem jeden Schritt, jede Bewegung, ganz versunken in den Traum aus Blau, in das Wellenspiel der schwingenden Stoffbahnen. Ja, sie posierte hingeben vor ihrem Schlafzimmerspiegel, ließ die Augenlider herabsinken, senkte auch das Kinn. (...) Ich fragte: Willst du weg? Sie sagte leise: Bloß mal sehen, obs noch paßt. Ich sagte: Sieht schön aus und der Neid riß mich fast mitten entzwei. (E.H. 52)

Paula is caught off guard by Christa whilst she is looking at herself in the mirror in the bathroom. As noted earlier, this adopted daughter finds refuge in the bathroom and does spend a lot of time there. The significance of the mirror should not be overlooked. In her analysis of the mother-figure in fairy tales Sibylle Birkhäuser suggests that the mirror "reflects our image symbolically, it points to a process of reflection, of contemplation with the purpose of self-recognition, insight".⁴⁹ The same could apply to Paula, since she is often alone with herself, deep in thought, and does tend to look at herself everytime she passes a mirror in the house:

Erwischtwerden vorm Spiegel war schon ohnehin immer sehr peinlich. Das Kind kam sich verraten und verhöhnt vor. Es betrachtete sich oft sehr gründlich, aber nur das Gesicht. (...) Es konnte schlecht an einem Spiegel vorbeigehen, ohne sich anzuschauen. Wie es aussah, war ihm höchst wichtig - auch

interessant, war auch eine Erfahrungsgelegenheit, eine Annäherung an sich selber. (P.H. 141)

This desire on the part of the young girl to look at herself in the mirror verges on the obsessional and is indicative of narcissistic tendencies. The emphasis on freedom forces her to withdraw more and more into herself so that she focuses on her own being and her image. The early death of her parents has also played its part in this neurosis because by the age of three, when she goes to live with her grandparents, she has not yet had sufficient time to experience her identification process and overcome the Oedipal phase, as Günter Häntzschel explains:

Aufgrund seines bisherigen Lebensverlaufs und der starken Rollenverunsicherung durch die Adoptiveltern kommen bei dem achtjährigen Kind Narzißmus und Identitätsprobleme zum Vorschein, die bei ungünstigen Lebensumständen zu schweren Krisen im Erwachsenenalter führen können.⁵⁰

Paula's identity problems are very apparent in Wohmann's text because this young girl is able to assume three different personae, depending on her mood swings. One moment she will be Paula, the girl who behaves and dresses as befits her femininity and the wishes of her adoptive parents; the next moment she will be Paul, the tough, independent child who does not cry, does not play with dolls and does not look at itself in the mirror; another time she will be Paulinchen, the little girl who wants to be cuddled and treated as a child.⁵¹ Her sense of insecurity is clearly part of this swapping of identities, hence she needs to discover

her true identity: the mirror offers her a means of doing so. This cult of the self is also evident in Paula's use of notebooks in which she is able to write down her thoughts and "freely pour out her soul".⁵² The fact that Paula does feel that she is on her own does lead to this infatuation with her own ego: the narcissist does experience isolation and a sense of abandonment:

She is also convinced that she is not understood; her relations with herself are then only more impassioned: she is intoxicated with her isolation, she feels herself different, superior, exceptional; she promises herself that the future will be a revenge upon the mediocrity of her present life.⁵³

The same can be said of Paula who is intent upon altering her way of life by the close of the narrative and who does to a certain extent patronise Christa and Kurt in her thoughts, though it should not be forgotten that it is often Wohmann who is using this daughter-figure as a mouthpiece for her own criticisms. Nevertheless, Paula does like her own body, in particular her hands to which many references are made:

Meine Brombeerhände, dachte das Kind, Brombeerhändchen, klein und unansehnlich, aber ich habe sie gern. Damit war auf einmal, mit dem Gernhaben der eigenen Hände, wieder Gefühl in ihm. Durch ein neues Gerührtsein fühlte es sich wie erlöst. Das sind wenigstens meine Hände. Sie sind immer bei mir. Sie erleben alles mit. Sie nehmen an mir

Anteil. (...) Die Hände, verschmiert von Brombeeren,
empfund das Kind als Eigentum und als seine Gefährten.

(P.H. 39)

For this child her hands represent accomplices who do provide comfort because they are part of her and prove that she does exist. They are the starting-point for Paula's appreciation of her whole self.⁵⁴ Since she is not allowed to express her love for her adoptive parents, her only option is to love herself.

The most noticeable similarity between "das Kind" in *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* and the I-narrator in *Die Eisheiligen* is their channelling of thoughts into artistic creativity. In Novak's work the adopted daughter develops a passion for reading, hiding a book in every room of the house. She tries to write a novel, thus finding sanctuary and comfort in fiction; she resorts to poetry as a simpler expression of her feelings. Paula, in Wohmann's novel, has a blue book in which she jots down spontaneous thoughts and new words she overhears; she transfers a more detailed explanation of her reflections into a yellow book. She discovers solace in Goethe's and Mörike's poetry and enjoys listening to Schubert. When walking in the woods she sings Christmas carols, even in the summer. Her grandparents had told her that her real mother had been an excellent singer. Paula often invents stories about her real parents, imagining life with them on an island. She alters the words of poems to suit her feelings but succeeds in maintaining the same rhythm. She also likes to write about feeling homesick. Both mothers discover the hiding-places of their daughter's literary output. On finding her daughter's book of poems, which mainly concern the mother's temperament, Kaltiesophie reads them aloud and then burns the book whilst her adopted daughter looks on. During group discussions with other parents Christa reads

aloud excerpts from Paula's books, unaware that Paula is listening. The adults critically analyse the language and style and discuss whether or not these are Paula's own words. They do not understand the meaning of the content. In her daughter's presence Christa ridicules any notion Paula might have of being a poet or genius. Thus, for both girls writing is a source of attack and defence: on paper they can criticise their adoptive parents and at the same time find comfort in the expression of emotions. For Paula both the process of thinking and the act of writing are a source of refuge and comfort.

Words spoken are also effective for Novak's daughter-figure who learns to rebuff Kaltesophie's cruel remarks in such a way that she challenges her and at the same time displays indifference. Paula does not show defiance orally, she does not engage in open battle, except for the one time she bites Christa's hand, instead she opts to withdraw into herself. She tries communicating to Christa and Kurt by writing letters and actually sending them through the post. Her one visual act of defiance before writing the note to express her wish to go to boarding-school, is to cut up the red dress Christa had bought for her, the Paula she had wanted her adopted daughter to be. The decision of each narrator to choose a boarding-school rather than another family is clearly influenced by the inability of both sets of adoptive parents to provide love. They both want to leave for this reason and have probably been so disappointed and hurt by their upbringing, that they would be afraid to face another set of parents just in case they were equally lacking in love - although this is not stated in either book. As already noted, the adopted daughter in Novak's autobiography chooses the Communist party as her replacement family and opts for a state-run boarding-school where she can be educated in the ways of Communism. As Sigrid Weigel points out, the move does appear to be a positive one, since anything would seem

better than what this adopted daughter has experienced throughout her childhood at the hands of her adopters:

Der zum Ende angedeutete Widerstand des Mädchens, ihre Identifikation mit den sozialistischen Ideen der Aufbauphase der DDR und ihr Eintritt in die FDJ gegen den Willen der Eltern, erzeugen den Anschein, als sei hier eine politische Identität gefunden, die zugleich die Befreiung aus den Fängen der destruktiven, familiären Vergangenheit ermöglichte.⁵⁵

On her sixteenth birthday the daughter travels alone to start a new stage in her life. Whilst Weigel does suggest in the above quote that this girl is breaking free from her past, the narrator at the end of *Die Eisheiligen* quashes any previous thoughts of freedom to be found in independence and escape from parental bondage, by impressing upon the reader the isolation of the boarding-school, surrounded by two lakes, a fenced in wood and a high wall: another kind of imprisonment lies ahead: "Auf der Mauer waren Glasscherben einzementiert" (E.H. 238). Disillusionment certainly comes to the fore in *Vogel federlos* where loneliness, being on one's own, proves to be the only successful form of escape. The idea of going to boarding-school for Paula suggests that she will find the authority and discipline there which is missing in her life with Christa and Kurt. She initially considers mentioning the idea to these adopters in the hope that she might arouse concern and that they might make changes for the better in their treatment of her. Certainly, for this girl who has been used to being on her own, since the death of her parents and her sister, the prospects of having to mix with lots of other children does not enthrall her:

Ich werde trotzdem, ohne daß ich wirklich auf ein Internat gehen will, mal so was andeuten. Sie kriegen dann vielleicht einen kleinen Schrecken. Sie überlegen dann vielleicht: hat sie es nicht schön genug bei uns? Warum will sie denn weg?
(P.H. 167)

Her decision to actually attend a boarding-school is finally based on the belief that this is the one place she will be able to be on her own: "Ich werde aber nur äußerlich nie allein sein, es wird nur immer nach Gruppenleben aussehen. Ich werde erst recht allein sein können" (P.H. 229) and it is evident from the daughter's experience in *Vogel federlos* that her belief is justified. It seems inevitable, therefore, that both adopted daughters will lead lonely lives as teenagers.

The question might well be posed as to what extent these girls deserve the treatment they receive from their adoptive parents because, as was explained at the start of this chapter, these narratives are biased towards the daughter's perspective. The justification of treatment not only depends on the daughter's behaviour, but also on the parents' background. In the mother-daughter relationship, for instance, it is quite common, as explained in the previous chapter, for the adult daughter to repeat her mother's ways when she raises her own children. Although the parents of Christa and Kurt are never mentioned, the grandparents of Paula are and they would have been of the same generation. The criticism these two emancipated adults express for the way in which the grandparents conduct their lives, the food they eat, their love of surrounding themselves with ornaments, so that there is hardly any space in the room, is indicative of their general attitude towards this generation. Since they despise everything the grandparents represent, their own

lifestyle has to be completely the opposite and, of course, they are not on their own: they are behaving in accordance with the freedom and openness evident in the early seventies. Thus, these two adults consciously do not repeat the way in which they were brought up.

Deciding whether or not Paula deserves to be treated the way she does is difficult. As indicated before, she does behave naughtily so one would expect her to be punished and the punishment would be deserved. However, these parents do not inflict punishment, instead they discuss any misdeeds carried out by Paula. For this daughter analytic discussion becomes a form of punishment. Any attempt she makes, be it good or bad, to encourage Christa and Kurt to treat her as a child and not as a grown-up, fails. And certainly this daughter does make concerted efforts to get closer to her adoptive parents but all to no avail:

Fast aus Rache umarmte das Kind diese Leute, die es sich nicht leichtmachen und trotz beruflicher Überlastung ein hilfloses verwaistes Kind adoptiert hatten. Sei nicht so überdreht, empfohlen sie ihm. (P.H. 198)⁵⁶

It does seem, therefore, that it is Paula's fault that she is unhappy in her new home. Christa and Kurt are well-meaning in their own way, they want to do what they think is best for Paula: a good diet, exercise, the 'right' books, didactic toys and so forth, but their approach is intellectual and far too rational. After sixteen years of being on their own together they are set in their ways, unable to change and recognise the needs of an eight-year-old girl: "Wir sind so schlau als zuvor" (P.H. 234).

In *Die Eisheiligen* Kaltesophie also conforms to the expectations of society by enforcing Prussian methods of bringing up children, hence the predominance of discipline and punishment in her child's life and the need to conform to bourgeois values, such as meticulous manners. Like the punishing mother portrayed by Mitgutsch, Kaltesophie had had an unhappy childhood and had been beaten by her father. Her adulthood was no better: at the age of eighteen she had an abortion, after her fiancé left her; she married late and could not have any more children of her own; she, therefore, fostered a girl whom she could not handle and who died at the age of six; she then adopted the narrator who turned out to be a sickly child and with whom she was left to cope on her own during wartime, whilst her husband was in hospital. Taking the mother's background into consideration, as well as the expectations of society about the way in which children should be brought up to be well-mannered and groomed, it is little wonder that Kaltesophie vents her frustration on her young adopted daughter, over whom she is able to exercise some control through punishment. The young child does seem to be used as a whipping-boy for this mother's own inefficiencies and frustrations:

Wenn ihr die Leiter unter den Füßen weggleitet, bin ich schuld. (...) Wenn sie ihre Brille verlegt hat (...) bin ich schuld. Wenn ihr bei allzu heftigem Abwaschen ein Zinken aus der Aluminiumgabel bricht, bin ich schuld. (E.H. 17)

This frustration stems from the fact that she can no longer have any children of her own, that she is therefore incapable of being a mother and has no real wish to be one, as she points out to her adopted daughter.⁵⁷ However, she conforms to social norms because she

wants to fit in by trying to present herself as a "good mother". In Hitler's era this would be particularly frustrating for such a woman, since mothers with four children or more were highly revered by society and awarded the 'Mutterverdienstkreuz'.

Nevertheless, there are times when punishment of the child does seem justified and other times when the mother's response to her child's misdemeanours is extreme, especially with regard to the type of implement she uses for beating.⁵⁸ Certainly the adopted daughter in *Die Eisheiligen* has her own streak of cruelty, which is probably another explanation for her inclusion in this family of ice saints. Out of spite the five-year-old shatters a bottle and places the pieces of glass in the shoes of a boy who had pushed her into the water. She goes through a phase of inscribing her name everywhere with a safety-pin and, when caught doing so, she sticks the pin into the teacher's arm. At school she is the one who is always getting into trouble with the teachers: letting loose a dove in the classroom which breaks the window; covering the blackboard with cream; threatening other pupils and stealing their pencils. She is quick to take revenge in her own way when someone hurts her. This is made very apparent in her last encounter with Kaltesophie in which the adopted daughter turns on her adoptive mother in her last act of violent defiance. Kaltesophie has come to fetch the suitcase and to tell her adoptee that neither she nor her husband will ever give her any money but they will allow her to go : "Sie stand an der Tür und sah zu, wie ich einen Rest Sachen in den Schrank gepackt habe, dann warf ich ihr den Koffer an den Bauch" (E.H. 232). These various incidents do highlight the fact that this adopted daughter is capable of giving as good as she gets. Unfortunately, the role-models who surround her are likely to bring out the worst in her because the environment in which she grows up engenders no human warmth.

Each of these adopted daughters does contemplate her background and the whereabouts of her real parents. Novak's daughter discovers the fact that she was adopted purely by chance whilst rummaging through the cupboards and coming across documents:

Ich vertiefe mich in die Papiere und wurde überflutet von nie
gelesenen und unverständlichen Wörtern. Ich begriff nur, daß
ich adoptiert worden bin, daß meine richtige Mutter auf alle
Rechte verzichtet hatte, daß sie nicht verheiratet gewesen ist
und mein richtiger Vater seit neun Jahren tot war, Freitag.

(E.H. 122)

The discovery causes irreparable damage but she does not utter a word to her adoptive parents. A year later Kaltesophie's temper does reveal the truth, as illustrated earlier. Clearly these two adoptive parents had intended to keep the adoption a secret. It seems obvious that happiness and security cannot be built on lies or fears of discovery which is the case in *Die Eisheiligen*. The worst fear for this young daughter is the threat of being sent away, knowing that her home is unstable.⁵⁹ For instance, Kaltesophie is furious, when her young daughter asks her what an "Angenommenes" (E.H. 72) is, a word which the child had overheard in conversations amongst the neighbours. However, the mother is herself not very careful about her choice of words in the presence of her six-year-old adoptee whom she calls a "Findling" (E.H. 26). She does not realise that the child will ask another relative for the meaning of the word. Out of context the word is explained according to its other interpretation, that of a geological term: "ein Findling ist ein großer Stein, der alleine im Wald oder auf einem Feld liegt, den hat die Eiszeit hinterlassen" (E.H.

27). Although the explanation does not clarify the mother's use of the word, namely that this daughter is a 'foundling', the geological term is just as revealing, since it symbolises the child's future loneliness and her relation to the Ice Saints.⁶⁰ Insecurity, a feeling of being unwanted, cause this adopted daughter to find out factual details about her real parents and to even imagine her real father whilst doing the housework. Whether the fact that he committed suicide influences her wish to end her life, or whether she just feels closer to this parent because of what he did, is not made clear. This daughter does return to the orphanage to establish the dates and places of birth of her real parents as well as their jobs but not their whereabouts at the time of searching. In *Vogel federlos* the teenager wants to terminate the adoption contract because she hates her adoptive parents so much.

This notion of hiding the truth about adoption from the child was one which was taken for granted in the early days of the popularity of adoption. Generally speaking it is now widely accepted that adoptees should be told:

Probably no issue in adoption has generated more anxiety or more literature than that of telling the children about their origins. (...) Discussion of origins raises in many cases the adopters' own feelings about their infertility, about illegitimacy and unmarried parenthood, and the primitive fear that the child will cease to love them once he learns they are not his 'real' parents.⁶¹

Clearly this is not the fear of Kaltiesophie and Karl because there is no love to lose in their relationship with their adopted child, but Kaltiesophie could lose someone who is at her beck

and call, who runs errands for her, who has to help around the house - a child who is treated more like a servant but who does not need to be paid for her services; a child who serves the purpose of helping this woman meet the demands of society. There is the suggestion of shame on the part of Kaltesophie about having had to adopt a child because it is evident from other incidents that she is easily ashamed by her daughter's appearance and is affected by the neighbours' opinions. As explained earlier this would be especially the case for those women living under the Third Reich who could not bear children. A main reason for adopting would, therefore, be to conform to society's expectations of the ideal role for a woman, that is to be a mother. Indirectly, then, society places pressure on a woman such as Kaltesophie, who sees her only way of being 'accepted' by those around her as possessing a child and thus being a mother. Nearly four decades later Christa wants to 'own' a child because it is fashionable to adopt. She, too, is influenced by the standards of the environment in which she and Kurt live, so that once again we can see that society is pressurising women in particular into a role which does not suit all of them. And when forced, no matter how indirectly, into this task of nurturing, the consequences are dire for the child concerned.

In *Die Eishelligen* and *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* the daughters do face identity crises, a common theme in such personal accounts of child-parent relationships. Yet the adopted daughter has to live with the fact that she once had other parents. In their imaginations both daughters in these novels bring to life their original parents, believing that their lives would have been better with them. Their tendency towards such imaginary worlds results from the way in which their adoptive parents handle them so that, when faced with uncertainty and instability of their daily lives, they flee to these imaginary worlds as a form of defence. Knowing that they are adopted means that they can use these

real parents as figures in their imaginary stories. This is particularly the case for Paula who imagines her mother's reaction to her birth:

Ich kam gleich heraus aus meiner lieben wahren Mutter und sie hat gelacht, ich lag in ihren Armen, sie fand mich schön und klein und rührend, sie hat mich geküßt. (P.H. 125)

In her fantasies Paula does envisage her real mother as being loving, fussing over her, being happy in the company of her child, even kissing her. Neither Christa nor Kurt fulfil this dream, in fact they go to great lengths to try to convince Paula that she cannot possibly remember her real parents who died when she was three years old.⁶² Paula is of the opinion that she will never regard Christa and Kurt as her parents:

Eltern, dachte es, wird mein Leben lang nicht stimmen. Eltern ist viel zu viel. Es ist falsch. Das Wort machte seine Beziehung zu den Schläfern und Schreibern zu nah, zu vertraulich, es paßte nicht. (P.H. 37)

Like the narrator of *Die Eisheiligen*, Paula never calls her new parents 'Mutter' and 'Vater', even though Christa and Kurt do make the suggestion to her. They are, nevertheless, only too pleased that Paula does not do so because it does not befit their modern ways:

Wir selber waren nicht scharf drauf, als *Vater* oder *Mutter*,
 unter diesen doch etwas veralteten Firmenzeichen, zu laufen.
 (...) Es kommt uns ja auch im wesentlichen auf ein modern
 verstandenes Freundschaftsverhältnis untereinander an, nicht
 wahr! (P.H. 176)

Similarly it is noticeable that Christa and Kurt never refer to Paula as their daughter. This is probably because she is supposed to behave like an adult companion, she is their "neue Lebensgefährtin" (P.H. 14) and, as mentioned previously, she is also treated as a source of material to be studied and analysed for books and articles written by Christa and Kurt.

As one psychologist, Martin Shaw, points out in his essay "Growing up adopted" (1984) "adopted children cannot easily be studied until they come into the public view for some reason other than being adopted".⁶³ This is so true of Wohmann's novel and Novak's autobiographical novel, where artistic creativity has brought these two adopted daughter-figures into the limelight. According to Shaw, there has in fact been relatively little psychological research into the "micro-level parent-child interaction in adoptive families", nor has there been much research into the question of identity in adoption, "either from a sociological or psychological standpoint", which does seem surprising.⁶⁴ This may stem from the fact that psychologists are divided over the definition of identity with regard to adoptees. On the one hand, there is the argument that "we create our identity, defining and redefining it in daily living, and that preoccupation with the past is self-defeating, a misdirection of energy". On the other hand, "some adopted people who feel they have benefitted from their search for origins would maintain that the value of knowing one's roots is too easily underestimated by non-adopted people".⁶⁵ Whatever the case, John

Triseliotis, in his 1980 study of adoption provides a more apt definition of identity for explaining the identity crisis which the two adopted daughters in this study undergo and are likely to experience in later life, because he defines identity in terms of a childhood experience of feeling wanted and loved within a secure environment, of knowing about your background, and being perceived as a worthwhile person by those around you.⁶⁶ As has been shown, neither Paula nor the I-narrator in *Die Eisheiligen* feel loved and secure in their surroundings, and they are certainly not treated with understanding nor with respect. It could be said that the childhood of each of these daughters typifies the upbringing of children in general and that adoption has no relevance to the lives of these girls, particularly since youngsters adapt to most situations quite easily and tolerate most things. The behaviour of each daughter could be regarded as quite natural because it is accepted that

children react to stress in different ways according to their temperament and life experiences. In some, the fear leads to anger and aggression. Others withdraw into themselves, daydream, suck their thumbs, whine and cling, or seem totally disinterested and aloof.⁶⁷

Whether adopted or not, each child needs to be loved so that it learns to trust. Nevertheless, it has been the intention of this chapter to illustrate the fact that adoption does add a different dimension to these daughter-parent relationships: both daughters demonstrate that adoption accentuates the fact that you are, when all is said and done, on your own. Moreover, as Maggie Jones explains, and as is apparent in these narratives, "adopted children may also carry with them more insecurity from the past than naturally born

children, with a greater than usual fear of rejection, and may need to be handled with extra care and respect."⁶⁸

Whilst the issue of adoption plays a subordinate yet significant role, since it reinforces and expands upon the question of identity being posed by many of the new generation of German writers, both Wohmann and Novak do illustrate in a critical light the method of child-raising predominant in the 1940s/1950s and the early 1970s in Germany. In *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* criticism takes the form of a satire on child-rearing methods at the beginning of the 1970s. Wohmann does not present a life-like situation, as is already evident in her portrayal of Paula, instead she concentrates on the negative effects of modern pedagogical theory, which the adoptive parents are keen to put into practice, as Gebhard Schönenberger explains:

Sie kämpft gegen jenen Erziehungs(un)geist an, der seine ganze Weisheit aus unzähligen Fachbüchern zusammenkratzt, der jegliche kindliche Äußerung fein säuberlich seziert und systematisiert, der Liebe und Nestwärme als Teil des alten Erziehungsideals verachtet.⁶⁹

This satire reflects Wohmann's criticism of ideological changes after 1968 and the adults' naïve belief in intellectual jargon. Not only is there criticism of Christa's and Kurt's attitude towards bringing up a child, but also their attitude, which verges on snobbery, towards other people who do not meet their supposedly high standards, as in the case of the Bechstein family. Hans Wagener aptly summarises Wohmann's criticism of society,

highlighting what has been explained and illustrated in this chapter, in the following comment:

Sie hat auch eine bittere, scharfzüngige Satire auf eine neue Art des Spießertums in der Bundesrepublik geschrieben, von Menschen mit Vernunftglauben, Gefühllosigkeit und unfruchtbarem ästhetischen Empfinden, von Menschen, die alles denkerisch durchdringen, reflektieren, hinterfragen müssen, für die ein Kind kein Individuum ist, sondern ein Wesen, das den angeblich richtigen gesellschaftlichen Normen zu entsprechen hat.⁷⁰

Wohmann wants the reader to be sceptical about an upbringing which is based on purely rational principles, deprived of emotions and spontaneity, but she also emphasises that an upbringing without any rationale is impossible. Parents and children have to come to some compromise over basic principles as a foundation for living together. As was noted in our analysis of *Ausflug mit der Mutter* in Chapter Two, the fact that this is a West German setting is not emphasised in Wohmann's writing.⁷¹ She is dealing with theory and presents a hypothetical situation, since no eight-year-old could be so aware and intelligent as Paula. And by dint of her theorising, she is able to ridicule and show the absurdity of the theories on pedagogy being espoused in Germany at that time.

