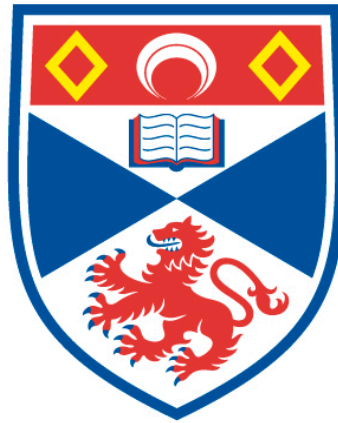


# MASCULINITIES IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN-LANGUAGE LITERATURE : STRATEGIES OF EVASION

Matthias Eck

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews



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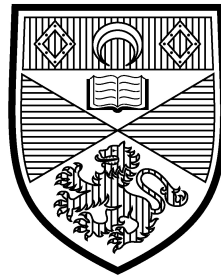
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# Masculinities in Contemporary German-Language Literature: Strategies of Evasion

Matthias Eck



University of  
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of  
PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews

4 May 2016



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I, Matthias Eck, received assistance in the writing of this thesis in respect of language, grammar, spelling or syntax, which was provided by Diana Hebel, Linden Lawson and Cynthia Waye.

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## Abstract

In the quest for a positive alternative male gender identity (anti-hegemonic masculinity), this thesis explores the representation of masculinities in contemporary German-language literature (focusing on Austria) by examining selected works by Daniel Kehlmann, Doron Rabinovici and Arno Geiger. The research combines close reading with critical theory on gender. While theory is used to contextualize and critically evaluate findings from the texts, it is complemented and enhanced by insights stemming from close reading, thereby contributing to the development of theory on masculinities.

While there is evidence of hegemonic subversion in the novels, the three authors offer few positive images of alternative masculinity. Kehlmann shows that hegemonic masculinity is a virtual concept which provides gratification through fantasy. It impacts on reality because men accept it as a standard for their own behaviour and social technologies constantly repeat this fantasy. Rabinovici illustrates how Jewish men unsuccessfully try to live up to the standard of hegemonic masculinity by switching identity. He shows how the male characters develop a fragile, weak masculinity as a result of their parents' silence about their experiences during the Holocaust. He also provides examples of a positive masculinity which reflect the theory of a 'gentle' Jewish masculinity. Geiger examines disintegrating hegemonic masculinity, helpless complicit masculinity, strategic passive masculinity and caring masculinity. The latter category takes the concept of 'gentle masculinity' into a broader context. Again, memory of and communication about the Holocaust are shown to impact on masculinity. The texts analysed disclose a gap between the ideal of masculinity and reality. In order to bridge this gap the male characters adopt two strategies of evasion: evasion to hide a softer and gentler side, and evasion into a world of fantasy where they pretend to live up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity.



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A thesis is always a collective effort. During this exciting research project I have received advice and support from several people. I would like to thank first and foremost my supervisors Prof Michael Gratzke and Dr Colette Lawson, for their guidance and also for challenging me. Your support was truly invaluable. I would also like to thank Nishani Balendra, Diana Hebel, Jutta Kling, Linden Lawson, Lowri Rees, Ashley Waye and especially Cynthia Waye. Last but not least I would like to thank my family and friends. A special thanks goes to Loïc Trabut for supporting me in every possible way.





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# 1 Introduction

According to a German study men in general feel the ‘Bedürfnis nach neuen Facetten des Mannseins und von Männlichkeit’; they see the new demands made of men, especially in the area of child care and the life of the couple, as an ‘enrichment’. 74% of men say that they are in favour of the equal treatment of men and women in the private and professional spheres.<sup>1</sup> According to an Austrian study, two-thirds of Austrian men would be willing to take parental leave.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, in Austria, 30% of men can imagine staying at home to do the household chores.<sup>3</sup>

So are we finally seeing a significant change in attitudes towards masculinity in Germany and Austria and the rise of new men? Not entirely. Let us look at these figures and trends more closely. While nearly one third of Austrian men are prepared to stay at home to do the housework, only 1% actually does.<sup>4</sup> While boys in Germany are all for gender equality, they see it as a given that their future female partners will somehow take care of the children on top of continuing to work.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the desire to have children is significantly lower among men compared to women, and men in Germany and Austria show the lowest rates compared to other European countries.<sup>6</sup> The image men

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<sup>1</sup> Carsten Wippermann, *Jungen und Männer im Spagat: Zwischen Rollenbildern und Alltagspraxis* (2014) <[http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/Jungen-und-M\\_C3\\_A4nner-im-Spagat-Zwischen-Rollenbildern-und-Alltagspraxis.property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf](http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/Jungen-und-M_C3_A4nner-im-Spagat-Zwischen-Rollenbildern-und-Alltagspraxis.property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf)> [accessed 9 January 2016] pp. 9, 11. This publication was prepared for the German Ministry for Family, the Elderly, Women and Youth.

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.maennerinkarenz.at/fakten.html>> [accessed 6 June 2015].

<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.parship.at/love-facts/liebe-familie-job-das-rollenverstaendnis-im-ueberblick.htm>> [accessed 9 January 2016].

<sup>4</sup> <<http://www.parship.at/love-facts/liebe-familie-job-das-rollenverstaendnis-im-ueberblick.htm>> [accessed 9 January 2016].

<sup>5</sup> Wippermann, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Mariam Tazi-Preve in Reinhard Raml, Evelyn Dawid and Gert Freistritzer, 2. *Österreichischer Männerbericht* (2011)

<[https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/III/III\\_00279/imfname\\_236879.pdf](https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/III/III_00279/imfname_236879.pdf)> [accessed 9 January 2016] p. 365. This report was prepared for the Austrian Ministry for Employment, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

have of masculinity is also telling: when asked what they appreciate in other men, the majority refer back to markers of hegemonic masculinity, such as being a good provider for the family, having professional competence, being assertive and ambitious.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, men feel the need for new aspects of masculinity in themselves and see a change in masculinity as a desideratum of the female partner and society,<sup>8</sup> which makes a traditional masculinity less acceptable. Evidently there is a gap between the intentions of German and Austrian men and reality, the expectations of society and the masculine ideal.

In the quest for a positive, alternative male gender identity (anti-hegemonic masculinity), this thesis will explore the representation of masculinity in contemporary German-language literature through an examination of selected works by Daniel Kehlmann, an Austrian-German author, Doron Rabinovici, an Israeli-Austrian writer, and Arno Geiger, an Austrian. These authors were chosen because their work engages closely with male identity and the term ‘German-language literature’ because all three write in German. Some of their texts are set in Germany.

Secondary literature on the construction of masculinities in literature is still scarce<sup>9</sup> and, compared to women’s studies, relatively few articles and books have been published on the topic of masculinity in German-language literature.<sup>10</sup> Research into representations of masculinities in Austrian literature has thrived with regard to very famous authors such as Thomas Bernhard and Elfriede Jelinek,<sup>11</sup> and female authors in general. Moreover, most of the published work so far

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 32–33.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Stefan Krammer, ‘Fiktionen des Männlichen — Männerforschung als literaturwissenschaftliche Herausforderung’, in *MannsBilder — Literarische Konstruktionen von Männlichkeiten*, ed. by Krammer (Wien: Facultas, 2007), p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Hindinger and Martin-M. Langner, ‘Vorwort’, in *‘Ich bin ein Mann! Wer ist es mehr?’ — Männlichkeitskonzepte in der deutschen Literatur vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Barbara Hindinger and Martin-M. Langner (Munich: Iudicium, 2011), pp. 7–14 (p. 7).

<sup>11</sup> See for example: Cornelia Prochaska, ‘Die (All)Macht des Mannes. Hegemoniale Männlichkeit und

concerns single works or single authors. What is still missing today is an analysis of what current male authors, marked by the discourse on a new masculinity have to say in this field. This thesis will contribute to narrowing that gap.

This research project hypothesizes that although a new masculinity, not based on the exercise of power and domination over women, has been increasingly promoted since at least the late 1960s<sup>12</sup>, current German-language literature does not really suggest positive representations of an alternative, non-hegemonic masculinity. There is ample evidence of anti-hegemonic subversion of masculinities, but no successful attempts to offer an alternative have emerged. Instead, the male characters adopt strategies of evasion to bridge the gap between the ideal of hegemonic masculinity and reality. Two patterns of ‘strategic evasion’ have emerged: evasion in order to hide a softer, gentler side traditionally attributed to women; and evasion into a fantasy world where men can live up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

This thesis focuses on German-language literature from both Austria and Germany for two reasons. First, both countries have comparatively conservative gender politics in the European context, which makes the need for a critical study of masculinities particularly relevant.<sup>13</sup> While in Germany the so-called *Elterngeld*, enabling both mothers and fathers to stay at home and take care of their children, was introduced in 2007, the same measure had been in place in Sweden as early as

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weibliche Identitätsfindung in Elfriede Jelineks “Der Tod und das Mädchen I. Schneewitchen”, in *MannsBilder*, ed. by Krammer, pp. 109–20; Burghard Damerau, ‘Aufsteiger und Attraktionen? Elfriede Jelineks Männergestalten um die Frauen mit Prestige’, *Studia austriaca*, 10 (2002), 73–90; Ria Endres, *Am Ende angekommen. Dargestellt am wahnhaften Dunkel der Männerporträts des Thomas Bernhard* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1980); Julia Malle, ‘Dann gab er mir ein Zeichen, das hieß: verschwinde! Maskeraden in Thomas Bernards “Ist es eine Komödie? Ist es eine Tragödie?”’, in *MannsBilder*, ed. by Krammer, pp. 136–49.

<sup>12</sup> The second women’s movement, which developed in the 1960’s questioned increasingly the traditional gender arrangements. (Walther Erhart, ‘Deutschsprachige Männlichkeitsforschung’, in *Männlichkeit. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, ed. by Stefan Horlacher, Bettina Jansen and Wieland Schwanebeck (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2016), pp. 11–25 (p. 12).

<sup>13</sup> In the following some selected and non-comprehensive examples are given. There are other interesting areas such as pay gaps, percentage of men in positions of power and so forth.

1974.<sup>14</sup> The number of German women working part-time is much higher than the European Union (EU) average: 45.1 per cent as opposed to 31.6 per cent respectively.<sup>15</sup> More recently there have been positive developments. For example, every child has had the right to childcare since 2013 in Germany and the current government has announced that it will double its budget for childcare provision.<sup>16</sup> According to Edgar Forster, Austria experienced a ‘delayed modernization’ after the Second World War: gender and equality politics in general only gained social acceptance in the mid- to late 1980s.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore no surprise that Austria is still behind in many areas of gender politics today.<sup>18</sup> Generally, in the past the ideal of a white, heterosexual, middle-class masculinity<sup>19</sup> was promoted in Austria and women’s politics were designed in the framework of conservative family politics.<sup>20</sup> In general, Austria is lagging behind Germany when it comes to gender politics. To give just one example: it took Austria nearly a decade longer than Germany to introduce same-sex civil unions. This is why the corpus of this study has an explicit emphasis on Austrian authors. Since the late 1990s, ‘Gender Mainstreaming’ has become the guideline of EU policy. Gender mainstreaming aims to address gender discrimination and identifies the structures and processes which lead to discrimination.<sup>21</sup> In 2004 Austria started to implement EU non-discrimination policy

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<sup>14</sup> Berlin-Institut für Bevölkerung und Entwicklung, *Demos Newsletter*, 26 Januar 2001 <[http://www.berlin-institut.org/newsletter/Ausgabe\\_26\\_01\\_2011.html.html#Artikel0](http://www.berlin-institut.org/newsletter/Ausgabe_26_01_2011.html.html#Artikel0)> [accessed 6 June 2015].

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, *The Current Situation of Gender Equality in Germany. Country profile 2012* <[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/epo\\_campaign/country-profile\\_germany\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/epo_campaign/country-profile_germany_en.pdf)> [accessed 6 June 2015].

<sup>16</sup> Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 18 March 2015 <<http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Kinder-und-Jugend/kinderbetreuung.html>> [accessed 6 June 2015].

<sup>17</sup> Edgar Forster, ‘Slow, Passive and Hesitant: Transforming Men’s Practices in Austria’, in *Men and Masculinities Around the World: Transforming Men’s Practices*, ed. by Elisabetta Ruspini et al. (New York: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 17–30 (p. 19).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, ‘Ungleiche Schwestern – Frauenbewegung seit 1989’, 8 September 2008 <<http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/gender/frauenbewegung/35296/ungleiche-schwester?p=all>> [accessed 9 January 2016].

in the professional sphere.<sup>22</sup> In 2011, quotas for female board-level executives in government-related companies were introduced.<sup>23</sup> Forster notes that society and politicians in Austria have now accepted boys' and men's work that aims 'to disrupt rigid hegemonic masculinity identities of boys and men to offer alternatives'.<sup>24</sup> Despite these developments, 'gender hierarchies, unequal distribution of resources, male dominance in leading positions, and gender-specific distribution of duties still exist'<sup>25</sup> and measures to advance gender equality remain politically very controversial.<sup>26</sup> It is in this context, with the existence of tension between implementation of more progressive gender policies in the late 1990s to the present and its critical reception, that the literary texts chosen are set.

The second reason for the focus on German-language literature here is the fact that the literary corpus is testament to a shared interest in masculinities among contemporary German-language authors, making an analysis based on gender especially promising. Several common themes emerge from these works: gendered memory, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and history; men who behave like children; violence as a restorative force; ageing men; women imitating men, and subversion in gender and genre. By exploring these common themes this discussion aims to make a contribution to the field of masculinities studies in the Austrian and German contexts — a field which, in terms of research, it should be noted here, still remains 'at a low level of institutionalization' in Austria even though young researchers show increasing interest in questions related to men.<sup>27</sup> While the field is much less anchored in the research culture of Germany than it is in North America and

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<sup>22</sup> Forum Politische Bildung, *Geschlechtergeschichte – Geschlechterpolitik – Gender Mainstreaming* (2006) <<http://www.politischebildung.com/pdfs/26-gesamt.pdf>> [accessed 9 January 2016] p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> <[http://www.renner-institut.at/fileadmin/frauenmachengeschichte/sp\\_70er/sp\\_frpol.htm](http://www.renner-institut.at/fileadmin/frauenmachengeschichte/sp_70er/sp_frpol.htm)> [accessed 9 January 2016].

<sup>24</sup> Forster, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 20–21.



Scandinavian countries,<sup>28</sup> research on men is relatively well established in Germany.<sup>29</sup> Several handbooks on masculinity were published in the United States in the new millenium, yet the first handbook focusing on German-speaking research was only published in 2016.<sup>30</sup>

The question becomes: why analyse masculinity in literature? The study of literature can contribute to our understanding of masculinities in various ways. Literature, like other media, actively contributes to discourse on gender. Books are ‘Archive des Wissens über das Geschlecht’.<sup>31</sup> While literature can be seen as a ‘playground’, with fictitious identities that enable a transgression of gender roles,<sup>32</sup> it is also evident that it is not free from the orchestration of gender: it is always historically, culturally and individually biased.<sup>33</sup> The benefit of a study of masculinities in literature is that, as a space of imagination, literature can also offer alternative masculinities. By providing new insight, literature can complement gender theories. In addition, such analysis can shed light on the tension between ‘Seele und Norm’,<sup>34</sup> between the ideal and actual experience of masculinity to which men may relate. Literature can anticipate discourse on social change: ‘Manchmal erzählen erdachte Figuren etwas über die Wirklichkeit, das die realen Menschen noch nicht auszusprechen wagen.’<sup>35</sup>

In the following, the methodology, research context and aims of this thesis will be presented,

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<sup>28</sup> Hans-Joachim Lenz, ‘Zwischen Men Studies und männlicher Verletzungs-offenheit — Zur kurzen Geschichte der Männerforschung in Deutschland’, *Freiburger GeschlechterStudien*, 21 (2007), 41–77 <<http://www.geschlechterforschung.net/download/Anl2.pdf>> [accessed 18 June 2015].

<sup>29</sup> Jeff Hearn and Keith Pringle with members of CROME, *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities: National and Transnational Approaches* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 27. For an overview on masculinity studies in Germany, see Erhart, ‘Deutschsprachige Männlichkeitsforschung’.

<sup>30</sup> Horlacher, Jansen and Schwanebeck (ed), *Männlichkeit*.

<sup>31</sup> Krammer, ‘Fiktionen des Männlichen’, pp. 15–36 (p. 15).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Inge Stephan, ‘Literaturwissenschaft’, in *Gender-Studien. Eine Einführung*, ed. by Christina von Braun and Inge Stephan (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), pp. 290–99 (p. 297).

<sup>34</sup> Elisabeth Raether and Tanja Stelzer, ‘Not am Mann. Das geschwächte Geschlecht’, *Die Zeit*, 2 January 2014 <<http://www.zeit.de/2014/02/maenner-krise-maennerbewegung>> [accessed 13 January 2014].

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

followed by an overview of the argument, which will also set out the body of literature which will be discussed.

## 1.1 Critical theory: masculinity and masculinities

Broadly speaking, masculinity studies are ‘concerned with the social construction of what it means to “be a man”’.<sup>36</sup> Masculinity ‘refers to the behaviors, social roles, and relations of men within a given society as well as the meanings attributed to them. The term *masculinity* stresses gender, unlike *male*, which stresses biological sex.’<sup>37</sup>

Research on masculinity has its origins in the 1970s as a by-product of that on femininity which always had men, implicitly or explicitly, in its focus, mostly in its criticism of patriarchy.<sup>38</sup>

Both queer and feminist theories have progressed and over the past three decades have successfully shown that sex (biological sex) and gender (social gender) are two separate terms. As such, gender is not static and can evolve.<sup>39</sup> The separation of sex and gender has opened up a new dimension in which to engage with the construction of gender;<sup>40</sup> this has also greatly benefited the research field of masculinity studies.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Kimmel and Tristan Bridges, ‘Masculinity’  
<<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0033.xml>>  
[accessed 18 January 2014].

<sup>37</sup> Kimmel and Bridges — authors’ emphasis.

<sup>38</sup> Krammer, ‘Fiktionen des Männlichen’, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1–2.

<sup>40</sup> Krammer, ‘Fiktionen des Männlichen’, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> For an overview on masculinities studies see for example: Rachel Adams and David Savran, ‘Introduction’, in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, ed. by Rachel Adams and David Savran (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp. 1–8.

Research on men has progressively established itself as an autonomous field of study.<sup>42</sup> Masculinity studies explore ‘the various ways that men are — as a group — privileged, as well as focusing on the costs of those privileges and the ways in which not all men are granted equal access to them’.<sup>43</sup> As masculinity studies deal with ‘the diversity of identities, behaviors, and meanings that occupy the label *masculine*’<sup>44</sup> they are often referred to in the plural — masculinities: ‘Die Erforschung der Männlichkeit beginnt mit der Entdeckung des Plurals. Statt eines monolithischen Kollektivsingulars kommen bei genauer Betrachtung eher plurale und widersprüchliche “Männlichkeiten” zum Vorschein.’<sup>45</sup>

The critical approach to men and masculinities in recent years can be summarized as follows:

a *specific* rather than implicit or incidental *focus* on the topic of men and masculinities; taking account of feminist, gay, and other critical gender scholarship; recognizing men and masculinities as *explicitly gendered* rather than non-gendered; understanding men and masculinities as *socially constructed, produced and reproduced* rather than as somehow just ‘naturally’ one way or another; seeing men and masculinities as *variable and changing* across time (history) and space (culture), within societies, and through life courses and biographies; emphasizing men’s relations, albeit differentially, to *gendered power*; spanning the material and the discursive in analysis; interrogating the *intersecting of the gender with other social divisions* in the construction of men and masculinities.<sup>46</sup>

Important critical theory on masculinities will be introduced in this section as it evolved chronologically; its reception and advancement will also briefly be touched upon. This section

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<sup>42</sup> While studies on men have increased significantly over the past years, women’s studies are still a larger field of research. See Stefan Horlacher, ‘Überlegungen zur theoretischen Konzeption männlicher Identität aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive. Ein Forschungsüberblick mit exemplarischer Vertiefung’, in *Männlichkeit denken. Aktuelle Perspektiven der kulturwissenschaftlichen Masculinity Studies*, ed. by Martina Läubli and Sabrina Sahli (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), pp. 19–82 (p. 24).

<sup>43</sup> Kimmel and Bridges.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. — authors’ emphasis.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Erhart, ‘Männlichkeit als als Kategorie der postmodernen Kondition’, in *Räume der literarischen Postmoderne. Gender, Performativität, Globalisierung*, ed. by Paul Michael Lützeler (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2000), pp. 127–46 (p. 134).

<sup>46</sup> Jeff Hearn, ‘The Materiality of Men, Bodies, and Towards the Abolition of “Men”’, in *Männlichkeit denken*, ed. by Läubli and Sahli, pp. 195–215 (p. 197) — author’s emphasis.

attempts neither to give a full overview of the field nor to provide a history of masculinity; it will rather introduce the theoretical concepts which will be applied to the analysis of the construction of masculinities in the literary texts chosen.<sup>47</sup> The present study draws on critical theory on masculinities from both the humanities and social sciences, both of which are seen as complementary:

In the most general terms, the social sciences contribute rigorous empirical research and greater attention to masculine rituals, organizations, and roles within different cultures; critics in the humanities add a more nuanced understanding of the importance of cultural representations to formations of gender, often placing greater emphasis on the domain of fantasy, imagination and the unconscious.<sup>48</sup>

In the groundbreaking work *Gender Trouble* (1990 – first edition), Judith Butler offers a social and discursive approach to gender. She argues that bodies defined by gender are as much a product of society as are identities and sex roles. It is only through the repetitive representation of gender-specific bodily performance that bodies become perceivable as male or female. In this sense, men and women ‘perform’ their gender:

gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted *social temporality*. Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For a comprehensive overview of theoretical approaches to masculinities, see: Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> Adams and Savran, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007 edition), pp. 191–92 — author’s emphasis.