In complete contrast *Die Eisheiligen* is a presentation of reality in all its brutality, because Novak is putting across to the reader true events, ones which she herself experienced. This is not just the story of an agonising relationship between adoptive

mother and adopted daughter, but it is also the portrayal of a childhood in the Third Reich and adolescence in the Russian-occupied zone, later the GDR. There are, thus, two ways of interpreting this work: either as a psychoanalytical study, which has been the intention of this analysis, or as a contemporary document, which, as Ingeborg Drewitz explains, shows the extent to which some German adolescents of the 1950s were anxious to stand on their own two feet, independent of the older generation:

Wer das Buch als Zeitdokument liest, Zeit, wie sie ein Kind erfährt, kann zu dem Schluß kommen, daß Kinder die Schrecken zwar wahrnehmen, anfällig für Verführbarkeit sind, aber doch kaum recht verführt werden können, weil das dumpfe Sich-selbst-behaupten-Wollen stärker ist.⁷²

Towards the end of *Die Eisheiligen* the adopted daughter has joined the 'Young Pioneers' and the 'Free German Youth' in order to find the company as well as understanding she does not receive at home, and to commit herself politically and show allegiance to the Communists, something which she knows will upset and annoy her adoptive parents, since they view the GDR as "Vaterlandsverräter" (E.H. 203). Ironically, refuge in this political institution is reminiscent of the daughter's own family upbringing. The orders and commands of the leaders of the FDJ

komm her du

stell dich mal vor die Hundertschaft

nein so nicht ...

links zwei drei vier

nee

wir sagen besser

links

und links

und links zwei drei (E.H. 223-224)

replace those of Kaltesophie

der Fuß wird gestreckt

nicht die Zehen einkrumpeln

strecken

jetzt das linke Bein

so nun geh los

links zwei drei vier links zwei drei vier (E.H. 48)

Thus, Novak does not depict the adopted daughter's decision to entrust herself to the East German state rather than to Kaltesophie and Karl as a solution to finding love and happiness. As Helga Kraft suggests, "she (Novak) sees the negative aspects of the family magnified in the practices of the state".⁷³

Maliciously, yet with conviction, the young daughter blames the older generation for the rise of National Socialism, for having submitted to Nazi rule without question and without active opposition. According to her, the new generation of Communists would act together to create a more equal society, the GDR:

Du würdest uns wohl am liebsten alle entlassen,

Eltern, Großeltern, einfach alle?

Ja, alle, denn ihr habt alle Schuld.

Und wer soll arbeiten, wenn die erfahrenen

Kräfte nach Hause geschickt werden?

Wir. Wir werden arbeiten. Wir werden ein

Land aufbauen, daß euch die Augen übergehen. (E.H. 208)

As in the works about fathers, Novak also comments in this book on the guilt of the German nation with reference to its recent, horrific past through her narrator, who had herself been a victim of mental and physical torture. Furthermore, it could be said that this sixteen-year-old was representative of a growing movement of young people, whose enthusiasm for socialism and idealistic hopes for the future of a new Germany were about to be confounded by the reality of politics and power - as the description of the wall with pieces of glass on top surrounding the boarding-school in the Mark of Brandenburg suggests:

Daß die neuen politischen Modelle auch eine Möglichkeit der Emanzipation vom Elternhaus boten, das wird am Schicksal der Ich-Erzählerin klar. Es zeigt sich, daß die Aufbau-bewegung nicht zuletzt von einer "Jugendbewegung" getragen wurde, deren antifaschistische und sozialistische Ziele und Ideale auch Ausdruck der Rebellion gegen eine Eltern-generation waren, die sich als unfähig und verlogen erwiesen

hatte und ungeheure Schuld auf sich geladen hatten. Und nun war diesen jungen Menschen die geschichtlich äußerst seltene Chance gegeben, sich bereits in den Entwicklungsjahren als Person historisch relevant einzubringen.⁷⁴

In his review of Novak's *Die Eisheiligen* Uwe Schultz aptly summarises the double-sided nature of this work, the historical/political and the personal/psychological aspects:

Die Abrechnung mit einer gehaßten Vergangenheit schließt die Rechnung gegen sich selbst ein. Helga M. Novak hat die dokumentarische Biographie einer schwierigen Kindheit in Deutschland geschrieben, aber auch den psychologischen Roman eines schwierigen Kindes.⁷⁵

In this chapter the issue of adoption has been raised via two very contrasting pieces of contemporary German literature: the one dealing with present-day theories on how to bring up a young girl, as experienced by the narrator over a period of two years; the other reflecting on Germany's atrocious past as seen through the eyes of the narrator during twelve years of living with her adoptive parents. Yet we have seen that both narrators have in common the process of thinking and the act of writing as a source of refuge and comfort. Artistic creativity provides a release from the oppressive surroundings in which these two girls find themselves. Ursula Bessen's comment with regard to the daughter's act of writing in *Die Eisheiligen*, namely "Schreiben wird zu einer Art Überlebensstrategie" is applicable not only to both daughter figures, but to Novak and Wohmann themselves and

to women's writing in general as a form of female experience.⁷⁶ For these modern German writers and their female protagonists literature provides the means for expressing criticism, directly or indirectly, in an artistic form and breaking free from the restrictive nature of traditional expectations about what and how women supposedly write in German. There is nothing 'trivial' about their writing because like all the women writers featured in this study they are intent upon surviving and succeeding in a society dominated by a patriarchal culture, above all in the realm of the intellect pertaining to politics and literature.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

- 1 Betty Jean Lifton is in fact of Jewish descent, lives in New York and is well-known there as a journalist, playwright and writer of children's books.
- 2 Betty Jean Lifton, *Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975), p. 245.
- 3 Lifton, p. 35.
- 4 R.D. Laing, *Self and Others* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 95.
- 5 Hedwig Courths-Mahler, *Die Adoptivtochter* (Bergisch Gladbach and München: Bastei Lübbe, 1987). The *Bastei Romane* are a popular form of novel available in newsagents, railway stations and at airports. Their equivalent in English are *Mills and Boon* stories.
- 6 Erhard Schütz, ed., *Einführung in die deutsche Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts. Bd.1: Kaiserreich* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1977), p. 197.
- 7 There does appear to be some confusion over Paula's age. She is definitely eight-years-old when she is adopted, however, it is not clear what age she is at the end of the book which also indicates the time span of the narrative. Whilst interviewing Wohmann in 1974 Dieter Zinner provided the information that Paula was eight at

the beginning of the narrative and thirteen when she left for boarding-school in 'Weg mit der Tarnung', *Die Zeit*, 20 December, 1974. In Eva Borneman's review Paula is "a child about eight years of age at the story's outset, nearing ten at the end" in *Books Abroad*, 49 (1975), 536. The time span of the narrative is almost three years, according to Gerhard and Mona Knapp, *Gabriele Wohmann* (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1981), p. 63. Hermann Burger believes Paula is thirteen when she goes to boarding-school, 'Wissenschaftlich durchleuchtete Obhut', in *Gabriele Wohmann. Auskunft für Leser*, ed. by Klaus Siblewski (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1982), pp. 86-91 (p. 90). Hans Wagener is of the opinion that Paula is nearly thirteen-years-old when she leaves in *Gabriele Wohmann. Köpfe des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1986), p. 46. In the actual text the first mention of Paula being eight is on p. 8, she is nearly nine on p. 166 and thirty pages later she is nearly ten. There are another forty-five pages to the end of the narrative in which there are no further references to her age or to the passing of time.

- 8 Heinrich Hoffmann, *Der Struwwelpeter oder lustige Geschichten und drollige Bilder für Kinder von 3 bis 6 Jahren* (Frankfurt: Loewes Verlag, n.d.).
- 9 Gabriele Wohmann, *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1986). Referred to as P.H. with pagination in brackets.
- 10 Dieter E. Zinner, 'Weg mit der Tarnung', *Die Zeit*, 20 December 1974.

- 11 Paula uses the description of "die Armen" to refer to Christa and Kurt when she notes their inability to disallow her from doing something (P.H. 137). She learns how to use the word in a patronising manner from Christa's tone of voice when she addresses Paula as "meine Arme" (P.H. 138) or "mein Armes" which is quickly changed to "glücklich" (P.H. 176-177), since no sympathy is intended.
- 12 Paula again refers to the two adults as "diese Idioten" (P.H. 226) towards the end of the narrative as she imagines them playing in the snow and realises that they just do not understand her at all. Reference to their intellectual ability is reiterated by Kurt when he recognises that they have not learnt anything from Paula and her presence; Paula picks up on his use of "schlau": "Viel wissen, das tun sie ja, aber viel auch noch fühlen, das gehört dringend dazu, sonst ist man nicht 'schlau'" (P.H. 235).
- 13 Further details in Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, ed. by Ivor H. Evans (London: Cassell, 1981), p. 582. The Ice Saints are also known as Frost Saints. Their days can fall between 11 and 14 May. Some give only three days but this varies. 11 May is the day of St. Mamertus, 12 May St. Pancras, 13 May St. Servatius and 14 May St. Boniface. According to Duden's *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut, 1979) in North Germany the Ice Saints' days occur between 11-13 May, whilst in South Germany they occur between 12-15 May. It is worth noting, too, that the 15 May is the saint-day of Dympna, the patroness of the insane. The feast day of Dymp(h)na is celebrated in the town of Gheel where, according to legend, her bones were

discovered in the thirteenth century. This association with Belgium and insanity does seem appropriate for Kaltesophie's own birthplace and mental instability.

- 14 Helga M. Novak, *Die Eisheiligen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1981). Abbreviated to E.H. with page numbers in parentheses.
- 15 The theme of the daughter persecuted by her stepmother and the portrayal of the stepmother as wicked frequently appear in fairy tales, especially in *Grimms' Tales*. In Cinderella, for instance, the daughter feels rejected and unloved as a result of her stepmother's hostile attitude towards her. In Snow White the stepmother is the evil queen whose jealousy of her stepdaughter leads to destruction - so great is her need for power and domination over others.
- 16 The daughter's explanation for the choice of name is as follows:

Als ich einmal mit einem Strauß Fasanenaugen nach Hause kam, sagte Tante Mieze, das seien Dichternarzissen, auch Pankrazerln genannt. Natürlich sehe ich nicht gerade wie eine Narzisse aus. Ich wollte dem Pankracius ähnlich sein, 'der mit allen Mitteln Kämpfende', wie Tante Mieze übersetzt hat. (E.H. 179)

- 17 Interestingly the name Pankraz appeared in German literature in 1856 as part of the title of Gottfried Keller's story *Pankraz der Schmoller* which was one of ten stories in the compilation entitled *Die Leute von Seldwyla*.
- 18 It is possible that 'Eisheilige' hints at the compound noun 'Scheinheilige'. To some extent Kaltesophie and Karl could be described as 'hypocrites' because they assume the identities of mother and father but are not capable of fulfilling their roles, as their adopted daughter's wish to leave them suggests.
- 19 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. by H.M. Parshley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 528.
- 20 Helga M. Novak, *Vogel federlos* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, Luchterhand, 1982), pp. 17-18. The original Latin title is given: "Volavit volucer sine plumis" and the fact that it originated in the Reichenau monastery.
- 21 The intention of these writers is reminiscent of the pair of teachers in Günter Grass' *Kopfgeburten - oder die Deutschen sterben aus* (1980) who depict Grass' political concern about overpopulation, but privately this married couple cannot decide whether to have a baby or not.
- 22 It is not absolutely clear whether Paula did have a brother or not. Most critics ignore the possibility, however Günter Häntzschel does refer to Paula's "kleine Geschwister" in *Gabriele Wohmann* (München: C.H. Beck, 1982) p. 97. In the text

Paul imagines having brothers in her perfect family and Christa does mention to her friends that there was a brother who died at an early age in an institution (P.H. 129). This is the one and only reference to the existence of a brother in the narrative.

23 The age of Christa and Kurt does not appear in the text, but Wohmann does state their age as being mid-thirties in a radio programme in which she participated for Radio Bremen in September, 1974. The script appears in *Ich lese. Ich schreibe. Autobiographische Essays* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterland, 1984), pp. 59-62 (p. 60).

24 This highlights the difference between this novel and the romance tales.

25 Haus Wagener, *Gabriele Wohmann. Köpfe des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1986), p. 47.

26 See note 7.

27 It should be noted, though, that this has nothing to do with Wohmann's own childhood which was a happy, harmonious one, having been brought up by caring, loving parents.

28 Interview with Dieter Zinner, *Die Zeit*, 20 December 1974.

- 29 Ursula Bessen, 'Helga M. Novak', in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (1984), pp. 1-9 (p. 7).
- 30 Yaak Karsunke, 'Der Sprung vorwärts war ein Fall', *die tageszeitung*, 14 October 1982, p. 8. Renate Wiggerhaus is of the same opinion: "Die deprimierende, individuelle Geschichte des heranwachsenden Mädchens wird eng mit der Zeitgeschichte, die ein solches Schicksal möglich macht, verknüpft", in *Frauen-Literatur-Geschichte: Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Hiltrud Gnüg and Renate Möhrmann (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985), pp. 416-433 (p. 421).
- 31 Wohmann, *Ich lese*, p. 60.
- 32 Paula is not allowed a room of her own because it will disrupt the décor of the house which is to remain open-plan, hence her bedroom is an area partitioned off by a curtain from the rest of the living-room, a "Schlafnische" (P.H. 61), which is seen as enhancing the overall effect of the room. Even the crib Paula inherits from her grandparents will not be put on show because it does not fit in with their modern furnishings:

Die Krippenfiguren, die Paula geerbt hat, gibts vom nächsten Mal an aber nicht mehr. Das können wir unserem ästhetischen Sinn nicht mehr antun. Man kriegt ja

Augenschmerzen davon. Ein künstlerischer Wert war ohnehin nicht vorhanden. (P.H. 211)

- 33 Beauvoir, p. 529. There are a number of examples in Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung* of the daughter having to show her gratitude to her mother. See Z. 8, Z. 136-137, Z. 174, culminating in "die Angst vor dem Dankbarseinmüssen" (Z. 239). More details appear in Chapter Two.
- 34 Wohmann, *Ich lese*, p. 61.
- 35 Hermann Burger, 'Wissenschaftlich durchleuchtete Obhut', in *Gabriele Wohmann. Auskunft für Leser*, ed. by Klaus Siblewski (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1982), pp. 86-91 (p. 89).
- 36 The parents' belief that they are tolerant and do everything right is already evident earlier in the text: "Wir sind derartig tolerant, sie besitzt jede aber auch jede Freiheit" (P.H. 100) and "Kaum anzunehmen, daß wir Fehler machen. Alles stimmt haargenau" (P.H. 116).
- 37 Wohmann, *Ich lese*, p. 61.
- 38 This idea of finding freedom in distant countries is reminiscent of Alfred Andersch's *Sansibar oder Der letzte Grund* (1957) in which Sansibar becomes symbolic of the longing to escape.

- 39 The daughter goes into detail to explain the reasons for committing suicide in the river:

Weil Ihr immer wissen wollt, wie es in meinem Kopf aussieht und ich es auch wissen möchte, aber schon weiß, wieviel Schlechtigkeit in meinem Kopf ist, möchte ich lieber sterben, weil Ihr mich sowieso nicht haben wollt und keiner mich haben will, weil ich böse bin und hinterlistig und undankbar (...) will ich tot sein. Ich weiß ja, daß Eure Geduld mit mir zu Ende ist, und meine mit mir selber auch, weil ich nämlich nicht und nie mache, was Ihr sagt (...) weil meine Mutter mich beizeiten weggegeben hat (...) will ich ins Wasser gehen, weil ich sogar zu feige bin, schwimmen zu lernen.
(E.H. 185)

- 40 Experts on the behaviour of adoptees do point out that a child's sickness offers the adopters the chance to show how much they care for the child:

Allowing a youngster to regress and be babyish and dependent for a while will help in forming emotional ties as well as giving him the chance to catch up on stages of development he has missed. (...) We all go back to infancy to some extent when we are ill and the extra attention one gives a sick child may do more for him than cure the cold.

Jane Rowe, *Yours by Choice: A Guide for Adoptive Parents* (London, Boston and Healey: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 154.

- 41 Kurt Biener, *Selbstmorde bei Kindern und Jugendlichen*, 6th edn (Zürich: Verlag Pro Juventute, 1990), p. 40.
- 42 Biener, p. 69.
- 43 Paula is careful about not waking Christa and Kurt because she knows how much they love their sleep. In fact, sleeping is one of their hobbies, the other being exercising: both hobbies are intended to keep them fit.
- 44 Rowe, p. 143.
- 45 It is not surprising that Paula does not play with other children because her adoptive parents want her to act like an adult. Whilst she lived with her grandparents she used to play with the Bechstein children. However, Christa and Kurt discourage her from continuing to play with them because they do not think that the family provides Paula with suitable company: they are critical of the Bechsteins' eating habits, their supposed lack of intelligence, the father's laziness and the mother's overprotectiveness towards her children: "Seit seiner Übernahme durch Christa und Kurt wußte das Kind: Die Bechsteins sind Spießer" (P.H. 137).

- 46 Gerhard P. Knapp, Mona Knapp, *Gabriele Wohmann* (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1982), p. 94.
- 47 Sibylle Birkhäuser-Oeri, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1988), p. 37.
- 48 Kaltesophie makes a similar remark to her adopted daughter about her appearance later in the text:

nein so gehe ich nicht mit dir raus

bitte geh und sieh dich mal im Spiegel an

merkst du nichts

du siehst wieder mal verboten aus verboten

(...)

man muß sich ja schämen so wie du aussiehst

(...)

mit dir gehe ich nicht mehr unter Leute (E.H. 162)

- 49 Birkhäuser-Oeri, p. 35.
- 50 Günter Haentzschel, *Gabriele Wohmann* (München: C. H. Beck, 1982), p. 99.
- 51 Paula does point out, that in fact all these different personae create one person:

Das Kind war, in jeder Erscheinungsform, im Grunde immer es selber. Paula, Paul, Paulinchen: die zusammen bildeten eine einzige Person, ein Lebewesen, es selber. Sie ergaben das Kind. (P.H. 86)

The names merely represent three different aspects of her personality.

52 Beauvoir, p. 363.

53 Beauvoir, p. 364.

54 Paula's obsession with her hands is mentioned a number of times: "Es betrachtete jetzt seine Hand, es find wieder an mit dem eindringlichen und begütigenden Gernhaben seiner eigenen Person, das fing mit der Hand an, strahlte dann aus" (P.H. 109); "Meine Hände sind etwas plump und ziemlich kurzfingrig, aber es sind meine" (P.H. 117); "Eine Rettung war wieder die alte Übung mit den eigenen Händen: sie schrecklich gern zu haben. Rührung und Trost: das sind meine Finger" (P.H. 197).

55 Sigrid Weigel, *Die Stimme der Medusa. Schreibweisen in der Gegenwartsliteratur von Frauen* (Dülmen-Hiddingsel: tende, 1987), p. 151. The decision of the daughter to become a Communist causes the final rift between her and Karl. In a letter to a friend she admits that she does care for him and is aware that he will not be happy about her enrolment in the Free German Youth organisation:

In die FDJ zu gehen ist das Schlimmste, was ich ihm antun konnte. (...) Ich möchte ihn nicht kränken, und ich weiß, daß er dann nicht mehr mit mir spricht und zwischen uns ewige Feindschaft herrschen wird. Bis jetzt habe ich mich aber immer noch ziemlich gut mit ihm verstanden.
(E.H. 213)

She could not possibly foresee, however, Karl's sudden change in character at the sight of her blue FDJ shirt:

Karl schlug mich mit der Faust ins Gesicht und schlug und schlug. Gerade er hatte mich früher nie geschlagen. Jetzt schrie er dauernd Kommunistenschwein, und als mir das Blut aus der Nase aufs Hemd tropfte, lachte er und rief: Da siehst du, Rot steht dir noch besser als Blau. (E.H. 219)

By actually seeing his daughter as the embodiment of Communism, Karl gives vent to his anger; the teenager has to bear the brunt of his physical and verbal abuse. Thereafter, the narrator does not recount any further conversations between the two of them. It must be assumed that the adoptive father has carried out his threat of not speaking to his adopted daughter ever again.

56 There are other examples of Paula's attempts to express affection for Christa and Kurt which are either not taken seriously or go unnoticed: "Du hast uns so gern?

Ja, sehr schön, wir freuen uns sehr, aber jetzt ists Schluß, los, marsch, ins Bettchen" (P.H. 55); "Der einzige Schaden, den das Glücksgefühl nahm, entstand dadurch, daß sein dauerndes Lächeln von keinem Gegenlächeln beantwortet wurde" (P.H. 91).

57 See page 229.

58 See pages 242-244 of this chapter for examples of the daughter's bad behaviour and the mother's response.

59 The case study of nine-year-old Martin shows how chance discovery of his adoption altered his behaviour for the worse, to being rude, defiant and playing truant from school:

It was finally to an understanding teacher that Martin sobbed out his discovery, his fear that there must be something dreadfully bad about being adopted or why would his parents not tell him, and the even worse fear that this was not really his home so he might be sent away any time. (Rowe, p. 170)

60 There is one moment when Kaltesophie, annoyed by her sister's interference and influence over her adoptive child, refers to her as "mein eigenes Kind" (E.H. 162).

61 Martin Shaw, 'Growing up adopted', in *Adoption - Essays in Social Policy, Law and Sociology*, ed. by Philip Bean (London, New York: Tavistock, 1984), pp. 113-127 (p. 121).

62 On several occasions Christa and Kurt point out to Paula that she cannot remember her real family or suffer from their death because she was far too young to recall the tragedy: P.H. 104, 118-119, 129:

Erfinde auch nicht ewig so Elterngeschichtchen, willst du?
 Du kannst einfach keine exakten Erinnerungen mehr haben,
 das ist einfach schon rein medizinisch gesehen nicht möglich,
 und du bist kein Fabelwesen mit überirdischen Antennen oder
 7. Sinn und so weiter, kein Medium, mach dir da keinen
 schönen Spuk zurecht. *Dir zuliebe.* (P.H. 175)

63 Shaw, p. 114.

64 Shaw, p. 124.

65 Shaw, p. 124.

66 John Triseliotis, ed., *New Developments in Foster Care and Adoption* (London: Methuen, 1980).

- 67 Rowe, p. 143.
- 68 Maggie Jones, *Everything You Need to Know About Adoption* (London: Sheldon, 1987), p. 76.
- 69 Gebhard Schönenberger, 'Wie soll man erziehen? Zu Gabriele Wohmanns neuem Roman', *Tages Anzeiger*, 13 December, 1974.
- 70 Wagener, pp.46-47.
- 71 See page 193.
- 72 Ingeborg Drewitz, 'Jugend von 1939 bis 1951. Helga M. Novaks Roman *Die Eisheiligen*', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 30 September 1979.
- 73 Helga W. Kraft and Barbara Kosta, 'Mother-Daughter Relationships: Problems of Self-Determination in Novak, Heinrich and Wohmann', *German Quarterly*, 56 (1983), 74-88, p. 78.
- 74 Dagmar Ploetz, 'Bis mir die Krallen nachwachsen. Helga M. Novaks Roman *Die Eisheiligen*', *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, 20 December 1979.

- 75 Uwe Schultz, 'Erziehung, die keine Antwort gibt. Eine poetische Autobiographie: Helga M. Novaks Roman *Die Eisheiligen*', *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 9 October 1979.
- 76 Ursula Bessen, p. 7.

CHAPTER FOUR: DEATH OF A DAUGHTER: END OF A STORY

We began this study of daughter-parent relationships in fiction by examining the impact of the father's death on the daughter and the way in which his death served as a catalyst for the story insofar as it was the reason for the author's narrative and provided the structure for each book. During the process of writing the adult daughter attempted to come to terms with the permanent loss of a parent. In this chapter we come full circle because in Hedda Zinner's *Katja* (1979) and Christine Haidegger's *Zum Fenster hinaus* (1979) it is the daughter who dies by committing suicide. In Zinner's novel, set in the 1950s and 1960s in East Germany, it is the death of the daughter which causes the mother, Fini Komarski, to reflect on their relationship during the funeral oration. Here the parent mourns the loss of her child. In Haidegger's novel, set in the 1940s and 1950s in Austria, the daughter is the narrator who portrays life with her mother and narrates the end of her own life. In both works the writer focuses on the mother-daughter relationship and the way in which the ambivalent bond is partly to blame for the death of the daughter. *Katja*, after whom Zinner's novel is entitled, overdoses on sleeping-tablets at the age of twenty-two; Irene, Haidegger's narrator and protagonist, intentionally jumps out of her school's attic window at the age of eleven, hence the title *Zum Fenster hinaus*. We shall see that each girl finds herself in a helpless situation, unable to voice her unhappiness to the one person who plays such a significant role in her life: Irene, for fear of hurting her mother, whom she loves so much; *Katja*, due to her inability to communicate with her mother whose work often keeps her away from home. It is the aim of this chapter to consider the multiplicity of motives behind each daughter's decision to take her own life; to see to what extent the mother (and father) can be held responsible for their daughter's fatal action; and whether the writer is making a statement about society as a whole.

Suicide is indiscriminate: anyone, young or old, rich or poor, can fall victim to it in any community, anywhere in the world. According to statistics, approximately twelve thousand suicides are committed annually in Germany by men over the age of seventy. An estimated ten to twenty times as many suicides are attempted by teenagers between the ages of fifteen and nineteen.¹ The figures are staggering and reveal a rapid-growing suicide rate not only amongst adolescents but also amongst children. During the last decade or so the number of suicides by teenagers in America has risen from 2.4 to 3.8 for every 100,000. In former West Germany suicides constituted 1.2 per cent of all deaths in the five to fifteen age bracket, 12.2 per cent in the fifteen to twenty-five age group.² According to Dr. Kurt Biener, Professor at the Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine in Zürich, after accidents suicide is the second most frequent cause of death in these age categories; though it is impossible to determine how many so-called accidents are actually suicides.³ Recent research in Britain concludes that "suicide is now third only to road accidents and cancer as a cause of death in the young".⁴ Psychologists and suicidologists do agree that 'successful' suicides are prevalent among men, whilst eighty per cent of attempted suicides are carried out by women, irrespective of the age group. The most common cause in sixty per cent of cases of suicide in the young is a broken home. Other motives which can lead to self-destruction are arguments with parents, friends or fiancés, depression, problems at school, sexual disappointments, unwanted pregnancies.⁵ We shall see that the two girls portrayed in the works of fictions here do have in common the fact that they face problems at school and both go through phases of feeling isolated from their family and friends: Irene experiences vulnerability whilst she is at boarding-school, growing up in the 1940s/1950s in Austria; Katja feels insecure during the time she spends in a children's home, and in particular during her marriage to Uwe, whilst growing up in the 1950s/1960s in East

Germany. To understand what drove each daughter to kill herself we need to look first of all at what was happening around her and going on in her thoughts during the days leading up to her fatal action and then work our way back through each girl's life to ascertain what else could have influenced her state of mind.

Unlike all the other novels in this study, it is the mother who is the narrator in Zinner's novel and who reflects on Katja's upbringing. Unable to comprehend her daughter's seemingly senseless action her immediate reaction is to set about piecing together the last moments of Katja's life, trying to find clues and establish reasons, very much like in a detective story, because she does want to find a guilty party, to make someone responsible for her daughter's death to ease her own conscience, as will be explained later when we consider the responsibility of the parents. The mother's perspective is interspersed with extracts from the funeral oration given by her close friend, Anna, as well as conversations with other friends and acquaintances of Katja's, and letters written by Katja, so that the narrative is not totally biased towards the mother, as is the case in the narratives by the daughters-cum-writers. Details about Katja's death are, therefore, drawn from various sources and compiled so as to attempt an explanation for this daughter's suicide.

On the day of the tragedy Katja had gone to work as normal, carried out her duties as a nurse in the hospital, had shown no signs of unhappiness to her colleagues and had even bought theatre tickets for the following day. That night she overdosed on sleeping tablets; two days later her husband notified his parents-in-law. Ambivalence about the final motive arises from two letters, one in which Uwe wrote that he intended to stay with his former girlfriend and baby and divorce Katja; the second, the reply, was written by Katja to Uwe and contained an ultimatum: he was to come home at once, if he wanted to avoid a disaster. There is ambiguity, however, about whether Uwe ever received this letter: he denies it and

his girlfriend divulges that she did not pass the letter on to him. Yet the mother establishes that the two of them were seen near Katja's flat around the time of the tragedy and it did take two days before Uwe notified anyone about Katja's death. The implication is, therefore, that either Uwe and his girlfriend did enter the flat and did leave Katja to die or they did not go near the flat and so had no idea of what Katja was doing. It is also possible that the girlfriend had read Katja's letter and intentionally stopped Uwe from returning home. For the reader Katja's suicide is, thus, shrouded in mystery which forces us to try and make sense, like the mother tries, of the inexplicable. At the same time the writer succeeds in catching our attention and keeps us guessing. Nor is it likely that we will be able to solve the puzzle because, as in most cases of suicide, numerous factors play their part and those closest to the victim remain bewildered by the sudden loss of a loved one.

For the reader of Haidegger's novel the reverse is true because the narrator is the daughter, hence the reader is privy to her thoughts before her death and during the act of suicide. On the one hand this makes the narrative completely biased, on the other hand the author invites the reader to understand and sympathise with this young girl who takes her own life. As in Novak's *Die Eisheiligen* the reader 'grows up' with the daughter because we see the world through the eyes of a child who describes her life from the age of three to eleven. At the same time Haidegger presents a child whose maturity, due to her mother's treatment of her, is part of her character, which, as was noted in *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus*, is convenient for the narrative flow. This use of the narrator-cum-protagonist also allows for the act of suicide to appear in print and the narrative to thereby end. Irene's thoughts fade away as the narrative loses its narrator. The reader does not witness the suicide but actually partakes of it. The very last words are Irene's thoughts, possibly even screams, as she jumps out of the window and tumbles to the ground. It is,

as if we, too, are experiencing the fall and die with her, which does intensify the emotional impact of this particular suicide:

DieBlätterderBuchesindsonah, dasGrünistunerträglich, icher-
kennedieRispendiebraunenSpitzenallesistsoüberdeutlichMama-
liebeMamaliebeMamamama (Z.F. 202)⁶

The linking of words and the gradual lack of punctuation illustrate perfectly the downward movement of the fall as well as the speed. Even in this daughter's last moment of life, the emphasis is on her mother, so that her importance and association with Irene's suicide is made apparent and will need to be analysed in greater detail. For now, though, it should be pointed out that Irene's decision to jump is not a spur-of-the-moment decision. Her choice of death is calculated. Looking out of the school's attic window for the first time, she considers the possibility that 'one' would be freed of all anxieties; the next time she gazes at the pavement below, it is like a magnet, as she thinks of her own plight. Part of the attraction of jumping lies in her conviction that death will solve all problems because there can be no more problems, once she is dead; another part lies in imagining how she would experience death by jumping from such a height:

Habe mir vorgestellt, wie das wäre. So, wie manchmal
knapp vor dem Einschlafen, wenn ich merke: JETZT ... und
dann noch eine Sekunde ganz hellwach bin, ehe ich wirklich
einschlafe. Dieses Jetzt ist eine Art Schmerz, wie ein

Zucken, vom Kopf bis zu den Zehen. Ob der Tod etwas
Ähnliches ist? (Z.F. 200)

On her third visit to the window Irene's mind is made up: she approaches death without any hesitation.

As will become evident when we analyse Irene's relationship with her mother in detail, Irene does regard her decision to take her own life as a solution to her mother's unhappiness. She sees herself as a financial burden to her mother who has to work very hard to afford her daughter's schooling. There is the belief, too, that if she no longer existed her mother would remarry and possibly return to Germany.⁷ The predominant motive for suicide is that she is sacrificing herself for her mother. In her mind she is the problem and suicide is the solution:

Manchnal denke ich, es wäre besser, ich wäre nicht geboren
worden. Seit ich auf der Welt bin, hat Mama nur
Schwierigkeiten. Ohne mich hätte sie es sehr viel leichter.
(Z.F. 190)

This thought process has been observed by psychoanalysts such as Edwin Schneidman:

Suicide is not a random act. It is never done pointlessly or without purpose. It is a way out of a problem, dilemma, bind, challenge, difficulty, crisis, or unbearable situation. It has an inexorable logic and impetus of its own. It is the

answer - seemingly the only available answer - to a real puzzler: How to get out of this? What to do? Its purpose is to solve a problem, to seek a solution to a problem that is generating intense suffering.⁸

In Katja's case there does not appear to be a problem as such which suicide is intended to solve, hence it is at this stage of analysis that the two deaths can no longer be referred to as two suicides, rather the one, that is Irene's, is suicide, whilst the other, Katja's, is parasuicide, that is to say her death is similar but not identical to suicide. We only need to look at Katja's final motive and method of killing herself to determine this. Shortly before her death Katja had disclosed to Eberhard Große, an educational psychologist and head of the children's home where Katja had had to stay for a while, when her parents had no housekeeper to look after her, that she could not leave Uwe because she loved him and hoped to change him. She was, in fact, afraid of losing him, since he had begun to visit his previous girlfriend and their baby again. She had wanted Große's advice with regard to Uwe's suggestion that the girlfriend and baby should move in with them. Katja had felt that she could not live without Uwe, she loved him desperately and was sexually dependent on him. But according to Uwe the suggestion had never been serious, merely a device for forcing the issue of divorce.⁹ Nevertheless, it does seem that the prospect of divorce was the culminating factor in Katja's decision to overdose on sleeping tablets, as her mother recognises: "Überhaupt muß meine Tochter alle Stadien der Eifersucht durchlaufen haben, denn Eifersucht war es neben allem anderen, da mache ich mir nichts vor, die den letzten Schritt auslöste" (K. 125).¹⁰ As mentioned earlier, Katja had given a warning signal by threatening her husband in a letter with the possibility of a disaster. When compared to

Irene's motive for suicide, Katja's reason for overdosing was not an attempt to solve a problem, instead she was crying out for help. Her method of killing herself, overdosing on sleeping tablets, was a slow, painless one, in comparison to Irene's decisive jump out of an attic window. As a nurse Katja had the opportunity to take sleeping tablets from the hospital over a period of time without anyone noticing; she would also have been aware of the fact that there would be a greater chance of somebody finding her still alive, if she overdosed on tablets, because they would take longer to kill her.¹¹ It does seem, therefore, that Katja had expected Uwe to return home in time to save her. In analysing people's reasons for taking overdoses psychologists have drawn up ten motives, seven of which have an appeal character, that is to say, the person taking the overdose has no intention of ceasing to live, instead s/he wants to make others feel sorry, to give them a sense of guilt, shock them; to make it clear how desperate s/he is; to influence somebody else or make him change his mind; to find out whether somebody else really loves him/her.¹² It is not difficult to see how Katja's action, had she not died, could have been regarded as an appeal because her written ultimatum to Uwe was in a sense a test of his love for her and showed that she had only intended to exert pressure on him. By comparing the motives for suicide and parasuicide Schneidman reached a number of conclusions, all of which appertain to Katja's death:

In parasuicidal behaviour the common purpose is to evoke a response. Suicide is conclusive; parasuicide is evocative. (...) The goal of one is the stopping of life; of the other, the changing of it. (...) It is meant to evoke helping behaviour

from others. (...) The common parasuicidal action is communication itself.¹³

Clearly Katja had wanted Uwe to respond to her threat, to force him to make a choice between her and his former girlfriend. The overdose was her way of trying to draw his attention towards her and to make him realise how much he was hurting her and making her suffer. It was, of course, a form of emotional blackmail, just as we saw in Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung* where the mother threatened to kill herself, if her daughter left home. At the same time Katja's action could be interpreted as her last resort to communicate with Uwe through deed, rather than words. Little did she know that her written words and her action would not have the desired effect and would go unheeded by the person who was supposed to save her and thereby show how much he loved her. The writer does hint at the possibility of fate having somehow been involved in Katja's death when the reader recalls that her mother had originally chosen to name her daughter, Katja, in memory of her own sister, who in her youth had taken her life in the name of freedom. For this mother's daughter it does appear to have been a case of "Nomen est omen" (K. 23) because Katja had often accused her parents of not letting her live her own life, of not giving her the freedom to develop her individuality. Thus, in a subtle way, even in Katja's death, the suggestion is that the past, in particular her mother's, has played its part, just as it had constantly haunted her life. This aspect of the influence of the mother's past on Katja's life will be looked at in greater detail when we study their relationship and recognise the way in which history hinders this daughter's development.

Whilst Katja had tried to use death to her advantage as a means of fulfilling her wishes, Irene was attracted to its finality and problem-solving aspect. When we delve deeper into

each girl's upbringing, it is possible to discover other motives which could have subconsciously influenced their tragic actions; events which would have affected their attitude towards death. As Erwin Stengel points out in his study of suicide, "the conscious motive is as a rule only the last precipitating factor in a multiplicity of causes".¹⁴ Significantly, neither girl was afraid of death because both of them had witnessed death and grown up with it. Before she was even four-years-old Irene had already encountered a victim of suicide when she knocked against the hanging corpse of the postman in the dark washroom. The sight of the black tongue and the eyes staring down at her had terrified the child so much that she did not return to the washroom for a long time thereafter. In her short life Irene had attended two funerals, her grandfather's and one of her mother's suitors, Herr Michalek's funeral. He, too, had committed suicide. There is also the constant thought that her father, reported missing in action, is presumed dead, especially after eight years of waiting for him to return. Her mother maintains the grave of an unknown Russian soldier in the event that someone somewhere is doing the same for her husband's grave, if there is one. Hence death continually invades Irene's daily life. She even wonders if her grandmother thinks about death; if she is afraid of dying; and if she sees any purpose in living, other than eating and drinking. In fact, Irene does question the meaning of life: "Der Wahnsinn, der darin liegt, uns auf die Welt kommen zu lassen, um uns dann nach so relativ wenigen Jahren wieder sterben zu lassen, macht mich ganz krank. Was kann man schon tun in diesen kurzen Jahren?" (Z.F. 177). The doubts of this daughter about the point of living do to a certain extent explain the calmness and certainty with which she confronts her own death.

Like Irene, Katja is also familiar with death and the effect the death of a person can have on the people around him or her, so that she is well aware of the risk she is taking

when she overdoses and tries to manipulate death to her advantage by using it as a threat. During her childhood she had been constantly reminded of the horrors of death by her mother who, after having spent eight years in the concentration camp at Ravensbrück on account of her activities on behalf of the anti-Nazi resistance movement, devoted the rest of her life to lecture tours and concerts to ensure that no one would ever forget the atrocities of the past. And this includes her daughter, who at the age of ten is taken by her mother to some of these lectures, where Katja hears of the children who were gassed to death. The daughter's initial tears turn into a withdrawal into herself. Her mother misinterprets Katja's wish to no longer accompany her to these lectures as indifference and coldness. However, as we shall see when we analyse the daughter's relationship with her mother and the importance of the past in her life, Katja's reaction to these dreadful deaths is a self-defence mechanism, her way of handling the suffering with which she is confronted. It might, therefore, seem surprising to the reader that Katja chooses a career in nursing which brings her face to face with death. Katja's explanation to her parents is that her mother had once upon a time looked after sick people and some of them had died in her arms during her time in Ravensbrück. This notion on the part of the daughter of in some way emulating her mother will become clearer in later analysis.¹⁵ At this stage it is already apparent that the mother's past, especially her familiarity with death, does influence her daughter's decision to work in an environment where death and suffering are close at hand. When one of the patients to whom Katja had become attached dies, her mother is unable to answer her questions about why a person has to die and how people can believe in God when death robs them of loved ones:

Meine arme Tochter, sie quälte sich mit dem Phänomen des Sterbens herum und fand bei mir keine Hilfe. Hätte ich ihr helfen können? Ich weiß es nicht. Ich glaubte, sie müsse allein damit fertig werden. (K. 66)

The mother's response, namely to let her daughter sort it out for herself and come to terms with her anguish on her own, is indicative of her inability to express and discuss emotions of any kind with her daughter. As will become evident, this proves to be part of her failure to communicate with her child. Hence, as noted earlier, Katja reacts to death with apparent indifference in order to shield her pain. She does not try to discuss death with her mother again, even though she works in the cancer ward which she compares to hell because youngsters lie there helplessly awaiting death. In comparison to Irene, then, Katja is far more familiar with the horrific and traumatic side of death. For this reason it is unlikely that Katja actually intended to die when she overdosed and, as was explained when we distinguished between suicide and parasuicide, her actions before her death were not indicative of a wish to end her life, rather a way of communicating a desperate need for love. Tragically, for this daughter it all went wrong, whereas for Irene her jump to death was a clear, decisive wish to die because she could only envisage the positive affects of her death.

The problems which death is supposed to solve for Irene come to the fore during her time at boarding-school and can be broken down into three areas: worries about schoolwork, an overwhelming sense of loneliness and an absence of love, all of which lead to phases of depression. Schoolwork poses a problem for Irene because she has to study hard to maintain a high standard of work. The pressure comes from home: she feels

obliged to study harder than the other pupils and excel in class because she knows that her mother has to work all hours of the day to keep up with payments for her school clothes and books, in spite of the fact that Irene won a scholarship to cover the fees at this school. Fear of letting her mother down, if she does not do well at school, is also linked to the memory of her father: "Mama sagt, Papa hätte seine Freude an mir, weil ich so gut in der Schule bin, und sie erzählt mir, wie sehr er geweint hat, weil er damals nicht fertig studieren durfte" (Z.F. 91). Similarly her mother's expression of joy when she hears that Irene has won a scholarship has its foundation in the pride her husband would have felt: "Mama freut sich und umarmt mich wieder. - Wenn Dein Papa das erleben könnte! sagt sie wohl hundertmal" (Z.F. 99). Hence the worry over a possible bad report and having to repeat a school year constantly traumatises Irene's life because she is afraid of disappointing both her parents. She concentrates to such an extent on this negative side that a low grade in mathematics is considered a disaster in her opinion. The fact that she is not above average in one subject is viewed out of all proportion:

Mama war sehr traurig, daß ich in Mathematik nur ein GENÜGEND habe. So schlechte Noten ist sie von mir nicht gewohnt. (...) Ich muß ihr versprechen, mich bei Ostern zu bessern. Ich verspreche es. Aber schweren Herzens. Ich habe einfach Angst, daß ich dieses Versprechen nicht einhalten kann. (Z.F. 186-187)

Thus, with regard to her schoolwork Irene does feel inadequate because she does not believe that she can fulfil the hopes of her mother and the expectations of her father, as interpreted by his widow.

Interwoven with Irene's anxieties about schoolwork is an overwhelming sense of loneliness. At the age of eight she becomes a boarder and has to leave her mother for the first time and can only spend vacations with her henceforth. It should be noted here that out of all the daughter-parent relationships portrayed in this study, the relationship between Irene and her mother is the most loving and affectionate and will be observed more closely later in this chapter. But as a result of Irene's attachment and devotion to her mother, boarding-school does cause a wrench and is a stark contrast to the loving home Irene has to leave behind. At school the pupils are educated to cope with their own problems and to behave in an adult manner.¹⁶ No two girls are allowed to form a close friendship; only groups of three are able to mingle together under the watchful eye of a teacher. Everyone must be friendly to one another but nobody is permitted to have a special friend, hence the teachers ensure that they put together girls who do not like one another. Some girls even pretend to argue for the sake of appearances so that they will be grouped together. Thus Irene feels alone at school: she has no one to whom she can turn and to whom she can talk openly. Her mother cannot understand her daughter's lack of friends at school when she is informed of this in a report, but Irene's attempts to explain the hypocrisy of the teachers are unsuccessful: her mother will never believe that her educators are not telling the truth. This daughter's sense of isolation, of in some way being an outsider, is illustrated by the May Day celebrations at school when the parents come to visit their children. Irene's mother is unable to come so that without either of her parents there she feels particularly lonely. She does accompany two sisters and their father to a café but she is unable to eat

the cake because she is too upset. The presence of this father who is so nice to her intensifies her sense of deprivation: she realises the extent to which she has been denied a father, and that her mother has had no husband with whom to share her life: "Ich wünschte, *mein Vater lebte noch. Vielleicht wäre alles anders. Sicher wäre alles anders*" (Z.F. 201).

Closely connected with Irene's awareness of missing a father in her life, not being able to see her mother during term-time and not being allowed to form close friendships with other girls in school, is the absence of love and care. The one teacher who does attempt to form some kind of friendship with her pupils is the sports mistress, Lisa. She addresses the girls by their first names, thus acknowledging them as human beings. She takes a particular interest in Irene and the stories she writes but she has to be careful not to devote all her attention to just one pupil. Nevertheless, she makes every effort she can to win Irene's trust by listening to her. She even gives her a hug and kiss after receiving the birthday present of a story Irene had written. The shock of the spontaneous embrace makes Irene aware of the emptiness of school life and the extent to which she misses human touch. No one in authority is conscious of the sadness felt by many of the girls, the secret tears, even the fear of getting no post:

Sind wir alle hier so einsam, daß wir nur nach der gegenseitigen Wärme suchen, weil sie uns sonst niemand gibt? Habe ich all die Monate Mamas Gegenwart so vermißt? Einfach nur ihre Nähe, das Wissen, daß ich jederzeit zu ihr gehen und sie umarmen konnte, wenn ich Lust dazu hatte?
(Z.F. 153)

Again and again this daughter stresses her loneliness and how much she misses the love and support of her mother: the climax is reached in the most poignant passage of the narrative:

Mama, ich hab dich lieb. Und ich habe Angst. Ich bin so allein hier. Jemand sollte da sein. Sie dürften einen nicht so allein lassen. Niemand dürfte so alleingelassen werden. Jemand hätte merken müssen, daß ich Hilfe brauche. So, wie Mama das merkt. So wie ich das merke. (Z.F. 201)

Thus Irene's thoughts highlight her fears, feelings of isolation and the absence of love, in particular her mother's, during her time at school. All these negative feelings only emerge at school and it is the school which provides the setting for Irene's suicide. In this daughter's case the education system must, therefore, be seen as partly to blame for driving this young girl to her death.¹⁷ The states of depression which Irene experiences are indicative of the motives which instigate other young people to take their own life, as pointed out at the start of this chapter and emphasised here by Schneidman:

Closely related to hopelessness - helplessness is the overpowering feeling of loneliness. (...) There is emotional loneliness that rests on the important need to have a compatible, close, one-to-one relationship. There is social loneliness, feeling disconnected, not tied in with groups or sub-groups.¹⁸

As we have seen, Irene's loneliness does result from the fact that her mother with whom she has enjoyed a close relationship is no longer present and, furthermore, the school does not allow groups of girls to form close friendships.