Butler thus claims that all gender is imitative. Gender identity imperatively needs to be performed to realize itself (performativity); this then happens in uncountable repetitive acts (performances), and repetition over time makes gender appear as ‘natural’.<sup>50</sup> Reflecting critically on her work, she notes that her ‘text does not sufficiently explain performativity in terms of its social, psychic, corporeal, and temporal dimensions’.<sup>51</sup> In her later work *Bodies That Matter*,<sup>52</sup> she clarifies that performativity is not to be understood as free play and that gender cannot be chosen as an individual wishes: gender performativity is not voluntary. Performativity is a process through which a subject is constituted.<sup>53</sup> To Butler, gender remains fiction:

If gender attributes, however, are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. The distinction between expression and performativeness is crucial. If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction.<sup>54</sup>

Gender is an effect of a ‘decidedly public and social discourse’; it is ‘an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality’.<sup>55</sup> If gender needs to be performed in repetition to be sustained, it opens up the possibility of subversion; as both the body and identity are socially constructed, subversion can occur both through bodies and behaviour.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>51</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xxv.

<sup>52</sup> On performativity see in particular Judith Butler, ‘Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion’, in *Bodies That Matter*, by Judith Butler, pp. 121–40.

<sup>53</sup> Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) pp. 87–88.

<sup>54</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 192.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 185–86.

In 1995 R. W. Connell published another groundbreaking work: *Masculinities*.<sup>56</sup> Connell argues that masculinity as one category does not exist, but that there are ‘multiple masculinities’.<sup>57</sup>

The concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is central to her argument:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.<sup>58</sup>

Hegemonic masculinity is, according to Connell, not fixed or the same everywhere: it is a contestable position.<sup>59</sup> Connell goes on to posit that the male gender order is internally organized in three groups: hegemony, complicity and subordination. No man really entirely embodies the concept of hegemonic masculinity, but it is generally accepted by society as the measure of masculinity. Men comply with this image of masculinity and profit from it.<sup>60</sup>

Connell classifies the majority of men within the category of ‘complicit masculinity’, a term which refers to men who support the patriarchal model and consequently the ruling hegemonic masculinity. In turn they receive what Connell labels the ‘patriarchal dividend’, the social and economic advantages that men gain from the hierarchical gender order.<sup>61</sup>

The group ‘subordinated masculinities’ is composed of men who do not comply with the masculine standards imposed. Gay men are at the bottom of this group.<sup>62</sup> Heterosexual men fall into this category as well when they are perceived to have feminine traits.<sup>63</sup> As there is an interaction

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<sup>56</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005 edition).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

between gender, race and class, further relationships between masculinities are produced.<sup>64</sup> Connell opens up a fourth category that she calls ‘marginalized masculinity’: ethnic minorities and socially ‘inferior’ men are part of this group. However, these marginalized men do not necessarily reject hegemonic masculinity; on the contrary, they can support and legitimize it.<sup>65</sup>

Connell analyses the life stories of different groups of men to find out how they cope with the crisis of masculinity and whether they try to reconstruct their masculinity. One of these groups consists of men who sympathize with the feminist movement; they attempt to reform their masculinity, trying to become open and non-assertive, a project which is problematic as it risks annihilating the self.<sup>66</sup> Undoing masculinity can create a ‘loss of personality structure’.<sup>67</sup> Connell concludes that while there is a ‘historical consciousness about gender’,<sup>68</sup> the enterprise of transforming masculinity does not have any popular base or presence in mass culture.<sup>69</sup>

Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity has become highly influential in scholarship: it has the merit of revealing the existence of a multiplicity of masculinities.<sup>70</sup> John Tosh notes that it has the advantage of addressing the ‘relational complexities of gender’.<sup>71</sup> As Demetrakis Demetriou notes, ‘Connell’s originality lies in the formulation of a single theoretical principle that states that the relationships within genders are centered on, and can be explained by, the relationships between

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>70</sup> Demetrakis Z. Demetriou, ‘Connell’s Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique’, *Theory and Society*, 30 (2001), 337–61 (p. 343).

<sup>71</sup> John Tosh, ‘Hegemonic masculinity and the history of gender’, in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 41–58 (p. 43).

genders.’<sup>72</sup> It shows how hegemonic masculinity can only be sustained by unequal relations between masculinities.<sup>73</sup> However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been criticized from a ‘sociological, psychological, poststructuralist, and materialist’ view.<sup>74</sup> Tosh points to the general shortfall of Connell’s theory:

In the first place, it is never convincingly demonstrated why patriarchy should take the precedence over all other structuring principles, to the extent that Connell affirms. One can accept the profoundly hierarchical character of masculinities, and the investment of men in power and dominance, without concluding that maintaining power over women is the deciding imperative. [...] To say that in the final analysis the gendered pecking order among men exists because of its bearing on the power dynamic between men and women is a very large claim which is far from being borne out by the historical context.<sup>75</sup>

Connell, in her theory, creates a dualism between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities for which she has been criticized. Demetriou proposes the concept of a ‘hegemonic masculine bloc’ in order to overcome this dualism:

The notion of masculine bloc [...] suggests that the form of masculinity that is capable of reproducing patriarchy is in a constant process of negotiation, translation, hybridization, and reconfiguration. This implies more than a recognition that hegemonic masculinity is capable of transforming itself in order to adapt to the specificities of new historical conjunctures. [...] It changes through negotiation, appropriation, and translation, through the transformation of what appears counter-hegemonic and progressive into an instrument of backwardness and patriarchal reproduction.<sup>76</sup>

Demetriou argues that it is an illusion that male power does not allow for contradiction and otherness: it is precisely because of its hybrid nature that hegemonic masculinity has the capacity

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<sup>72</sup> Demetriou, p. 343 — author’s emphasis.

<sup>73</sup> Tosh, pp. 45–46.

<sup>74</sup> For a summary of the critique, see R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity — Rethinking the Concept’, *Gender & Society*, 19 (2005), 829–59.

<sup>75</sup> Tosh, pp. 53 and 55.

<sup>76</sup> Demetriou, p. 355.



continuously to reproduce itself.<sup>77</sup> Jeff Hearn has also argued that the concept of hegemony has been used in too restricted a way.<sup>78</sup> According to him, there is a need for ‘a much more multi-faceted and indeed embodied account of men and masculinities’.<sup>79</sup> Following the critiques, Connell herself and James Messerschmidt have attempted a re-examination of the concept and tried to reformulate it in contemporary terms;<sup>80</sup> they affirm that its basis remains ‘the combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities’.<sup>81</sup> However, they suggest a more complex and holistic understanding of gender hierarchy, also taking into account the agency of subordinated groups, especially women.<sup>82</sup> The geographical interplay of masculinities is taken into consideration,<sup>83</sup> as is a more specific treatment of the male body.<sup>84</sup> Finally Connell and Messerschmidt argue for recognition of the complex dynamics within hegemonic masculinity and its potential internal contradiction.<sup>85</sup>

While Connell focuses on social explanations for the phenomenon of masculinity, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1995) offers a psychological approach: she argues that at times masculinity has nothing to do with men.<sup>86</sup> Women have an interest in masculinities as well: ‘As a woman, I am a consumer of masculinities, but I am not more so than men are; and, like men, I as a woman am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them.’<sup>87</sup> Sedgwick argues that masculinity and femininity, instead of being opposite poles, are orthogonal to each other: ‘they are actually in

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Hearn, ‘The Materiality of Men, Bodies, *and* Towards the Abolition of “Men”’, p. 205.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>80</sup> Connell and Messerschmidt.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 846.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 848.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 849.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 851–52.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 852.

<sup>86</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Gosh, Boy George, You must be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!’, in *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. by Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 12–20 (p. 12).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

different, perpendicular dimensions, and therefore are independently variable'.<sup>88</sup> That means that a person could be high or low in both of the scales at the same time. Masculinity and femininity are here understood as threshold effects:<sup>89</sup> in order to be perceived as and feel like a sexed object, one has to cross a threshold.

At the end of the 1990s some theorists on gender attempted to find psychological explanations for the behaviour of Western men within the logic of masochism. Both John Noyes (1997) and David Savran (1998) argue that male masochism was invented to preserve the power of white men. As a reaction to the threat to masculinity and power, it can be understood as an anticipation of the surrender of power in order to sustain it. Noyes argues that masochism was the response to a specific technical problem:

The masochist's body was invented in the late nineteenth century as a machine that could do one of two things, depending upon how it was regarded, how it was used, or where it was positioned. It could reduce socially nonproductive aggressivity to an individual pathology, or it could transform social control into sexual pleasure.<sup>90</sup>

He concludes on male masochism:

It [...] is best understood not as a pathological prevalence of the feminine sexual disposition within the male, but as a neurotic attempt at self-preservation, a strategy of enactment whereby rituals of helplessness and dependency are performed for the sake of maintaining some positive relation to perceived stereotypes.<sup>91</sup>

Noyes's text has been criticized for arguing that masochism was an invention of the late nineteenth century, as masochism has for centuries been anchored in Western thinking in relation to Christianity's emphasis on suffering.<sup>92</sup> To Savran, masculinity is a complex and unstable concept:<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 15–16.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>90</sup> John K. Noyes, *The Mastery of Submission: Inventions of Masochism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 9.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>92</sup> Vern L. Bullogh, 'The Mastery of Submission: Inventions of Masochism (review)', *Bulletin of the History*

‘masculinity and femininity are always historically contingent, always in the process of being reimagined and redefined according to changing material conditions. [...] there is no transhistorical essence of masculinity and femininity’.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, he argues that gender is based on fantasy; it is an identification which is in essence imaginary.<sup>95</sup> Savran observes that marginalized masculinities have become more central in the culture of the United States; in particular he notices the emergence of the white man as a victim as a powerful new figure.<sup>96</sup> This new figure can be divided into five categories: ‘the angry white male, the sensitive male, the male searching for the Wild Man within, the white supremacist, the spiritual male’.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, masochism becomes a useful instrument for an analysis of contemporary white masculinities.<sup>98</sup> According to Savran, the construction of the white man as a victim is a response to particular social and economic challenges such as the emergence of the feminist, lesbian and gay right movements and economic decline.<sup>99</sup> Based on Freud, Savran claims that men are torturing themselves to prove their masculinity.<sup>100</sup> The logic of masochism explains the backlash by some white men against social movements such as feminism: these men inflict pain on themselves in order to be ready to attack minority groups which have socially and economically benefited over the past decades.

In *La Domination masculine* (1998) Pierre Bourdieu presents an ethnographic approach to masculinities. Bourdieu qualifies masculine domination as a form of symbolic violence which is

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*of Medicine*, 72/4 (1998), 801–02.

<sup>93</sup> David Savran, ‘Introduction’, in David Savran, *Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 3–38 (p.7).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

exerted through communication and knowledge and remains invisible for its ‘victims’.<sup>101</sup> Acknowledging that the study of masculine domination itself is limited by modes of thinking produced by that very same domination, he develops his argument and bases it on the study of ‘objective structures’ and ‘cognitive forms’ in Kabyle society — a society which remained relatively protected from external influence.<sup>102</sup> Bourdieu suggests that the masculine and feminine are organized as a system of oppositions: the divide between the sexes is present in things (the home, for example), the social world, in the bodies and habitus of agents, working as schemes of perception, thought and action.<sup>103</sup>

According to Bourdieu the social order works like an immense symbolic machine, ratifying the masculine domination on which it is founded.<sup>104</sup> He sees this social domination as being based on biology — anatomical difference — which is a naturalized social construction itself.<sup>105</sup> Masculinity is always relational, constructed against femininity; inherent in this construction is a fear of the latter.<sup>106</sup> To Bourdieu, men have a desire to dominate (*libido dominandi*), which is socially instituted. Like children, they play games that are socially assigned to them. The man is a child who *plays* a man, including through rituals and social games in which privileges are both acquired and disputed. They play ‘power games’.<sup>107</sup> Masculine domination is spontaneous and coerced but can only be understood by looking at the permanent effects that the social order exercises over women.<sup>108</sup>

In his study on masculinity Bourdieu therefore focuses on women, arguing that if the thoughts

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<sup>101</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *La Domination masculine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), p. 12.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 22–23.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 24, 40.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 106, 112.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

and perceptions of the dominated conform to the structure of the relationship of domination which is imposed on them, they recognize and submit to that structure.<sup>109</sup> The dominated apply categories constructed from the viewpoint of the dominant and thereby make them appear natural; this can lead to self-depreciation.<sup>110</sup> To support his point, he refers to a study in which a majority of French women say that they want a partner who is older and taller than them.<sup>111</sup> The socialization of women is constructed in a manner that puts limits on them.<sup>112</sup> The dominated participate in domination by accepting the limits that are imposed on them.<sup>113</sup> He later softens this claim by saying that the dominated *can* contribute to their domination.<sup>114</sup>

To Bourdieu the constitution (habitus) is inseparable from the structures (habitudines), which produce and reproduce it.<sup>115</sup> The dominated habitus cannot simply liberate itself through consciousness and sheer willpower.<sup>116</sup> Bourdieu acknowledges that masculine domination has become something that has to be defended or justified in some parts of the world today.<sup>117</sup> However, men continue to exercise control in the public sphere and the quest for power.<sup>118</sup> Bourdieu speaks of a ‘trans-historic continuity’ of masculine domination,<sup>119</sup> a parallel to Connell who finds persistence in the model of hegemonic masculinity over time. Bourdieu’s theory has been criticized as defending masculine domination<sup>120</sup> and for lecturing women as ‘victims’ of domination about their

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 27–28.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp. 60–61.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>120</sup> Marie-Victoire Louis, ‘Bourdieu: Défense et illustration de la domination masculine’, *Les Temps Modernes*, 604 (1999), 325–58.

complicity in their own victimization.’<sup>121</sup>

In her book *Female Masculinity* (1998 – first edition) Judith Halberstam adopts a very different approach to women and masculinity and a deconstructive approach to masculinity in general, discussing transgender men or women with a same-sex desire. She differentiates between maleness (being a man) and masculinity. She agrees with Sedgwick that masculinity is not exclusively owned by men: ‘it is crucial to recognize that masculinity does not belong to men, has not been produced only by men, and does not properly express male heterosexuality’.<sup>122</sup> Halberstam claims that female masculinity exists and that it is not an imitation of maleness.<sup>123</sup> Quite on the contrary, women have made an important contribution to masculinity in their own right, developing different and ‘alternative’ forms of masculinities. However, until today there has been no general acceptance or recognition of masculine women.<sup>124</sup> She presumes that female masculinity has been suppressed because it possibly threatens the institution of motherhood: ‘I suppose people think that if female masculinity is widely approved, then no one will want to take responsibility for the trials and pains of reproduction.’<sup>125</sup> While Halberstam affirms that there is an active exchange between male and female masculinities,<sup>126</sup> she argues that the masculine woman is capable of creating new masculinities: ‘she is much more likely to transform the mechanics of masculinity and produce new constellations of embodiment, power and desire. She is more likely, furthermore, to give than to take.’<sup>127</sup> The merit of Halberstam’s work is her suggestion that a study of masculinity is possible

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<sup>121</sup> Martin Wallace, ‘A Disconcerting Brevity: Pierre Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination*’, *Postmodern Culture*, 13 (2003) <<http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/issue.503/13.3wallace.html>> [accessed 21 June 2015].

<sup>122</sup> Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006 edition), p. 241.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

without men.<sup>128</sup>

In *Männlichkeit als Maskerade* (2003) Claudia Benthien and Inge Stephan argue that not only femininity but also masculinity can be seen as a masquerade. Based on Joan Riviere's theory of femininity as a masquerade, Benthien sees masculinity as staged — a parallel to Butler — and as a mask that functions as a protective mechanism. Reversing Riviere's theory on femininity, Benthien posits that a man who acquires femininity for whatever reason has to fear social devaluation by both men and women: he would be seen as unmanly and be afraid of degradation and ridicule. In order to avoid this he puts on a masculine mask, which is supposed to affirm his masculine identity.<sup>129</sup> Masculinity is here seen as a staging of authenticity.<sup>130</sup> Through masquerade, a gendered identity, however it may be disposed, is suggested as a given.

Finally, with *Angry White Men* (2013) Michael Kimmel argues that the time of 'unquestioned and unchallenged male entitlement is over'.<sup>131</sup> He explores how American white men, who are either not aware of this development or try to oppose it, react to this new reality. According to Kimmel white men, whatever their social background, benefit from a system which is based on gender and racial inequality.<sup>132</sup> While the majority of American males have accommodated themselves to greater gender equality,<sup>133</sup> there are groups of men who still regard themselves as entitled to privilege and feel cheated:<sup>134</sup> not only is their livelihood threatened but also their

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<sup>128</sup> Rachel Adams, 'Masculinity without Men: Review of Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*', pp. 1–16 <<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/english/adams/g6651-001-x01/HalberstamReview.pdf>> [accessed 18 January 2014] p. 3.

<sup>129</sup> Claudia Benthien, 'Das Maskerade-Konzept in der psychoanalytischen und kulturwissenschaftlichen Theoriebildung', in *Männlichkeit als Maskerade. Kulturelle Inszenierungen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Claudia Benthien and Inge Stephan (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), pp. 36–59 (pp. 55–56).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>131</sup> Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men* (New York: Nation Books, 2013), pp. xi, xii.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

manhood.<sup>135</sup> Even though they still hold most of the power they see themselves as victims<sup>136</sup> of reverse discrimination in the political, economic and social fields.<sup>137</sup> Kimmel argues, like Savran, that they become ‘angry white men’ whose feelings can be characterized as ‘aggrieved entitlement’.<sup>138</sup> This anger can lead to violence, which is connected with the desire to be in control again:

If masculinity is based on impermeable defences and the feeling of being in control, then violence may be restorative, returning the situation to the moment before that sense of vulnerability and dependency was felt and one’s sense of masculinity was compromised.<sup>139</sup>

Angry white men believe that feminists have gone ‘too far’<sup>140</sup> and are searching for spaces where they can again feel like real men.<sup>141</sup> Kimmel goes as far as to suggest that aggrieved entitlement can become a way of life for some men.<sup>142</sup>

Theory on masculinity continues to evolve. For example, Keith Pringle et al. called for engagement with the global dimensions of men’s dominance and a comparative approach to promote gender equality in a globalized world.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>143</sup> Keith Pringle et al., ‘Introduction: Transforming Men’s Practices Around the World’, in *Men and Masculinities Around the World*, ed. by Ruspini et al., pp. 1–13 (pp. 3, 10, 11).



## 1.2 Methodology

Masculinity as a cultural and theoretical phenomenon is complicated and complex.<sup>144</sup> No single theoretical approach can encapsulate the phenomenon comprehensively. A combination of the theories outlined above will therefore be used for the analysis of masculinities in this study. The way in which they are combined may vary according to author and text, as some theories may work well with one text but less so with another. Of course, the discovery that a theory cannot be applied to a text is in itself significant for the analysis of the representation of masculinity in that literary work.

The basis of this analysis of masculinities is that gender is a social construct. This study will make use of the terms ‘fragile male identity’ (in the sense of a lack of self-confidence, stable identity and identification as a man), ‘weak masculinity’ (in the sense of a lack of power and performance as a man) and ‘positive alternative male gender identity’ (in the sense of a constructive, stable male gender identity and confidence and identification as a man; a masculinity based on respect, tenderness, empathy and equality with women as well as care for children — a positive alternative to hegemonic masculinity). ‘Anti-hegemonic subversion’ will be used as an overall term for constructions of masculinities which undermine the concept of hegemonic masculinity in one way or another; this subversion does not necessarily imply the rejection of the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

Masculinity can be analysed in literature on different levels: are genre and gender related? Is there a masculine affinity towards certain topics and themes? Is there a gendered construction and

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<sup>144</sup> Reeser, p. 4.

characterization of literary figures? What position do they adopt in the cast of characters due to their gendered disposition? How do male and female characters relate with regard to social power and domination? Are the perspectives of narration and points of view male-oriented?<sup>145</sup> This study will ask these questions as appropriate, by combining the methodology of close reading with theoretical concepts on masculinity.

The methodology of close reading in the simplest sense can be defined as the ‘detailed and careful analysis of a written work’<sup>146</sup> with the aim of understanding its meaning. It refers to the intrinsic study of literature. Close reading is a complex process:

For close reading means not only reading and understanding the meaning of the individual printed words; it also involves being sensitive to all the nuances and connotations of language as it is used by skilled writers. This can mean anything from a work’s particular vocabulary, sentence construction, and imagery, to the themes that are being dealt with, the manner in which the story is being told, and the view of the world it offers. In other words, close reading involves almost everything from the smallest linguistic items to the much larger issues of literary understanding and judgement.<sup>147</sup>

Andrew DuBois points out that ‘there is no *single* influential manifesto or statement of purpose’ for close reading.<sup>148</sup> The origin of close reading is usually attributed to the works of I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) and of his student William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930). The school of New Criticism developed thereafter, represented, for example, by T. S. Eliot and John Crowe Ransom. While the aim of Richards was ‘to find the most rigorous and precise way he can to put works of literature into a productive relation with their contexts of reception’, New Criticism cuts off the works from their

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<sup>145</sup> Krammer, ‘Fiktionen des Männlichen’, p.30.

<sup>146</sup> <[http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/close per cent 20reading](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/close%20reading)> [accessed 30 November 2015].

<sup>147</sup> Roy Johnson, *Studying Fiction. A guide and study programme* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 6.