Katja also experiences social and emotional loneliness because during her upbringing her mother is too busy with her work to spend time with her daughter; and during her marriage Katja's husband is preoccupied with setting up a car maintenance business and more interested in his former girlfriend and baby. The fact that Katja is unhappy as a child is commented upon by a friend of her mother, Rosemarie, to whom Katja reveals that she wishes for a mother who is not so politically committed and motivated by the past: "Sie sehnt sich nach einer Mutter, die einfach nur Mutter ist, nichts anderes" (K. 37).¹⁹ Resentment towards her mother's work and anyone associated with it becomes increasingly evident as Katja grows older. As a young child she is only aware of the fact that her mother is often away from home and not present to nurture her and fuss over her. On returning from a visit to a friend's house Katja remarks to her mother: "Es ist eine richtige Familie" (K. 29), the implication is that she does not see her home as providing the ideal family-setting; and she does blame her mother for not creating this setting.²⁰ In fact, Katja never brings home school friends - this may be due to the fact that she feels ashamed of the lack of familial warmth at home, but an explanation is not given in the text. Not only is this daughter annoyed by her mother's frequent absences, but she is also angered by the frequent reunions the mother has at home with her friends from Ravensbrück. She accuses her mother of having time for her friends but no time to play with her daughter. As a child Katja expresses her hatred of these Ravensbrück women whom she is supposed to regard as her aunts.²¹ Most of these women have lost their own children so they shower Katja with gifts and call her childish names. But Katja rebels against all the attention, screams

and fights against being picked up. She does not regard these women as her friends and it is her mother whom she wants. As will become clearer later, Katja is not only jealous of the close relationship her mother has with her friends, but she also objects to having to listen to their memories of life in the concentration camp and the constant dredging-up of the past.

In previous chapters we noted that lack of communication and the inability to express feelings caused the greatest rift between parent and child. Zinner's portrayal of this mother and daughter is no exception, whilst Haidegger's novel provides the exception. The mother's lack of time for Katja meant that any chance of creating a close relationship and developing this was doomed from the outset. This mother was either too busy to converse with her daughter or it was the wrong time of day and she was not in the mood for conversation. The result would be a rebuff, a wrong tone of voice and the damage was irreparable:

"Ich will dich etwas fragen."

"Muß das jetzt sein?" Wie oft hatte ich sie mit diesen Worten abgespeist.

"Nicht unbedingt," antwortete sie und stand auf. Anscheinend hatte sie erwartet, abgewiesen zu werden.

(...)

"Na, was hast du auf dem Herzen?" fragte ich dann. Mein Ton paßte ihr nicht, er schien ihr zu tantenhaft. (K. 41)

Katja's response was to withdraw increasingly into herself, to stay in her bedroom and not come out when friends of her mother visited. A phase of playing truant from school, which was indicative of her unhappiness at home, did not have the effect of arousing her mother's attention because her mother left her husband to sort out the problem with their daughter. Another indication of Katja's reaction to being socially and emotionally alone was that at the age of sixteen she started to bring men home to her own room over night, locking the door so that her parents could not enter. On the one hand, her behaviour signalled that she felt deprived of love from her parents and, therefore, turned to sexual relationships for some comfort; on the other hand, she was forcing her parents to pay her attention and perhaps even discuss the matter. However, there was no discussion: her father threatened to throw her out and put her into an institution. Katja's reaction was to show indifference as she had become used to doing, as was noted earlier, and to call her parents' bluff. Thus, time for in-depth communication between this daughter and her parents was not possible during her upbringing, and even after Katja married and moved away from home, her phone calls to her mother were received with impatience because they interrupted her busy schedule. One of the sad facts of this story is that it is only at her daughter's funeral, when it is too late, that the mother realises to what extent communication was absent from their relationship: "Wie oft sprechen wir so aneinander vorbei, ohne uns dessen bewußt zu werden" (K. 102) and that Katja's death was itself evidence of lack of communication.

As previously indicated, a 'successful' parasuicide would have communicated this daughter's need for attention, not only from her parents but also, and primarily, from her husband, from whom she wanted proof of love because she felt insecure in their relationship. Katja's insecurity in her marriage was twofold: first, she discovered five days before their wedding day that Uwe was still visiting his former girlfriend, who was

expecting their baby. At the time Katja had threatened to put a halt to their marriage plans but Uwe had reassured her that there was nothing to worry about because this marriage was far too important. This brings us to the second reason for Katja's sense of insecurity in this relationship with a man who was ten years older than she was: during the honeymoon Uwe reveals that he wants Katja's father to help him set up a car maintenance workshop by obtaining a business licence through his contacts. Katja knows that her father would never use his friends in such a way, thus words of anger and screams ensue between the newlyweds. Back at her parents' home the argument becomes so vehement that the mother suspects that Uwe had, or would, hit his wife:

Ich selbst wäre, wenn ein Mann seine Hand gegen mich
erhoben hätte, nicht eine Stunde länger bei ihm geblieben.
Und nun sollte Katja, meine Tochter ... Aber noch war das
ja nur eine lächerliche, durch nichts begründete Vermutung.
Erst später sollte ich erfahren, daß sie stimmte. (K. 98)

The reader's suspicion that Uwe had married Katja for ulterior motives is proved correct during this angry scene with her parents where he admits that he would not have married Katja, had it not been for her father's contacts.²² Although Katja bursts into tears, she follows Uwe who treats her "wie ein Herr, der seinem Hund pfeift" (K. 99). The suggestion is that she is under his control because she loves him so much that she will do anything for him: she has become totally dependent on him, emotionally and sexually. Uwe's control over his wife and her dependence is made even more apparent by the way in which he is able to force her to hand in her notice at the Charité hospital under the

pretext that she should work with him in his new business, even though he knows that Katja is dedicated to her career as a nurse. He also persuades her to visit her parents again to ask for DM5,000 to support his business venture. Katja's mother refuses to help because her daughter does not admit the reason for the request.²³ From the outset, then, Katja's marriage is fraught with problems. Her dependence on her husband is such that he is able to manipulate her according to his will. If she does not do what he wants, he threatens to leave her, and does on a number of occasions stay away from home. It is not surprising, therefore, that Katja is driven to such drastic action as an overdose, not only to try and force Uwe to come back to her, but also to show her desperation. Her parasuicide was intended to be a method, albeit a risky one, of communication; however, her death turned out to be her last act.

As previously mentioned, the relationship between Irene and her mother is a harmonious one on account of their love for one another. Throughout the narrative the mother's love for her daughter is apparent, be it in the form of physical embraces, encouragement, support or protection.²⁴ Similarly Irene acknowledges her attachment and devotion to her mother. But too much love can also have its problems, as Haidegger's novel illustrates. One aspect of Irene's decision to commit suicide is her willingness to sacrifice her own life to benefit her mother's life - such is the extent of her love for her mother. And as explained earlier, since Irene is so attached to her mother, separation from her is all the more painful when she has to go to boarding-school. When we looked at the mother-daughter relationship in Chapter Two, it was noted that the process of identification the daughter undergoes is complex and ambivalent, so that, although Haidegger presents a relationship which is outwardly very loving, Irene does have to confront inner conflicts and feelings of guilt which are part of the identification process. For Irene her mother is "das

große Vorbild" (Z.F. 164) so that the most difficult problem she faces in their relationship is the conflict of wanting as well as feeling she has to be like her mother, whom she sees as the personification of goodness, and at the same time wanting to develop her own individuality. Irene believes that she will never be able to meet the high moral standards by which her mother lives her life; the fact that she sees every person as being innately good and is convinced that love of mankind is the most important thing in the world. Interestingly, this mother, like the punishing mothers depicted by Mitgutsch and Novak, was also brought up according to the principle that children would only become decent adults through being disciplined and that punishment was their parents' expression of love for them. However, Irene's mother does not repeat this method of child-raising; instead, having learnt from her own experiences, she refuses to punish her child physically, believing that love will be the solution to any problem.²⁵ The implication is, though, that this mother's perception of life is idealistic and naïve, and it is this aspect which perturbs her daughter most of all because not only is she afraid that people abuse her mother's trust on account of her partial deafness, so that she does not always catch what somebody is saying about her and is oblivious to the fact that some people do not like her because she is German and a Protestant, but also Irene does not have her mother's idealistic view of life, so that she believes she can never be as good-natured as her role-model.²⁶ Hence the suggestion is that she fails her mother who expects such good things of her daughter:

Ich würde so gerne ganz wie Mama sein. Aber es gelingt mir nicht. Ich sehe die Leute so, wie sie sich mir zeigen, und ich versuche nicht, ihr Bild für mich zu ändern, auch wenn ich oft möchte, daß sie anders wären. (...) Ich will GUT sein,

will Mama Freude machen, will, daß man mich als freundliches und nettes Kind sieht, aber immer wieder kommt etwas dazwischen. (Z.F. 111)

Closely related to this mother's goodness and perception of life is the fact that she is a devout, church-going Christian whose faith forms the foundation of her daily existence. God and the church are, therefore, part of her daughter's upbringing. In fact, the first books from which Irene learns to read are the Bible and a hymn book. Throughout her childhood the Bible is one of her favourite books because she likes to copy its language in her own writing, which will be looked at more closely later in this chapter. As a four-year-old Irene is afraid of the Catholic God because she believes that she will be sent to hell, since she is a Protestant.²⁷ As she grows older this daughter begins to have less and less faith in God because she associates all good things with God but sees more and more bad things happening around her, particularly the fact that her mother has to work so hard but earns so little money for the sewing she does because people owe her money and she is ashamed to ask for it: "Wohin ich auch sehe, sehe ich soviel Böses, und ich kann mir einfach nicht vorstellen, daß Gott das so gewollt hat" (Z.F. 95).²⁸ At boarding-school Irene finds it increasingly difficult to believe in God and realises that she continues to attend church for the sake of her mother and because she likes the minister and reading the Bible. She judges herself as anything but good: "Vielleicht bin ich gar nicht bestimmt, GUT zu sein, vielleicht ist es deshalb so schwer für mich, an den LIEBEN GOTT zu denken und zu glauben, wie ich das bisher getan habe?" (Z.F. 155). As in Mitgutsch's novel, where the daughter was brought up to believe that her mother was enforcing God's will, Irene cannot separate her mother's goodness from her faith in God so that the physical absence

of her mother at school signals the absence of God from her life. When she is separated from her mother, she finds it ever more impossible to live up to her mother's ideals and the principles of the church.²⁹ For Irene this proves to be a painful realisation because she believes that she is letting her mother down and that her loss of faith may be interpreted as loss of love for her mother - such is the extent to which she sees the two entwined. For the reader this daughter's differing opinion from that of her mother and the changes her thoughts undergo are indicative of the fact that she is developing her own ideas and experiencing the process of psychological separation from her mother.

The process of identification and individuation Irene experiences is complicated by the fact that she regards her mother as being perfect: she wants to identify with her and feels obliged to fulfil her mother's expectations since her mother is so good to her. Thus the implication is that she is under pressure. At school she is forced into being independent because her mother is not there and because the teachers expect their pupils to cope on their own. Aware of the need to become independent and self-reliant in order to survive, Irene faces an identity crisis: she is drawn to her mother and everything she represents so that her attachment to her mother is still strong but she also has to, and wants to, create her own self, to break free from this dependence in order to develop her individuality:

Immer habe ich gedacht, selbst denken zu können, und nun sehe ich, daß ich eigentlich doch sehr von Mama, abhängе. Nicht, daß ich so gut wäre wie sie, oder so fromm, oder vielleicht so fleißig, aber ihre Art, mit Menschen umzugehen, ihre Art zu reden oder zu schweigen in all den Jahren, haben mich so gemacht wie ich bin. Ich habe mich gar nicht *selbst*

gemacht, sondern sie und die anderen Leute, mit denen wir umgegangen sind, haben mich zu dem gemacht, was ich bin. Vielleicht leide ich deshalb so unter einer komischen Traurigkeit, weil ich vielleicht gar nicht so sein möchte, wie Mama das will. (Z.F. 155)

Even when Irene is away from her mother at school she realises that her whole attitude towards life has been determined by her mother and that everything she does, says or feels is always with her mother in mind: what her mother would do in her situation, what effect something would have on her mother and so forth. The strength of the mother-daughter bond is thus evident from the fact that Irene's thoughts constantly revolve around her mother, which leads her to question to what extent she is similar to her mother: "Bin ich wie sie? Bin ich innerlich so wie meine Mutter?" (Z.F. 164). The questions this daughter poses illustrate her anxieties about her own identity and whether she does, in fact, have an identity of her own: "Wer weiß, wer ich bin, und was? (...) Was ist das, dieses ICH, von dem hier die Rede ist? Was macht dieses ICH aus? Woraus besteht es? Wohin geht es? Woher ist es gekommen?" (Z.F. 163). The fact that Irene cannot identify her ego once again suggests that she is so much part of her mother that she is inseparable from her, and as already mentioned, this daughter's very last thoughts are of her mother, which emphasises the idea that she has internalised her mother.³⁰

As was highlighted in our earlier analysis of the mother-daughter bond, it is often the case that mother and daughter are interdependent and that their roles are reversible. The portrayals by Haidegger and Zinner also make this point. The mother in *Zum Fenster hinaus* relies on her daughter for love. Her husband is presumed dead so the only person

who gives her life any meaning is Irene. A number of men show an interest in marrying her but she remains devoted and faithful to the memory of her husband and the life of their child. Her husband's last words were that she should take good care of Irene, thus she fulfils his request. At the same time she depends on Irene to carry out her father's dream of a good education, as was explained when we looked at the worries Irene has about her schoolwork. From the mother's perspective it could be said that Irene keeps the memory of her husband alive, which does point to a form of alienation, whereby the daughter is no longer a person in her own right but an embodiment of her father's dreams and wishes, encapsulating his memory. Thus the mother's dependence on her daughter is indirectly indicative of her dependence on her husband. Another sign of the mother-daughter interdependence is the ability of the daughter to assume the role of mother, even as a child. Irene comforts her mother who breaks down and cries when Irene's primary schoolteacher tries to dissuade her from encouraging her daughter to try for the grammar school because it is not the place for daughters of war widows. She even suggests to the mother that she would consider improving Irene's grades, if the mother altered an outfit for her:

Ich könnte die Lehrerin umbringen, daß sie Mama zum Weinen gebracht hat, aber ich unterdrücke den Zorn und gehe zu Mama bin und tröste sie ein bißchen, lege den Kopf an ihre Wange, damit sie merkt, sie ist nicht alleine und ich bin ganz nah bei ihr. (Z.F. 95)

Here the daughter is able to provide her mother with physical comfort: she appears stronger because her mother is in the unusual situation of having been angered and hurt. Such a

scene is out of the ordinary in this narrative where the mother normally comforts her child. However, Irene does make a direct reference to their role reversal when she notes the extent to which her mother's idealistic view of life makes her vulnerable: "Oft denke ich, sie ist das Kind, und ich bin erwachsener als sie. (...) Es tut weh, daß es die Welt nicht gibt, in der Mama lebt" (Z.F. 111).³¹ From the above illustrations it is apparent that the mother needs her child just as much as Irene needs her. However, the mother's dependence on her daughter, not only for love and support but also for fulfilling her husband's ambitions, is another form of pressure for this young girl. Irene, in fact, points out that one aspect of her suicide is that her mother will be 'free' to find a new husband and a different, loving relationship. Indirectly, she is implying that it is not her responsibility to fill the gap the loss of her father left in her mother's life. As has been shown, Irene comes up against numerous forms of pressure which all point to the fact that the influences of the past and present are not compatible, that conflicting emotions are unresolvable.

A very similar conclusion can be reached about Katja's life, for in Zinner's novel the daughter also experiences feelings of guilt in her ambivalent relationship with her mother, and like Irene, she too faces the difficulty of living up to the ideals embodied in her parents. In this work, as will be shown after we have considered the ambivalence of this mother-daughter bond, it is not religion by which the mother sets her standards, instead it is the principles of communism which shape the life of Katja's mother and father. As was explained earlier in this chapter, lack of communication was the cause of many problems for Katja and her parents, that is not to suggest, however, that this daughter did not love her parents, just as her most common reaction, indifference, belied pain and suffering. In a letter to her only female friend, Annemarie, who was also a nurse, Katja admitted her

love for her parents: "Ich liebe meine Eltern, nur bedeutet das nicht, sie kritiklos zu lieben. (...) Ich weiß auch, was die Eltern alles für mich getan haben und tun" (K. 83). Throughout the mother's recollections there is only one mention of daughter and mother embracing. Katja's hug astonished her mother because it was so unlike her to demonstrate affection. The spontaneous reaction by Katja had been a display of gratitude for her mother's offer to bake a cake for the visit of Annemarie: "Katja umarmte mich in ihrer immer etwas burschikosen Art und sagte: 'Du bist doch die Beste'" (K. 68). Such demonstrative appreciation of her mother as a parent is unusual for this daughter who is prone to showing her displeasure and annoyance either by dint of arguments or indifference. Nevertheless, there is an underlying admiration for her mother which can be seen in the reasons for Katja's choice of professions.³² After failing to obtain the results she required for studying for the 'Abitur' and going on to study medicine, Katja had decided to become an actress. Although an explanation is not given, it is probable that Katja based her choice of profession on the fact that her mother had herself once been an actress. The daughter's wish to go into acting should, therefore, be seen as indicative of her identification with her mother. Whilst her mother was surprised by her daughter's career-decision, she did not discourage her, instead she advised her to apply for a place at drama school and sit the exams, for which she helped Katja to learn her parts but could see that her daughter had no natural flair for acting. After Katja's application for drama school was turned down, she opted for a career in nursing which came as another shock to her parents but, as explained earlier in our analysis of Katja's confrontation with death, her decision was influenced by her mother's past experiences, so that again this suggests the daughter's wish to identify with her mother. This may also have been a way of getting closer to her mother and bridging the gap between them, because subconsciously she could have been trying to

impress her mother, first, by choosing such a career path, second, by succeeding in getting a training-place, and third, by doing well in the job and not giving up, as her mother had expected her to do.

It is not only Katja's career choice that illustrates identification with the mother, but there are also behavioural characteristics which underline their similarities, so that on a psychological level this mother and daughter are closer than they realise or care to admit. Irony lies in the fact that the mother complains about Katja being cold and heartless, as manifested by her indifference, yet there is no evidence of her own warmth:

"Unentwegt ist mit dem Mädchen etwas los," sagte ich, dem Weinen nahe. "Das sie überhaupt nicht an mich denkt."

"Das stimmt nicht," widersprach Rosemarie. "Sie hängt sogar sehr an dir."

"Dann versteht sie es gut, ihre Gefühle zu verheimlichen," meinte ich bitter. "Ich habe nichts davon bemerkt." (K. 37)

For the reader it is not surprising that Katja is able to hide her feelings behind indifference because she would have seen that her role-model was herself incapable of expressing emotions, especially love, in her relationship with her. Even after Katja's death the mother never actually states that she loved her. Instead she stresses that, after having spent eight years in a concentration camp, she had learnt to control her feelings, so that they were subordinate to reason and logic:

Daß für mich immer nur die eine, die rationelle Seite zum Kriterium des Ganzen wurde, hatte mir den Zugang zum Wesen meiner Tochter unmöglich gemacht. Das erkannte ich jetzt. Ich war zu sehr von mir ausgegangen, besonders von den Jahren in Ravensbrück, wo ich gelernt hatte, Gefühle immer dem Verstand unterzuordnen. (K. 150)

Thus, as a person, Fini Komarski had hardened in order to endure all the suffering around her; as a mother, she failed her daughter during the critical years of childhood. The fact that this mother had also trained to be an actress meant that she was able to disguise the truth with ease and again conceal emotions: the training stood her in good stead for surviving the Nazi régime, but it affected the way she behaved with her own child:³³

Manchmal denke ich, daß wir diese Zurücknahme kultiviert haben, statt echte und falsche Gefühle erkennbar zu machen. Damit fördern wir eine Art Heuchelei: die Angst, Gefühle zu äußern. (K. 63)³⁴

Just as this mother had learnt to protect her inner feelings, so her daughter developed indifference to hide her emotions. It is possible that this was another aspect, but only a minor one, which influenced her own interest in acting, and perhaps the fact that she failed the drama school's entrance exam was telling because it showed that she was not very good at acting and presenting a false self. It does seem, therefore, somewhat incomprehensible that her own mother, who was familiar with the acting profession, could not tell when Katja

was concealing the truth from her. But this probably had to do with the fact that she was preoccupied with her work and frequently away on tours, so that she did not have the time to see and understand the causes of Katja's behaviour. It is only after her daughter's death that she does make the time to analyse her mistakes, as will be explained when we consider who, if anyone, is to blame for Katja's death.

What is significant at this stage of our analysis of mother and daughter is that there is evidence in the novel of their similarities: Katja's identification with her mother influences her own behaviour and choice of career, just as Irene had pointed out that it was her mother who moulded her attitude to life. And as in *Zum Fenster hinaus* there are signs of role reversal. When the mother attempts to help her daughter with homework in order to pay her some attention, it is Katja who teaches her easier methods of solving the mathematical problems.³⁵ Thus the mother becomes the pupil who is in need of guidance. This particular role reversal of pupil and teacher is reiterated, and noted by the mother, during one of the few, brief conversations she has with Katja. The subject of the discussion is Stephan, Katja's father. The daughter comments that she feels sorry for her father because he appears to always be sad and she puts this down to his inability to compete with his wife. Thus Katja sees her mother as responsible for her father's tendency to be depressed:

"Du hast manchmal so eine Art, die keinen Widerspruch aufkommen läßt. Vielleicht hast du das im Lager gebraucht."

Es kam mir vor, als hätten wir die Rollen getauscht, als sei sie die Überlegene und ich das Schulkind. (K. 39)³⁶

Whilst the mother perceives that she is the pupil, learning from her daughter about herself, she does not heed the significance of Katja's remark at the time. Ironically, she herself describes Katja's behaviour as "widersprüchlich" (K. 46) so that it is perhaps understandable that a mother, who does not allow for contradictions and inconsistencies in her life, cannot relate to a daughter who appears to be contradictory and inconsistent in her behaviour.

The development of Katja's individuality as she grows up is hindered by the problems she has predominantly with her mother because the indifference she grows accustomed to showing is not naturally part of her personality. Its cause is the mother's 'obsession' with her own past, which for Katja creates an oppressive atmosphere because this past is constantly forced upon her against her will, be it in the form of reunions of Ravensbrück women in her home, being taken by her mother to listen to her lectures, or at school, where teachers sing the praises of her mother's active resistance of Nazism and want her to come and give talks about her past. Katja even interprets her mother's decision to put her in a children's home as putting her into a camp, although the decision was, in fact, borne of necessity and only a short-term solution until a suitable housekeeper was found to look after Katja. Yet it is in the children's home that Katja learns to confide in Große, the head of the institution, to whom she reveals that she hates the historical ambience in which she is forced to live, believing that it is poisoning her upbringing. Shortly before her death Katja returns to Große and explains the bitterness with which she regarded her mother's work during her childhood and the effect it had upon the shaping of her character:

"Aber ich stumpfte ab, ich mußte es," erklärte sie mir,

"anders hätte ich nicht leben können. Es war Selbstschutz.

Und ich reagierte allergisch auf alles, was mit diesen Geschehnissen zu tun hatte. Dieses Abstumpfen als Folge großer Belastungen, denen ich als Kind ausgesetzt war, indem man mir die Vergangenheit ständig vor Augen hielt, war einer der größten Erziehungsfehler bei meiner Erziehung, und man sollte diese Gefahr auch bei anderen Jugendlichen nicht übersehen." (K. 147)

Not only was indifference a reaction to the stifling effect of reminders of the past, but, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, Katja also withdrew into her own world from which she excluded her parents but included different men from whom she sought pleasure, in the form of sex, one of these men being Uwe. For Katja marriage to Uwe is based on a number of reasons: love and sex; escape from her parents' home and the reminders of the past; as well as an act of rebellion against everything her parents represented. This last reason will be considered in due course. For this daughter marriage, then, appeared to be the solution to her problems and seemed to provide an escape-route.

We have seen in our analysis of previous portrayals that in times of crisis the majority of daughters turned to artistic creativity, to a world of fantasy and dreams where they could either forget their problems or try and understand their anxieties by writing about them. This was evident in Chapter One where daughters wrote about the deaths of their fathers to come to terms with their loss; in the relationships of mothers and daughters the narrator of *Ausflug mit der Mutter* emphasised the point that by writing about her mother, she was showing her love for her as well as learning about herself; both adopted daughters turn to reading and writing as a way of finding comfort and coping with their lives. Whilst Katja

envisages marriage as improving her life, Irene seeks solace in writing and drawing as well as in her enjoyment of reading. At boarding-school she keeps a diary, given to her by her mother, in order to overcome her homesickness.³⁷ The process of writing for Irene involves both the creation of a new friend, to whom she can talk, as well as a conversation with herself: it, thus, releases her anxieties and makes her confusions less serious and less important:

Das Tagebuch hilft mir sehr, mich zurechtzufinden. Es hört sich sozusagen alles an und ich kann es später wieder lesen und habe es inzwischen meist überwunden, das oft traurige Gefühl, das mich zum Schreiben veranlaßt hat. (Z.F. 141)³⁸

The diary, therefore, becomes a sounding-board for Irene's doubts. In her stories Irene portrays unhappy figures because in reality she is herself unhappy; she never sees her mother laughing and her peers are also sad at school. Nobody in school believes that she invents her stories herself and the same is said of the poems she writes for the school newspaper. In her school report the suggestion is made that she should read less in order to curb her active imagination. Hence the education system is shown to be unsupportive, even discouraging, of this young girl's artistic creativity. The teachers have no respect for Irene's ability nor for privacy, which is illustrated by the fact that some of them read her diary whilst she is at home over Christmas. Irene's reaction to this discovery is to burn her diary. Her anger and disappointment are evident because she had believed it was her own private property, but the teacher's reading of her personal thoughts made these thoughts in her diary public knowledge. Her action does suggest that she believed it was

safer to burn the evidence than offer strangers the chance to pry into her innermost emotions. When at home during the vacations Irene paints landscapes in uninterrupted privacy. Her paintings are of vast, open landscapes, such as the sea or sky, images of freedom: "Dann kann ich mich HINEINVERLIEREN" (Z.F. 138).³⁹ She never paints anything bright or colourful and never depicts any people, which does underline her own sadness and loneliness. Nonetheless, art, be it painting, writing or reading, provides a hiding-place, somewhere to which to escape, where the mind shuts out the drudgery of reality, all the worries and fears, but, as Haidegger's novel illustrates, it is not a permanent solution and it is easy to destroy.⁴⁰ Interestingly, Katja's mother also discovers some comfort and strength in art, in the form of poetry, during her time in Ravensbrück, when she recalls four lines from Heine's poetry:

Anfangs wollt ich fast verzagen,
 Und ich glaubt, ich trüg es nie;
 Und ich hab es doch getragen -
 Aber fragt mich nur nicht, wie? (K. 66)⁴¹

The verse endows the mother with the courage not to give up in her time of crisis. Her concerts and plays are another way of helping, not only herself but also her fellow-captives, to temporarily forget their suffering and enable them to survive in the concentration camp. She is unable to have the same influence on her daughter who does not turn to art for support, but to another person, Uwe, who is supposed to help her to escape her past and ultimately save her from death.

This brings us to the problem of apportioning blame in these novels, the extent to which loved ones in the lives of these daughters can be held responsible for their tragic deaths, as well as the part society plays, if any, in influencing each daughter's step towards death. In Zinner's novel Katja's mother does reproach herself for not having adequately fulfilled her role as a mother, for neglecting Katja throughout her childhood and into womanhood, whilst enjoying and furthering her own career, but she only reaches this understanding after her daughter's death. Thus the tragedy of this mother-daughter relationship lies in the fact that only as a result of Katja's death does the mother come to understand and accept her own faults. The immediacy and impact of death during the funeral service brings about this realisation: "Ich hätte sehen müssen, wie sich das Kind abstrampelte, um mit seinem Leben zurechtzukommen. Ich hätte, hätte, hätte ... damit schlage ich mich ohne Unterlaß herum" (K. 45). Analysts point to the fact that it is common for parents to have intense feelings of guilt after their child's suicide:

The sense of guilt is especially great where it concerns parents who had no particularly close ties with the child concerned and who felt relatively powerless and helpless towards him or her. Questions like: "What did we do wrong?", "Shouldn't we have paid him more attention?" (...) often torment parents for many years afterwards.⁴²

Katja's mother does acknowledge that she and her husband were not aware at the time of having done anything wrong; that they did try to puzzle out the reasons for their daughter's attitude which they had regarded as odd. It did not occur to them, however, that her

behaviour, as has been shown, resulted from their attitude and actions. By reliving the past and trying to piece together events prior to her daughter's death, the mother illustrates a desperate attempt to come to terms with her own conscience. She needs to punish herself, to agonise over her mistakes and shortcomings in order to make some sense of Katja's death. It is, in fact, quite natural for a bereaved parent, a survivor, to undergo some psychic trauma, since "ambivalences that may have been resolved in the ebb and flow of everyday life are held in frozen frame, perhaps with extra guilt and pain".⁴³ The action of doing something seemingly productive, such as talking to anyone with whom Katja had been in contact on the day of her death and investigating the death, is likely to provide a source of comfort for this mother. At the same time her feelings of guilt cause her to search for others on to whom she can shift the blame and make scapegoats for her own feelings: "Uwe war schuld am Unfaßbaren, davon war ich überzeugt. Ich floh geradezu in diesen Gedanken. Floh ich nicht von mir selbst? Von meinen eigenen Schuldgefühlen?" (K. 114). At the start of the funeral service she is even prepared to lay the blame on her husband and is taken aback by her thoughts: "Ich verstehe mich selbst nicht, warum ist Stephans Mitgefühl mir kein Trost? Mache ich ihn verantwortlich für Katjas Tod? (...) Wenn er schuldig ist, dann bin ich es viel mehr" (K. 7). The questions and doubts of this mother are never adequately answered, however much investigating she undertakes, and it is probable that she will never fully understand her daughter's death. According to Günter Höhne in his review of *Katja* it was Hedda Zinner's intention to pose many questions, not only about the motives for Katja's death, but also about the values of East German society; however, she did not intend to be able to answer all of them.⁴⁴

In studies of the suicide's parental family researchers have commented on the influence of each parent on the child who eventually commits suicide. In 1965 Teele had already investigated the significance of the mother's social participation:

Surprisingly, mothers of suicides seem to be more socially active, more intelligent, more 'clear-minded' and more understanding than those of non-suicides. (...) The more a person's mother participates in social activity, the more the child is exposed to society's ethics and norms, and the more likely he becomes to turn aggression inward rather than outward.⁴⁵

As we have seen in our analysis of the mother-daughter relationship in *Katja*, this finding is an apt description of Katja's mother and does highlight the difficulty Katja has living with her mother's past and coping with her present problems with Uwe. From an early age Katja is exposed to her mother's social and political activities. This exposure is reflected in a school essay Katja writes in which she criticises the achievements of the East German state. The essay title, "Was ich unserem Staat zu danken habe" (K. 42), is set by the teacher who reacts angrily when she reads the work of this thirteen-year-old who has gone against her teachings:

"Immerzu hören wir, wie schlecht es den Kindern früher ging und wie gut es uns geht. Immerzu wirft man uns die Vergangenheit vor und verlangt, daß wir dankbar sind. Aber

wir sind doch nicht schuld an der Vergangenheit, und wir können nicht ständig danke schön, danke schön, sagen. Wir sind doch auch der Staat, wenigstens behauptet man das immer, und wir werden schon zeigen, was in uns steckt, wenn wir dran sind." (K. 43)

Despite the fact that the essay is grammatically virtually flawless, the teacher gives Katja a low grade on account of her criticisms and the rebellious tone of her work. The scene is indicative of the education system in the GDR where the pupils were discouraged from expressing their opinion, or even having an opinion, especially about the state. And the fact that this girl had the audacity to express criticism was an even worse sin in the eyes of her teacher. Confronted by her daughter's anger about the grade, the mother is torn between supporting her child's right to express her own opinion and not wanting to undermine the teacher's authority. Her attempt to explain the teacher's reaction to the essay is sufficient proof for this daughter to recognise the hypocrisy of this society: "Ihr sagt, man soll die Wahrheit sagen, aber wenn man das tut, ist es nicht die Wahrheit" (K. 45). Such conflict in the mind of this young teenager already points to the future problems she has of combining her parents' idealistic principles and her husband's capitalist tendencies in her own life.⁴⁶ Throughout the novel the author places emphasis on Katja's inability to combine successfully the expectations of her parents who represent the old guard, and the materialistic demands of Uwe who represents the new generation and who sees success as dependent on having the right connections or being a member of the Communist Party.⁴⁷ Just as Irene feels guilty about no longer believing in God and, therefore, hurting her mother, Katja experiences the guilt of letting her parents' down by

falling in line with her husband's approach to life. It is Uwe who, after Katja's death, draws the mother's attention to his wife's conflict of loyalties:

"Es wäre auch alles weiter ganz gut gegangen, wenn Sie nicht mit Ihren blödsinnigen Prinzipien und Grundsätzen gekommen wären. (...) Und zwischen diesen Grundsätzen und dem wirklichen Leben ist Katja zugrunde gegangen. Sie konnte das nicht übereinbringen, das Alte und das Neue, das Wirkliche und das Gewünschte. (...) Sie hat auch mich und ihr Elternhaus nicht übereinbringen können, das war ausschlaggebend. Für eines hätte sie sich entscheiden müssen, das konnte sie nicht. Sie war wie zerrissen."

(K. 154)⁴⁸

Whilst Uwe does describe correctly the ambivalent situation in which his young wife found herself after marrying him, he is wrong to suggest to the mother that everything would have worked out well in his marriage had it not been for the political and moral ideals of Fini and Stephan. He, too, tries to clear himself of any blame for Katja's death, but as we have seen, he was the one to leave Katja when she could not provide what he wanted and it was to him that Katja addressed her ultimatum.

The personal conflict Zinner depicts in Katja's relationship with her parents and her husband does have a wider significance because it highlights the general problems of a generation gap, as well as the conflicting problems endemic of East German society and its development in the 1960s, where the past ideology of socialism was overlapping with the

new ideas of ruthless opportunism. In her novel Zinner shows the extent to which conflict within the family and within society is rife due to the changing attitudes from one generation to the next. Katja's mother makes a similar point when she recognises that the political commitment of her generation was partly to blame for creating lack of understanding and lack of communication with the younger generation: "Wir, die wir Vorbild sein sollten, waren es, die unsere Kinder dem Endziel, für das wir kämpfen, entfremdeten, indem wir uns ihnen entfremdeten" (K. 38). In his review of *Katja* Hans Jürgen Geerds focuses on the socio-political problems:

Die Fragen, die sich Fini stellt, sind Fragen allgemeinen Charakters in unserer sozialistischen Gesellschaft. Sie haben vielschichtiges Gepräge. Begreiflich wird der Umstand, daß sich jede neu heranwachsende Generation ihr eigenes Verhältnis zu Gegenwart und Vergangenheit schaffen muß, also ihr eigenes originäres Erleben der Gesellschaft artikuliert. Es kann keines Mechanismus im Übertrage der Ideale von einer Generation zu anderen geben.⁴⁹

Hence, Zinner questions not only the ethical values embedded in East German society, but also the role of parents in their upbringing of the next generation. At the same time she exposes individual and collective responsibility for the death of Katja.

It should be noted that the mother in this novel does combine a career and child-raising which was typical of East German women at that time. Up till now we have not come across a mother who is so politically-committed and career-oriented. In her article entitled

'Wie hoch ist eigentlich der Preis der Emanzipation?' Margy Gerber focuses on the problems women in the GDR face in balancing work with family life and the extent to which their offspring suffer the consequences:

Emotionally disturbed, asocial, even suicidal children of working mothers, are recurring figures in GDR women's writing today. Increasingly, children are being viewed as victims of women's emancipation.⁵⁰

With regard to *Katja* I do not agree with Gerber's comment because, as has become clear in this analysis of Katja's death, it is not so much the fact that her mother works which emotionally affects Katja, rather it is her generation's obsession with the atrocities of the past which disturb this daughter, as well as the problems in her relationship with Uwe. Moreover, the belief that East German women were emancipated is also questionable. State measures and legal equality did allow women to combine a career with motherhood but women were still regarded as carrying the responsibility for children and housework, even if they did have a full-time job which was usually in poorly-paid areas of the economy, such as the service sector, health care and social welfare. In addition to this 'double burden' of being both a worker and mother women in the GDR were also expected to perform a social or political role. For some of these women their right to work was regarded more as an obligation, especially in view of the fact that many social benefits were tied to employment. It is not that straightforward, therefore, to speak of East German women as being emancipated. As Irene Dölling points out "women were regarded primarily functionally - as workers and as mothers - (...) not as subjects with a claim to

self-determination and the responsibility for their own lives".⁵¹ Thus, we find that East German women's literature frequently reflects this conflict between individual wishes and social pressure:

... literature in the GDR, in the absence of a feminist public sphere, is the genuine and primary place where women communicate and thematize their experience. (...) given the enormous discrepancy in the GDR between social emancipation and the preservation of traditional sex roles on both a private and ideological level, GDR women's literature is characterized by a curious tension between conscious self-awareness and critique.⁵²

Social commentary is not as blatant in *Zum Fenster hinaus*, although Haidegger does portray a mother and daughter who are made to feel like outsiders because they are German and Protestant.⁵³ In her novel Haidegger does reveal the prejudices of some Austrians towards Germans immediately after the Second World War:

Alle Kinder im Kindergarten sind katholisch, nur ich nicht. Darum, und weil ich anders spreche als sie, hauen mich die Buben oft, weil meine Mutter eine DEUTSCHE ist und sie schuld ist, daß wir den Krieg verloren haben und viele Kinder keinen Vater mehr haben. (Z.F. 45)

Thus, from an early age Irene is exposed to hurtful prejudices and, even though these are voiced by children, the children would have heard these opinions expressed by their parents and other adults. During her short life Irene does make a number of references to people's attitudes towards her and her mother's nationality and faith, so that the prejudices do affect her and she does have a sense of being excluded from the community in which she lives. At one point she actually wishes that people would like her and forget that her mother is German: she just wants to be like any other ordinary girl and accepted by those around her.⁵⁴ Even at boarding-school she is made to feel different because the majority of the girls are Catholic and she has to get up earlier and walk further than they do to attend church. Due to her increasing loss of faith, as explained earlier, and a desire to fit in and not be regarded as an outsider, Irene ends up singing in the choir for Catholic mass. Thus, the pressures this young girl experiences can also be attributed to the narrow-mindedness of the community in which she is brought up. The implication is that she feels as if she is being continually judged by her neighbours, teachers, peers, and most importantly, her mother (and father, who is kept 'alive' by her mother's memories) and ultimately God. Her sense of having to live up to everyone else's expectations is further complicated by the fact that these expectations are all different and conflicting, depending on whether she is at home, or out and about in town, or at boarding-school. Like Zinner, Haidegger therefore lays the blame for this daughter's suicide not just on her mother but on society as a whole.

As has been shown, both novels highlight the pressures parents exert on their children, whether they are politically-committed and guided by intellect and reason, or whether they are soft-hearted and sympathetic, and guided by love and faith. In both cases the daughter internalises the belief that she is letting her parents down so that she feels guilty, but at the

same time she is unable to resolve the conflict of acknowledging the wisdom of her parents, yet wanting to be a person in her own right by creating her own identity. In a literal sense each girl does break away from her role-model and lives separated from her mother but neither daughter succeeds in making the psychological break, such is the extent of each mother's influence. As we have seen in earlier studies of the mother-daughter relationship, the portrayals by Haidegger and Zinner are just as problematic and complex, so that the bond in itself is not the reason for the daughter's death, however much the mother blames herself. In both novels there are many components to each daughter's final, tragic act. Ultimately, each book serves as a warning, both to parents and any misguided principles they might have, and to society and its inability to heed the warning signs.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 *Jahrbuch der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1990/91*, ed. by Emil Hübner and Horst-Hennek Rohlfes (München: C.H. Beck, 1990), p. 15.
- 2 Kurt Biener, *Selbstmorde bei Kindern und Jugendlichen*, 6th edn (Zürich: Verlag Pro Juventute, 1985), p. 11.
- 3 Larry Morton Gernsbacher comes to the same conclusion in his study of suicide in *The Suicide Syndrome: Origins, Manifestations, and Alleviation of Human Self-Destructiveness* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1985), p. 16.
- 4 Janet Watts, 'Why Must They be Teenagers in Love with Death?' *Observer*, 17 May 1992, p. 48.
- 5 The classic factors associated with suicide by teenagers today include unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse and Aids. See Watts, p. 48.
- 6 Christine Haidegger, *Zum Fenster hinaus* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986). Hereafter referred to as Z.F. with page numbers in brackets.
- 7 This is, of course, Irene's perspective. Her mother may only remarry on account of her daughter and the financial security a husband might offer the two of them.

8 Edwin Schneidman, *Definition of Suicide* (New York: Wiley, 1985), pp. 128-129.

9 It turns out that Uwe had been married and divorced once before but did not mention this to Katja.

10 Hedda Zinner, *Katja* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1981). Abbreviated to K. with pagination in parentheses.

11 Biener gives the following explanation for why girls tend to commit suicide by overdosing:

Erstens, schienen die Mädchen (...) allgemein bestrebt zu sein, ihre Körper äußerlich intakt zu lassen; sie wählen daher die orale Vergiftung. Dabei besteht allgemein eine höhere Chance, daß der Suizident gefunden wird, da es eine längere Zeit dauert, bis der Tod eintritt. (...) Gerade für demonstrative Suizidversuche scheint die Medikamentenintoxikation geeignet zu sein. Man darf aber aus dieser Tatsache nicht den Schluß ziehen, Suizidversuche mit toxischen Substanzen seien nicht ernst zu nehmen. (p. 30)

12 *Suicide in Adolescence*, ed. by René Diekstra and Keith Hawton (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1987), p. 60.

- 13 Schneidman, p. 215.
- 14 Erwin Stengel, *Suicide and Attempted Suicide* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 39.
- 15 Katja's mother had wanted to kill herself during her imprisonment in Ravensbrück by walking into an electric fence. A friend prevented her from doing so by reminding her that she should not think of herself. It is not mentioned in the narrative if Katja is aware of this.
- 16 We already saw the effect such an upbringing had on Paula in *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* where the parents wanted her to behave as an adult. Katja's mother also expects her daughter to cope with distress on her own.
- 17 At the turn of the century a number of German works were published which highlighted the pressures school, especially boarding-school, exerted on pupils and the fact that many children could not endure the demands of the teachers. They include: Hermann Hesse's *Unterm Rad* (1905), Robert Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (1906) and Frank Wedekind's play *Frühlings Erwachen. Eine Kindertragödie* (1891).
- 18 Schneidman, p. 133.

- 19 Ironically, Rosemarie's own daughter left home to live with a man who drove her to drink and who left her for another woman.
- 20 As was shown in *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* the daughter's desire for a mother who treats her as a child is expressed by Paula. She also comments on the fact that the Bechstein family is a 'proper' family because of the cosiness and security she encounters there.
- 21 In a letter Katja wrote during her honeymoon to her only female friend, Annemarie, she admitted that the camaraderie of the Ravensbrück women did offer a sense of security and an overwhelming amount of affection. Her original negative attitude altered as she grew older.
- 22 After his wife's death Uwe repeats the fact that he did marry Katja for ulterior motives but that he also grew to love her.
- 23 The mother discovers after her daughter's death that Anna had provided Katja and Uwe with the financial backing for the car repair business.
- 24 This is also the first time that a mother is portrayed as bringing up her daughter completely on her own. In previous portrayals of mothers and daughters there has been a father present at some stage in the child's upbringing, however, he is usually in the background and does not play a significant role in these works which focus on the relationships between mothers and daughters.

- 25 On the one occasion that Irene is smacked by Herr Pirkner for playing on the railway track and nearly getting run over, her mother reacts angrily towards this suitor's interference and punishment of her daughter: "Schläge haben noch NIE ein Kind gebessert" (Z.F. 37). In contrast to Christa's and Kurt's belief that a child should not be punished (*Paulinchen war allein zu Haus*), Irene is brought up by a very loving mother whose reason for not punishing is based on care and understanding.
- 26 It is somewhat ironic that Irene's mother warns her about living in a fantasy world, it is almost a premonition on the mother's part: "Der Fall nachher ist umso tiefer" (Z.F. 177).
- 27 See pages 326-327 for the social implications of being a Protestant in Austria.
- 28 This is reminiscent of Katja's questioning of the role of God, when she sees people dying around her in the cancer ward. See pages 294-295.
- 29 Living up to her mother's expectations becomes increasingly difficult because Irene is developing her own point-of-view and the environment at school is not conducive of love and goodness.
- 30 This idea is made apparent when Irene is summoned to the headmaster of whom she is terrified. Her mother had written a letter to him, requesting that he should show her daughter some understanding and appreciate her circumstances. Annoyed by the

mother's interference the headmaster accuses Irene of being spoiled and threatens to give her scholarship to another girl, if the mother is not satisfied with her daughter's education. Irene's fear is manifested by her immediate loss of speech and the coldness she feels. In her anxiety she holds on to the one word, she knows, that embodies comfort, security and warmth:

Mama, sagt es in mir drin immer wieder. Mama. Mama.
 Mama. Nichts anderes, ich weiß nicht wie lange. (...)
 Niemand soll mich trennen von dem Wort MAMA, das
 ununterbrochen in mir ist. Es ist wichtig, daß ich mich an
 dieses Wort klammere, sehr wichtig. (Z.F. 187-188)

This passage also points to the end of the narrative where the last words are 'Mama'.

- 31 Role-reversal was also evident in *Kartenhaus* and *Ausflug mit der Mutter*.
- 32 Rosemarie, in fact, draws the mother's attention to Katja's admiration of her: "Sie hängt nicht nur an dir, sie bewundert dich" (K. 37).
- 33 Whilst in Ravensbrück Fini had organised plays and concerts and afterwards she captured life in the camp in word and song, and went on concert tours around the GDR and abroad. This was her fight against Fascism.

- 34 Stephan is also aware of the conflict between feeling and reason: "Zwischen dem, was man sagt, und dem, was man empfindet, gibt es manchmal Unterschiede" (K. 40). He, too, learnt to surpress emotions in order to survive.
- 35 In *Ausflug mit der Mutter* the narrator sees herself as the teacher and her mother as the pupil.
- 36 There is a factual explanation for Stephan's depression. He had been arrested by the Nazis in 1937 and transported to Siberia where he had also suffered, mainly because he could not bear the thought that he would be suspected of being an informer.
- 37 It was noted in *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* that Paula liked to write about the feeling of being homesick.
- 38 There is a later reference to Irene's dependence on her diary: "Ich brauche das Tagebuch wirklich dringend" (Z.F. 164). In *The Second Sex* Beauvoir comments on the fact that Marie Bashkirtsev kept a diary to which she talked like she used to talk to her dolls. The diary "is a friend and confidante; she questions it as if it were a person".

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Sexond Sex*, trans. and ed. by H.M. Parshley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 363.

- 39 This is reminiscent of the daughter in Novak's *Die Eisheiligen* who longs to escape to faraway places where the sea symbolises freedom.
- 40 In *Die Eisheiligen* Kaltiesophie destroys her daughter's poems by burning them.
- 41 The verse is one example of Heinrich Heine's earliest poetry known as the "Junge Leiden" and written during the period 1817-1821 and later included in his *Buch der Lieder*. The poem was originally dedicated to Heine's schoolfriend, Gustav Friedrich von Untzer, who was badly wounded in the Battle of Waterloo.
- 42 Diekstra, p. 70. At the start of the funeral Fini contemplates her guilt: "Bin ich schuldig? Niemand wird mich schuldig sprechen, aber ich weiß, daß ich es bin" (K. 7).
- 43 Beverley Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 31.
- 44 Günter Höhne, 'Katja von Hedda Zinner', *Sonntag* (27), 6 July 1980.
- 45 Quoted in Gene Lester, David Lester, *Suicide: The Gamble with Death* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 38.
- 46 Like Irene's mother, these parents can be accused of creating their own world: "Sie sehen die Wirklichkeit nicht, wie sie ist, sondern wie sie ihrer Meinung nach zu sein hat" (K. 85).