<sup>148</sup> Andrew DuBois, ‘Introduction’, in *Close Reading: The Reader*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Andrew DuBois (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 1 – 40 (p. 2) – author’s emphasis.

contexts.<sup>149</sup> The New Critics ‘determined that the focus of criticism should be on the words written in the text itself, rather than on history, the author’s biography, or philology’.<sup>150</sup> The approach of studying a document without context does not tell us what we should study in a literary work.<sup>151</sup> The New Critics concentrated on the ambiguity of poetic language, the tension created through a competition of meanings, irony as ‘a quality of tension between a statement and its context’, paradoxes as a tension of logic, tone and context in the sense of ‘organic context’, meaning the inner coherence of a literary text.<sup>152</sup> In recent years the ‘New Formalism’ movement developed, which aims to ‘bring up to date the kind of attentive close reading promoted by the new critics, usually by focussing on the rhetorical and aesthetic features of a text, mitigating cultural contexts’.<sup>153</sup> Classic close reading rejects theory and solely relies on the reader response. Paul de Man speaks of ‘hostility directed at theory in the name of ethical and aesthetical values’.<sup>154</sup> However, current scholarship increasingly attempts to combine both approaches. Annette Federico calls ‘Activist Formalists’ scholars who ‘want to continue to see literature as a product of history and culture, while at the same time treating the poem or the novel as a somewhat autonomous object, worthy of aesthetic attention’.<sup>155</sup> This thesis combines gender theory with close reading because it regards both approaches as complementary and beneficial for the study of masculinity in literary texts, combining external knowledge and criticism with textual insights.

Literature has the ability to reflect images of gender and gender relations with all their

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<sup>149</sup> Joseph North, ‘What’s “New Critical” about “Close Reading”? I.A. Richards and His New Critical Reception’, *New Literary History*, 44/1 (2013), 141–157 (p. 146).

<sup>150</sup> Annette Federico, *Engagements with Close Reading* (London: Routledge, 2016). Kindle Cloud Reader.

<sup>151</sup> DuBois, p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., pp. 6 – 8.

<sup>153</sup> Federico. Kindle Cloud Reader.

<sup>154</sup> Paul de Man, ‘The Resistance to Theory’, in Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 3 – 20 (p. 4).

<sup>155</sup> Federico. Kindle Cloud Reader.

ambivalence and ambiguity in a highly nuanced manner<sup>156</sup> and it is only through close reading that these nuances and contradictions can be captured. Ambiguity complicates and enriches meaning;<sup>157</sup> the ambiguity of language can enhance our understanding of masculinities. Masculinity is also constructed through the genre and narrative structure of texts.<sup>158</sup> Therefore an analysis of masculinity in literary texts also requires formal analysis. Gender theory implies culturally and historically variable contexts of production and reception. It allows for contextualisation. The use of gender theory and sociological categories permits a critical reading of gender representations in literature and the revelation of the social, economic and cultural strategies behind it. However, it should not be limited to this. As Tony Tholen argues:

Literatur bildet nicht soziologische Kategorien einfach ab, sondern stellt sie ästhetisch dar. Darstellung heißt, dass der Text sie ästhetisch (re)inszeniert, dass sie in dieser Inszenierung ihren Status einer sozialwissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis über die gesellschaftliche Geschlechterpraxis verlieren und damit zur beweglichen Position innerhalb einer fiktionalen Geschlechtertextur werden.<sup>159</sup>

In this study close reading will be used to explore the interaction of form and content. It will look at plot development, narrator and perspective, narrative structure, the specific use of words and language, figures of speech such as irony, literary devices and genre. It will examine specific passages and relate them to the text as a whole. Gender theory will be used to focalize. For example, the narrative mode of the texts will be investigated, analysing whether a certain genre or narrative practice is associated with masculinity or has an impact on the representation of masculinity therein. The established mode of construction will be set in relation to discourses on as

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<sup>156</sup> Tony Tholen, 'Männlichkeiten in der Literatur. Überlegungen zu einer männlichkeitssensiblen Literaturwissenschaft', in Tony Tholen, *Männlichkeiten in der Literatur. Konzepte und Praktiken zwischen Wandel und Beharrung* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), pp. 11–26 (p. 13).

<sup>157</sup> Federico. Kindle Cloud Reader.

<sup>158</sup> Tholen, 'Männlichkeiten in der Literatur', p. 21.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

well as cultural and historic conditions of gender. It will show how the text reflects critical theory on gender, but also point to contradictions and indicate where theory loses its grip.

Moreover, this discussion will adopt a combination of an intrinsic and extrinsic approach to literature beyond gender theory. It will as appropriate call on other theory, sociological research and literary and non-literary texts of the authors discussed with the aim of contextualizing their works. It will further draw on existing interviews with the authors in newspapers and other media and at times on their biographical background. The aim here is not to let the author determine his literary work: on the contrary, the literary work is seen as autonomous. However, research as well as background on the author are used to back up text-based findings.

In this study the primary texts are first read in their own right, examining deductively how masculinities are constructed and presented by the authors. They are then read for a second time inductively, using the selected critical theory. Literary texts simultaneously create, form, consolidate and reflect social practices and discourse on gender. Understanding literature as a space representing current attitudes on gender and in which to imagine alternatives, this study will also seek to establish whether the authors are consciously aiming to produce alternative anti-hegemonic masculinities.

### 1.3 Research context

Literary studies in general have just begun to engage in a critical analysis of masculinity.<sup>160</sup> While its visibility in the field of *Germanistik* is not very high,<sup>161</sup> German literary research into masculinity

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<sup>160</sup> Horlacher, 'Überlegungen zur theoretischen Konzeption männlicher Identität', p. 24.

<sup>161</sup> Tony Tholen, 'Deutschsprachige Literatur', in *Männlichkeit*, ed. by Horlacher, Jansen and Schwanebeck,

has gradually developed, thanks to the increased use of sociological theory.<sup>162</sup> The following will give an overview of important recent trends in and coverage of this research in German-language and, more specifically, Austrian literature.

On the whole, research into German-language literature still offers relatively few methodological approaches for the analysis of masculinities.<sup>163</sup> Literary texts have been examined understanding masculinity as historically variable,<sup>164</sup> using the concept of masculinity in crisis which has become a ‘standard trope’ in work on masculinities in German and Austrian literature,<sup>165</sup> applying critical gender theory drawing mostly on the concepts of hegemonic masculinity,<sup>166</sup> gender performance<sup>167</sup> and masquerade,<sup>168</sup> or through a close analysis of narrative structure.<sup>169</sup> Some approaches combine gender theory with the examination of narrative construction of gender identities,<sup>170</sup> while others juxtapose modern theoretical concepts of men’s studies with the discourses on masculinity of the period of the texts studied.<sup>171</sup> This thesis builds on these approaches, combining a wider set of different critical theories with a close reading of the text,

pp. 270–87 (p. 271).

<sup>162</sup> Martin Blawid, *Von Kraftmenschen und Schwächlingen: Literarische Männlichkeitsentwürfe bei Lessing, Goethe, Schiller und Mozart* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), p. 1.

<sup>163</sup> Krammer, ‘Fiktionen des Männlichen’, p. 30.

<sup>164</sup> Walter Erhart, ‘Männlichkeiten, Mythos, Gemeinschaft – Nachruf auf den Western-Helden’, in *Wann ist der Mann ein Mann? Zur Geschichte der Männlichkeit*, ed. by Walter Erhart and Britta Hermann (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), pp. 320–49 (p. 347).

<sup>165</sup> Peter Davies, ‘Introduction: “Crisis” or “Hegemony”? Approaches to Masculinity’, in *Masculinity and German Culture: Edinburgh German Yearbook*, 2, ed. by Sarah Colvin and Peter Davies (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), pp. 1–19 (p. 2).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. See also Stefan Krammer, ‘Vorwort’, in *MannsBilder*, ed. by Stefan Krammer, pp. 7–11 (p. 8).

<sup>167</sup> Krammer, ‘Vorwort’, p. 8.

<sup>168</sup> *Männlichkeit als Maskerade*, ed. by Benthien and Stephan.

<sup>169</sup> Walter Erhart, *Familienmänner. Über den literarischen Ursprung moderner Männlichkeit* (Munich: Fink, 2001) and Walter Erhart, ‘Das zweite Geschlecht: “Männlichkeit”, interdisziplinär. Ein Forschungsbericht’, *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 30 (2006), 156–232.

<sup>170</sup> Vera Nünning in Uta Fenske, ‘Männlichkeiten im Fokus der Geschlechterforschung. Ein Überblick’, in *Ambivalente Männlichkeit(en). Maskulinitätsdiskurse aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive*, ed. by Uta Fenske and Gregor Schuhen (Berlin: Opladen, 2012), pp. 11–26 (p. 21).

<sup>171</sup> See for example Blawid.

thereby trying to enrich a comprehensive approach to the study of masculinity. It will, for example, draw on Bourdieu, whose work has found relatively little reception in the context of the study of German-language literature.<sup>172</sup> Research has mostly focused on men when analysing masculinity; this study will also look into the concept of female masculinity.

Several trends can be identified in German-language literature. Generally, masculinity emerges as a culturally multifaceted phenomenon.<sup>173</sup> Moreover, masculinity is unmasked as a fictitious construct<sup>174</sup> which has to be constantly produced and reproduced.<sup>175</sup> For some time research has increasingly focused on forms of marginalized masculinity and images of a new masculinity.<sup>176</sup> The literary representation of male minority groups, such as young German Turks,<sup>177</sup> and portrayals of Jewish masculinity<sup>178</sup> have been studied, for example. Research on the construction of masculinity in twentieth-century Austrian literature notes an increased search for possibilities of identification and a wide spectrum of new patterns of masculinity in literary texts. However, no positive response to this quest is presented. The model of hegemonic masculinity is eroding, but there is no real disengagement.<sup>179</sup> Another study finds plenty of so-called ‘new fathers’ in contemporary German-language literature:<sup>180</sup> ‘Männer [...] die die traditionelle Auffassung von Vaterschaft, die um die Allein-Ernährerrolle und die autoritäre

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<sup>172</sup> Tholen, ‘Deutschsprachige Literatur’, p. 270.

<sup>173</sup> Erhart, ‘Männlichkeiten, Mythos, Gemeinschaft’.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. and Hindinger and Langner, p. 8.

<sup>176</sup> Tony Tholen, ‘Männerbilder im Wandel? Beobachtungen zur Literatur des beginnenden 21. Jahrhunderts’, in Tholen, *Männlichkeiten in der Literatur*, pp. 51–78 (p. 55).

<sup>177</sup> Frauke Matthes, ‘Of *Kanaken* and Gottes Krieger: Religion and Sexuality among Feridun Zaimoğlu’s Young Muslim Men’, in *Masculinity and German Culture*, ed. by Colvin and Davies, pp. 250–61.

<sup>178</sup> Frauke Matthes, ‘“Echter Südländer — Reb Motke — Deutschmann”? Debating Jewish Masculinity in Maxim Biller’s *Die Tochter*’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 48/3 (2012), 323–35.

<sup>179</sup> Stefan Krammer, ‘Polymorphe Herrlichkeit am Beispiel österreichischer Literatur der 1980er und 1990er Jahre’, in *Ich bin ein Mann!*, ed. by Hindinger and Lagner, pp. 256–81.

<sup>180</sup> Tholen, ‘Männerbilder im Wandel?’, p. 75.

Position innerhalb der Familie zentriert ist, zunehmend in Frage stellen und sich öffnen für veränderte Formen der familiären Arbeitsteilung zwischen den Geschlechtern.’<sup>181</sup>

The categories of marginalization, family and fatherhood are all linked to another trend in research in this field: the focus on family stories. Research into twenty-first-century German-language literature finds ample evidence of marginalized masculinities, especially in family stories or texts reflecting the new social realities.<sup>182</sup> Others argue that masculinity as a gender-specific category holds a narrative structure, especially in modernity, in which the history of masculinity can be described in the form of family stories.<sup>183</sup> One study that discusses new family stories which appeared before the year 2000 concludes that they often show weak male characters, while the female characters establish themselves as strong heroes.<sup>184</sup> With regard to *Väterliteratur*, there is a trend that generational discourse is accompanied by discourse on gender in German-language literature.<sup>185</sup>

Looking at the nexus of masculinity and narration, it has been argued that masculinity is presented as a narrative structure. Men use narrative modes and techniques to orient themselves towards historically and socially prescribed masculinities.<sup>186</sup> Gender here becomes the product of a certain repertoire of narrative elements.<sup>187</sup> Men embody masculinity ‘indem sie eine Geschichte darstellen, indem sie in eine Geschichte gezwungen werden, indem sie performativ eine Geschichte vollziehen’.<sup>188</sup> One may speak of ‘narrative Performanz’<sup>189</sup> in this context. Narration has been

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>183</sup> Erhart, *Familienmänner*, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 406.

<sup>185</sup> Anne Fuchs, *Phantoms of War in Contemporary German Literature, Films and Discourses – The Politics of Memory* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

<sup>186</sup> Erhart, ‘Das zweite Geschlecht’, p. 207.

<sup>187</sup> Nünning in Fenske, ‘Männlichkeiten im Fokus der Geschlechterforschung’, pp. 11–26 (p. 21).

<sup>188</sup> Erhart, ‘Das zweite Geschlecht’, p. 206.



understood as a ‘transmediale Kulturtechnik’ which has a central role for gender relations, as it both produces and stabilizes them.<sup>190</sup> At the same time literature has the potential to deconstruct gender: ‘Gerade weil Literatur Sprache neu verwendet und an ihre Grenzen treibt, weist sie auch dem sich durch Sprache konstituierenden Individuum neue Möglichkeiten auf, sich — und somit auch seine sexuelle Identität — neu zu entwerfen.’<sup>191</sup>

While researchers find a diversification of images of masculinity in contemporary German-language literature, globally the concept of hegemonic masculinity has not disappeared. A double cultural and socio-economic conflict has been identified among men: they are still defined through traditional codes, but at the same time they want to experience their emotions and a sense of family.<sup>192</sup> It has been further argued that violence is presented as the reaction of men towards a hegemonic masculinity, which is perceived as restrictive:

Trotz der durch Gewalt (wieder) erzwungenen Vormachtstellung erweist sich die hegemoniale Männlichkeit in den Texten als äußerst fragil. Denn Gewalt wird zum Zeichen der Ohnmacht, der Unsicherheit und der Selbstdestruktion umfunktioniert. [...] Die literarischen Texte zeigen zwar Wege in eine neue Männlichkeit auf, positive Lebensentwürfe liefern sie aber im Grunde nicht. Der Lösungsprozess von patriarchalen Geschlechterordnungen wird als so schwierig beschrieben, dass die Figuren nur als Beschädigte draus hervorgehen können. Der katastrophale Ausgang ist dann nicht mehr aufzuhalten: Die Figuren erweisen sich allesamt als Opfer ihrer Männlichkeit und opfern dabei ihre Männlichkeit.<sup>193</sup>

Austrian literature in particular has portrayed and criticized patriarchal and violent men from a male-filial or feminist point of view.<sup>194</sup> Geiger’s works fall into this category.

While research has shown increased interest in ‘new men’, it still identifies a trend towards a

<sup>189</sup> Horlacher, ‘Überlegungen zur theoretischen Konzeption männlicher Identität’, p. 57.

<sup>190</sup> Nünning in Fenske, ‘Männlichkeiten im Fokus der Geschlechterforschung’, p. 21.

<sup>191</sup> Horlacher, ‘Überlegungen zur theoretischen Konzeption männlicher Identität’, p. 61.

<sup>192</sup> Tholen, ‘Männerbilder im Wandel?’, p. 75.

<sup>193</sup> Krammer, ‘Polymorphe Herrlichkeit am Beispiel österreichischer Literatur der 1980er und 1990er Jahre’, p. 279.

<sup>194</sup> Tholen, ‘Deutschsprachige Literatur’, p. 282.

traditional ‘hard’ masculinity in the literature of the end of the twentieth century<sup>195</sup> and the beginning of the twenty-first, where so-called ‘Front-Männlichkeiten’, the ‘aggressiv-narzisstische, sexuell-libertäre Typus hegemonialer Männlichkeit’, persists.<sup>196</sup> The present thesis will further explore the literary constructions of masculinities between the persistence of hegemonic masculinity and currents of anti-hegemonic subversion. It will explore the strategies the authors use to construct and deconstruct masculinities. The phenomenon of violence as a male reaction to change in gender relations will be addressed in a systematic manner.

Material has been published on the construction of masculinity in the works of Geiger and to a lesser extent Rabinovici. Research into Geiger’s *Es geht uns gut* has focused on the relationship between narrative structure and masculinity<sup>197</sup> and the current trend of family stories, which question the continuity of male generations, investigating the interplay between genre and gender.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, the connections between gender and remembering<sup>199</sup> and gender and postmemory<sup>200</sup> in the novel have been explored. Research into Geiger’s *Alles über Sally* has analysed the representation of ageing and specifically in relation to gender<sup>201</sup> and examined the novel in the light of a new middle class whose perceptions of family, marriage and the individual were impacted by female empowerment.<sup>202</sup> The construction of masculinity in Geiger’s *Es geht uns gut* and

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<sup>195</sup> Britta Hermann, ‘Als Mann Schreiben. Geschlecht und Stil in Literarischen Debatten um 1800, 1900 und 2000’, in *Männlichkeiten denken*, ed. by Läubli and Sahli, pp. 261–84 (p. 282).

<sup>196</sup> Tholen, ‘Männerbilder im Wandel?’, p. 57.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>198</sup> Anne Fleig, ‘(K)ein Mann im Haus? Erinnerung, Identität und Männlichkeit: Zur Renaissance des Familienromans bei John Duffel und Arno Geiger’, *Feministische Studien*, 28/2 (2010), 270–83 (p. 273).

<sup>199</sup> Michelle Mattson, ‘The Obligations of Memory? Gender and Historical Responsibility in Tanja Dückers’s *Himmelskörper* and Arno Geiger’s *Es geht uns gut*’, *The German Quarterly*, 86 (2013), 198–219 (p. 211).

<sup>200</sup> Anna O’Driscoll, ‘Arno Geiger’s *Es geht uns gut*: A *Posthistoire* Narrative?’, in Anna O’Driscoll, *Constructions of Melancholy in Contemporary German and Austrian Literature* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 143–98.

<sup>201</sup> Meike Dackweiler, ‘Das Thema “Altern” in Arno Geigers Roman *Alles über Sally*’, in *Studia Theodisca*, 20 (2013), 101–122.

<sup>202</sup> Joanna Lawnikowska-Koper, ‘Auf den Spuren der “Neuen Bürgerlichkeit” in Arno Geigers Roman “Alles

Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.* has been examined in relation to victimhood<sup>203</sup> and the relationship between gender and memory,<sup>204</sup> and the construction of male Jewishness and female Turkishness in the latter has been studied.<sup>205</sup>

This thesis aims to widen and at the same time close gaps in the research into masculinity in the works of the three authors chosen. It will tie in with research into masculinity, memory, postmemory and family stories and deepen insight into the construction of Jewish masculinities and of ageing in relation to masculinity. Moving beyond these areas, it will also look at other marginalized masculinities, such as Turkish masculinity and address the contribution of women to the production of masculinity. It will also explore the phenomenon of childlike qualities in the male characters, which is related to irresponsible behaviour. The thesis will break new ground in research on masculinity in Kehlmann's work in general, which in this respect has so far been sidelined by scholars.

This study is also conscious that theoretical approaches to gender have their limits and aims to adjust and complement them, thereby also making a contribution to the development of studies on masculinities. First, it assumes that not every man fits into Connell's categories and that these cannot therefore be interpreted as being entirely sound. Initially, Connell's category of men who sympathize with the feminist movement seems to be especially promising, as they supposedly attempt to reform their masculinity; however their understanding of feminism is limited, as Connell

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über Sally", *Colloquia Germanica Stetinensia*, 23 (2014), 53–71.

<sup>203</sup> Michael Gratzke, 'Mullemänner: Dealing with Austria's Past and Weak Masculinity in Arno Geiger's "Es geht uns gut" and Doron Rabinovici's "Suche nach M"', *Austrian Studies*, 19 (2011), 98–112.

<sup>204</sup> Mirjam Bitter, *Gedächtnis und Geschlecht. Darstellungen in der neueren jüdischen Literatur in Deutschland, Österreich und Italien* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016).

<sup>205</sup> Rachel Ramsay, 'Eine verwandtschaftliche Verbindung (A Connection of Kinship)? Jewish-Turkish alliances in Contemporary Jewish Writing in German', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* (2012), <<http://leobaeck.oxfordjournals.org>> [accessed 19 September 2015].

herself noted.<sup>206</sup> In fact there is little evidence that these men engage actively in supporting female empowerment and construct a positive alternative male gender identity; rather they seem to retract and become passive because they are helpless. The marker of passivity, which can possibly even be read as a passive resistance to female empowerment, will be further developed throughout the thesis — the categories of ‘helpless masculinity’ and ‘passive strategic masculinity’ are useful in this respect. This resonates with the theory of masculinity in crisis and ties in with theory on how men react to a society which is increasingly based on policies of equality.

Second, drawing on Kimmel, Savran and Nye, this study presumes that some men accommodate themselves to greater gender equality while others resist it, a resistance that can be active (‘angry white men’) or passive (‘masochism as a self-preservation strategy’). The concept of ‘angry white men’ is read here as an extreme reaction, limited to a minority of men. Rather the underlying mechanism of violence as a restorative force and as a means of being in control again will be employed here. Such violence can turn towards the self as well as towards others. When looking at discourses on masculinity in crisis, this discussion will be self-reflective of the fact that such discourse can serve as a form of ‘re-establishing the privileged position of a particular view on masculinity’.<sup>207</sup> Feminism can be an opportunity for masculinity, not only a threat.<sup>208</sup>

Third, Connell’s category of ‘marginalized masculinities’ is especially important for this study: the texts of Rabinovici include Turkish and Jewish characters. Jewish masculinity can be seen as both marginalized and subordinated masculinity, with the negative connotation given in the theoretical framework of Connell: Jewish men have been regarded as castrated and effeminate.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 129.

<sup>207</sup> Davies, p. 4.

<sup>208</sup> See also Davies.

<sup>209</sup> Reeser, p. 32.

However, in this study Jewish masculinity will also be seen as anti-hegemonic in the positive sense, as a ‘gentle masculinity’ which is not based on the subordination of women; it could therefore serve as the basis for a positive alternative male gender identity. Of course, not all Jewish masculinity is gentle.

Fourth, this study also acknowledges that the concept of hegemonic masculinity neglects the personal involvement of men in the construction of their masculinity. There is in fact variation in masculinity, which has its source in individual experience.<sup>210</sup> The past and communication or non-communication of it, this study will argue, are essential to this individual experience.

Fifth, looking at the power of the ideal hegemonic masculinity, the question arises: what makes it such an attractive model for men, even though not many men can live up to it? The answer cannot only be the associated economic advantages. Men may be complicit in sustaining the model of hegemonic masculinity because it allows for ‘gratification through fantasy’.<sup>211</sup> Masculinity seems to be connected to a desire to be admired by others. It will be assumed that there is a non-negotiable imaginary aspect to hegemonic masculinity.

Sixth, this study presumes further that the idea that masculine domination is a powerful machine producing symbols and structures of thought which have an effect on women, making them unconsciously complicit in sustaining male domination, also applies to men: they as much as women are hostages to the structures of thought of the domination and as such become subconsciously complicit as well.

Seventh, it is assumed in the following that the argument that transgender men or women with

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<sup>210</sup> Tim Carrigan, Bob Connel and John Lee, ‘Toward a new sociology of masculinity’, in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, ed. by Adams and Savran, pp. 99–118 (p. 106).

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., pp. 112–13.

a same-sex desire can produce masculinity is also valid for women attracted to the opposite sex. Finally this research project hypothesizes that theories of masculinities from the past, in this case the nineteenth century, can enrich our understanding of masculinities today.

## 1.5 Overview and corpus

As previously stated, this thesis will discuss the literary texts of the contemporary German-language authors Daniel Kehlmann, Doron Rabinovici and Arno Geiger. Their approaches to the construction of masculinity will be compared. The following overview will illustrate the flow of the argument and introduce the corpus.

The first chapter discusses Daniel Kehlmann's two novels *Die Vermessung der Welt* (2005) and *Ruhm* (2009). The interaction of irony, satire and gender will be examined, as well as the relation of acting, play-acting, pretending, performing and online/offline identities with masculinity. Relevant theory on masculinity of the nineteenth century will be introduced.

Daniel Kehlmann states in *Die Vermessung der Welt* that hegemonic masculinity is only possible in imaginary spaces. This is shown at three levels: first, Kehlmann uses the past, here the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a fictitious space in which to explore masculinity. Second, Kehlmann deploys irony to highlight that gender is a social construct, interlinking irony and narration. Third, men try to comply with standards of masculinity, including hegemonic masculinity, but fail to do so entirely. As a coping strategy they commit acts of violence against themselves and others, and escape into fictitious worlds: the world of numbers, imagined experiences in South America and dreams of North America. As such, Kehlmann reveals that hegemonic masculinity is imaginary and a constraining force for the self-realization of the male individual.

*Ruhm* offers a complex interplay between reality, fantasy and media. The idea of hegemonic masculinity as being fictitious expressed in *Die Vermessung der Welt* is further developed in *Ruhm*. The male characters try to enact hegemonic masculinity through the use of new and old media; as such they create virtual images of hegemonic masculinity and escape into virtual worlds. Inauthenticity is created through the interlinking of irony and narration, questioning the authenticity of gender. Nevertheless in both novels hegemonic masculinity is shown as a real social force against which men measure their masculinity and which as such impacts on their lives and those of others. Taken together the novels suggest that men today are essentially the same as they were in the nineteenth century, pointing to a transhistorical consistency in masculinity.

The second chapter of this thesis analyses the novel *Suche nach M.* (1997) by Doron Rabinovici in detail and compares it with his novels *Ohnehin* (2004) and *Andernorts* (2010). The discussion centres on the question as to whether the construction of Jewish masculinity, which has traditionally been marked as anti-hegemonic, allows for the development of a positive alternative masculinity. The influence of the past on the construction of male (Jewish) identity will also be examined. Theory on Jewish masculinity will be introduced as well as postmemory theory embedded in the current discussion of family stories.

Rabinovici develops a variation of the genre of *Elternliteratur* in opposition to family stories. In Rabinovici's texts it is the relationship of the parents with their sons that is central to the process of coming to terms with the past. The parents' troublesome *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has a tremendous impact on this relationship, which in turn affects the development of their masculinity. While the sons show elements of anti-hegemonic subversion, they fail to develop a positive alternative male gender identity. One of the striking characteristics of the third generation (counting from the Shoah) in Rabinovici's works is that they remain passive to avoid any engagement with the self, as well as childlike and irresponsible. They develop a weak masculinity and fragile male

identity. The male characters in Rabinovici's works have in common that they switch identity frequently to escape reality, a process that coincides with violence against the self. They not only change their identity through the use of fantasy spaces, they also do so in real life, taking the strategy of evasion shown in Kehlmann's works even further. Rabinovici moreover presents masculinity as an instrument to protect and to achieve certain goals: the second generation of Jewish men put on a mask of hegemonic masculinity to protect themselves from the past and deploy it as a reference point to protect their sons, while female characters use masculinity to succeed in their endeavours. A few of the male characters embody the concept of a 'gentle masculinity', which is shown to have potential as a model for a positive alternative masculinity.

The third chapter draws primarily on Arno Geiger's novels *Es geht uns gut* (2005) and *Alles über Sally* (2010) and also refers to the novels *Der alte König in seinem Exil* (2011) and *Selbstporträt mit Flusspferd* (2015). In this study the discussion of Geiger's works focuses on how the empowerment of women affects the male characters and whether men are free to choose their gender role. It also draws on postmemory theory through an examination of the intersection of past, memory and gender.

*Es geht uns gut* portrays the decline in men's power from the first generation to the third. The male characters can be assigned to three categories: disintegrating hegemonic masculinity, helpless complicit men and strategic passive masculinity. The first group refers to the first generation of men: they behave according to hegemonic standards of masculinity but lose their power in the public and private spheres. The second generation of men are complicit in hegemonic masculinity out of helplessness when faced with a changing gender world. Instead of assuming their responsibilities, they put the double burden of the household and professional career on their women. The strategic passive masculinity developed by the third generation of men is strategic in that it allows them to remain in a comfort zone; they display childlike features and refuse to take on



any responsibility. A fragile male identity is inherent in this category of men. While they remain passive and non-assertive towards women, they continue to admire hegemonic masculinity. In their fantasy and imagination, expressed through storytelling or make-believe photographs, they become powerful men who have success with women, forming a parallel with the men in Kehlmann's works who escape to imagined worlds and fictitious spaces. The projection of hegemonic masculinity into fantasy spaces can be seen as a passive contestation of the erosion of gender roles following female emancipation: as hegemonic masculinity has become less acceptable it turns into a mere fantasy. The paradigm of strategic passive masculinity can be seen as a means by which these men protect themselves, a neurotic self-preservation strategy which does not force them to take up a position regarding the change in gender roles that has occurred and, on the contrary, displays a passive resistance. At the same time this strategy is linked to masochism, which points to the psychological violence the men inflict upon themselves. All the male characters share the trait of blocking out the past. As in Rabinovici's texts, both the avoidance of dealing with the past and non-communication regarding it have a tremendous impact on the sons' relationships with their fathers, which in turn affects their masculine identity. Again non-communication acts as a shield which men use to protect themselves from memories of the past and avoid any serious engagement with the self.

In *Alles über Sally*, Arno Geiger shows that a positive alternative masculinity is possible and presents a 'caring, gentle and emotionally literate masculinity'. Despite a few commonalities, this is a counter-model to the strategically passive masculinity developed in *Es geht uns gut*. However, these men have to escape into safe spaces such as a diary in order fully to live out their caring masculinity. This suggests that society does not easily accept a remodelling of masculinity. Women are shown to have agency in the construction of masculinity; they validate it and can be complicit in the patriarchal system. Women are also shown to be able to combine traditionally feminine and masculine aspects. As in Rabinovici's works, their approach to masculinity is utilitarian. Both men

and women are shown to be hostages to the thought structures of male domination. The empowerment of women does not necessarily bring about that of men: in *Es geht uns gut* it results in disempowerment and in *Alles über Sally* it only leads to partial empowerment to be who they choose to be.

In the conclusion of this discussion, the general research findings will be drawn together. Common themes and trends in the works analysed will be identified. The implications of the research findings for gender theory and for research on masculinities in literature will be discussed. Finally, this study's original contribution to research on masculinities will be elaborated, as will its limitations.

It will be shown that all male characters, as well as some female characters, are in one way or another complicit in structural gender inequality and authorize hegemonic masculinity. At the same time the male characters fail to meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity outside imaginary and mythic spaces and virtual worlds, including the Internet, mobile communication and stories controlled by vindictive male narrators.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is shown to be a fantasy and fiction. The male characters adopt strategies of evasion; they escape into fantasy worlds and multiple identities in order to avoid a constructive engagement with their masculinity, which leads to violence towards the self. In some cases this violence is transformed into strategic passivity — a neurotic self-preservation strategy and passive contestation of female empowerment. In exceptional cases the male characters are able to develop a positive alternative male gender identity. Even then, however, they have to adopt strategies of evasion: as society does not seem to accept their remodelling of masculinity, they can only fully live it in safe, fictive spaces.



## 2 Daniel Kehlmann: Fictitious hegemonic masculinity

Questions of masculinity are central to Daniel Kehlmann's writing. His protagonists are almost always men — most of whom are over-gifted outsiders with a scientific profession or committed professionals heavily engaged in the quest for fame.

In this chapter, the construction of masculinity will be analysed in the novels *Die Vermessung der Welt* and *Ruhm*. *Die Vermessung der Welt* was chosen because it deals with a time in which masculinity was being redefined and fluid;<sup>1</sup> this allows for experimentation with the presentation of masculinity. *Ruhm* is especially productive for analysis as it explores the switch between identities, impersonation and virtual worlds. Both works are linked through the relationship between fame and masculinity.

The examination of both novels will draw on relevant theory on masculinity as outlined in the Introduction, as well as theory on irony. For *Die Vermessung der Welt* theories on masculinity from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will be introduced, and for *Ruhm* theories on online identities. The following questions arising from the primary texts will guide this chapter: What implications does the representation of masculinity in an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century context have for today? How do irony, satire and gender intersect in the novels? What strategies do the characters adopt to cope with the demands of hegemonic masculinity? How are acting, play-acting, pretending, performing and online/offline identities connected to masculinity? How are the quest for fame and that for masculinity interrelated?

*Die Vermessung der Welt* will be read as a *Gegenwartsroman*, a contemporary novel, which is

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'The New Man: Theories of Masculinity around 1800', *Goethe Yearbook*, 15 (2008), 187–215 (pp. 210–11).

set in the past, thus allowing the application both of theories of masculinity of the time in which it is set and of modern gender theories. This approach can provide insight into how masculinities may have developed over time, as well as how historic theory on masculinity could prove useful in a modern context. Discussing Kehlmann's novel, Kathryn Olesko argues that fiction can enrich our understanding of history.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, fiction set in the past can enrich our understanding of masculinity today.

It will be demonstrated that in *Die Vermessung der Welt* and *Ruhm* the male characters accept hegemonic masculinity as the measure for their masculinity, but fail to meet its standards. Consequently they seek fulfilment in imaginary spaces and virtual worlds. Through the use of fantasy spaces and irony, Kehlmann reveals that hegemonic masculinity is a virtual concept and a social fantasy; it remains a fictional yet powerful concept which heavily impacts on reality.

## 2.1 Imaginary spaces — imaginary masculinities: *Die Vermessung der Welt*

After a short summary of the plot and an introduction to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concepts of masculinity, it will be established that *Die Vermessung der Welt* is a contemporary novel. The representation of masculinity will then be discussed in relation to satire and irony before moving to an analysis of the masculinity of the three main protagonists.

The topic of masculinity in *Die Vermessung der Welt* has been sidelined, if not ignored, in its

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<sup>2</sup> Kathryn Olesko, 'The World We Have Lost. History as Art', *Isis* 98 (2007), 760–68.

critical reception, which focuses mostly on how the author deals with the past.<sup>3</sup> The novel examines two legendary geniuses in their old age, alternately narrating (with little attention to historical fact) the lives of the German mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauß and the German geographer and explorer Alexander Humboldt.<sup>4</sup> Humboldt, the son of a Prussian aristocrat, enjoys an extensive classical education at the side of his brother with whom he has a close, albeit tense, relationship. After the death of his mother Humboldt decides to accompany Aimé Bonpland, a French botanist, on an expedition to South America, where Humboldt's geographical measurements and research into plants and animals make him famous in Europe. Upon his return to Paris he publishes thirty-four volumes on the observations he made during his travels. The Prussian King then orders Humboldt back to Berlin to work for him. Humboldt starts to get interested in magnetism and invites Gauß to a congress in Berlin, an encounter which leads to an extensive exchange of letters between the two. At the end, Humboldt departs on his final journey to Russia, which does not turn out to be very scientifically productive.

Unlike Humboldt, Gauß has a modest background. He wins a scholarship, which allows him to make pioneering discoveries in mathematics and astronomy. Both Humboldt and Gauß become globally renowned in their respective fields of study. While Humboldt remains single, Gauß marries and has three children. After the death of his wife, he marries her best friend — not out of affection, but to ensure that someone takes care of the household. Gauß is then employed as a surveyor, assisted by his son Eugen, whom he holds in very low esteem. Eugen accompanies Gauß on his journey to Berlin, where he is arrested for participating in a secret student meeting, part of the

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Volker Hage in Andreas Freinschlag, 'Wo ist Daniel Kehlmann? Kunstsoziologische Beobachtungen' (2010), 1–24 <[http://www.germanistik.ch/publikation.php?id=Wo\\_ist\\_Daniel\\_Kehlmann](http://www.germanistik.ch/publikation.php?id=Wo_ist_Daniel_Kehlmann)> [accessed 7 November 2015] or Daniel Kehlmann and Sebastian Kleinschmidt, *Requiem für einen Hund. Ein Gespräch*. (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2009), pp. 44, 66.

<sup>4</sup> Subsequently referred to as 'Gauß' and 'Humboldt'.

nationalist-patriotic student movements against the establishment, which is closed following a violent raid by the Prussian police. Thanks to the intervention of Humboldt, Eugen is released and goes into exile in America.

### *Concepts of masculinity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*

In order to analyse the construction of masculinity in *Die Vermessung der Welt*, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the differing concepts of masculinity at the beginning of the nineteenth century. After the French Revolution there was a broad discourse looking for a new image of masculinity.<sup>5</sup> Some writers lamented that a ‘Verweichlichung’ (softening) of men had taken place and that a new kind of masculinity was needed: Friedrich Ehrenberg, for example, warned that ‘becoming soft’ would prevent young men from becoming ‘real men’. While he is in favour of an ‘Abhärtung’ of the male body, he stresses ‘intellectual and moral performance’ as male virtues. He portrays ‘the ideal man [...] mostly in terms of duties and obligations rather than privileges’.<sup>6</sup> Johann Chistian Siede, on the other hand, emphasizes the physical aspect of masculinity, underlining the characteristic of strength, in contrast to the ancient Greek aesthetics of the male body, in order to highlight the difference between men and women.<sup>7</sup> The programme of difference between the genders promoted at the end of the eighteenth century coded femininity and masculinity, defining not only male but also female gender characteristics.<sup>8</sup> Whereas theorists such as Ehrenberg and Siede focused on the public role of men and their State obligations, others such as Ernst Moritz Arndt explored the development of men from childhood to manhood: ‘The idea of an abstract norm

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<sup>5</sup> Hohendahl, pp. 210–11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 190, 191, 193.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 194–95.

<sup>8</sup> Ute Frevert, ‘Soldaten, Staatsbürger. Überlegungen zur historischen Konstruktion von Männlichkeit’, in *Männergeschichte. Geschlechtergeschichte. Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne*, ed. by Thomas Kühne (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1996), pp. 69–87 (p. 70).

is explicitly rejected in favour of a processual understanding of human beings, as an unfolding of potential (Anlagen) that will come together in the mature male.’<sup>9</sup>

Even though these theorists did not develop a coherent, unified theory of masculinity, there are common features. Clearly they emphasize the need for a ‘new and stronger articulation of the male’.<sup>10</sup> In fact the crisis of masculinity and the attempt to redefine it led to a variety of masculinities which can be categorized as follows: the disciplined soldier, promoted as a role model for all Prussian men;<sup>11</sup> the ‘Turner’ (gymnast), who trains his body for a future war;<sup>12</sup> the German-nationalist student, who does not want to be trained but volunteers to fight in a war;<sup>13</sup> and the bourgeois family father.<sup>14</sup> Several of these masculinities clash with each other, whereas others are compatible and overlap; indeed sometimes the different, contradictory elements were consciously merged, as in the construction of the ‘Heldenjüngling’ (young hero), which combined ‘Empfindsamkeit’ (sensitivity) with patriotism and militarism.<sup>15</sup> Within literary discourse, Goethe’s idea of masculinity — connected to Romanticism and Classicism — was highly influential. There was the pre-Romantic notion of the ‘empfindsamer Schwärmer’ (sensitive dreamer), who compensates for the inadequacy of the empirical world with a dream world through the power of

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<sup>9</sup> Hohendahl, p. 211.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 211–12.

<sup>11</sup> Karen Hagemann, ‘Männlicher Muth und deutsche Ehre’: Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), p. 305.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel A. McMillan, “... die höchste und heiligste Pflicht ...” das Männlichkeitsideal der deutschen Turnbewegung 1811–1871’, in *Männergeschichte. Geschlechtergeschichte. Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne.*, ed. by Thomas Kühne (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1996), pp. 88–118 (pp. 88–90).

<sup>13</sup> See Alexandra Kurth, *Männer-Bünde-Rituale. Studentenverbindungen seit 1800*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> See Anne-Charlott Trepp, ‘Männerwelten privat: Vaterschaft im späten 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert’, in *Männergeschichte*, ed. by Thomas Kühne, pp. 31–50.

<sup>15</sup> Karen Hagemann, ‘Of “Manly Valor” and “German Honor”: Nation, War, and Masculinity in the Age of the Prussian Uprising against Napoleon’, *Central European History*, 30/2 (1997), 187–220 (p. 212).



imagination.<sup>16</sup> In his later works Goethe offered the idea of ‘Entsagung’ (renunciation),<sup>17</sup> which heals men of the ‘Schwärmertum’ and reflects the image of ‘learned men’ with regimented lives and corporal discipline, implying abstention from physical love and from the fulfilment of one’s wishes for the sake of a greater good. ‘Entsagung’ is framed as the height of virtue in nineteenth-century discourse and transfigures the self in a quasi-religious way.

Kehlmann reveals in *Die Vermessung der Welt* that men can only conform to their self-imposed standard of masculinity in imaginary spaces and employs three techniques to develop this concept. First, he uses the past — here the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries — as a fictitious space in which to explore masculinity. Second, he employs irony to highlight that gender is an artificial construct: irony and narration are interlinked, producing a general atmosphere of inauthenticity, ambiguity and equivocation. Third, he shows that hegemonic masculinity remains the point of reference for the male characters; however, they are not entirely able to conform to this standard. As a coping strategy they commit acts of violence against themselves and others, and escape into the fictitious world of numbers, imaginary experiences in South America and ideas associated with North America. As such, hegemonic masculinity is shown to be imaginary.

### ***A contemporary reading***

The novel is especially suitable to be read as a contemporary work of fiction. Its treatment of the past has been subject to intensive discussion, several contributions to which remark upon the contemporary nature of the book. Friedhelm Marx, for example, concludes that it is historic and

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<sup>16</sup> Lothar Pikulik, *Frühromantik: Epoche, Werke, Wirkung* (Berlin: C.H. Beck, 2000), p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Joachim Pfeiffer, ‘Promethean Renunciation: On the relationship between artistry, creativity and masochism in Goethe’, in *One Hundred Years of Masochism, Literary Texts, Social and Cultural Contexts*, ed. by Michael C. Finke and Carl Niekerk (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 109–17 (p. 109).

contemporary at the same time.<sup>18</sup> Kehlmann himself claims that his work is a ‘Gegenwartsroman, der in der Vergangenheit spielt’ because, according to him, it corresponds aesthetically and formally to contemporary standards.<sup>19</sup> However, there is more to this. Stefan Neuhaus argues: ‘Sprache und Bewusstseinsstrom der Figuren sind gegenwartsbezogen.’<sup>20</sup> That *Die Vermessung der Welt* can be read as a contemporary novel will be illustrated here by showing that the author’s use of the past tense creates fictitious presentness and by demonstrating that the characters have knowledge of the present.

Kehlmann creates contemporality in his novel by using the ‘epische Präteritum’, which designates:

keine reale, historische Vergangenheit, sondern fiktive Gegenwärtigkeit, eine Präsenz des erzählten Geschehens in unserer Einbildungskraft. In einem fiktionalen Erzähltext verliert das Präteritum seine temporale Qualität [...] ja es ‘vernichtet’ gerdezu explizite Zeitangaben im Text.<sup>21</sup>

In *Die Vermessung der Welt* the narration also acquires the quality of a ‘fictive presentness’. The ‘epische Präteritum’ works in two ways. First, the past tense loses its temporality in the narration sequence of a chapter:

Alexander von Humboldt war in ganz Europa berühmt wegen einer Expedition in die Tropen, die er fünfundzwanzig Jahre zuvor unternommen hatte. [...] Er war der jüngere von zwei Brüdern. [...] Knuth überlegte. Dann zuckte er die Schultern und schlug vor, eine Münze zu werfen.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Friedhelm Marx, “‘Die Vermessung der Welt’ als historischer Roman”, in *Daniel Kehlmanns ‘Die Vermessung der Welt’: Materialien, Dokumente, Interpretationen*, ed. by Gunther Nickel (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2009), pp. 169–85 (p. 180).

<sup>19</sup> Kehlmann and Kleinschmidt, pp. 66–67.

<sup>20</sup> Stefan Neuhaus, “‘Die Fremdheit ist ungeheuer’: Zur Rekonzeptualisierung historischen Erzählens in der Gegenwartsliteratur”, in *Entwicklungen in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur nach 1989*, ed. by Carsten Gansel and Elisabeth Herrmann (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2013), pp. 23–36 (pp. 30–31).