47 It is worth noting that Katja's mother uses her connections to obtain and furnish a flat for Katja and Uwe. She also rings up the director of the drama school to ask him not to be too hard on Katja when he turns down her application. Yet Stephan refuses quite definitely to exploit his contacts for the business licence.

48 Uwe must have talked about Katja to his girlfriend because she had the same impression of Katja with regard to her attitude to life. To Katja's mother she says of Katja:

"Im Grunde war sie ja ein armes Luder. Ein bißchen verrückt, entschuldigen Sie schon, etwas scheint da zu Hause nicht gestimmt zu haben. Sie hatte so verdrehte Vorstellungen vom Leben." (K. 128)

49 Hans Jürgen Geerds, 'Nachdenken provozierend. Hedda Zinner: *Katja*', *Neue deutsche Literatur*, 10 (October, 1980), 124-127 (p. 126).

50 Margy Gerber, 'Wie hoch ist eigentlich der Preis der Emanzipation? Social Issues in Recent GDR Women's Writing', *GDR Monitor*, 16 (1986-87), 55-83 (p. 71).

51 Irene Dölling, 'Between Hope and Helplessness. Women in the GDR and the "Turning Point"', *Feminist Review*, 39 (Winter 1991), 3-15 (p. 10).

- 52 Sigrud Weigel, 'Overcoming Absence: Contemporary German Women's Literature (Part 2)', *New German Critique*, 32 (1984), 3-22 (p. 7).
- 53 Towards the end of the narrative Irene mentions that she and her mother have had Austrian citizenship for a year.
- 54 Irene will never be an 'ordinary' girl because of the way in which her mother has raised her. She is taught to read by her mother at the age of three and a half and for her fourth birthday she receives a library membership card. She is not yet four-years-old when she attends kindergarten for the first time. Thus, from an early age this daughter's mental agility and maturity are evident, but, as has been illustrated, on an emotional level she has not advanced so quickly and cannot handle the situation in which she finds herself.

CHAPTER FIVE: NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

Hitherto we have concentrated on what is relevant to the study of theme and character since that is the focus of this thesis. Nevertheless, we are featuring the portrayal of daughter-parent relationships by women writers, so that we should not just analyse *what* the writer says, but *how* she says this. Thus, in this chapter we shall see in what way each writer presents and portrays the daughter and her parents by looking at the different narrative levels, the framework and chronology of each work. It will also be worth considering whether the writer's method of portrayal serves a particular purpose. It is to be stressed, though, that such an analysis is not the primary concern of this study as a whole, hence any comments made will still be placed within the context of subject matter, that is, to what extent the narrative strategies support the content.

One of the first problems we encounter when we read any one of these ten novels selected for analysis is the relationship between the writer, the narrator, and the daughter, which is complicated by the use of the first person and/or third person, so that we are frequently left wondering about whose voice is actually heard in the text: can the writer be identified in her own right, is the narrator speaking on her behalf or is the female protagonist a projection of her thoughts, of herself? As we shall see later, there are a number of possible reasons for the writer's choice of perspective, so that it is necessary, in the first instance, to recognise the complexity of each narrative before we can appreciate its purpose. However, irrespective of whether the writer uses the first person or third person, in all the books, except Zinner's *Katja*, the narrator is the daughter, and even in *Katja* we do hear the daughter's opinions and thoughts expressed by other people and in letters. Common to all these works, then, is the fact that we are well acquainted with the

thoughts of the daughter, to what degree is dependent upon the way in which these thoughts are presented.

When we compare the narrators of each of the books it becomes apparent that six of the ten works are written in the first person, whilst the remainder are a mixture of first person and third person. Within that group of six only two narrators are given names, Fini Komarski and Irene, and the I-form is used. As in all these first-person narratives, and as pointed out in previous chapters, the perspective is therefore biased. For example, in *Katja* the mother is the narrator who reflects on her relationship with her daughter, using the I-form. Since the mother blames herself for Katja's tragic action, it would be all too easy for us to see her also as responsible for the death and ignore all the other factors, because we know what the mother is thinking and perceives events as she does. But, as mentioned earlier, Zinner includes in this book the perspective of other characters by means of conversations, letters and the funeral oration so that we are prevented from abandoning all objectivity.

This is not the case in *Zum Fenster hinaus* where Irene is the I-narrator through whose eyes we see the world. Hers is the only perspective in this book, so that we grow up with her, learn what she learns, interpret life as she does, experience her anxieties and in the end jump out of the window with her. As we shall see, when we look more closely at the style, the language also reflects the child's perspective. Similarly, in *Die Eisheiligen*, we grow up with the narrator because the writer presents the young daughter's perspective, so that once again we experience at first hand the emergence and development of a child's mind. Structurally, though, Novak has incorporated in her work not just the thoughts of the I-narrator, but also dialogues, reports, impressions, descriptions, poetry so that the overall

effect is one of a collage, hence we are prevented from becoming absorbed in the interior monologue of the narrator, even though the first person is used.

The perspective of the child is also evident in Wohmann's *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* where there is first-person narration by the main protagonist, Paula. However, at the same time the writer tells the story of Paula's life with her adoptive parents in the third person and refers to this daughter as 'das Kind', which first of all emphasises the fact that this is a child and we as readers should not forget this because, as pointed out in our analysis of this book in Chapter Three, Paula is extremely mature for her age so that from the language used we might think that the first-person narrator is an adult; secondly, the fact that the writer does not call the daughter by her name suggests that she wants us to see her protagonist as possibly representative of any child; and thirdly, the use of 'das Kind' is imitative of the theoretical books on child-raising to which the portrayed parents constantly refer. Hence our earlier conclusion that this is a book on how not to bring up children. The text alternates between this third-person narration and the conversations between Christa and Kurt and with their friends, so that the perspective continually fluctuates.

In *Ausflug mit der Mutter* Wohmann again combines first-person narration with that of third-person. The I-narrator appears to be the writer herself because she frequently interrupts the portrayal of the mother by commenting on and criticising her own writing. This narrative level is further complicated by the fact that there are two time phases: the writer refers to the time of narration and she reviews what she has written four months earlier:

Ich bleibe in Seiten stecken, die ich vor ungefähr vier Monaten geschrieben habe. Die Beschreibungen von damals wirken steif, wie unaufgetaut. (...) Auf der ersten Seite bin ich doch fast zynisch gewesen vor Angst (...). (A.M. 70-71)

Using the I-form the writer explains the problems she faces in portraying her own mother, at the same time she uses the archetypal labels of 'die Mutter' and 'die Tochter' to describe the relationship between these two women in the third person. By creating these fictional figures the writer fictionalises herself as well as her mother. For the writer this is a way of detaching herself from the closeness of the subject-matter; for us as readers it can be confusing because once again the perspective is constantly shifting between first-person and third-person narration; movement back and forwards between the past and present, between events and conversations which took place and ones which were imagined. What is certain, though, is that the writer is present in this particular work, in spite of the fact that the narrating I is never named. Moreover, the protagonists also remain anonymous. By keeping them anonymous she shrouds her work in ambiguity, at the same time she protects her own right and her mother's to privacy, whilst her protagonists behave and act according to her will, her thoughts and her feelings. The writer's self-criticism and reflections on the writing process are reminiscent of Peter Handke's *Wunschloses Unglück* (1972), in which the I-narrator's depiction of his mother's life and suicide is interspersed with thoughts about the problems of writing about a subject, which is from his own life and close to him, combined with the fear of transferring this subject into something else.¹ It was already noted in Chapter Two that Wohmann expresses a similar fear as well as the belief that, even though she fictionalises her mother, the very act of writing about her is indicative of

the bond between writer and protagonist, here the daughter and mother. From the standpoint of the narrative, we encounter the perspective of the writer in her professional role as well as in her role as a daughter.

In contrast, there is no intrusion by the writer in Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung*, although there is a combination of first-person and third-person narration. We are first introduced to the I-narrator who is given a fictional name, Vera. The third-person narration by an external voice concerns the childhood of the narrator's mother, Marie. Once this story has been told the rest of the narrative is in the first person because this comprises the narrator's recollections of her own upbringing and relationship with her mother on one level and on another level she describes her own child's upbringing and present-day relationship with her. The complexity of narrative levels as indicated by the presence of different voices is highlighted in Plessen's *Mitteilung an den Adel*. The protagonist of this book is Augusta (which also happens to be one of Plessen's given names), her life and relationship with her father is told in the third person. But, as is becoming increasingly apparent in this study of the narrative strategies of each writer, we should not be deceived into thinking that this story is a straightforward, unambiguous, third-person narrative. If we take, for instance, the following excerpt which occurs seventeen pages after the start of the narrative, it is impossible for the reader to attribute the words in parentheses either to the thoughts of Augusta or to the third-person narrator: "Augusta schwor, sie habe in ihrem Leben nie wieder Brei gegessen (was in dieser absoluten Form eine Lüge ist)" (M.A. 22). This is the first indication we have that there may be another perspective in this work, as indicated by the use of present tense which alludes to the actual time of writing. A few pages later Augusta is holding "Selbstgespräche" (M.A. 37): here the use of the first person as well as the use of the present tense allude once more to the possibility that this is the writer

speaking, though we are led to believe that this is the fictional character talking to herself. In this same passage the word "Pause" occurs a number of times in brackets, as if these are stage directions in a play, indicating the breaks in the thought process. This use of "Pause" is always connected to the passages in which Augusta thinks of her boyfriend, Felix, and underlines the hesitancy and uncertainty of their relationship, the play-acting. We are also made aware of an external presence, merely on account of this literary notation:

Gibt es eine Utopie in der Liebe? (Pause) Sag nicht nein,
 Felix. (Pause) Selbstgespräche, wo du laut mit dir redest,
ich sagst, *du* sagst und da sitzt und flennst. Kaputte Pläne,
 neue Pläne, als ginge es nicht ohne Pläne. (...) Vielleicht
 bin ich schon glücklich, von Herzen, mit Schmerzen, klein
 wenig und gar nicht glücklich, weil es dich gibt. (Pause)
 Weit weg. Wie hättest du dich loseisen sollen. (Pause) Wie
 hättest du loskommen sollen aus dem Büro. (Pause)
 (M.A. pp. 77-78)

Another narrative level is introduced when lengthy excerpts from C.A.'s diary are presented nearly halfway through the book. Augusta sets about describing and analysing the form and content of the diary, just as the reader might interpret Plessen's work. Thus the writer presents a book within a book, which the protagonist herself refers to as "ein merkwürdiges Ding, weder Buch noch Tagebuch, noch bloßes Geständnis. An einen Romanversuch erinnerte es (...)" (M.A. 104). In this 'diary' there is a fictitious protagonist, Lieutenant Becker, whose activities are related by an external narrator in the

present tense. Occasionally, the author, C.A., inserts his own comments. On reading the 'diary' Augusta, the critic, makes the following observation which to a certain extent is applicable to Plessen's own narrative format:

Das Tagebuchkonzept war allerdings gestört: Es bestand nicht aus Aufzeichnungen des Oberleutnants Becker, sondern eines zweiten, eines unpersönlichen Erzählers, der diesen beobachtet zu haben schien. Die Konzeption hatte sich nicht lückenlos durchhalten lassen; in Momenten größerer Anteilnahme war es C.A. passiert, daß er den Oberleutnant oder den Erzähler fallengelassen und sich selber ins Spiel gebracht hatte. (M.A. 104)

Even more revealing for the reader is Augusta's understanding of her father's use of a fictitious character in order to create objectivity:

Ich kann es verstehen, ich meine: als Trick. Du wolltest dich von dir distanzieren. Das kann man machen. Man wird sich über jeden anderen leichter klar als über sich selbst, aber der Trick erleichterte es dir auch, dich zu drücken, in dieses Offiziergerede zu flüchten, (...). (M.A. 132)

The implication is that Plessen is herself telling us that she is the voice behind her character, Augusta, who presents memories from which she can distance herself because

they become fictionalised. The story of Becker occupies approximately forty pages of Plessen's text and is interspersed with questions Augusta poses to herself, or possibly these are meant for us, as well as critical comments, all of which occur in brackets. Apart from the presentation of this story, there are also imaginary conversations between Augusta and her father in which she tries to delve deeper into his reason for writing the diary and for presenting it to her. These brief discussions or "Anläufe", as they are referred to and numbered one to seven in the text, interrupt the actual analysis by Augusta, as does the description in the third person of Augusta's activities during the journey. Hence, as we have grown accustomed to noting in the majority of books analysed in this study, the levels of narration in the past and in the present are made more intricate by the inclusion of dialogue and monologue as well as the alternation between reality and imagination. All these aspects merge to create a highly complex text.

The creation of so many different layers of narration does risk losing the reader's understanding of the work as a whole. In *Kartenhaus*, *Lange Abwesenheit* or *Der Vater*, all of which are written in the first person, we are once again privy to the feelings and inner thoughts of each narrator. But in none of these works are we expected to perceive the world through the eyes of a child because the perspective in each book is that of the adult daughter reminiscing about her upbringing. Whilst Schwaiger's and Schutting's narrators remain anonymous, Schriber does name her narrator, Hanna. The only perspective in *Kartenhaus* is that of the I-narrator, yet in spite of it being one-sided, the narrator is neither nostalgic nor sentimental during her reflections. In fact, the overall tone is one of aloofness, as will become clearer when we look in more detail at the style of this work.

It is possible to see the I-narrator of *Der Vater* in a similar light because there is an absence of spontaneous emotions, in spite of the fact that this narrator is mourning the recent death of her father. In contrast to Schwaiger's I-narrator, this daughter stays very calm, as if subdued. We sense no hatred, even though this would have been understandable considering the narrator's description of her father's cruel streak. Unlike the narrator in *Lange Abwesenheit*, Schutting's narrator does not reproach her father, so that these recollections contain no vengeance or anger. It might well be the case that the narrator's detachment, the fact that she does not express grief and appears unmoved, is comparable to her father's tendency to be indifferent. When we analyse the style of *Der Vater* in more detail, it will become apparent that the writer succeeds in creating a distance between her narrator and the subject-matter. There are similarities to Wohmann's *Ausflug mit der Mutter*, although the writer does not interrupt the narrative flow with her own comments nor does she analyse the process of writing, instead, as we shall see, it is the actual overall presentation, which corroborates the narrator's detachment.

As already indicated, there is no distance in *Lange Abwesenheit* between the narrator and the subject-matter. Written in the first person, we experience first-hand the ambivalent emotions of this unnamed narrator towards her father. There is no other perspective in this book, yet we might be forgiven for forgetting this narrator is grieving over the loss of her father because the tone of the narrative is neither tearful nor sentimental: there is too much anger and cynicism on the part of the narrator. There is a danger that the veracity of the narrator's thoughts is too overwhelming for the reader who may dislike, or even be offended by such frankness which comes too close to the truth. The narrator may also be regarded as the voice of conscience for the writer, who through the use of her first-person narrator exposes her feelings of guilt.

In order for us to be able to understand the possible reasons for each writer's choice of narratorial voice we also need to appreciate the way in which she presents the entire work, since in all cases the textual form underpins her decision for opting for the first- and/or third-person narrator. This is especially evident in Schutting's *Der Vater* where the ambivalent relationship between daughter and father is reflected in the movement between dream and reality. The fact that the narrator is herself unsure about whether she dreamt an event or not intensifies the ambiguous nature of this work. The narrator freely uses the family name of Schutting as well as the name of her home town, Amstetten in lower Austria, in her recollections of life with her father, yet no other proper names of people and places are mentioned; in some cases the writer even makes a point of omitting the name of a place or a pub by using a row of dots (V. 58). Initially we are also struck by the absence of capitalisation at the start of each sentence, which is possibly indicative of the writer's uncertainty of how to express in writing her emotions and her response to bereavement. Similarly, the writer avoids the use of the finite verb, preferring to use past and present particles, which seems to suggest that there is a continuous process of thought, with no beginning or end, which is further emphasised by the lack of full stops. This further reflects the narrator's attempts to understand her father, her oscillation between distance and closeness to this man. The whole work is one long process of thought, where memories are linked by association and not by logic and chronology. In many places the use of the dash replaces the full stop, just as one thought leads to another without a break. Schutting's sentences, which can be as long as one page, frequently contain brackets in which the narrator inserts a comment or the remark of another person, sometimes it is an aside or an afterthought which can be on a different time level to the main episode:

mein Gott, sagt eine alte Frau, eine Bäuerin, zu meiner Mutter, so oft war der Herr bei uns draußen, Hengsten schneiden, einmal hatte er gleich vier auf der Matte liegen! (sie ist nicht die einzige, die, offensichtlich bemüht, in angemessener Sprache zu sprechen, auch dort, wo Vergangenes in die Gegenwart nachwirkt, statt des vertrauten Perfekts ein Präteritum wählt). (V. 35)

As illustrated in this excerpt the writer also avoids using inverted commas to introduce direct speech. The overall lack of traditional punctuation is appropriate for the book since it emphasises the constant digressions of the narrator's thoughts, sometimes there are complete changes of direction in her thinking, other times an explanation or elaboration is presented. There is also a tendency to list objects and people at great length, for example, six pages of depicting inhabitants of Amstetten who had some connection with her father (V. 109-114); seven pages concerning her father's faults (V. 137-143); thirteen pages containing the narrator's various dreams about her father after his funeral (V. 122-135). It is as if the writer has to exhaust one area of thought before she can present another.

In his 1987 review of Schutting's style of writing Herbert Herzmann concludes that this writer is playing with language in order to force the reader to attempt to reconstruct the text and so reach his/her own understanding of the work, that she is teaching the reader to learn to read properly.² In *Der Vater* it is a way for the narrator to examine her own past, that is, the writer's past, her relationship with her father and her attitudes, without being drawn into the emotional aspect of the mourning process. It should not be overlooked that in addition to prose-works Schutting has published collections of poems which explains the

poetic quality of this particular book, the absence of clichés and the usual, expected response of a mourner to grief. Schutting presents a work of art, her 'Trauerarbeit'. As Herzmann points out this writer goes against the expected norm by not forming sentences according to the way in which a person speaks: "Vielmehr verarbeitet die Dichterin Erzählung, Reflexion und Experiment in äußerst komprimierte Texte, die in ihrer Intensität eher der Lyrik nahestehen".³ He also notes that Schutting originally studied photography before history and German in Vienna, which maybe explains her inclination towards visual language. The author herself says of her writing process:

Wenn ich etwas schreibe, habe ich dabei die Empfindung, als gäbe es das bereits, als legte ich es nur frei, wie man übermalte Fresken freilegt, damit andere, die sie noch nicht gesehen haben, sie nun auch betrachten können.⁴

Such an explanation alludes not only to the narrative levels in *Der Vater*, but also to the language which is at times lyrical, even theatrical, as the ending highlights, and as was already commented upon in Chapter One.⁵ The use of metaphorical language by the writer befits the Barock monastery in which the narrator finds herself.

Whilst the writer illustrates her narrator's intricate thoughts, memories and dreams on one level, on another level there is the banality of everyday activity, which is introduced by the framework of the three days between the father's death and his funeral on 20th June, during which the narrator keeps herself busy by writing the 130 addresses to relatives and associates of her father on the mourning cards. She advises her family on how to formulate the words for the obituary notice in the newspaper and helps with suggestions for the

funeral oration. She also organises a wreath and accompanies her mother to the undertakers. Such usual activities before a funeral therefore contrast with the narrator's imagination and serve to heighten the reader's awareness of the writer's artistry. Apart from these three days of activity and reflection there is a brief reference to the narrator's departure for Vienna and later return. This is followed by a gap of two years; in the last seven pages the narrator recalls a visit to her father's former school, having been invited by the abbot to give a reading on the anniversary of her father's graduation. There is evidence not only from the content, but also from the language, that the narrator has reached a better understanding of her father: she no longer refers to him indirectly as "er" but addresses him directly as "du", which illustrates a progression towards closeness and is more in keeping with a dialogue rather than an account. The suggestion is that a level of communication has been achieved.

An unusual feature of *Der Vater*, which is nowhere to be found in any of the other books analysed here, is the use of black humour in stark contrast to the tragic subject matter. It should suffice to cite two examples of this humour to indicate a possible method of handling grief. In both cases the narrator is ridiculing the seemingly endless preparations as well as the pomp and ceremony involved in her father's funeral, at the same time the writer is encouraging the reader to be equally objective and to keep a distance from events. Whilst addressing the envelopes to the various butchers and vets who knew her father the narrator considers sending a mourning card to her father to let him know that he has died; she envisages the problems the postman would encounter in finding the right grave:

(jetzt wäre die letzte Gelegenheit, ein Kuvert an den Vater zu adressieren, warum sollte man seinen Tod nicht demjenigen

mitteilen, der als bald einziger davon vielleicht nichts weiß?
 Briefträger, der, die Namenstafeln überfliegend, die Gräber
 abläuft, weil auf dem Kuvert Zeile und Platz ohne Nummer
 geblieben sind) (V. 19)

During the funeral procession daughter and mother walk arm in arm behind the hearse; the narrator, conscious of breathing in the car exhaust fumes, thinks that now at least her father will have a peaceful, undisturbed, afternoon nap:

(...) ich aber atme sie ein, voll Vertrauen auf ihre
 umnebelnde Wirkung - in einem so spiegelblank polierten
 Auto und einem frischgemachten Bett findet der
 Nachmittagsschlaf des Vaters statt, (...) (V. 159)

In contrast to the solemnity and unhappiness of the subject-matter such humour is striking and unexpected for the reader. In comparison with other works about the deceased father Schutting's narrative strategy and language succeed in providing a very different approach to the problem of portraying a private and real relationship in fiction.

As in *Der Vater* the daughter in *Mitteilung an der Adel* receives the news of her father's sudden death over the phone from her mother. It is the telephone call which is the start of the story and, like Schutting's narrator, Augusta has to travel from her workplace to her hometown to reach the destination of the funeral, but it is this journey, and not the activities before and after the funeral itself, which provides the narrative thread through the book. The trip takes four days and nights as Augusta travels from Munich to Schleswig-Holstein,

and it is interrupted three times as Augusta recalls something or someone significant from her past. Her first port of call, Baden-Baden, is a necessary detour because she has to pick up an aunt who is supposed to attend the funeral but who, in the event, decides not to do so. Augusta continues to Wiesbaden to explore the place where her father had been stationed at the end of the war. Her penultimate stop is Göttingen where she visits a former student friend. Sometimes it is the place, sometimes a person, that triggers off this daughter's memories. Throughout the narrative we are made aware of the progression of the journey via the motorway signs with the city names written in capital letters in the text. As the number of kilometres decrease, the conclusion and the climax of the journey and the narrative approach.

The book is divided into four chapters: "Unter dem Glassturz", "Post Festum", "Lokaltermine" and "Im Kaleidoskop". These titles, as mentioned earlier, do not correspond to the four days of the journey. The fact that this format does not correlate with the chronology is, on the one hand, confusing for the reader, but on the other hand, it is another method on the part of the writer to create distance between herself and the subject-matter. Within the chapters there are additional segments which disrupt the chronological coherence, such as "Traumstück", "Etagenstück", "Treppenstück", "Parterrestück" in the first chapter; numbered "Anläufe" in the second chapter; and numbered "Versuche" and more "Traumstücke" in the penultimate chapter. As well as these formal intrusions the writer interweaves real and imagined conversations, in the past and the present, with the interior monologue and includes an external voice whose comments are sometimes, but not always, announced. Thus the structure of *Mitteilung an den Adel* proves to be as complex and ambiguous as the combination of first-person and third-person narration. The writer needs to create a distance between herself and her

protagonist so that she can voice her criticism of her father and society through Augusta. By means of ambiguity Plessen does succeed in distancing herself from the intimacy of the subject-matter, so that, as in *Der Vater*, the reflections of the daughter are unsentimental, but here criticism of the father and everything he represents dominates the tone of the narrative.