<sup>21</sup> Jochen Vogt, *Aspekte erzählender Prosa: Eine Einführung in Erzähltechnik und Romantheorie* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2014), p. 29 — author’s emphasis.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Kehlmann, *Die Vermessung der Welt* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2005), pp. 19, 20. Subsequently

While a deed in the past is introduced, the action in the novel, which actually precedes this past, is narrated in the present tense.

Second, the past tense loses its historic character in the interiority of the characters: ‘Scheinbar stundenlang hörte er den Schnee knirschen und wußte, daß zwischen ihm und dem Abgrund nur Wasserkristalle waren. Bis zum Ende seines Lebens, mittellos und gefangen in der Einsamkeit Paraguays, konnte er sich die Bilder bis ins kleinste zurückrufen’ (*Vermessung* 174). In this passage, the past curiously becomes the future and is remembered as the past.

Even though the novel is set in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some characters, such as Gauß and his son Eugen, know something of the future: ‘Er hätte seine Seele dafür gegeben, in hundert Jahren zu leben, wenn es Mittel gegen den Schmerz geben würde und Ärzte, die diesen Namen verdienten.’ (*Vermessung* 83–84) Gauß’s reference to the invention of pain-relief medication implies that he has knowledge of the modern-day context; his son Eugen is also conscious of the future (*Vermessung* 14). This supports the view that *Die Vermessung der Welt* is a contemporary novel. However, the future knowledge of the characters is mostly limited to technological progress. Gauß remains ignorant of the social advances of the twentieth century: ‘Wieso trugen Frauen nicht Sachen, die man aufbekam?’ (*Vermessung* 149) The men in the novel are aware of scientific and technological developments, but not of women’s changing role in society. If the novel is read as a commentary on masculinity today, we are encouraged to believe that men ignore change in gender relations and that present-day males are basically the same as they were in the nineteenth century. This contests the view that masculinity changes over time.

Thus the novel reflects both modern theory of masculinity and that of the time in which it is set. The latter point raises the question of whether such theory could be useful in analysing masculinities today. Humboldt's masculinity, for example, incorporates masochistic tendencies: he takes the philosophy of Albrecht von Haller to an extreme. Already well known in his time, von Haller's works had an influence on the literary concept of 'sensibility'; his quest was to discover everything about sensation and motion in the body.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, he conducted experiments on animals, dissecting and torturing them while alive.<sup>24</sup> For Haller 'the most intense pain, the most perfect state of sensibility, results in the loss of consciousness, i.e., insensibility'.<sup>25</sup> Humboldt pushes Haller's experiments even further, from cruelty towards animals to cruelty towards other people and even himself; he seems ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of science and knowledge. To this end he starts to test the limits of his own sensibility by using Galvani's experiment on his own body (*Vermessung* 31–32). This can be seen as an example of Humboldt's adherence to Romantic Science, which was obsessed with forces such as electricity and galvanism.<sup>26</sup> Romantic Science theories also implied that the discovery of nature necessitates self-discovery. Here, Humboldt discovers his own body through pain.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, his behaviour can be interpreted as an illustration of his masochistic tendencies, deriving as he does pleasure from this self-torture: 'Weiter, sagte Humboldt, und mit seltsamem Schrecken wurde ihm klar, daß etwas in ihm Lust empfand.' (*Vermessung* 32) A link could be made to the physiological explanations given

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<sup>23</sup> Ildikó Csengei, 'Sensibility in dissection: affect, aesthetics, and the eighteenth-century body in pain', in *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 9/2 (2003), 155–80 (p. 155).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>25</sup> Albrecht von Haller, 'A Dissertation on the Sensible and Irritable Parts of Animals', quoted in Csengei, p. 171.

<sup>26</sup> The Romantic scientists were engaged in the quest for finding scientific proof for an 'all-pervading life-force'. (Jürgen Barkhoff, 'Romantic science and psychology', in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. by Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 209–25 (p. 210)).

<sup>27</sup> Barkhoff, p. 211.

for masochistic behaviour, in which the pain impulse is believed to cause sexual arousal.<sup>28</sup> Humboldt's masochism is also intertwined with his thirst for scientific discovery (*Vermessung* 33). To Humboldt it is as if inflicting pain is a means of defeating the body, leaving the physical shell: 'Und er war ungeheuerlich, der Schmerz; so stark, daß man nicht begriff, was mit einem vorging. [...] es kam einem vor wie etwas, das mehr der Außenwelt als dem eigenen Körper angehörte.' (*Vermessung* 104)

Humboldt achieves Haller's 'most perfect state of sensibility' when he faints during an experiment on himself (*Vermessung* 163). While a physiological explanation for masochism is given in the text, the novel also offers a psychoanalytical exploration of the motivations behind Humboldt's behaviour, which perceives childhood experiences as the source of masochistic tendencies.<sup>29</sup> Humboldt had been subjected to extreme cruelty, which could even be labelled as sadism, at the hands of his brother during his childhood.<sup>30</sup> His life changes irrevocably when he nearly dies in a frozen lake because of his brother: 'Von nun an wurden seine Noten besser. Er arbeitete konzentriert und nahm die Gewohnheit an, beim Nachdenken die Fäuste zu ballen, als müsse er einen Feind besiegen.' (*Vermessung* 25) The image of clenched fists when thinking denotes intellectual work as a real struggle; it mirrors the effort the genius has to exert in his quest for the ideal of the 'Sturm und Drang'.<sup>31</sup> Following this pivotal event, Humboldt commits to turning himself into a tough man and a brilliant scientist. He spends an entire night in a room reputed to be haunted in order to prove himself resilient and works extremely hard to out-perform his brother

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Gratzke, *Liebeschmerz und Textlust* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), pp. 15–16.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.14.

<sup>30</sup> See also Hubert Winkels, who sees the source of Humboldt's masochism in the fact that he had to endure the sadism of his brother. (Hubert Winkels, 'Als die Geister müde wurden Daniel Kehlmanns "Vermessung der Welt"', *Die Zeit*, 13 October 2005 <<http://www.zeit.de/2005/42/L-Kehlmann> [accessed September 2010]).

<sup>31</sup> Ulrich Fröschle, "Wurst und Sterne". Das Altern der Hochbegabten in "Die Vermessung der Welt", in *Daniel Kehlmanns "Die Vermessung der Welt"*, ed. by Nickel, pp. 186–97 (p. 190).

academically. Humboldt also makes out that he is manlier than he is: when his brother locks him in a cupboard, for example, Humboldt pretends that it was he who had locked himself in (*Vermessung* 21). Here, Humboldt's development of masochism can be linked to the desire to be in control: a situation of weakness is turned in the imagination into self-torture to prove toughness. While Kimmel argues that this restorative violence is directed towards others,<sup>32</sup> Kehlmann suggests that it can also be turned towards the self. As Michael Gratzke notes, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors 'Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, and others established suffering of excruciating pain as the initial experience of becoming a man.'<sup>33</sup> Savran argues that men torture themselves to prove their masculinity.<sup>34</sup> Both ideas are reflected in Humboldt's actions, as he pushes these concepts of masculinity to an extreme.

Humboldt's behaviour can also be linked to Goethe's concept of renunciation: Humboldt makes personal sacrifices, such as abstaining from sexual pleasures, to contribute to a higher objective — science. Again Humboldt takes this concept too far: science, the world of numbers and measurement become the sole purpose of his life.

In *Die Vermessung der Welt* Kehlmann displays knowledge both of the masochism-related theories of Winckelmann, Lessing and Herder, contemporary with the novel's setting, and of modern masochism theories, which emphasize psychological and physiological elements. Kehlmann thus builds a theoretical bridge between the past and present. In Humboldt, Kehlmann develops a masculinity built on pain; men are still taught to deny and suppress pain today.<sup>35</sup> In this

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<sup>32</sup> Kimmel, *Angry White Men*, p. 177.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Gratzke, 'Werther's Love. Representations of Suicide, Heroism, Masochism, and Voluntary Self-Divestiture'; *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 81/1 (2012), pp. 28–36.

<sup>34</sup> Savran, 'Introduction', p. 330.

<sup>35</sup> Don Sabo, 'The Study of Masculinities and Men's Health: An Overview', in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. by Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and R. W. Connell (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

context, the question arises as to the relevance of the aforementioned theories to the present day: How many men today commit acts of violence towards themselves to confirm their masculinity? In the same vein we can ask whether Goethe's concept of renunciation can provide insight into the behaviour of modern men: How many men today subordinate themselves entirely to their work and make sacrifices for their careers in order to live up to a certain ideal of masculinity?

### *Irony and satire*

As noted by Stephanie Catani, Kehlmann employs satire as a stylistic device with which to place historical figures into a modern context.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, he uses satire and irony in relation to gender. Two forms of irony will be distinguished for this discussion: irony as a rhetorical and stylistic device and irony as a philosophy or way of life. Irony as a device works through the underlying principle of discrepancy. Two variations are apparent in the text: the difference between what a protagonist says and what he does (dramatic irony) and the contrast between what is expected and what actually happens (situational irony).<sup>37</sup> The latter reflects an attitude to or style of existence,<sup>38</sup> such as that expressed in German Romantic Irony or postmodern irony. Satire, on the other hand, is a form of humorous criticism of 'conventions of a specific context'.<sup>39</sup>

Through the use of satire and irony, *Die Vermessung der Welt* reveals that gender is a social construct, a performance that is not authentic. Irony is also interlinked with the mode of narration, evoking a general atmosphere of inauthenticity, ambiguity and equivocation. This makes a biographical and historical reading of the novel impossible.

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Publications, 2005), pp. 326–53 (pp. 332–34).

<sup>36</sup> Stephanie Catani, 'Formen und Funktionen des Witzes, der Satire und der Ironie in "Die Vermessung der Welt"', in Daniel Kehlmanns *"Die Vermessung der Welt"*, ed. by Nickel, pp. 198–215 (p. 212).

<sup>37</sup> <[http://www.new-wisdom.org/cultural\\_history2/4-neo-classicism/3-satire.htm](http://www.new-wisdom.org/cultural_history2/4-neo-classicism/3-satire.htm)> [accessed 7 November 2015].

<sup>38</sup> Claire Colebrook, *Irony* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 5 and 38.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

The scene of the secret student meeting illustrates well how Kehlmann uses satire and irony to deconstruct gender as artificial and a fiction. The novel emphasizes that Eugen's favourite book is Friedrich Ludwig Jahn's work on gymnastics (*Vermessung* 8), in which the traditional image of masculinity and the male body is celebrated. Kehlmann takes care to underline the imaginary nature of the construction of masculinity therein: 'Ausführlich beschrieb der Autor Vorrichtungen, die er sich ausgedacht hatte, damit man auf ihnen herumklettern könne.' (*Vermessung* 9) In the nineteenth century, the norm was again 'kräftige, auf Kampf, Unternehmung und Erzeugung von Nachkommen ausgerichtete Mannsexemplare. [...] In der Disziplinierung des männlichen Körpers gewinnen geregelte Leibesübungen an Bedeutung. Es zielt darauf ab, den männlichen Körper zu "stählen"'.<sup>40</sup> In this way, the 'Turnvater' Jahn engaged both in conventional politics and in the politics of masculinity: he authored 'Deutsche Wehrlieder' for the German army, characterizing 'military service for the threatened fatherland as the duty of every man who was capable of bearing arms (wehrfähig)'.<sup>41</sup> All this is clearly reflected in the speech of an unknown man at the secret meeting which Eugen attends:

Muskeln. Ihr Braven, fuhr er nach einer langen Pause fort, ihr Jungen, ihr Kraftvollen, ihr müßt stärker werden! Er räusperte sich. Denn wer denken wolle, tief und wesensberührend und bis zum Grund, habe den Körper zu straffen. Ein Denken ohne Muskeln sei schwach und matt, sei labbriges Franzosenzeug. Das Kind bete fürs Vaterland, der Jüngling schwärme, der Mann jedoch streite und leide. Er bückte sich und verharnte einen Moment, bevor er in rhythmischen Bewegungen sein Hosenbein hochkremelte. Auch hier! Er klopfte mit der Faust an seine Wade. Rein und stark, felgaufschwungsfest, klimmzugshart, wer wolle, könne fühlen. Er richtete sich auf und stierte ein paar Sekunden in den Raum, bevor er mit Donnerstimme schrie: Wie dieses Bein sei, so müsse Deutschland werden! (*Vermessung* 230–31)

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<sup>40</sup> Monika Szczepaniak, *Militärische Männlichkeiten in Deutschland und Österreich Großen Kriegen: Konstruktionen und Dekonstruktionen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), pp. 20 and 21.

<sup>41</sup> Hagemann, "Männlicher Muth und deutsche Ehre", p. 211.



This speech endorses the construction of Prussian masculinity as a disciplined manliness in the context of the war against the French, in direct contrast to French masculinity.<sup>42</sup> The speaker is, of course, serious about what he is saying, as serious as Jahn and other theorists of his time were; but for the modern reader it becomes a satire. The social convention of a physically strong man is here criticized through the use of humour and exaggeration. Satire is also apparent in the comic relationship between Bonpland and Humboldt — the representatives of French and German masculinity (*Vermessung* 48) — where Kehlmann illustrates the absurdity of the artificial eighteenth-century construction of German masculinity in contrast to the French.

The student meeting reflects Siede and Ehrenberg's emphasis on the physical aspects of masculinity, hailing gymnastics as an education for both body and mind. Moreover, it links being a man and working the body with pain — masculinity is connected to masochism. It also sees the 'empfindsame Schwärmer' as a phase between adolescence and becoming a man. While the student meeting scene echoes the new theories of its time, it is first and foremost a satire of the image of masculinity being disseminated, which invites men to show off their power and strength. First, it illustrates that this is an artificial construct, as can be seen in the first half of the scene in the language used (see preceding passage), which draws on neologisms — 'felgaufschwungsfest, klimmzugshart' — supporting Butler's view that gender is constructed by language and discourse.<sup>43</sup> Moreover it shows that gender can be produced through the stylization of physique:<sup>44</sup> the students are asked to work their bodies to make the hard side of masculinity visible.

Second, through the use of situational irony, the second part of the student meeting scene illustrates that there is a gap between the ideal of masculinity and reality: the students' actions do

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<sup>42</sup> Hagemann, 'Of "Manly Valor" and "German Honor"', pp. 193–94.

<sup>43</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 185–86.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

not correspond to the ideal image of masculinity being promoted by the unknown speaker. When the police arrive and start arresting them, Eugen feels desperate: ‘Eugen begann zu weinen. Er war nicht der einzige. Mehrere junge Männer schluchzten hemmungslos.’ (*Vermessung* 233) The students react contrary to what Jahn and the reader expect from rebellious young men. They do not correspond to the physical masculine ideal either: ‘Ein schwächtiger Junge fiel vor ihm auf die Knie, umklammerte seine Stiefel und bettelte um Milde.’ (*Vermessung* 234) Here the physical reality of the boy challenges the image of the powerful, strong male body advocated by the speaker, the male gender norm. Knowing that Jahn and other theorists, as well as the Prussian state, tried to fight the ‘Verweichlichung’ of young men, the entire scene becomes ironic: despite Jahn’s theories, the students start to break down or sink to their knees when the police arrive, thus falling short of the ideal of masculinity he propagated. The young men do not yet seem to have internalized the discourse of the speaker. However, although this image of masculinity remains fictitious, it has a powerful impact as the young men listen spellbound and become excited by the speech (*Vermessung* 231). Here discourse creates an image of masculinity by denying the reality of male bodies and the behaviour of men. The scene reveals the power of discourse and shows how a masculine ideal can be created through language and the stylization of the male body and admired as such despite the evident discrepancy with reality. Bodily expectations are shaped by social and political forces.<sup>45</sup> Even though the ideals of the male body are mostly unrealistic and based on fantasy, men buy into them and rate themselves and other men accordingly.<sup>46</sup>

Irony and satire are used in *Die Vermessung der Welt* as a deconstructive reading of gender, pointing to the difference between what is said and what is presented, between the concept of

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas J. Gerschick, ‘Masculinity and Degrees of Bodily Normativity in Western Culture’, in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. by Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, pp. 367–79 (p. 369).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

masculinity and the reality of it. Irony is ‘disruption, disillusion’.<sup>47</sup> Irony is also used in relation to ageing, which in turn is connected to masculinity in the text. As Ulrich Fröschle points out, Kehlmann has linked the topic of ageing to the subject of human genius.<sup>48</sup> As their mental powers decline with advancing years, Gauß and Humboldt start to struggle with their manhood, constructed mainly on their professions; neither wants to accept their mental decline and the resulting loss of influence. Humboldt notes: ‘Vielleicht sei dies und das noch möglich. [...] Sein Kopf sei nicht mehr wie früher.’ (*Vermessung* 261) On a research trip, Humboldt tries to inform his younger colleagues what the investigative process will entail, but they already know and have even adopted better methodologies (*Vermessung* 276). Both Humboldt and Gauß have to face the ironic fact that they still exist, even though their significant contribution to the sciences is finished.<sup>49</sup> The older men are of no further use: ‘Er war Anfang Zwanzig, und sein Lebenswerk war getan. Er wußte: Wie lange er auch noch da sein würde, er könnte nichts Vergleichbares mehr zustande bringen.’ (*Vermessung* 92) Gauß, whose groundbreaking discovery marks the end of his career and the end of his life, is much more pessimistic about ageing than Humboldt: ‘Das Menschenhirn sterbe jeden Tag ein wenig ab.’ (*Vermessung* 221) Fröschle notes that ageing is depicted as tragic in *Vermessung der Welt*;<sup>50</sup> this is certainly true for Humboldt. For Gauß, however, ageing is ridiculous: ‘Altern, das war nichts Tragisches. Es war lächerlich.’ (*Vermessung* 245) While Humboldt longs for eternal life, Gauß hopes to live in a more modern time (*Vermessung* 260). Gauß, who is intellectually much ahead of his time, is locked in the past; he would give ‘his soul’ (*Vermessung* 83) to be able to live in the future. Humboldt, in contrast, dreams that science will one day defeat death (*Vermessung* 239).

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<sup>47</sup> Paul de Man, ‘The Concept of Irony’, in Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 163–84 (p. 182).

<sup>48</sup> Fröschle, p. 186.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

Neither Humboldt nor Gauß can escape death, despite their superior intellectual powers. This in itself is tragic. Their existence becomes — in a way — ridiculous or ironic in the Romantic sense:

Irony must recognise that we can never overcome singular viewpoints and achieve a God-like point of view; we are always subject to a cosmic joke. For any idea we have of our selves or our world will be part of a process of creation and destruction that we can neither delimit nor control.<sup>51</sup>

Both scientists are part of this process. In the novel, masculinity is related to the quest for fame and ageing: the former makes both scientists influential and somewhat powerful men, the latter has the contrary effect.

Irony is also a principle of narration in *Die Vermessung der Welt*; Catani argues that it is a specific narrative stance which is characterized by the distance of the narrator from the protagonists and his refusal to comment on or judge the plot.<sup>52</sup> In her view this leads to a ‘Neubestimmung der literarischen Ironie’.<sup>53</sup> Catani has identified the self-reflectivity of the novel as a comic and ironic achievement: the protagonists show hostility towards narration and attack the sovereignty of the narrator.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the novel contains another layer of irony and subversion: the characters turn against their very own creator, the author. Gauß, for example, questions the authenticity and biographical correctness of Kehlmann’s writing: ‘wohingegen jeder Dummkopf in zweihundert Jahren sich über ihn lustig machen und absurden Unsinn über seine Person erfinden könne.’ (*Vermessung* 9) There has been much discussion about the authenticity of *Die Vermessung der Welt*.<sup>55</sup> The ironic narrative stance and the widely discussed exclusive use of indirect speech<sup>56</sup> forbid

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 36 and 37.

<sup>52</sup> Catani, p. 209.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 211, 212.

<sup>55</sup> See for example Ottmar Ette, ‘Alexander von Humboldt in Daniel Kehlmanns Welt’, *HiN — Humboldt im Netz. Internationale Zeitschrift für Humboldt-Studien*, XIII, 25 (2012), 34–40, and other contributions in this issue. All articles available under: <<https://www.uni-potsdam.de/romanistik/hin/hin25/inhalt.htm>> [accessed 7

a biographical reading of it. Kehlmann notes: ‘Es ist ein gebrochener Realismus der Gattung. Das Buch gibt sich als ernsthaftes Geschichtswerk und ist das Gegenteil davon. Das ist nicht bloß eine Ironie des Tones, sondern eine der Haltung.’<sup>57</sup> He here situates the novel in the German tradition of Romantic Irony, in the sense that the literary text is aware of its own creation and own artificiality;<sup>58</sup> it is no coincidence that the novel is set exactly at the time when Romantic Irony was redefined. Indirect speech does indeed provide a less accurate and authentic account than direct speech, as it contracts what was said.<sup>59</sup> Inauthenticity and ambiguity are also created through the use of the *Konjunktiv*, which is inherent in indirect speech in German. The phrase ‘Er sagt, er habe keine Zeit’, for example, leaves room for ambiguity and interpretation; we do not know if the person is lying or not.

Gauß shows awareness of his fictional existence<sup>60</sup> and complains that the author has placed him in the past:

Seltsam sei es und ungerecht, sagte Gauß, so recht ein Beispiel für die erbärmliche Zufälligkeit der Existenz, daß man in einer bestimmten Zeit geboren und ihr verhaftet sei, ob man wolle oder nicht. Es verschaffe einem einen unziemlichen Vorteil von der Vergangenheit und mache einen zum Clown der Zukunft. (*Vermessung* 9)

Humboldt also turns against the author when he questions the utility of writing a novel which is set in the past:

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November 2015].

<sup>56</sup> Martin Krumbholz, ‘Das Glück: ein Rechenfehler Daniel Kehlmanns Roman “Die Vermessung der Welt”’, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 18 October 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel Kehlman, *Diese sehr ernsten Scherze. Poetikvorlesungen* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Ingrid Strohschneider Kohrs, *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2002), p. 49.

<sup>59</sup> Vogt, pp. 151–52.