In *Lange Abwesenheit* objective criticism has turned into subjective anger aimed at the deceased father. The narrative begins and ends with the narrator standing at her father's grave. The text however is constructed in such a way that there is no temporal or formal sequence of events, nor is there any obvious, rational link between the various thoughts of the narrator and her reflections on her relationship with her father and with Birer. Nevertheless, almost a third of the way through the book the writer does focus solely on the relationship between the narrator and Birer for twenty-two pages, which is quite a significant portion considering that the book is only eighty-two pages long, and therefore the shortest of all the books in this study. Furthermore, even the actual print of this text is larger and bolder than is usual, but as would be expected in a children's book. The idea behind this choice of print may be that the reader should not overlook any single word, since each word is vital and relevant to the story, especially when there are very few words in the book as a whole. Thus, visually the printed word makes an impact on the reader, irrespective of content. This is also achieved by the uncomplicated sentence structure, so that the simplicity of structure and style as well as the clarity of language may well suggest the writer's openness and apparent honesty. *Lange Abwesenheit* is a personal account based very much on emotions. The narrator openly expresses her feelings which could imply that the writer is making no effort to disguise her own thoughts. This is evident from the fact that she uses no experimental language, as Schutting does; nor does she interweave

narrative levels with different narrators, as Plessen does. Hence, there is no attempt to create distance and objectivity between the I-narrator and the emotionally-laden content. Fluctuation between the past and the present does occur but this is not always signalled because the writer tends to use the present tense to make the impact of the past more immediate. Thus, although the narrator is at her father's graveside at the start of the story, scenes from his deathbed are depicted in the present tense and these scenes alternate with events and conversations in the family home and in Birer's flat, so that the overall effect imitates the natural oscillation of any person's process of reflection.

Another work, written for the most part in the present tense, occasionally in the perfect tense, thereby emphasising the immediacy of the narrator's thoughts and reducing the distance between the narrator and the reader, is Wohmann's *Ausflug mit der Mutter*. As in *Lange Abwesenheit*, the same scene, that of the narrator and her husband leaving her mother after a visit, opens and closes the narrative. The time scale in between these two scenes is approximately one year, although we are only made aware of this towards the very end of the book. The chronology is such that it is not very apparent because, as in other works, the writer juxtaposes scenes, which illustrate the associative nature of the narrator's thoughts.⁶ The combined use of the present tense and narration in the first and third person illustrates a lack of distinction between the past and the present, as we noted in Schutting's *Der Vater*. There is also the suggestion that the writer wishes to produce a work of art, since she is analysing what she has written in the past and is critical of her own work:

Schauen wir uns dieses Bild doch ohne ein wieder nur
verallgemeinerndes Geblinzel an. Lassen wir uns doch

gründlich auf den ganzen Inhalt dieser Augenblicke nach unserem Abschied ein. Reden wir uns doch nicht raus mit anderen, möglichst schwerwiegenderen Einsamkeiten. Diese hier zuerst geht dich an. Sie zuerst und allein ist deine schwerwiegendste. (A.M. 9)

The above quotation shows the way in which the writer incorporates criticism of her depicted scenes in this work, and the fact that she invites the reader to take a step back and analyse the scene, as if she were rewinding a film and pausing to capture a particular moment on screen, or expecting the actors to rehearse a scene on stage in order to correct any mistakes: "Unsere Bewegung WINKEN ist fast theaterhaft künstlich" (A.M. 9). Capitalisation of certain words throughout the book is not a sign of emphasis but proof of these words being factual.⁷ Hence the writer presents a postcard from the mother to her children all in capitals in her text to demonstrate visually that these words were actually written words on the mother's postcard (A.M. 61-62). She also avoids speech marks to signal a conversation, so that the reader has to concentrate in order to be able to identify different voices, as is the case in the following excerpt in which the mother's two sisters discuss her health in the presence of the narrator and her mother:

Du siehst ja, später tagsüber ist die Mutter oft vergnügt, und abends geht es ihr sowieso immer viel besser, eigentlich richtig gut.

Die Mutter gibt der Tante schüchtern recht, blickt aber die Tochter weiter hilfesuchend an.

Die ältere Tante nennt Medikamente DROGEN. (...)

Immer gleich zum Arzt gehen, was ist damit gewonnen? Das macht nur hysterisch und verängstigt. (A.M. 41)

Quotation marks do occur whenever the writer-cum-narrator refers back to and analyses previous material she had written about her mother. As indicated earlier, the framework of this narrative is provided by the daughter's departure from her mother after a visit which commemorated the first anniversary of her father's death. The narrative comprises a series of trips, "Ausflüge", undertaken by both the mother and the daughter, together and apart: the mother's regular weekend visits to her two sisters; their holiday in the Black Forest; shopping-trips and walks; a visit to the hairdressers; the narrator's holiday in the Swiss Alps; a visit to the zoo; the various visits of her and her husband to her mother on special occasions, such as her 53rd wedding anniversary and New Year's Eve. Such everyday, normal events are interspersed with critical comments by the narratorial voice, reflections on the past, character assessment, collusion with the reader and dialogue, all of which merge without any distinct differentiation. However, there is some attempt by the writer to form 'chapters', not by numbering or headings, but by the use of three asterisks to indicate a gap between one episode and the next. These episodes, twenty-one in total, vary in length, the longest is fifteen pages, the shortest two pages, and reflect the relevance the writer places on their content, such as the longest episode which highlights the narrator's psychological conflict during her trip to Karlsruhe. Nevertheless, there is constant ambiguity about whether a trip took place or not, so that fact and fantasy are often indistinguishable. It does seem to be a common feature of all these writers to combine the real and the imaginary, which is partly due to the fact that one's memory can play tricks

and partly because the writer is employing her creative skills. It may well be a possible ploy on the part of the writer, not only to protect the authenticity of her work, but also to encourage the reader to question his/her own attitudes and behaviour, as indicated by the narrator's self-questioning within *Ausflug mit der Mutter*.

This aspect of self-questioning by the narrator comes to the fore in *Zum Fenster hinaus* where in a number of paragraphs towards the close of the narrative the narrator poses one question after another, all of which are in her thoughts and remain unanswered. The following excerpt, which contains just a few of a total of twenty-five questions in one paragraph, illustrates the determination of the writer to impress upon the reader the anxieties of the narrator:

Warum überschlägt sich immer alles? Warum entzieht sich mir ein Gedanke, wenn ich glaube, gerade auf seiner Spur zu sein? Warum habe ich so viele unwichtige Gedanken? Warum kann ich nicht lernen zu denken, während ich meine tägliche Arbeit tue? Richtig denken, meine ich. Warum mache ich mir überhaupt so viele Gedanken? Warum nehme ich alles so schwer? Was kann ich denn schon ändern?
(Z.F. 163)

As explained when we looked at the perspective of this work, the narrator is a young girl with whom the reader grows up, yet despite this perspective of a child there is no naïvety either in choice of language or in the structure of this narrative. At the start of this work there can be no hint or premonition of the narrator's eventual suicidal act because the

reader's knowledge of events is only allowed to develop in conjunction with the narrator's thoughts and deeds as they happen. For this reason Haidegger has written the entire work, with just a few exceptions, in the present tense: the reader lives and dies with the narrator. During this narrative there are reminders of Irene's young age: just as a child learns a new word by its sound, some words are at times misspelt in the text: "Bibissi" (BBC), "Proteese" (Prothese). Such words are usually ones which Irene has overheard when listening in on other people's conversations. Capitalisation of words - normally a single word, very rarely a complete phrase - is selectively used by the writer. Capitalised words in this narrative suggest that they are either new words for Irene or that the writer wants to stress certain words. Sometimes the child appears to be imitating someone else's tone and pitch of voice or she pays particular attention to words which gain in significance; the writer signals this to the reader: "Christa hat es schön. Sie hat einen VATER" (Z.F. 49).⁸ Such stylistic techniques on the part of the writer are necessary in this book because they point to the learning process of a child. It would be all too easy otherwise for us as readers to overlook the fact that the inner thoughts and perception of this narrator are those of a child. As indicated in earlier analysis, it is the mother's handling of her daughter from the moment she teaches her to speak, read and write which forces the child into early maturity. For the writer it is her solution to presenting a narrator who is a child, yet whose adulthood is part of her character and, therefore, very convenient for the narrative flow. On the one hand this narrator behaves like a child, on the other hand she perceives the world like an adult. There are distinct parallels to Paula in *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus*, whose maturity her creator has had to defend by stressing that Paula is her artistic creation. But what is more troubling for the reader of Haidegger's work is that the entire narrative consists of just one perspective, that of the young I-narrator, whose perception the reader

has to accept so as to understand her suicide. In order to make this perception plausible and acceptable the writer incorporates into her work a great deal of simple, realistic details about everyday life in post-war Austria, such as the narrator's reaction to her first taste of chocolate:

Es sah komisch aus und ich hatte gleich braune Finger davon.

Mama sagte, das wäre süß und zum Essen. (...) Aber ich mochte die Schokolade nicht und habe sie ausgespuckt, weil ich sowas nicht kannte. Mama war sehr traurig, weil der Mann es GUT GEMEINT hatte und weil Schokolade KOSTBAR ist, aber ich mochte sie trotzdem nicht. (Z.F. 24)

The historical details, such as the freeing of concentration camp prisoners, the presence of American soldiers, all contribute to the realism of the setting of this narrative, yet are perceived by a child with innocent clarity. This is imitated by the uncomplicated sentence structure and the fact that various episodes are linked either by temporal references or by logical, thematic associations. We face no problems in following the sequence of events. It has to be pointed out, though, that the amount of detail as well as the depth of this young girl's thoughts do, indirectly, make the presence of the writer felt.

This is very much the case in *Die Eisheiligen*. In the first place, the perspective of the young I-narrator is not the only perspective, and secondly, the writer includes historical information and facts as if quoted from the original source and clearly not as perceived by the narrator:

Der Affenbrotbaum oder Baobab ist ein Charakterbaum der weiten Steppengebiete des inneren Ostafrika. Sein Stamm erreicht einen gewaltigen Umfang. In der Trockenzeit wirft der Baum die Blätter ab, so daß er fünf bis sechs Monate blattlos dasteht. (E.H. 44)

Such an excerpt is left to stand on its own within the text without any clear link to the passage beforehand or the one that follows. As previously mentioned, the structural effect of Novak's work is one of a collage which makes the narrative very disjointed. The writer prevents the reader from becoming absorbed in the first-person narration because of her method of composition: the placing of passages of prose next to poems, dialogue next to monologue, the language of officialdom next to East Berlin dialect, reports next to songs. The variety of narrative forms and idiomatic expressions is complemented by the visual presentation of this work, the way in which some sentences do not follow one another but are placed on one line and then the next, irrespective of their length; the absence of punctuation in passages which we learn to recognise as being the words of Kaltesophie. The non-grammatical style of these sections which, as in *Der Vater*, includes the avoidance of capital letters at the start of each sentence, is indicative of the constant flow of words from the mother's mouth: endless demands, orders and criticisms. The reader can even hear the screams:

hör auf zu husten hör auf hör endlich auf zu husten wozu
haben wir dich eigentlich zur Kur geschickt hööör aaaauuff
ich halte das nicht länger aus du hast doch gar nichts hör auf

zu husten der Arzt hat gesagt du hast gar nichts (...) jetzt
 reichs mir aber gleich setzt es was daß dir der Husten
 vergeht aber gründlich und für immer ich kann das nicht
 mehr ertragen. (E.H. 21)

But in spite of the disjointedness of the structure and style we do not lose our way in this narrative on account of the precision of the chronology. Each of the twelve chapters, spanning the years 1939-1951, corresponds to one year in the life of this narrator who begins her story at the age of four.⁹ Apart from the last two chapters each chapter closes with a reference to winter and/or Christmas during wartime and after the war. Thus, frequent reference to time and place ensure that we are aware of the narrative thread.

As in earlier analysis of our child-narrators, the writer does not always succeed in convincing us that her first-person narrator is a child. For example, in the very first line of *Die Eisheiligen* the four-year-old describes the water not as "grün", but as "resedagrün". The precision of detail, such as the narrator's intricate description of how she steals a fir tree, the way in which she actually fells the tree, is too much to expect of this narrator, so that again it does seem that the adult writer is present in the text, not to mention the fact that the writer's imagination is also at work in these episodes. Since Novak does not deny that this work is autobiographical, we ought to be suspicious of such detailed information because it would seem incredible if the writer could recall events of more than thirty years ago with such clarity. Moreover, as one critic points out, there is no pathos in this book because the tone is just as cold as the protagonists themselves: "Der Ton (...) ist eiskalt, nüchtern, leidenschaftslos. Sie rechnet ab wie ein Computer, sie zählt die Minuspunkte auf,

sie reiht endlos Episoden aneinander, ohne Steigerung, nur gerade nach dem zeitlichen Ablauf geordnet".¹⁰

Historical events do not always remain in the background, providing the setting and atmosphere of the narrative. In *Katja* they intrude upon the life of the daughter because they are inseparable from the mother's life. This has already been shown in our analysis of the content, but it is also evident in the structure. The funeral service for Katja provides the framework: on the one level there is the funeral oration by Anna, on another level there are the mother's own recollections. For most of the text the story fluctuates between these two levels. However, it is noticeable that for the first twenty-one pages there is no mention of Katja's life because Anna begins the oration by talking about the mother's life immediately before, during and after Ravensbrück. Hence, the structure underpins the mother's obsession with her past as well as the effect of this obsession and of this actual period of history on her daughter; it illustrates the source of many of Katja's problems. Extracts from the oration occur as the mother switches on and off from listening; they also jolt her memory. Sometimes she contradicts Anna's words, sometimes she agrees with her: in both cases she elaborates upon the oration in her own mind, hence the appropriateness of the first person. The mother's recollections begin as far back as 1935 in Prague and conclude in 1970 in East Berlin. It becomes apparent that the oration by Anna is full of clichés when contrasted with the reality of the mother's past. In fact, to the mother the oration sounds like one of her lectures to which she is reluctant and unwilling to listen:

Wie anders sieht sie das Kind, das "von den furchtbaren Umständen, die die Mutter prägten, nichts mit bekam". "Für uns Ravensbrückerinnen", sagte Anna weiter, "die wir uns bei

Finis zusammenfanden, war Katja, die damals Dreijährige, wie ein Unterpfand neuen, befreiten Lebens". (K. 26)

The strength of Zinner's novel lies in its content, rather than in its structure and style. On account of the oration there is movement between the present and the past which is recalled by the mother. The memories contain many facts and record conversations in a chronological order, but there is a distinct absence of emotions on the part of the mother who, as a narrator, gives an account of events, as if it is her duty. This highlights the fact that she has learnt to control her feelings and grief and also points to one of the main problems in her relationship with her daughter.

We come across a similar barrier in *Kartenhaus* where the I-narrator reflects on the past and her present relationship with her mother in such detail and with such detachment, that we never experience the emotions of this narrator, just as the mother does not really know what is going on in her daughter's mind. Schriber's attention to detail and focus on exactness replaces any expression of emotion, either with reference to past events or to the present. For instance, the mother fleetingly strokes the narrator's hair, which is commented upon as "ein Gefühl, als hätte sich eine Wespe in meinem Haar verfangen" (K.H. 99). The narrative abounds with references to hands and hair, usually as a sign of the mother's old age. The framework of the narrative is the narrator's visit to the mother throughout which she takes stock of her mother's appearance, watches her activity around the kitchen and the way she behaves. A certain action or word expressed by her mother causes the narrator to recall something from her childhood days. Thus, as in most of these reflective portrayals, the writer combines the present with the past, linking the narrator's recollections by association and importance, and not by chronology, and presenting

numerous memories of differing length. And like the daughters reflecting on their relationships with their fathers, this writer also merges fantasies and dreams with reality. Since the narrator rebuilds her childhood home out of her memories it could be said that the book comprises a collection of memories, 'cards', each with its own story to tell, the sum of which create the whole work, the 'house'. It is noticeable that the house is the narrator's initial focus of interest on arrival, and not her mother, and it is the house which stirs up most of the narrator's memories. The narrator tells herself and so informs the reader that these memories are "mangelhaft", since she can only rely on impressions and the pictures which remain in her mind of a scene or a person. This comment, as well as her analysis of the process her memory has undergone and the way in which her feelings have altered over the years by dint of experience and maturity, are applicable to all our writers in this study, who endeavour to bring the past back to life:

Und ich sehe eine Kindheit nach dem Eindruck von jener Zeit. Sie besteht vor allem in sinnlichen Wahrnehmungen. Bilder sind deutlich, bekommen jetzt eine Wichtigkeit, die sie damals nicht besessen haben. Unscheinbare und vielleicht nur für mich wichtige Dinge lösen plötzlich eine Empfindung aus: Es ist ein Fluidum, das für mich an diesen Dingen haftet.

(K.H. 119)

Trying to portray the past as truthfully and as realistically as possible is one of the main problems such writers face because, without doubt, their ability to remember details with such precision after so many years have passed has to be called into question. Moreover,

their perception of past events and relationships will have been coloured by time and experience, so that Schriber's narrator does give a true explanation of the problem.

As in these books of reflections Wohmann's *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* also lacks action because it is a book on theory, whereby the writer presents a theoretical situation to test a child's response to parents, who comply with theories on child-raising down to the last detail. For the reader the most interesting aspect of the structure is the fluctuation between narrative levels which can be broken down into four areas: Christa's and Kurt's conversations with Paula; their discussions with friends about her behaviour; Paula's writing down of her impressions of what she overhears; and her adoptive parents' reading and commenting upon what she has written. There is no framework to this narrative which opens with Paula's anxiety about using her chamber pot in her new surroundings. Subsequent episodes, which also alternate between the past and present, are linked by particular words such as the "Nachttopf". It should be pointed out that the present tense is used to signal either direct conversations, for which there are no speech marks, or Paula's interior monologue, and not to differentiate between past and present events because this narrative is written in the third person. Indirect conversations, that is, conversations which Paula partly overhears, intentionally or when she is half-asleep, are recorded in italics. Sometimes italics are used for Paula's indirect speech or they highlight a tone of voice, in particular Christa's:

*Was sehen da meine entzündeten Augen? Bist du denn nicht
heut wieder der Paul? Hast du uns das nicht vorhin erst
großartig verkündet? Und deine angetrübten Paulklamotten
angezogen? Und jetzt: Puppen? Na hör mal, was ist denn*

*das für ein perverser, für ein reichlich komischer Paul, der
benimmt sich ja wie ein sentimentales dummes kleines
Mädchen. (P.H. 48)*

Whilst italics visually attract the reader's attention to particular words and phrases, they also illustrate Paula's awareness of what is being said and her analysis of certain expressions. The effect seems to be one of alienation because she is able to distance herself from the emotional effect such words might have on her, not only as a result of her own analysis, but also the fact that most of these italicised words are not directed at her, although they concern her. Thus, once again, the writer's presentation of her material complements the mentality of her protagonist, and combined with the different perspectives, does not permit the reader to feel sorry for this child. As befits the title, Wohmann's novel is intended to be a cautionary tale which is evident both in the content and in the use of satire, so that the overall effect is one of detachment between the writer and her protagonist and between the protagonist and the reader. In this work the writer is clearly not trying to evoke the sympathy of the reader.

In *Die Züchtigung* Mitgutsch forces the reader to confront the facts of child abuse, however painful these facts are, by dint of the realism of her first-person narrator's account of her upbringing which reads like a protocol. The narrative begins in the present-day of the narrator and moves into the past, to her mother's upbringing and life, which is triggered by the narrator's daughter asking about the similarities between her mother and grandmother. For the first seventy pages the story is of Marie, the narrator's mother; occasionally it is interrupted by the narrator's own thoughts which introduces a different temporal level. Such digressions are indicated in the text by an asterisk and not by

numbered chapters or episodes. We do not, therefore, lose sight of the I-narrator, even though she does not narrate her mother's childhood, which would be impossible, considering the detail and the fact that the reader is also made aware of the mother's thoughts and feelings as well as her reactions and behaviour as a child. Although there is movement between different temporal levels throughout the narrative, this is always signposted and the chronology is precise, so that the composition is clear and interwoven with descriptive scenes as well as concise, report-like passages. For the reader the reality of child abuse is made all the more immediate and intense by the writer's ability to present the whole spectrum of emotions in this narrator's life - hatred, love, pride, pity. This work should not be seen as some kind of vendetta on the part of the writer against the memory of her mother and her treatment of her daughter. Instead, the reader is encouraged to understand what makes a mother maltreat her child. Ultimately, this understanding should lead to the ability to forgive.

The fact that the works analysed here are all written by women does not mean that the blending of fact and fiction combined with any autobiographical format is just a female trait, although many critics do see autobiography as a feature of women's writing. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the structure and style of Wohmann's *Ausflug mit der Mutter* is similar to that of Handke's *Wunschloses Unglück* and Hans Frick uses an I-narrator to reflect on his relationship with his mother and her death in *Die blaue Stunde* (1977).¹¹ These two works are just two examples of the male writer's blending of autobiography and fiction from a text-internal and text-external standpoint. The tendency towards autobiographical writing has been a feature of the works of German-speaking male and female authors in the 1970s and 1980s, especially when we look at the trend in 'Väterliteratur'. Having analysed the narrative strategies, we cannot regard the works in

this study as typifying or creating characteristics peculiar only to women writers. That is not to say, however, that contemporary women writers in German-speaking countries have not attempted to present a female way of writing. For feminist writers, such as Verena Stefan and Elfriede Jelinek, the structure and style of their writing is just as important as the content, if not more so. Both authors have tried to distance themselves from a language which they regard as patriarchal by experimenting with the visual and grammatical form of their writing. Both, for instance, avoid using capital letters which, as was noted in Schutting's *Der Vater*, seems to be a common starting-point for creating a new language in these works.¹² Thus these particular writers want to impress upon the reader visually that they have emancipated themselves from language constructed by men. Yet, this is not Schutting's intention in *Der Vater*, where she experiments with her writing in order to find a way of putting into words the mourning process as well as to encourage the reader to reassess his/her own attitudes to death. As Sigrid Weigel points out, discussion about whether there is a specifically female way of writing is often futile, not least because we are already influenced by our knowledge that the writer is a woman:

Daß Frauen 'anders' schreiben ist durch zahlreiche Beispiele zu belegen und durch viele Gegenbeispiele zu widerlegen. Die Frage, ob diese Gegenbelege Ausnahmen sind, überhaupt die empirische Feststellung des anderen Schreibens, scheint mir an sich ohne Bedeutung. Viel wichtiger ist mir die Frage, ob Frauen dadurch, daß sie anders schreiben als Männer, ihren eigenen kulturellen Ort finden, ob sie eine

ihren Wünschen und Erfahrungen angemessene Sprechweise entwickeln.¹³

It is this last point of whether women have found their own cultural niche which we will examine in the conclusion to this study in the light of the works analysed.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 Peter Handke, *Wunschloses Unglück* (Salzburg: Residenz, 1972).
- 2 Herbert Herzmann, 'Schreiben als Stiftung neuer Sinnzusammenhänge', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Fernausgabe Nr. 233, 9 October 1987, pp. 41-42.
- 3 Herzmann, p. 41.
- 4 Herzmann, p. 41.
- 5 See page 92 in this study.
- 6 The lack of precision with regard to time references is evident from the following list: "Vor drei Wochen", "neulich", "zwei Vormittage später", "seit zwei Monaten", "nach drei, vier Monaten".
- 7 Capitalisation in *Ausflug mit der Mutter* is used differently in *Zum Fenster hinaus*. See page 359.
- 8 There is one phrase which is completely capitalised. It is reported speech and imitates the instructions of the teachers in the boarding-school: "IHR SOLLT LERNEN, MIT EUEREN PROBLEMEN SELBST FERTIG ZU WERDEN,

SELBSTÄNDIG EURE ENTSCHEIDUNGEN ZU TREFFEN, heißt es hier immer"
(Z.F. 199).