<sup>60</sup> Christoph Deupmann, ‘Poetik der Indiskretion. Zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Wissen in Daniel Kehlmanns *Die Vermessung der Welt*’, in *Die Unendlichkeit des Erzählens. Der Roman in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1989* ed. by Carsten Rohde and Hansgeorg Schmidt Bergmann (Bielefeld: Aistheis Verlag, 2013), pp. 237–56 (p. 255).

Das Romanschreiben, sagte Humboldt, erscheine ihm als Königsweg, um das Flüchtigste der Gegenwart für die Zukunft festzuhalten. [...] Somit sei es ein albern Unterfangen, wenn ein Autor, wie es jetzt Mode werde, eine schon entrückte Vergangenheit zum Schauplatz zu wählen. (*Vermessung* 27)

Here the novel is poking fun at itself. Humboldt also expresses his general dislike for storytelling (*Vermessung* 128). The *permanente Parekbase* of Romantic Irony is reflected: ‘Mit dem Schlagwort der *permanenten Parekbase* erfaßt [Friedrich] Schlegel den gesamten interaktionsästhetischen Zusammenhang des poetischen Ironiebegriffs: das ständige Reflektieren und Transzendieren der Dichterpersönlichkeit im eigenen Kunstwerk in ständigem Hinblick auf das Publikum.’<sup>61</sup> Despite the characters’ subversiveness in criticizing the author, his authority nonetheless prevails in the end and they turn into comic figures of the future. As in Romantic Irony, they become a cosmic joke. Again, inauthenticity and ambiguity are evoked.

### ***Character analysis***

Both Gauß and Humboldt accept the concept of masculinity they believe to be hegemonic, but in varying degrees. They have in common that they react with violence towards others or the self and with a strategy of evasion in their inability to correspond to the image of hegemonic masculinity.

Gauß tries to embody a masculinity based on patriarchy: he dominates his son Eugen and his second wife, whom he sees as cheap labour to manage the household and raise the children (*Vermessung* 7, 161). Gauß is disappointed in his son because he does not correspond to the ideal of a soldier — a conservative construction of masculinity — but rather displays the characteristics of the sensitive dreamer (*Vermessung* 191). Kehlmann makes use of Socratic Irony, which means more than saying something and meaning something else — it questions our self-evident use of

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<sup>61</sup> Marika Müller, *Die Ironie: Kulturgeschichte und Textgestalt* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995), p. 63 — author’s emphasis.

concepts: ‘we use a concept as though it had moral coherence and force, but we then go on to act and speak in different ways that undermine that claimed coherence’.<sup>62</sup> Here, the ideal of the soldier as representing moral coherence and force is undermined both in Gauß’s physical appearance and his behaviour: he has a weak body, is in bad health and behaves like a child. He is hiding in bed, for example, when he ought to participate in a scientific congress, or is afraid to walk around in Berlin (*Vermessung* 7–8, 245). There is a curious tension between Gauß’s academic standing and his childlike (and to the reader incomprehensible) behaviour, which, as Catani notes, corresponds to Kant’s definition of a joke.<sup>63</sup> This incomprehension is partly caused by the reader’s unfulfilled expectations as to how Gauß should behave as a man.

Walther DeKerseredy and Martin Schwartz argue that for many men, violence is the only way to express and validate masculinity.<sup>64</sup> Trying to conform to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, Gauß behaves violently towards others: just the sight of his son makes him so aggressive that he has outbreaks of anger that lead him to destroy things around him (*Vermessung* 7). Gauß’s virility sustains itself through the devaluation of both men and women. He calls his second wife Minna ‘lästig, beschränkt und das Unglück seiner späten Jahre’ (*Vermessung* 7). Gauß has trouble accepting his son and his own role as a loving father (*Vermessung* 155). He finally rejects his paternal duties completely: ‘Er würde ohne ihn aufwachsen müssen, das stand fest.’ (*Vermessung* 156), thus failing to conform to the ideal of the ‘loving bourgeois family father’<sup>65</sup> prominent at the

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<sup>62</sup> Colebrook, p. 19.

<sup>63</sup> Catani, p. 200. Immanuel Kant defines a joke as follows: ‘Es muß in allem, was ein lebhaftes, erschütterndes Lachen erregen soll, etwas Widersinniges sein (woran also der Verstand an sich kein Wohlgefallen finden kann). Das Lachen ist ein Affekt aus der plötzlichen Verwandlung einer gespannten Erwartung in nichts.’ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2006), pp. 228–29.

<sup>64</sup> Walther S. DeKerseredy and Martin D. Schwartz, ‘Masculinities and Interpersonal Violence’, in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. by Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, pp. 353–67 (p. 362).

<sup>65</sup> Trepp, pp. 45–46.

time. He is always preoccupied with his male authority and his performance as a man, which leads to violent behaviour. He is even afraid to embarrass himself in front of his son:

Gauß streckte seufzend die Hand aus, in Erwartung einer Ohrfeige zuckte der Junge zurück. Dabei hatte er ihm nur auf die Schulter klopfen wollen. Ärger stieg in Gauß auf, jetzt konnte er die Geste nicht mehr zu Ende führen, ohne sich zu blamieren. Also mußte er ihm einen Klaps auf die Wange geben. Der geriet ein wenig zu fest, und Eugen sah ihn mit aufgerissenen Augen an [...] Zärtlich strich Gauß über die Kristallspiegel, die Skalen und das schwenkbare Teleskop. (VERMESSUNG 193–94)

Bourdieu's argument that women are victims of modes of thinking about masculinity is here extended to men. Gauß feels, for example, that he needs to behave in a 'manly' way during highly emotional scenes, such as when he has to bid goodbye to his son, who is going to America: 'Dann zog er Eugen so fest an sich, daß seine Schulter gegen dessen Kiefer prallte; für ein paar Sekunden war Eugen betäubt vor Schmerz.' (*Vermessung* 296) In both the preceding passages, Kehlmann shows through the use of irony — in the sense that there is a discrepancy between how the characters feel and how they act — how the ideal of hegemonic masculinity renders men unable to show emotion and how that inability leads to violent behaviour. This resonates with Quintilian Irony where, through dissimulation, people say (or do) the opposite of what they mean.<sup>66</sup> Here the male characters need to dissimulate and become inauthentic. Violence is shown to be a strategy for being in control.

Even though Eugen is associated with a new generation of men — one that challenges the old establishment (*Vermessung* 221) — there are several indications that his concept of masculinity emulates that of his father. Like his father, he sleeps with prostitutes (*Vermessung* 298) and apparently reduces women to their usefulness in the household (*Vermessung* 302). As such he supports patriarchy as the form of hegemonic masculinity. Again, Kehlmann here seems to suggest

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<sup>66</sup> Colebrook, p. 1.



that men do not change. During the secret student meeting, Eugen imagines himself leading a counter-attack on the policemen; however, he ultimately lacks the courage to do so (*Vermessung* 233–34). Eugen possesses more male virtue in his imagination than in reality; masculine virtues become a fiction for him.

Humboldt, on the other hand, destabilizes pre-existing notions of gender given his non-hetero-normative sexuality (*Vermessung* 267). He is feminized by his contemporaries, who associate his scientific work with childish endeavour or female enterprise (*Vermessung* 63, 217). Humboldt feels the pressure to conform to the hard, strong masculinity propagated at the time and tries to create a corresponding image of himself; he also attempts to do so by showing off. This manifests itself in the way he writes about his adventures in his diaries and in his quest for fame, which is rooted in his rivalry with his brother: ‘Deinetwegen wollte ich Minister werden, meinetwegen mußt Du auf den höchsten Berg, [...] Alles andere wäre nicht angemessen gewesen. Und für Angemessenheit hatten wir immer das sicherste Gefühl.’ (*Vermessung* 266) In this passage, Humboldt’s brother notes that their ambitions are not necessarily reasonable. The word ‘Angemessenheit’ makes reference to Alexander Humboldt’s obsession with measuring things for the sake of science. In his diaries Humboldt shows off and pretends to have a more robust and masculine body than he really has, which Kehlmann conveys using sarcasm: ‘Zum Glück, schrieb er in sein Tagebuch, sei er niemals seekrank. Dann mußte er sich übergeben.’ (*Vermessung* 44)

As discussed earlier, Humboldt’s masculinity is grounded in violence towards the self. He turns himself into a tough researcher and tries to harden and master his body. He rarely sleeps (*Vermessung* 43) and suppresses all emotion:

Bonpland fragte ihn, ob er selbst nicht wenigstens ein kleines bißchen seekrank sei. Er wisse es nicht. Er habe sich entschlossen, es zu ignorieren, also bemerke er es nicht. Natürlich müsse er sich manchmal übergeben. Doch eigentlich falle ihm das kaum mehr auf. (*Vermessung* 50)

As Todd Reeser notes, a man who ignores and overcomes sickness can be seen as masculine.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, research has shown that men pay less attention to their health than do women, and that for some men their masculinity is ‘characterized by risk-taking, an ignorance of the male body, and reluctance to seek medical intervention for suspected health problems’.<sup>68</sup> Kehlmann uses dramatic irony here: Humboldt cannot overlook his vomiting, even though he claims he can — this is denial in action. Thus irony reveals that Humboldt is unable to live up to his image of being a man. He also inflicts violence upon himself when it comes to his sexuality, which — being associated with both homosexuality and paedophilia and thus contrary to the concept of hegemonic masculinity — he violently suppresses. One night, for example, he wakes up with a naked boy in his bed:

Er streckte die Hand aus, um den Jungen wegzuschieben, aber als er dessen *feuchte Haut fühlte*, zuckte er zurück, *als hätte er einen Schlag bekommen*. Geh weg, *flüsterte er*. Der Junge rührte sich nicht. Humboldt sprang auf die Füße, stieß mit dem Kopf an die Decke, *trat zu*. Der Junge schrie auf, seit der Sache mit den Sandflöhen trug Humboldt nachts Stiefel, und rollte sich zusammen. *Er trat wieder zu und traf den Kopf, der Junge wimmerte leise* und verstummte. Humboldt hörte sich *keuchen*. Schemenhaft sah er den reglosen Körper vor sich. Er packte ihn an den Schultern und zertrte ihn hinaus. (*Vermessung* — my emphasis)

The scene is marked by a contrast of sexual tension (‘feuchte Haut’, ‘keuchen’), tenderness (‘fühlte’, ‘flüsterte er’) and extreme violence (‘Schlag’, ‘trat zu’, ‘trat wiederzu und traf den Kopf, der Junge wimmerte leise’). The passage also links eroticism and sexuality with science: ‘als hätte er einen Schlag bekommen’ echoes the galvanic experiments Humboldt had enacted on his body (*Vermessung* 31, 32). The discussion between Humboldt and his brother is more explicit on the subject and reveals the violation and aggression Humboldt inflicts upon him:

Niemand, sagte Humboldt, habe eine Bestimmung. Man entschieße sich nur, eine vorzutäuschen, bis man es irgendwann selbst glaube. Doch so vieles passe nicht dazu,

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<sup>67</sup> Reeser, p. 12.

<sup>68</sup> Critical Research on Men in Europe (CROME), ‘Men, Masculinities and “Europe”’, in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. by Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, pp. 141–62 (p. 145).

man müsse sich entsetzliche Gewalt antun. Der Ältere lehnte sich zurück und sah ihn lange an. Immer noch die Knaben? Das hast du gewußt? Immer. (*Vermessung* 264)

This passage reflects a sentence which Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the founder of modern aesthetics of male beauty,<sup>69</sup> wrote to his muse, a nobleman with whom he fell in love:<sup>70</sup> ‘Um wiederum auf Ihre Schrift zu kommen, so versichere ich Ihnen, daß ich mir viel anthun müssen [*sic*], um nicht mehr zu sagen, als ich gesagt habe; wie ich würde gethan haben, wenn ich meiner Passion hätte folgen wollen.’<sup>71</sup> In his concept of aesthetics Winckelmann ‘rais[ed] homo-eroticism in general to the level of a precious possession,’<sup>72</sup> idealizing Greek hairless, white male statues. Homosexuality actually became a pathology in nineteenth-century medicine.<sup>73</sup> Humboldt, however, can claim that his homosexuality and paedophilia are theoretical because of Winckelmann, whose aesthetic discourse is the only medium wherein he can indulge his desires. Humboldt violates himself by theorizing his sexual desires.

The second strategy which the male characters adopt to cope with the social expectations of men is evasion. While Kehlmann chooses the past as a fictitious space in which to explore masculinity, he also shows how the male characters escape into fictitious worlds, those of numbers, imaginary experiences in South America and ideas of North America.

Both Humboldt and Gauß find a means of escape in numbers. Humboldt had been taught at an early age to rationalize his feelings and fears through numbers (*Vermessung* 22) and believes that they have the power to defeat the disorder in the world (*Vermessung* 50), even to save one’s

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<sup>69</sup> Richard Dyer, ‘The White Man’s Muscles’, in *the Masculinity Studies Reader*, ed. by Rachel Adams and David Savran (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp 262–73 (p. 292).

<sup>70</sup> Simon Richter and Patrick McGrath, ‘Representing Homosexuality: Winckelmann and the Aesthetics of Friendship’, *Monatshefte*, 86/1 (1994), 45–58 (p. 47).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>73</sup> Reeser, p. 32.

existence: ‘Fakten und Zahlen, sagte er mit unsicherer Stimme, die könnten einen vielleicht retten.’ (*Vermessung* 293) Gauß escapes into the same world — in which he excels — even more than Humboldt; eventually it becomes more important than his sexual life, despite the fact that his sex drive is strong: ‘Die Zahlen begleiteten ihn jetzt immer. Er vergaß sie nicht einmal, wenn er die Huren besuchte.’ (*Vermessung* 86) Strikingly, Gauß retreats into the world of numbers whenever he is faced with his own emotions — as is apparent in his wedding speech, for example, when he compares his luck to a mathematical error (*Vermessung* 148). Another example is the scene in which he first sleeps with his wife, and gets up during intercourse to note down his scientific revelations (*Vermessung* 150). On the one hand science and numbers take over Gauß’s life; on the other they become a space of evasion — a metaphor for rationalizing his emotions and suppressing a side traditionally associated with the female. Gauß submits to the ‘masculine imperative for emotional distance’,<sup>74</sup> reflecting the discourse of his time: at the end of the eighteenth century male emotionality was still valued, whereas it was devalued in the nineteenth. Catherine Newmark speaks of a ‘Entemotionalisierung des Mannes’.<sup>75</sup> One way in which men inflict violence upon themselves is by suppressing their emotions as they seek to adhere to a traditional standard of masculinity.<sup>76</sup> Eventually, the imaginary space of numbers does not merely become reality for Gauß, but it also brings him closer to it: ‘Die Zahlen entführten einen nicht aus der Wirklichkeit, sie brachten sie näher heran, machten sie klarer und deutlich wie nie’. (*Vermessung* 86)

Humboldt also escapes into the realm of imagination by transforming his real experiences on

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<sup>74</sup> Michele Adams and Scott Coltrane, ‘Boys and Men in Families: The Domestic Production of Gender, Power and Privilege’, in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. by Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, pp. 230–49 (p. 235).

<sup>75</sup> Catherine Newmark, ‘Vernünftige Gefühle? Männliche Rationalität und Emotionalität von der frühzeitlichen Moralphilosophie bis zum bürgerlichen Zeitalter’, in *Die Präsenz der Gefühle. Männlichkeit und Emotion in der Moderne*, ed. by Manuel Borutta and Nina Verheyen (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010), pp. 41–56 (p. 44).

<sup>76</sup> Adams and Coltrane, p. 238.

his trip to South America into imaginary ones in which he acts with appropriate masculine responses. This both allows him to escape the realities of life in Europe and permits him to create an image of his masculinity which is closer to the tough, strong ideal.

The text questions the reality of Humboldt's journey several times. Bonpland, for example, notes: 'Die Orinokofahrt scheine ihm wie etwas, wovon er in Büchern gelesen habe, Neuandalusien sei eine Legende aus der Vorzeit, Spanien nur mehr ein Wort.' (*Vermessung* 163) As such, South America has become a fantasy space in which Humboldt can pretend to be more masculine than he really is. When he is faced with a jaguar, for example, he does not act with courage but runs away like a coward (*Vermessung* 108). He then decides to describe the event in the way in which it should have unfolded: that he went after the jaguar with a rifle (VERMESSUNG 108). Again we can see how Humboldt is trying to show off.

When Gauß reads about Humboldt's adventures he remarks: 'Dieser Mann, sagte er, beeindruckend! Aber unsinnig auch, als wäre die Wahrheit irgendwo und nicht hier. Oder als könne man vor sich selbst davonlaufen.' (*Vermessung* 87) Gauß seems to imply that Humboldt's research mission is an escape from himself — possibly parts of his personality and desires that he is not ready to accept. Humboldt has indeed fled the hetero-normative life he would be expected to lead back home:

Von rechts wegen hätte er Bergwerke inspizieren sollen. Hätte ein deutsches Schloß bewohnt, Kinder gezeugt, sonntags Hirsche gejagt und einmal im Monat die Stadt Weimar aufgesucht. [...] Bonpland fragte, ob es ihm als Fehler erscheine. Schloß, Kinder, Weimar. Das sei doch etwas! [...] Der Gedanke sei ihm nie gekommen. (*Vermessung* 142)

The ideal of renunciation comes in handy for the 'verklemmte Homoerotiker'<sup>77</sup> Humboldt, who

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<sup>77</sup> Hellmuth Karasek, 'Der sanfte Berserker', *Die Welt*, 10 November 2007

uses it to justify his lifestyle; he abstains from women for the sake of the higher good, science, and moreover argues that they are a handicap to his scientific research. When he is asked if he has ‘a darling’, he turns red and answers: ‘Das behindere nur [...] Man heirate, wenn man nichts Wesentliches im Leben vorhabe.’ (*Vermessung* 30) Humboldt rejects the concept of masculinity embodied in the bourgeois family father, which implies that you only become an adult man when you get married and have a child.<sup>78</sup> At the same time renunciation acts as a cover for his homosexual desires in that it enables him to avoid expressing his sexuality.

Although the men of the next generation in the novel do not embrace violence, they do, like the previous age group, adopt strategies of evasion. Following his arrest at the secret student meeting, Eugen has to leave home and go to America if he wants to escape prison. In this last chapter there is a clear departure from the novel’s established perspectives of narration. While the previous chapters were told from Gauß’s and Humboldt’s perspectives, portraying Eugen as a weak man, the final chapter is written from Eugen’s. Catani speaks of an ironic turn, as the last chapter belongs entirely to Eugen, who has been humiliated throughout the novel by his father.<sup>79</sup> The shift in narration indicates a new beginning for Eugen. However, the departure to America has been caused by his arrest during the student meeting and is associated with his failure to behave like a man; it can be seen as just another evasion. Eugen has to go to America — a space that remains imaginary in the novel to this point — to become a man, as is made clear in the final chapter: ‘Er trug jetzt einen Bart und kam sich zum ersten mal nicht wie ein Kind vor.’ (*Vermessung* 295) Eugen also sleeps with a woman for the first time on his journey to America. He becomes a man when the plot is told from his perspective — a possible hint that this process only takes place in his imagination.

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<<http://www.welt.de/kultur/article1346525/Daniel-Kehlmann-der-sanfte-Berserker.html>> [accessed November 2015].

<sup>78</sup> Hagemann, *Männlicher Muth und deutsche Ehre*, p. 305.

<sup>79</sup> Catani, p. 210.

### Summary

Kehlmann uses the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a fictitious space in which to explore masculinity. He creates a fictive presentness of the text, reflecting the view that men can be incapable of or averse to change.<sup>80</sup> As a contemporary novel, *Die Vermessung der Welt* has significance for our understanding of masculinity today: one starts to wonder how much pain men inflict on themselves in order to be perceived as real men. Many more men than women, for example, do regular weight-training to shape their bodies.<sup>81</sup> Men may also allow their lives to be regimented by their work; for example, they put in more extra hours than women.<sup>82</sup>

Kehlmann reveals how masculinity can be artificially created through language and discourse and stylized bodies. Discourse is shown to achieve an image of masculinity by denying the reality of men's behaviour and the male body. Through the use of situational irony, Kehlmann provides a deconstructive reading of gender by pointing out the difference between discourse and reality. He also parodies the images of masculinity of the time in which the novel is set. Humboldt takes on an absurdly masculine role and becomes a parody of the image of masculinity propagated by Winckelmann and Herder. Moreover, Kehlmann uses irony as a narrative stance: his own protagonists attack the narration and rebel against the author; this can be read as calling into question the male authority of the author. Through the use of Romantic Irony, the process of ageing is depicted as tragic and ridiculous. The fame that Humboldt and Gauß earned during their scientific careers and upon which they built their masculinity declines with the unstoppable process of ageing; death is inevitable. Both characters are part of two processes of creation and destruction that they

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<sup>80</sup> Reeser, p. 222.

<sup>81</sup> <<http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/290436/umfrage/umfrage-unter-frauen-zur-haeufigkeit-des-besuchs-von-fitness-und-kraftstudios/>> [accessed 16 December 2015].

<sup>82</sup> 'Überstunden sind der Normalfall für Angestellte', Spiegel Online, 13 September 2013 <<http://www.spiegel.de/karriere/berufsleben/maenner-machen-mehr-ueberstunden-als-frauen-a-922191.html>> [accessed 16 December 2015].

can neither limit nor control: Kehlmann's narration (creation) and ageing (destruction). *Die Vermessung der Welt* interlinks irony, satire, narration and gender, creating an overall atmosphere of inauthenticity, ambiguity and equivocation. Through these interconnections men who exhibit masculinity according to the expected standards are shown to be inauthentic.