- 9 In the first chapter 1939 comes to an end and 1940 is the year for the rest of the chapter.
- 10 Madeleine Günthardt, 'Tiefgekühltes Verhältnis. Helga M. Novaks *Die Eisheiligen*', *Die Weltwoche*, 16 January 1980.
- 11 Hans Frick, *Die blaue Stunde* (München: C. Bertelsmann, 1977).
- 12 Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* (1975) and Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Liebhaberinnen* (1975) illustrate their experimentation with language in order to create a female way of writing.
- 13 Sigrid Weigel, 'Der schielende Blick. Thesen zur Geschichte weiblicher Schreibproxis', in *Die verborgene Frau*, ed. by Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel (Berlin: Argument, 1988), pp. 83-137 (p. 88).

CONCLUSION: NOBODY'S DAUGHTER?

Whilst reviewing the outcomes of our analysis of the theme and character of a sample of prose-works by women writers in German-speaking countries from the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties, we shall focus on the possible impact of the late sixties on these writers when the majority would have been in their twenties and studying at university. We will look to see to what extent the writer's perspective has been shaped by the attitudes of that era towards the older generation. We shall then consider whether these literary works have a particular purpose, such as a therapeutic value for the writer. Having taken into account the influences of the past on the writer and the desired effect at the time of writing, it will finally be worth noting what the intentions of such works of literature are for the writer and for the reader.

In Chapter One we studied the relationships between daughters and fathers as portrayed by Schwaiger, Schutting and Plessen whose works have been subsumed under the term 'Väterliteratur', showing how each of these women writers focuses primarily on the family-man rather than on the professional man, on his personal life, rather than his public life. Above all, each daughter expresses her concern about her own relationship with her father. The woman writers's 'Abrechnung', that is, wherever retribution and reconciliation are unequivocal, is not with an historical figure. We can, therefore, draw a distinction between daughters, aged thirty to forty, from German-speaking countries, writing about their deceased fathers during the late seventies and early eighties, and sons of the same age and country of origin, such as Niklas Franck or Sigfrid Gauch, coming to terms with their fathers' official activities under Hitler's rule.

Twelve years after the student movement these post mortem paternal portraits by sons and daughters do have in common a certain outspokenness, which is indicative not only of

the anti-authoritarian attitude they had probably adopted as students during the late sixties, but also of the questions posed about the guilt and complicity of the adult population of Germany and Austria under the Nazi regime. In these 'Väterbücher' the questions are directed at specific individuals, the fathers, and thereby acquire a personal slant arising from a private situation. The 1968 demands of the women of the SDS to raise the significance of private issues within the political realm, resulting in the feminist principle "the personal is political" (see Introduction), continue to be reflected in these personal portrayals of fathers by women writers. Their doubts about the patriarchal structure of society, which emerge from the picture they paint of their own family life, are clearly reminiscent of the Women's Movement and the climate of 1968. For both male and female writers whose perspective was coloured by the social upheaval of this period it is evident that their fathers are serving a purpose other than that of having been a father. Hans Mayer points out the irony between the students' rejections and the writers' needs:

Die Bewegung der Achtundsechziger war alles in einem: Generationsrevolte, ideologischer Konflikt, Abrechnung in fast allen Einzelfällen mit der eigenen Kindheit und Pubertät. (...) Die literarische Reaktion nach dem Ende der Revolte fiel sonderbar aus. (...) Man braucht die Väter ... als Reizmaterial für die Beschäftigung mit sich selbst.¹

Without doubt the generation conflicts of the sixties provided a springboard for the later 'Väterbücher' by sons and daughters. The father is focused on as the embodiment of the dilemma faced by his generation, namely of meeting the demands of the Nazis and living

with the consequences; the problem of combining private beliefs with social expectations; of being the perfect role model in the home and being a collaborator and perpetrator of atrocities outside the home. As we have seen in these works by Schwaiger, Schutting and Plessen, the starting point for daughters questioning their fathers' private and public role is the personal realm, which illustrates how typical these works are of women's writing as a whole. However, for women and men writers alike it is certainly the case that 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' has become more intimate with writers looking inward to the family and themselves rather than outward to collective responsibility as portrayed by writers such as Grass and Lenz.

Whilst anti-authoritarianism is apparent in these 'Väterbücher' in that the children are rebelling by dint of their writing against their fathers, a conflict of generations comes to the fore in the works about mothers. With reference to Novak's *Die Eisheiligen*, Wohmann's *Ausflug mit der Mutter* and Jutta Heinrich's *Das Geschlecht der Gedanken* (1977), Helga Kraft and Barbara Kosta note that

the authors' dates of birth and the years in which their novels were published indicate that the generation of women who have experienced the emancipatory movement of the sixties is clashing with the generation of women whose lives have been shaped by traditional values.²

This opinion ties in with our acknowledgement above of the influences of the late sixties on sons and daughters now in their thirties and forties writing about their fathers. Here daughters of the same age experienced the New Women's Movement. Kraft and Kosta

come to the conclusion that Novak, Heinrich and Wohmann have shown how "the mother-daughter relationship constitutes a major aspect in the perpetuation of powerlessness which traditionally frames women's lives".³ As a result of our analysis we can say the same of Schriber's *Kartenhaus* and Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung*, where in each book the adult daughter recognises her mother's continuing influence over her, whether she is living apart from her daughter or whether she is dead. All these women writers do make it very clear to the reader that as daughters they find it impossible to dissociate themselves from their mothers on a psychological level without incurring guilt and anguish for having physically parted from them. Yet, as our analysis in Chapter Two illustrates, this separation from the mother as well as the daughter's acceptance of the way her mother was or is are intrinsic to the daughter's establishment of her own sense of identity. Whilst it has already been noted that portrayals of mothers are not solely the domain of women writers, only daughters are able to write about their ambivalent, often guilt-ridden, relationships with their mothers and their subsequent quest for self-identity on account of the complex identification process which takes place between mother and daughter.⁴

Chapter Three highlighted the difficulties adopted daughters encounter in coming to terms with feelings of deprivation as a result of never having got to know their real parents. Whether the tone of the narrative is satirical or true-to-life, both Wohmann and Novak illustrate the sense of insecurity each adoptee experiences, culminating in her decision to leave her adoptive parents. Whilst Wohmann voices her criticism of adults who adopt for all the wrong reasons through her daughter figure, Novak speaks from her own experience. The traumatic upbringing of the female adoptee is dealt with convincingly by these two women writers. In Chapter Four the daughter's departure is not just from her parents but from life itself. Both Haidegger and Zinner show that the mother plays an influential,

decisive part in the shaping of her daughter's attitude to life. Once again only a woman writer would have the necessary insight for being able to depict so genuinely the symbiotic bond between daughter and mother and all the guilt feelings attached to this relationship.

Having analysed the content and narrative strategy of ten novels by women writers from German-speaking countries, we can conclude that when we talk about modern women's writing, we are not, in fact, identifying a newly created language, instead we are acknowledging that writing serves a purpose for women which is different to that of their male counterparts. This purpose is often related to the woman's need to define herself through analytical reflections on the past, thereby establishing her own identity, as well as to be valued as a person in her own right by her parents, husband, lover and society as a whole. Hence, many female works of literature are works of self-expression, that is, they are extremely subjective and self-absorbed. This has been evident in the sample of works we have studied from German-speaking countries where past events peculiar to Germany and Austria have played their role in shaping the attitudes of these daughters-cum-writers towards their parents. Plessen and Novak are not only concerned with introspective self-analysis via their portrayal of parent-daughter relationships, but also with the power of social expectations and the dehumanising effect of negative influences from one's own environment. Each of these writers is helping to break the barrier of silence: on a psychological level they dispel the notion of perfect parents; on a sociological level they present historical facts as they experienced them: "Aufarbeiten, Wegarbeiten, das wird immer mehr zum Thema der Literatur in diesen Jahren, als wäre da etwas zu lange verschwiegen worden".⁵

When we consider the therapeutic effects of women's writing we are able to deduce from our analysis of 'Väterbücher' that writing about one's deceased father provides a sense

of emancipation for many of these grown-up daughters, and to a certain extent the sons. It is not merely a question of coming to terms with their father's death and overcoming the mourning process, rather it is an opportunity to express one's criticism, hatred, occasionally love, and to reveal home truths without fear of retribution from this authoritarian person. In his discussion of 'Väterbücher' past and present in German literature Peter Dettmering views the death of a father as a release for writers such as Meckel and Schutting in the light of the guilt these children have inherited from their fathers for past German complicity under a fascist regime. By exposing his/her awareness of this guilt to the reader the writer is undergoing a cathartic process of ridding himself/herself of this burden. Here too individual concerns acquire social significance through the sharing of responsibility:

(...) der Autor leidet unter einem auf ihm oder dem Vater lastenden Fluch, und da dieser Fluch im weiteren Sinn der der Gemeinschaft, des Kollektivs ist, erwartet der Autor eine Teilnahme des Kollektivs an der von ihm persönlich stellvertretend getragenen Schuld. Erst dann, wenn die Schuld oder der Fluch geteilt, mitgeteilt worden ist, kann der Sohn wirklich an die Stelle des Vaters setzen, darf der Vater wirklich tot sein - ...⁶

However, the caveat should be made that there is the danger of fictionalising the horror of German history to such an extent that it is only through literature that these writers can come to terms with the past, and therefore do not face up to reality.⁷

In some 'Väterbücher', especially those by male writers, the aspect of revenge is, in fact, a more predominant factor than in others. The daughters on the other hand focus primarily on the intimate relationship in order to understand both their fathers and themselves. Elisabeth Plessen explains her experience of writing about her deceased father in *Mitteilung an den Adel* in the following way:

(...) ein Monster-Vater bleibt eine zentrale Figur auch über seinen Tod hinaus, eine Hypothek. Das eigene Ich, die eigene Persönlichkeit löst sich erst nach und nach durch sie hindurch ein, wenn der Prozeß, der mit ihm geführt wurde, das Messer so nachhaltig und über Jahre ins Herz bohrte. Wunden müssen heilen. Vielleicht brauchen sie dazu genau so lange, wie sie geblutet haben.⁸

As has been highlighted throughout this study the process of healing must be seen as ongoing. When asked in an interview in 1984 about the possible therapeutic effect of writing Brigitte Schwaiger answered without hesitation in the affirmative:

Bestimmt! So wie Sprechen auch. *Wirkliches* Sprechen, bei dem innerster Gedanke und innerstes Fühlen mit dem übereinstimmen, was man sagt. Solches Sprechen ist auch eine Heilung. Ich würde zwischen Literatur und dieser Art des Sprechens gar nicht soviel Unterschied machen.⁹

As we have shown, the highly subjective nature of a majority of women's writing points to the therapeutic aspect of expressing personal anxieties and emotional conflicts by putting pen to paper and voicing these thoughts through an I-narrator. This has been especially evident in the works by daughters trying to come to terms with the death of a parent: "Schreiben also zur Lebensbewältigung, als Handlungersatz und ebenso als Handlungsmöglichkeit".¹⁰

Many of the above aspects appear in another recently published 'Vaterbuch', Sibylle Plogstedt's *Niemandstochter*, subtitled *Auf der Suche nach dem Vater*, which provides the title for this Conclusion.¹¹ Before the narrative begins Plogstedt dedicates her book to herself and calls it a "Protokoll einer Therapie". At the end of the book she acknowledges, amongst others, the support of her therapist who counselled her during her search for her real father. The therapeutic role of writing implicit in many of the novels we have studied is here acknowledged openly, since this woman writer admits that her writing has served a therapeutic purpose for her and that her book stands as a testimony of that therapy. It becomes evident in the book that the title is a contradiction in terms: the daughter refers to her unknown father as "Niemand", yet she has to be the daughter of 'somebody'. Our analysis highlights the fact that however much each daughter despises, hates or loves her father/mother, she cannot deny her origins.

Closely linked to this self-therapy is the notion that in these personal accounts women writers are ultimately searching for their own identity and discovering their self, hence the narcissistic aspect of women's writing. Mitgutsch's reason for turning to writing is typical of many of her female colleagues: "Der Grund, warum ich schließlich den Versuch unternommen habe, selbst schriftstellerisch tätig zu werden, ist ein rein persönlicher und hat etwas mit Selbstbestätigung und -findung zu tun".¹² It is not surprising, therefore, that

most contemporary women's literature is autobiographical and subjective because not only are they conscious of the demands of the Women's Movement, but there is also the desire to reflect on one's own suffering and probe deep within one's own psyche. The act of writing about one's father or mother is clearly a stepping-stone towards self-determination: each book is not an end in itself but a means to recognising and understanding the complexity of the relationships between daughters and parents. Generation after generation of women from all classes throughout the world experience similar doubts, similar pain, which is what gives these works, although originating in German-speaking countries, a universal quality.

The relevance of autobiography to women's writing is highlighted in Brigitte Schwaiger's novel *Schönes Licht* (1990), when the protagonist, Christine, a writer by profession, comments:

Da hat sie sich so geplagt, da nahm sie die Zettel immer wieder aus der Lade, da bemühte sie sich, in eine andere Welt zu entfliehen, und jetzt sagen die Leute: Ihr Buch ist wahrscheinlich autobiographisch. Na ja, schließlich hat sie es ja wirklich selbst geschrieben. In diesem Sinn ist es eine Auto-Bio-Graphie. Eine Selbst-Lebens-Schrift. ¹³

For the woman writer, writing can be seen as a method of survival, not just of artistic creation. We are reminded of Johanna Wördemann's article about the first meeting of women writers in Munich organised by the *Frauenoffensive* in 1976. Entitled 'Schreiben um zu überleben oder Schreiben als Arbeit' Wördemann reflected the concerns of the

women about their reasons for writing, which could be categorised into these two areas of motivation.¹⁴ For the male writer this notion of 'writing to survive' would be incomprehensible and inapplicable. Barbara Frischmuth interprets the significance of writing for her as "eine Lebensform und Lebensmöglichkeit, vielleicht auch eine, um zu überleben".¹⁵ Scorned for trying to compete in what has been traditionally a men's world, women writers are making themselves heard and understood, and in the process they are finding their niche in literature through the commonality of shared female experience. Thus, writing to survive as a woman has its origins in authenticity: "Die Schwierigkeit zu schreiben, und da sehe ich mich nun eindeutig als weiblichen Autor, liegt vor allem darin, immer mehr aus mir selbst heraus zu schreiben".¹⁶ As Eva Koch-Klenske points out, the appearance during the past two decades of so many women's literary works as well as their preference for depicting private experiences prove that women are searching for their own form of communication:

Eine Sprache suchen ums Leben. Eine Sprache suchen, in der sich leben läßt. Frauen 'schreiben' an ihrer Geschichte (wenngleich auch noch allzu oft in Geschichten), als wollten sie das neue Leben üben, sie schreiben den Monolog, um das Sprechen mit dem anderen, den Dialog zu proben.¹⁷

Through writing, women are continuing to share their frustrations and everyday problems with other women, and expose the inequality in women's lives, just as they had done within the self-experience groups of the New Women's Movement in the late sixties. In her article 'Schreiben als Angriff auf das Patriarchat' in 1979 Brigitte Wartmann had

already at that time recognised the significance of writing for women due to the commonality of female experience:

Es erleichtert die individuelle Suche nach einem verlorenen Selbst-Bewußtsein und läßt darüber hinaus in den von Frauen produzierten Texten mittels der vielfach variierten einzelnen Erfahrungen ein gemeinsames Kultur-Schicksal erkennen.¹⁸

Nowadays the individual concerns of each female writer can be seen more clearly as indicative of problems for women in society at large, since her criticism is far more vociferous and is reaching a wider readership as a result of marketing strategies. It does appear to be the case that "the process of writing itself has become a tool for emancipation".¹⁹ Certainly such detailed portraits of fathers and mothers did not occur thirty years ago and would never have done so today had it not been for the intellectual climate of 1968. It is evident from their works that German sons and daughters of the postwar generation, writing about the activities of their parents during the Third Reich have little respect for them, partly because they regard their parents as culpable for having supported Hitler, whether actively or passively, and partly because they are willing and not afraid to tell the truth.

In 1992 the daughter of Martin Walser, Alissa Walser, received the Ingeborg Bachmann prize for her short story *Geschenkt*, in which she portrays a seemingly incestuous relationship between father and daughter.²⁰ At the time Walser admitted that she had exploited her own relationship with her father for the source of material but she refuted any autobiographical associations, adding that she was too young (31) for memoirs. Yet, as we

have seen in the works in this study, many women authors are aged between thirty and forty and, as for example in the case of Plessen and Schwaiger, cannot deny autobiographical associations. What is particularly interesting in the case of Alissa Walser's story is that she has chosen to write about a daughter-father relationship whilst her own father is still alive, and, what is more, is highly regarded for his writing. In contrast, then, to the women writers considered here, this daughter has chosen not to wait until her father's death before describing an extremely intimate relationship. She must have also been aware of the damage she was likely to cause her father's reputation in the literary world as well as the probability of incurring his wrath and the negative impact on their own relationship.

In the light of our analysis of German-speaking women's writing of the mid-seventies to mid-eighties, it seems almost inevitable that female authors of the nineties will be prepared to confront their living fathers and mothers in writing, irrespective of the consequences. It is a sign of the self-confidence the woman writer has gained over the past twenty years and the independent footing she has found for herself in a no longer male-dominated literary world, where publishers are eager to encourage 'Frauenliteratur' and market the themes we have covered here. The woman writer of today is clearly not a 'Niemandstochter': she is self-assured and independent but at the same time conscious of her family ties. However much the daughters in this study may have wished to 'disown' their fathers, mothers or adoptive parents in order to achieve emancipation, they could not deny their origins and the influence of their parents on their upbringing and development, even if they had physically distanced themselves, as in the case of Plessen and Schriber. For nearly all these authors the reader adopts a role akin to a therapist because the woman writer is seeking a good listener to whom she can tell all. While some critics may consider the autobiographical penchant of women writers and the often self-therapeutic aspect of

their literary work as self-indulgent, it has to be stressed that for both the woman writer and the woman reader there is a sense of solidarity and self-affirmation in understanding each other's lives, that ultimately each writer proves that she is 'somebody's daughter'.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

- 1 Hans Mayer, *Die unerwünschte Literatur. Deutsche Schriftsteller und Bücher 1968-1985* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), p.129.

- 2 Helga W. Kraft and Barbara Kosta, 'Mother-Daughter Relationships: Problems of Self-Determination in Novak, Heinrich and Wohmann', *German Quarterly*, 56 (1983), 74-88 (p.75).

- 3 Kraft and Kosta, p.85

- 4 Interestingly in her most recent book *Der rote Faden* (1992) Brigitte Schwaiger also takes up the theme of motherhood from the perspective of the writer as mother, so that once again the woman writer is very subjective and personal. Karin Struck is criticised for allowing personal sentiments, in particular painful and angry emotions, to cloud her arguments against abortion in her latest book *Ich sehe mein Kind im Traum* (1992).

Gertrud Fussenegger, 'In jeder Wiege liegt die Zukunft. Neues von Karin Struck und Brigitte Schwaiger', *Die Welt*, 15 August 1992.

- 5 Ingeborg Drewitz, 'Jugend von 1939 bis 1951. Helga M. Novaks Roman *Die Eisheiligen*', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 30 September 1979.

- 6 Peter Dettmering, 'Der Tod als Befreiung? Über den Vater in der Literatur und im Leben', *Loccumer Protokolle*, 6 (1981), 23-31 (p.31).
- 7 See Hinrich C. Seeba, 'Erfundene Vergangenheit: Zur Fiktionalität historischer Identitätsbildung in den Väter-Geschichten der Gegenwart', *Germanic Review*, 66 (1991), 176-182.
- 8 Elisabeth Plessen, 'Abschied von den Vätern', in *Vatersein*, ed. by Hans-Jürgen Schultz (München: dtv, 1984), pp.19-30 (p.27).
- 9 Eva Koch-Klenske, '"Solches Sprechen ist auch eine Heilung". Ein Gespräch mit Brigitte Schwaiger', in *Die Sprache des Vaters im Körper der Mutter*, ed. by Rolf Haubl et al. (Giessen: Anabas, 1984), pp.153-162 (pp.157-158).
- 10 Eva Koch-Klenske, *Das häßliche Gesicht der schönen Frau* (München: Frauenbuchverlag, 1982), p. 18.
- 11 Sibylle Plogstedt, *Niemandstochter. Auf der Suche nach dem Vater* (München and Zürich: Piper, 1991). As was the case for the daughters trying to understand their deceased fathers in Chapter One, this daughter feels that she has been deprived of a special relationship:

Ich strecke meine Fühler aus ins Niemandland, spreche ihn
an: "Vater, wer bist du? Bist du die Leere in mir? Bin ich

die Tochter von nichts? Bin ich deshalb niemand? Glaube ich darum: Mich liebt niemand?" Die Leere in mir ist so groß, da muß Platz für jemand gewesen sein. Mühsam entziffere ich meine Lebenschiffre: "Niemand, das bist du, Vater".

(Niemandstochter, p.13)

Throughout the account the daughter refers to her unknown father as "Niemand" which explains the title of Plogstedt's book. It becomes clear that the mother plays an equally significant role in this book and in her daughter's life, because she is the one to whom the narrator repeatedly turns for information about her father: "Das Risiko, meine Mutter zu verlieren, kann ich nicht eingehen. Sie ist meine einzige Bezugsperson" (N. 89). There are numerous conversations, phone calls and letters between daughter and mother, and the writer sends her mother draft excerpts from her book as a result of which her mother comments: "Ich bin dir so nahe, wie all die Jahre noch nie" (N. 154), which recalls Wohmann's belief that her writing created another kind of closeness between her and her mother. Furthermore, Plogstedt ends her book by referring to her mother: "Vor allem danke ich meiner Mutter, (...) weil mein Buch ja auch eine Auseinandersetzung mit ihr und ihrer Geschichte ist" (N. 163). As in the works concerned with mother-daughter relations, this daughter also identifies with her mother and is afraid of repeating her mistakes: "Müssen wir die Fehler unserer Mütter so lange wiederholen, bis wir sie lösen können? Was wäre das für ein makabres psychisches Erbe" (N. 49).

It is possible in this one work to draw a number of parallels with the ten works analysed in this study. Firstly, the I-narrator is the voice of the writer who wants to know who her father was, what his political activities under Hitler were, how he treated his mother and how he brought up his sons. Like the narrator in *Lange Abwesenheit* she too visits her father's grave and talks to him, as if he were alive: "Ich muß spüren, wie der da liegt" (N. 131), so that in death she is able to get physically close to him for the first time. Secondly, this search reveals the fact that the adult daughter is searching for her own self which she sees as incomplete as long as her father remains a stranger. Moreover, she blames her father and his absence from her life for her rebellious nature as highlighted by her active participation in political demonstrations and subsequent imprisonment, her alcoholism - she, in fact, discovers that her father was a heavy drinker - and her promiscuity, all of which stem from her deep-rooted sense of insecurity.

- 12 Birgit Leonhardt, 'Interview mit Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch', *Buchreport*, 5 June 1985, p.32.
- 13 Brigitte Schwaiger, *Schönes Licht* (München: Langen-Müller, 1990).
- 14 Johanna Wördemann, 'Schreiben um zu überleben oder Schreiben als Arbeit. Notizen zum Treffen schreibender Frauen in München, Mai 1976', *Alternative*, 108/109 (1976), 115-118.

- 15 Hilde Schmölder, *Frau sein und schreiben. Österreichische Schriftsteller definieren sich selbst* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1982), pp.64-72 (p.72).
- 16 Barbara Frischmuth, 'Eine Literatur, die entwaffnet', *Courage 7*, Berliner Frauenzeitung, Jg.3 (Juli 1978), 22-25.
- 17 Koch-Klenske, p. 18.
- 18 Brigitte Wartmann, 'Schreiben als Angriff auf das Patriarchat', *Literaturmagazin*, 11 (1979), 108-129 (p.109).
- 19 Kraft and Kosta, p.86.
- 20 Alissa Walser, '"Ich will dein privates Fleisch". Die in Klagenfurt ausgezeichnete Erzählung *Geschenkt* von Alissa Walser', *Der Spiegel*, 6 July 1992, pp.182-185.

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