All the male characters in *Die Vermessung der Welt* try to comply with the standard of hegemonic masculinity, based either on patriarchy or the notion of a strong, hard masculinity; however, they are not able to do so entirely. Consequently they react with strategies of violence towards others or the self and with evasion in order to mask their weaknesses and to provide themselves with a fictive sense of masculinity. Going beyond Connell and Kimmel's claim, Kehlmann reveals that measuring up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity also comprises an element of self-violence which can be interpreted as a strategy to gain control and a restorative force. The male characters escape into imaginary spaces in order to hide their feminine or anti-hegemonic sides and to construct a manlier image of themselves. Interestingly, they also fail as fathers: they either remain childless or have a bad relationship with their child. The paternal role can combine traditionally male and feminine activities, such as playing and nurturing, and as such destabilize gender.<sup>83</sup> Gauß shuts down any possibility of gender subversion by basing the relationship with his son on patriarchal power. Hegemonic masculinity is unmasked as a fiction that exists only in the imagination; however it remains an overarching force and a standard for male behaviour. This resonates with Butler's view that gender is a 'regulatory fiction'.<sup>84</sup>

To sum up, masculine conventions emerge in *Die Vermessung der Welt* as a constraining force which does not allow men to be authentic, to display their emotions or to live out their sexuality.

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<sup>83</sup> Reeser, pp. 46, 48.

<sup>84</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 192.



Despite its inauthenticity, ambiguity and artificial construction, hegemonic masculinity is shown to be a concept which is resistant to historical and social change and becomes a reality in the sense that men accept it as a standard for their masculinity.

The argument that hegemonic masculinity is a delusion and fiction but nonetheless a real social force is further developed in *Ruhm*. Here, irony as a stance of narration becomes even more self-reflective, as the following analysis will show.

## **2.2 Virtual worlds — virtual masculinities: *Ruhm***

The subsequent section will discuss the presentation of masculinity in *Ruhm*. The novel will be introduced by a brief analysis of its formal structure and literary technique. The various themes will then be fleshed out, before an examination of a selection of male characters. Selected female characters will also be discussed in relationship to male authority and power. Elements of the various plots will be interwoven into these analyses.

*Ruhm* illustrates the close connection between acting, play-acting, pretending, performing and online/offline identities. It offers a complex interplay between reality, fantasy and media. It will be shown that the male characters try to enact hegemonic masculinity by creating virtual images of it through the use of new and old media.

### ***Form***

*Ruhm* consists of several short stories that are interlinked through shared characters and plots. Critics have struggled with the classification of *Ruhm* in terms of literary genre, questioning

whether the text really is a novel.<sup>85</sup> One of its characters provides the answer himself: ‘Ein Roman ohne Hauptfigur! Verstehst du? Die Komposition, die Verbindungen, der Bogen, aber kein Protagonist, kein durchgehender Held.’<sup>86</sup> Heinrich Detering claims: ‘Was sich aus den neun ineinander verspiegelten Geschichten dieses Buches entwickelt, ist der Roman eines Romans.’<sup>87</sup> Indeed, in *Ruhm* the theme of self-reflectivity of the author gains even more pointed expression than in *Die Vermessung der Welt*. The author is omnipresent: ‘Der Autor greift in die Geschichten ein, er ändert abrupt deren Lauf und bringt sich so immer wieder selbst in Erinnerung.’<sup>88</sup> Moreover, one of the characters, Leo Richter, is also the fictitious author of several of the stories in the novel: ‘der Autor vertrackter Kurzgeschichten voller Spiegelungen und unerwartbarer Volten von einer leicht sterilen Brillanz. [...] natürlich kannte sie seine berühmteste Geschichte, die von einer alten Frau und ihrer Reise ins schweizer Sterbehilfzentrum handelte.’ (*Ruhm* 29) This is a reference to one of the stories in *Ruhm*, ‘Rosalie geht sterben’. Through irony, Kehlmann shows ‘die Souveranität seiner Erzähldisposition, lässt die Struktur-Scharniere im Umgang mit point of view und fiktionaler Illusion [...] deutlich sehen’<sup>89</sup>. He displays his virtuosity as an author. As in *Die Vermessung der Welt*, the use of irony questions the authenticity of the text, which creates an atmosphere of ambiguity in relation to masculinity and gender.

### **Themes**

Among many shared themes, *Die Vermessung der Welt* and *Ruhm* are linked through the topic of

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<sup>85</sup> Jochen Jung, ‘Wenn das Handy neunmal klingelt, “Ruhm”: Daniel Kehlmanns Roman in neun Geschichten schnurrt wie eine gut geölte Maschine’, *Die Zeit*, 15 January 2009 <<http://www.zeit.de/2009/04/L-Kehlmann>> [accessed November 2015].

<sup>86</sup> Daniel Kehlmann, *Ruhm* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2009), p. 25. Subsequently referenced here as *Ruhm*.

<sup>87</sup> Heinrich Detering, ‘Wenn das Handy zweimal klingelt’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 January 2009, p. Z5.

<sup>88</sup> Jung.

<sup>89</sup> Volker Wehdeking, ‘Judith Hermann, *Alice*, und Daniel Kehlmann, *Ruhm*, Erzählverfahren des postmodernen Minimalismus und Neorealismus’, *Sprachkunst. Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft*, 60/2 (2009), p. 261–77.

fame. While *Die Vermessung der Welt* focuses on the fame of geniuses, *Ruhm* examines how people engage in the pursuit of fame in both the public and private spheres. Both novels explore the effect of fame on the protagonists' quest for hegemonic masculinity.

Another central theme of *Ruhm* is modern technology and its impact on male identity. According to Iuditha Balinth, it is a 'komplexe literarische Komposition über Medialisierung und Kommunikationstechnologien'.<sup>90</sup> Jochen Jung points to the special role of the mobile phone in Kehlmann's narration as being 'wirklichkeitsverwirrend[e]'.<sup>91</sup> The influence and importance of technology in our lives is best summarized in the following statement by one of the characters — a travel agent: 'Fragen sie den Computer. Ich frage auch den Computer. Jeder fragt den Computer, so läuft es!' (*Ruhm* 61) Connell remarks that 'Western science and technology are culturally masculinized'.<sup>92</sup> Technology is still very much linked to men in everyday life.<sup>93</sup> Or, as Cynthia Cockbrun and Susan Ormrod note: 'Männlich zu sein heißt, technisch kompetent zu sein [...] Weiblich zu sein heißt, nichts oder wenig mit Technik zu tun zu haben.'<sup>94</sup>

Jung points to another important theme: 'Rollentausch'.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the characters change identity, pretend to be other people and try to lead alternative lives. That these characters are mostly men has been largely ignored by literary critics. *Ruhm* is foremost a novel about identity — male identity. It may be no coincidence that the male protagonists' identities are created with the help of

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<sup>90</sup> Iuditha Balinth, 'Hyperfiktion, Simulation. Medien(technologien) und die Architektonik des Erzählens in Daniel Kehlmanns *Ruhm*. Ein Roman in neun Geschichten', *Jahrbuch der ungarischen Germanistik 2010* (Budapest, 2011), pp. 15–31 (p. 15).

<sup>91</sup> Jung.

<sup>92</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Döge, 'Männlichkeit, Technik, Politik. Androzentrische Selektivitäten im Prozess der politischen Techniksteuerung', 1–6 <<http://www.ruendal.de/aim/pdfs/Doege.pdf>> [accessed May 2012] p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Cynthia Cockbrun and Susan Ormrod, 'Wie Geschlecht und Technologie in der sozialen Praxis "gemacht" werden', in *Ein alltägliches Spiel. Geschlechterkonstruktion in der sozialen Praxis*, ed. by Irene Dölling and Beate Kraus (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), p. 29.

<sup>95</sup> Jung.

technology and media, which, moreover, can increase male performance: ‘Medien stellen also eine Art Prothese oder Werkzeug dar, welches die Funktionen des menschlichen Körpers und seine sinnlichen Fähigkeiten über den gewohnten Raum hinaus technisch verstärkt oder verlängert.’<sup>96</sup>

The following section will discuss how masculinity and male identity are presented in *Ruhm* by analysing first a selection of male characters and then two female characters.

### *Analysis of male characters*

Both short stories ‘Stimmen’ and ‘Wie ich log und starb’ deal with the subject of adultery. In ‘Stimmen’, where Ebling, a technician, is the main protagonist, the adultery remains virtual through the use of technology — a mobile phone. In contrast, in ‘Wie ich log und starb’ the adultery committed by an unnamed character, referred to as ‘Mollwitz’s superior’, is real. It too is facilitated through the use of a mobile. In both stories, men and women seem to conform to traditional gender roles. Ebling is presented as the typical family man and father, the breadwinner who is unaware of what is going on in his family (*Ruhm* 12).

Mollwitz’s superior corresponds to the image of hegemonic masculinity as defined by Connell in the sense that he torments his subordinates at work: ‘Meine Untergebenen erwarteten mich so ängstlich wie immer.’ (*Ruhm* 169) Incidentally, this also correlates with the earlier questions about masochism and masculinity raised when discussing *Die Vermessung der Welt*. Men seem to accept hierarchy at the workplace and submit in a somewhat masochistic way to their superiors. Mollwitz’s superior also tries to establish male authority at home in his relationship with his children (*Ruhm* 173). While he attempts to exercise hegemonic masculinity at the workplace and in his family, he is

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<sup>96</sup> Alexander Roesler, ‘Medienphilosophie des Telefons’, in *Systematische Medienphilosophie*, ed. by Ludwig Nagl and Mike Sandbothe (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), pp. 273–82 (p. 274).

rather childlike in other ways; for example, he still has the cuddly toy in his bedroom that he has had since he was ten years old (*Ruhm* 165). This parallels the behaviour of Gauß in *Die Vermessung der Welt*, who hides in his bed, for example. Mollwitz's superior's childlike behaviour and the interlocking of work and play<sup>97</sup> reflect Bourdieu's argument that men are children playing men.

Both Ebling and Mollwitz's superior start an affair in the context of dissatisfaction with their lives (*Ruhm* 9, 162). One day Ebling receives a call on his mobile phone for a certain 'Ralf'; it seems that his new mobile has been assigned the number of the well-known actor Ralf Tanner by mistake. After some hesitation Ebling starts pretending to be Tanner when people call him. However, his new identity begins to make him anxious and so he decides to switch off his phone. Sabine Polotzek remarks that the telephone affects our lives in that we generally react when it rings; however, it also makes selective accessibility possible.<sup>98</sup> Though at first Ebling gives only prudent answers to callers, he becomes increasingly active, eventually agreeing to go on a date with a woman who seems to be Tanner's lover. He starts a virtual affair.

Mollwitz's superior, in contrast, embarks on a real affair and constructs a series of lies in order to hide his double life — which is made easier because of the mobile phone, becoming as it does an extension of himself. The mobile also allows him to create his own reality: 'Wie merkwürdig, daß die Technik uns in eine Welt ohne feste Orte versetzt hat. Man spricht aus dem Nirgendwo, man kann überall sein, und da sich nichts überprüfen läßt, ist alles, was man sich vorstellt, im Grunde auch wahr.' (*Ruhm* 172–73) Polotzek notes that the use of the phone can free people from their

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<sup>97</sup> Brigitte Prutti, 'Postmoderne Artistenmetaphysik? Zum Spiel mit der Autorschaft in Daniel Kehlmanns *Ruhm*', *PhiN* 55 (2011), 1–39 <<http://web.fu-berlin.de/phn/phn55/p55t1.htm>> [accessed November 2015] p. 22.

<sup>98</sup> Sabine Polotzek, *Anonymität und Intimität, Allgegenwärtigkeit und Unnahbarkeit bei Telefonat und Chat* (2001) <<http://www.mediensprache.net/networx/networx-21.pdf>> [accessed November 2015] p. 17 and p. 110.

spatial but not temporal restrictions.<sup>99</sup> This is also reflected in Kehlmann's text: technology has its limits and Mollwitz's superior has to invent characters, such as a colleague, Longrolf, whom he uses as an excuse for his absences (*Ruhm* 175) as the mobile cannot double the time at his disposal.

It becomes clear that the double life of Mollwitz's superior is not so much about the two women he goes out with as about himself, about restoring his identity.

Ich wachte spätnachts auf, horchte auf die Atemzüge der Frau neben mir und fragte mich für bange Sekunden nicht so sehr, welche von beiden sie, sondern wer eigentlich ich gerade sein sollte und in welchem Irrgarten ich mich verloren hatte. (*Ruhm* 175–76)

This points to the fragility of the protagonist's identity and reflects postmodern irony: 'our very historical context is ironic because today nothing really means what it says. We live in a world of quotation, pastiche, simulation and cynicism: a general and all-encompassing irony.'<sup>100</sup> In such a world, even identity does not seem real.

The new lives created through the mobile phones have an impact on real life for both characters. Ebling's virtual affair, for example, affects his sex life with his wife:

Diese Nacht faßte er zum ersten Mal seit langem wieder seine Frau an. Zunächst war sie nur verblüfft, dann fragte sie, was denn los sei mit ihm und ob er getrunken habe, dann gab sie nach. Lange dauerte es nicht, und während er sie noch unter sich spürte, war ihm, als täten sie etwas Ungehöriges. Ihre Hand klopfte an seine Schulter, aber es dauerte noch ein paar Minuten, bevor er von ihr abließ und sich zur Seite rollte. (*Ruhm* 15)

When Ebling makes love, he is ruthless: he takes what he wants then 'rolls over' when finished, showing no affection for his wife. He ignores his wife's signal of tapping on his shoulder.

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<sup>99</sup> Polotzek, p. 15.

<sup>100</sup> Colebrook, p. 1.

Stereotypes of male sexuality are perceived as powerful, uncontrollable and selfish.<sup>101</sup> A traditional gender dualism surfaces here, putting the woman in a passive position. The passage shows that Ebling does not consider Elke's feelings at any moment and even fades out her presence entirely, thinking only of the woman he has talked to on the phone. The limits of Ebling's power in his non-virtual life can be seen when Elke considers having her own bed.

Interestingly, it excites Ebling to envision women as helpless: 'Auch diese Nacht zog er sie an sich, und auch diesmal gab sie zögernd nach, und währenddessen stellte er sich eine vor Leidenschaft hilflose Carla vor.' (*Ruhm* 20) In his virtual reality, Ebling becomes a man who dominates women and as such he partly embodies hegemonic masculinity, which is intrinsically linked to the subordination of women. This reflects the view that men can be complicit in hegemonic masculinity because they get 'gratification through fantasy' and 'compensation through displaced aggression' out of it.<sup>102</sup>

Finally Ebling's virtual identity and real life begin to merge:<sup>103</sup>

Als er in der Küche Elke begegnete, blieb er verwundert stehen. Für einen Moment war es ihm vorgekommen, als stamme sie aus einem anderen Dasein oder einem Traum, der mit dem wirklichen Leben nichts zu tun hatte. [...] Wieso konnte er das eigentlich sehen, warum war er zu Hause und nicht bei der Arbeit? Er wußte es nicht. (*Ruhm* 19–21)

Likewise, the double life of Mollwitz's superior starts to harm his real life and his professional career. When he learns that his section at work has reissued one hundred mobile phone numbers that were already in service to new clients and that his employee Mollwitz has not followed up, he remains inactive, preferring to invest his energy in making up lies for the two women he is seeing.

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<sup>101</sup> Ken Plummer, 'Male Sexualities', in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. by Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, pp. 178–96 (pp. 178 and 182).

<sup>102</sup> Carrigan, Connell and Lee, pp. 112–13.

<sup>103</sup> See also Balinth, p. 16.

He knows his career is threatened, but does not do anything about it. Finally, he starts to believe that he has a real new life. When his lover tells him she is pregnant he bursts out: 'Ein Kind — mein erstes!' (*Ruhm* 180) Then reality catches up with him: 'Aber ich hatte schon zwei, und die waren schwierig und fremdartig genug' (*Ruhm* 188).

Both characters use technology to make themselves feel more masculine. It is clear that Ebling envies Tanner, who fits the stereotypical symbol of hegemonic masculinity; he has many attractive female lovers and is very successful both professionally and financially. As Connell notes, film actors are exemplary bearers of hegemonic masculinity;<sup>104</sup> indeed the politics of hegemonic masculinity need exemplary masculinities<sup>105</sup> such as Tanner, whose identity is something that Ebling desperately longs for (*Ruhm* 17).

Ebling tries to make use of the new power he has in his virtual life. For example, when a friend of Tanner's calls him and tells him that he wants to commit suicide, he tells him to go ahead (*Ruhm* 21). As we learn later in another story, the man did in fact commit suicide. This shows that there can be grave consequences of virtual actions in the real world. However, Ebling realizes that his power and new, virtual reality are only thanks to technology and cannot be sustained. His resulting feeling of impotence makes him commit acts of revenge using modern technology, not without situational irony: 'Am nächsten Tag sabotierte er drei Computer und stellte eine Festplatte so ein, daß sich genau einen Monat später alle Daten darauf löschen würden.' (*Ruhm* 22)

For Mollwitz's superior, his double life is a duplication of life: 'Doppelleben: die Verdoppelung des Lebens.' (*Ruhm* 183) In this quotation the negative 'double life' is turned into a positive 'duplication of life'. Balinth argues that in this character, personal identity is presented as a

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<sup>104</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 77.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 211.



construct of choice and reality as a labyrinth which can be controlled through communication technologies. She concludes: ‘Gezeigt wird eine Verdoppelung der Realität *und* der Repräsentation im selben Subjekt.’<sup>106</sup> It could be argued that this ‘Verdoppelung’ is again reflective of the wish to be manlier by having relationships with two women and by fathering a child with each of them. Mollwitz’s superior is showing off: he can double his masculinity. Finally he commits to one woman and the other woman has announced that she will be visiting. The ending suggests that a double life cannot be sustained and that technology fails to control reality.

In his fantasy world, Ebling becomes a man who conforms to hegemonic standards — a man he is not in his everyday life: ‘Wäre er mutiger gewesen, er hätte den Knopf gedrückt.’ (*Ruhm* 22) He legitimizes hegemonic masculinity by portraying it as something desirable; he becomes part of a complicit masculinity described by Connell.<sup>107</sup> At the same time he fails to comply with these standards. Technology — in this case a mobile phone — makes his fantasy possible, whereas his real life is insignificant: nobody notices him. With his mobile he can imagine that he is living the life of a star and be the ideal man he would like to be. As Ebling starts to believe that Tanner’s life is also his, the barriers between his two identities blur and his virtual life turns into an extension of his reality. Clearly, Ebling is not able to embody hegemonic masculinity entirely.

Mollwitz’s superior, like Ebling, is ‘a nobody’, an insignificant person, as is underlined by the fact that he does not even have a name. He looks for recognition and wants to become ‘somebody’. Both men are complicit in patriarchy but fail to meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity beyond the virtual space of the mobile phone; their stories imply that even technology has its limits.

Mollwitz, the main character in ‘Ein Beitrag zur Debatte’, is a thirty-seven-year-old employee

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<sup>106</sup> Balinth, p. 21.

<sup>107</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 79.

working at a mobile phone company. He spends most of his time, even at work, surfing the net and writing postings for different Internet fora, creating a virtual world in which he has the power to express himself freely without giving away his real identity. At the same time this virtual space gives him power over others — a power that he does not have in real life:

Vorausschicken muss ich, daß ich ein riesen Hardcore-Fan von diesem Forum bin. Stahlidee. Normale Typen wie ich und du, die Prominente spotten und davon erzählen: Kalte Sache, toll überlegt, interessant für jeden, und außerdem hat das Kontrollfunktion, damit die wissen, daß sie gescannt werden und sich nicht aufführen können wie was weiß ich. (*Ruhm* 133)

The Internet eventually takes over Mollwitz's life. He even adapts his everyday language to that of the virtual world, including the use of Anglicisms, making his virtual world an extension of his real one: 'Immer Username mollwitt. Im Real Life (dem wirklichen!) bin ich Mitte dreißig, ziemlich sehr groß, vollschlank. Unter der Woche trage ich Krawatte, Officezwang, der Geldverdienmist, macht ihr ja auch. Muß sein, damit man seinen Lifesense realisieren kann.' (*Ruhm* 134) Interestingly, Mollwitz's online profile is rather exaggerated. In the story 'Wie ich log und starb' he is described by his boss thus: 'Es klopfte, und Mollwitz kam herein, schwitzend wie immer, beschwert von seinem grotesken Körperrumfang, kleingewachsen, nackenlos, bedauernswert.' (*Ruhm* 170) However, in his online identity Mollwitz has made himself more masculine, in this case taller than he actually is, thus preventing people from seeing that he does not correspond to the hegemonic ideal of a powerful and strong body.<sup>108</sup> This brings us to the question of virtual identities and their implications. Karlheinz Benke defines virtual identity as follows:

*Virtuelle Identität*, also Identität im Netz, versteht sich als Selbst-Präsentation des Menschen, der interaktiv mit Hilfe der Tools einer computervermittelnden Kommunikation [...] handelt. Sie bedeutet, *anonym* aufzutreten und den eigenen Namen unkompliziert ändern zu können, verschiedene Namen gleichzeitig zu besitzen

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<sup>108</sup> Reeser, p. 105.

und so fort.<sup>109</sup>

Nicola Döring notes that the estimation of virtual identities remains controversial:

Viele kritisieren, dass Personen im Netz ihre wirkliche Identität hinter beliebig ausgedachten virtuellen Scheinidentitäten verbergen und der soziale Austausch somit zur puren Maskerade verkommt. Andere dagegen loben, dass Menschen bei der Konstruktion virtueller Identitäten biografisch wichtige und sinnvolle Identitätsarbeit leisten, indem sie Aspekte ihres Selbst offenbaren und erkunden, die in vielen Offline-Situationen ausgeblendet bleiben.<sup>110</sup>

Jan Schmidt argues that the social web not only lowers the control of online-based management of information, but also the management of identity and relations. According to him it is a myth that the Internet is a cyberspace in which people leave their bodies behind and can create new identities.<sup>111</sup> Kehlmann's text seems partly to support the points made by Döring and Schmidt. Mollwitz makes himself look better than he is in reality and the Internet allows him to explore parts of his personality that he cannot express in his actual life. The similarity between his real name 'Mollwitz' and his username 'mollwitt' suggests that a certain degree of authenticity is retained online. However, Kehlmann goes further, showing that the virtual world has an impact on real-life identity. The Internet becomes an extension of Mollwitz's reality: he adopts the language of the Internet and, as Balinth argues, his use of language is part of his identity.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Karlheinz Benke, 'Netz, Online-Kommunikation und Identität', in *Handbuch Online-Beratung, Psychosoziale Beratung im Internet*, ed. by Stefan Kühne and Gerhard Hintenberger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), pp. 47–65 (p. 48) — author's emphasis.

<sup>110</sup> Nicola Döring, 'Identität + Internet = Virtuelle Identität?', *Forum Medienethik*, 2 (2000), 1–16 <[http://www.mediaculture-online.de/fileadmin/bibliothek/doering\\_identitaet/doering\\_identitaet.pdf](http://www.mediaculture-online.de/fileadmin/bibliothek/doering_identitaet/doering_identitaet.pdf)> [accessed July 2013] p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Jan Schmidt quotes a study by Jan-Hinrik Schmidt, Ingrid Paus-Hasebrink and Uwe Hasenbrink (2009) on the self-presentation on the Internet. Only 3.2 per cent of the twelve- to twenty-four- year-olds agreed with the statement: 'Ich habe auch Profile, in denen ich mich ganz anders darstelle, als ich wirklich bin.' (Jan Schmidt, 'Identitäts und Beziehungsmanagement in sozialen Netzwerken. Die Rolle des Social Web für Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und soziale Einbettung' <<http://www.aksb.de/upload/dateien/PPPJanSchmidt.kl.pdf>> [accessed November 2015].

<sup>112</sup> Balinth, p. 20.

Mollwitz is addicted to the Internet (*Ruhm* 151). According to a recent German study, more men than women are similarly addicted;<sup>113</sup> single men have a higher rate of addiction than those who live in partnerships.<sup>114</sup> The basic criteria of pathological use of the Internet are extensive use during the day; a loss of control of the time spent online; the need to use the Internet for increasingly longer periods in order to be satisfied; unpleasant emotional and physical conditions such as nervousness and anger when the person cannot use the Internet; and the neglect of tasks and interests despite perceived damaging consequences such as absences from work, risk of losing one's job, loss of a partner or financial problems.<sup>115</sup> Mollwitz fits this characterization.<sup>116</sup> Because of his addiction the Internet is the only means through which he can construct his masculinity; it is the space which he frequents the most.

Mollwitz lacks social skills, as exemplified in the episode where he attends a conference. He shies away from the other participants and compensates by eating so much that he feels sick: 'Ich: Silence komplett. Sag ja immer nichts unter Fremden. Kann ich nicht, mag ich nicht, hab ich einfach nicht drauf.' (*Ruhm* 142) Whilst he tries to avoid any social contact, curiously he searches out the company of the author Leo, who happens to be at the same hotel. He has a specific motivation for doing so — he would like to feature as a character in one of Leo's books:

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<sup>113</sup> Hans-Jürgen Rumpf, Christian Meyer, Anja Kreuzer and Ulrich John, *Prävalenz der Internetabhängigkeit (PINTA). Bericht an das Bundesministerium für Gesundheit* (2011) <[http://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/fileadmin/dateien-dba/DrogenundSucht/Computerspiele\\_Internetsucht/Downloads/PINTA-Bericht-Endfassung\\_280611.pdf](http://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/fileadmin/dateien-dba/DrogenundSucht/Computerspiele_Internetsucht/Downloads/PINTA-Bericht-Endfassung_280611.pdf)> [accessed November 2015].

<sup>114</sup> 'Daten und Faktenblatt: Pressekonferenz der Drogenbeauftragten der Bundesregierung am 9.10.2012' <[http://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/fileadmin/dateien-dba/Presse/Downloads/Handout\\_PK\\_Jahrestagung\\_2012.pdf](http://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/fileadmin/dateien-dba/Presse/Downloads/Handout_PK_Jahrestagung_2012.pdf)> [accessed November 2015].

<sup>115</sup> Kay Uwe Petersen and Rainer Thomasius, *Endbericht Beratungs- und Behandlungsangebote* <[http://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/fileadmin/dateien-dba/DrogenundSucht/Computerspiele\\_Internetsucht/Downloads/Beratungsangebote\\_pathologischer\\_Internetgebrauch\\_Endbericht\\_100531\\_Drogenbeauftragte.pdf](http://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/fileadmin/dateien-dba/DrogenundSucht/Computerspiele_Internetsucht/Downloads/Beratungsangebote_pathologischer_Internetgebrauch_Endbericht_100531_Drogenbeauftragte.pdf)> [accessed November 2015] p. 70.

<sup>116</sup> See also Balinth, p. 19.

Wenn einer so viel im Internet unterwegs ist wie ich [...] Also dann weiß er, daß Wirklichkeit nicht alles ist. Daß es Räume gibt, in die man nicht mit dem Körper geht. Nur in Gedanken und trotzdem da. Lara Gaspard treffen. Das war possible! Eben in einer Story. (*Ruhm* 146)

Novels, like the Internet, offer spaces detached from the human body:<sup>117</sup> you can hide and reinvent yourself in both media. They are spheres of fantasy, and it is as though Mollwitz would like to gain recognition by being in a story (*Ruhm* 147). He believes that he can become someone else in literature or the Internet while still retaining some authenticity, and all of this with little effort: ‘Transformation eben! Sich selbst übertragen in was anderes. In einer Geschichte wäre ich ein anderer, aber auch ich selbst.’ (*Ruhm* 147) It is interesting that someone who is so familiar with new technology wishes to have his failed existence recreated through the traditional medium of literature. This may be because a book is socially more acceptable and is traditionally perceived as more ‘culturally valuable’ than the Internet. Mollwitz’s desire to be in one of Leo’s novels supports the point that it is only in fiction that he can meet attractive women and validate his masculinity. Finally, Mollwitz believes that he will never be part of any story; however, he is part of a story in *Ruhm*.<sup>118</sup> Mollwitz’s fantasy has thus already become reality. Or has it?

Again, media are depicted as an extension of reality. As Natália Kasko notes, the whole short story ‘Ein Beitrag zur Debatte’ reads like a long entry in an online forum.<sup>119</sup> Indeed there is evidence for this: the story is written from the first-person perspective and always with the consciousness of a reader who can immediately comment online: ‘Ich weiß, daß ihr euch jetzt hochlacht wie Irrsinn.’ (*Ruhm* 137) Kehlmann thus uses another layer of irony here: it is as if

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<sup>117</sup> See also Benke, p. 48.

<sup>118</sup> Markus Gasser, ‘VII Die Verschwundenen. *Ruhm*.’, in Gasser, *Das Königreich im Meer. Daniel Kehlmanns Geheimnis* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), pp. 109–32 (p. 127).

<sup>119</sup> Natália Kasko, ‘Grenzüberschreitung und Identitätskonstruktion in Daniel Kehlmann’s *Ruhm*’, *Werkstatt*, 7 (2012), 26–48 <<http://werkstatt.unideb.hu/2012/kaskon.pdf>> [accessed November 2015] p. 43.

Mollwitz wrote the short story himself online, thus reflecting postmodern definitions of irony: everything seems to be inauthentic and ambiguous, a simulation, there appears to be no original. The same is true of Mollwitz's virtually constructed masculinity.

Mollwitz thinks of himself as a very capable man, but in reality he is a failure in both his professional and private life. He is uninterested in his work and fails to establish relationships with women (*Ruhm* 143). Despite his age, he still lives with his mother, who cooks for him and keeps the household (*Ruhm* 136). At times, Mollwitz behaves in the opposite manner socially expected of a man: he cries, for example, when his mother makes a scene. Immediately he reminds himself that men do not cry and feels embarrassed: 'Ich begann auch zu weinen. Ich weiß das klingt peinlich wie Irrsinn.' (*Ruhm* 157) Mollwitz is very much aware of male (hegemonic) standards, but he is not able to comply — at least not in real life; it is only through the Internet that he can come close to doing so. He legitimizes hegemonic masculinity, as it is something he strives towards and accepts as a means of measuring his own masculinity. Being insignificant and humiliated in actual life, he develops fantasies of omnipotence: 'Wißt ihr, diese Menschen, die irgendwann ein Pistolengewehr nehmen und dann voller Container Blut, ich kann die schon verstehen.' (*Ruhm* 154) The word 'Pistolengewehr' is rather childish and points to Mollwitz's immaturity. More than 90 per cent of gunmen are male and the profile of a gunman somewhat matches Mollwitz's character.<sup>120</sup> Becoming a gunman can be read as a failed attempt to meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity.

It is clear that Mollwitz is searching for recognition and possibly fame, which is also reflected

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<sup>120</sup> 'Es gibt erkennbare psychologische Charakteristika, die bei diesen Tätern gehäuft auftreten. Es lässt sich eine Mischung aus Verzweiflung und Depression, Größenfantasien und Kränkbarkeit erkennen. Ein solches Muster weist auf eine narzisstische Problematik hin, bei der es um die Kompensation von Minderwertigkeitsgefühlen geht.' (Jens Hoffmann, Karoline Roshdi and Frank Robertz, 'Zielgerichtete schwere Gewalt und Amok an Schulen Eine empirische Studie zur Prävention schwerer Gewalttaten', *Kriminalistik*, 4 (2009), 196–204  
<[http://forensiseuropa.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/2010\\_zielgerichtete\\_gewaltundamok.pdf](http://forensiseuropa.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/2010_zielgerichtete_gewaltundamok.pdf)> [accessed November 2015] p. 203).

in his online life. Döring notes that the Internet functions as a source of respect and recognition: ‘Im Netz dagegen werden dieselben Personen unter Wegfall unmittelbarer Zuordnung zu einer sozialen Kategorie (z.B. Altersgruppe) mit ihren oftmals ganz stereotypkonträren Gedanken, Gefühlen und Verhaltensweisen wahr- und ernstgenommen.’<sup>121</sup> Benke argues that the motivation to create virtual identities is identical to that in real life — it is a longing for success and recognition.<sup>122</sup> Mollwitz’s virtual identity is not without consequences for his real life, especially as his real identity grows increasingly dominated by it.<sup>123</sup> The Internet becomes even more than an extension of reality, as it begins to subsume his world offline. Finally, it is his online life that makes it impossible for him to live his real life.

Ralf Tanner is the main protagonist of the story ‘Der Ausweg’. Unlike other male characters who create a virtual reality, Tanner tries to free himself from his mediated self. However, Tanner is in a crisis, as he seems to have lost control over his life:

Im Frühsommer seines neununddreißigsten Jahres wurde der Schauspieler Ralf Tanner sich selbst unwirklich. Von einem Tag zum nächsten kamen keine Anrufe mehr. Langjährige Freunde verschwanden aus seinem Leben, berufliche Pläne zerschlugen sich grundlos, eine Frau, die er nach seinen Möglichkeiten geliebt hatte, behauptete, daß er sie am Telefon verspottet habe (*Ruhm* 79).

As Ebling subsumes his self by assuming Tanner’s identity in ‘Stimmen’, Tanner here loses his real identity. He becomes ‘unreal’ to himself. The reader already knows from the first story that Tanner is a womanizer and has many affairs, thus demonstrating a high level of sexual prowess. It becomes clear in this story that he is not interested in women as people, but only as sex objects: ‘An diesem Abend ging er mit einer Frau aus, um die er sich schon lange bemüht hatte. Aber als er ihr

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<sup>121</sup> Döring, p. 6.

<sup>122</sup> Benke, p. 50. On the relationship between identity and recognition, see Heiner Keupp, ‘Fragmente oder Einheit? Wie heute Identität geschaffen wird.’ <[www.ipp-muenchen.de/texte/fragmente\\_oder\\_einheit.pdf](http://www.ipp-muenchen.de/texte/fragmente_oder_einheit.pdf)> [accessed November 2014].

<sup>123</sup> Balinth, p. 21.

gegenüber saß konnte er plötzlich nicht mehr so tun also ob ihr Gerede ihn interessierte.’ (*Ruhm* 80–81) Subsequently, Tanner feels more and more estranged from himself: ‘und am nächsten Morgen, als er sie ruhig neben sich atmen hörte, war ihm, als hätte ein Fremder sich in dieses Zimmer verirrt; und dieser Fremde war nicht sie.’ (*Ruhm* 81) His estrangement is portrayed as being connected to his job as an actor. As Sebastian Kleinschmidt remarks in an interview with Kehlmann: ‘diese ständige Selbstverwandlung, dieses ständige Rollenspiel, daß man nicht genau weiß, wer man eigentlich ist. Das zehrt an der Substanz.’<sup>124</sup> Actors have to switch identities all the time:

Er hatte schon lange den Verdacht, daß Fotografiertwerden sein Gesicht abnützte. Sollte es möglich sein, daß jedesmal, wenn man gefilmt wurde, ein anderer entstand, eine nicht ganz gelungene Kopie, die einen aus sich selbst verdrängte. Ihm war, als wäre nach den Jahren des Bekanntseins nur mehr ein Teil von ihm übrig und als brauchte er bloß noch zu sterben, um einzig und allein dort zu sein, wo er eigentlich hingehörte: in den Filmen und auf den unzähligen Fotografien. Und jener Körper, der noch immer atmete, Hunger hatte und sich aus irgendwelchen Gründen hier und dort herumtrieb, würde endlich nicht mehr stören – ein Körper, der dem Filmstar ohnehin nicht sehr ähnlich war. So viel Arbeit und Schminke waren nötig, soviel Aufwand und Formung, damit er wirklich aussah wie der Frank Tanner auf der Leinwand. (*Ruhm* 81–82)

The passage refers to Tanner’s obliteration. It shows how the media have taken over his life (the photos use up his face).

Balint speaks of a loss of identity through obliteration within the individual.<sup>125</sup> A film is a virtual space in which one can lose oneself by playing different parts.<sup>126</sup> The preceding quote also shows that hegemonic masculinity is not natural — it is a concept that needs to be artificially sustained and requires a lot of hard work. It reflects, too, the link between masculinity and the male

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<sup>124</sup> Kehlmann and Kleinschmidt, pp. 89–90.

<sup>125</sup> Balint, p. 17.

<sup>126</sup> Sunhild Galter, ‘Vernetzte Welten in Daniel Kehlmanns *Ruhm*: Schicksal oder Chance?’, *Germanistische Beiträge*, 29 (2011), 86–97, p. 95.



body. The body is artificially created and formed; this also requires effort. Putting on make-up resonates with the theory of masculinity as a masquerade: Tanner's masculine identity is affirmed through a cosmetic mask.

As in *Die Vermessung der Welt*, Kehlmann again links irony and parody to Butler's gender performance theory. The 'nicht ganz gelungene Kopie' in the preceding passage makes direct reference to Butler's theory: 'Practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration and one that appears as derived, phantasmatic, and mimetic — a failed copy as it were.'<sup>127</sup> Ralf Tanner embodies and consolidates the traditional image of masculinity in movies. However, he does not succeed entirely and feels like a failed copy, showing that hegemonic masculinity is phantasmic and mimetic. Butler's theory is reflected further when Tanner starts going to clubs where impersonators of famous people perform on stage; the link between male identity and performance is again made here. Tanner starts to become a double of himself at the club where he performs as the 'Tanner double', an 'Imitator seines medialen Selbst'.<sup>128</sup> Male identity and gender become an imitation without origin:

The notion of gender parody defended here does not assume that there is an original, which such parodic identities imitate. Indeed, the parody is of the very notion of an original; just as the psychoanalytic notion of gender identification is constituted by a fantasy of a fantasy, the transfiguration of an Other who is always already a 'figure' in that double sense, so gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin.<sup>129</sup>

Adopting his new, non-mediated persona, Tanner moves into another apartment and changes his identity entirely when he takes on the name 'Matthias Wagner'. The situation becomes ironic

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<sup>127</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 200.

<sup>128</sup> Balinth, p. 18.

<sup>129</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 188.

when Tanner meets his own impersonator, who tells him:

Um einen Menschen darstellen zu können, muß man mit ihm leben. Oft gehe ich auf die Straße und merke gar nicht, daß ich es als Ralf Tanner tue. Ich lebe als er. Ich denke wie er, manchmal bleibe ich tagelang in der Rolle. Ich bin Ralf Tanner. Das braucht Jahre. (*Ruhm* 85)

Indeed, Tanner is impressed by how well the impersonator captures his self — he embodies hegemonic masculinity even better than Tanner does: ‘Er konnte sich nicht erinnern, daß er selbst je so eine gute Figur abgegeben hatte.’ (*Ruhm* 91) That Tanner ‘cut a good figure’ reflects Butler’s idea that ‘[t]here is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’.<sup>130</sup> Eventually the owner of the club tells Tanner that he does not resemble Tanner so much after all; in a way, he informs him that he does not entirely embody hegemonic masculinity. The irony is apparent, and is again reflective of Butler, who argues that gender parody is controlled: ‘Parody by itself is not subversive, and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony.’<sup>131</sup> The club owner controls parody and decides who remains on stage and who does not. Tanner becomes a parody of his own performance of masculinity: he is shown through the eyes of the club owner as not meeting its expectations. For a moment Tanner is scandalized. However, he then simply returns home and thinks: ‘Niemandem schien er gefehlt zu haben. Es war, als hätte ein anderer seine Angelegenheiten weitergeführt.’ (*Ruhm* 86) At the end of the story, his suspicion that someone else took his place crystallizes. Tanner sees a film trailer in which he appears to play the lead character, but he does not recall ever having participated in the film. He sees photos of ‘Tanner’ in China, even though he has never been there. Nora starts to point

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<sup>130</sup> *Gender Trouble*, p. 34

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, p. 189.

out that he does not look like the actor Tanner. Finally he begins to doubt himself and who he is: ‘Sein Blick glitt zum Wandspiegel. Da war sie, und da war er, und plötzlich schien es ihm unsicher, auf welcher Seite die Originale waren und wo die Abbilder.’ (*Ruhm* 89) This echoes Butler’s view that there is no original gender. Overall, a postmodern approach to irony is evident:

To describe postmodernity as a society of the simulacra, where copies and repetitions have no original, where systems have no centre and where images have no prior model of substance imaged, is to see the postmodern present as finally having liberated itself from the constraining myths of an ultimate real.<sup>132</sup>

In the text, copies and repetitions do not seem to have any original. Gender performance is ironic in itself as it creates ‘the illusion of a self or a body that was there to be expressed.’<sup>133</sup> The reader starts to doubt whether Tanner is really Tanner or whether Ebling has finally made his fantasy come true. When Tanner tries to enter his villa, another Tanner is already in the house. Tanner states: ‘Wer auch immer ihn aus seinem Leben verdrängt hatte, er machte es perfekt, er war der Richtige dafür, und wenn irgend jemand Tanners Dasein verdient hatte, dann der dort drüben.’ (*Ruhm* 93) Tanner is not at all upset about this: ‘Also hatte er den Ausweg gefunden. Er war frei.’ (*Ruhm* 93) His annihilation of his identity leads to freedom, which seems to suggest that he has been acting in life — he had to live up to the expectations of a highly successful man who was obliged to perform, both in his relations with women and professionally. Following Bourdieu’s argument, he ‘played’ a man. Again, he was able to assert a hegemonic masculinity through the media via his roles in films, an image that gave him the opportunity to act similarly in his real life — he was able to sleep with many women, for example. Masculinity is a virtual construct, not only online or via the mobile phone, but also in the media in general. With the assistance of the medium of television, Tanner maintains a dominant social role that is engaged in the politics of producing

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>133</sup> Colebrook, p. 95.

exemplary bearers of hegemonic masculinity.

### *Analysis of female characters*

There are several stories in the book in which women are the main characters. Interestingly, though, they remain dependent upon male authority, despite their courage and independent behaviour. Irony is used to reveal that this dependence is a fiction created virtually by male authors.

In the story 'In Gefahr', unlike his girlfriend Elisabeth, the character of Leo represents a construction of masculinity that is contrary to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. An author, he is portrayed as a 'seltsame[r], aber geistreiche[r] Mann' (*Ruhm* 29), a dependent character. Elisabeth has to take care of him as if he were a child and in their relationship she seems to assume the role of mother rather than that of lover and partner:

Danach müßte sie sich ums Gepäck kümmern, und im Hotel wäre es an ihr, mit dem Rezeptionisten zu sprechen und dafür zu sorgen, daß der Zimmerservice etwas brachte, das auch Leo mit seinen kindischen Eßgewohnheiten für genießbar hielt. (*Ruhm* 27)

The secret hero of the short story is not Leo but Elisabeth. She, in contrast to Leo, is an independent and courageous woman. She works for *Médecins sans Frontières* and has parachuted into war zones. She embodies more traditionally male virtues than Leo does and can be seen as an example for Halberstam's argument that masculinity is not necessarily attached to the male body.<sup>134</sup> However, there is little evidence that she creates an alternative masculinity that could be labelled 'female masculinity', as suggested by Halberstam. Instead Elisabeth seems to believe that masculinity is owned by men. For example, she indirectly questions Leo's masculinity when she thinks about her colleagues: 'Das waren immerhin erwachsene Menschen die bewußt ein Risiko eingegangen waren, Männer, die sich im Leben zurechtfinden und die anders waren als ... Ja, es

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<sup>134</sup> Halberstam, p. 241.

waren Männer, die für sich selbst sorgen konnten.’ (*Ruhm* 36) In direct contrast to Leo, Elisabeth’s colleagues behave like adults and are able to find their way in life and take care of themselves; therefore they are ‘real men’. This implies that women play a role in the production of masculinity since they judge it. The passage also suggests that men who exhibit childlike behaviour are not ‘real men’; Leo is an interesting parallel with Mollwitz’s superior’s and Gauß’s childlike tendencies in *Die Vermessung der Welt*. The couple, Elisabeth and Leo, appear as an example of gender subversion: neither behaves according to gender stereotypes.

Elisabeth’s greatest fear is to end up as a character in one of Leo’s novels. This does, however, happen at the end of the book, in the second rendition of ‘In Gefahr’, which has the same title as the previous story. Here the author Leo has written a story about himself from Elisabeth’s perspective; in this version he is much more courageous: ‘Drüben in der Hauptstadt hatte er sich merkwürdig versonnen verhalten. [...] Woher nahm er plötzlich diesen Mut? Es paßte nicht zu ihm.’ (*Ruhm* 196) He seems to be portrayed as he would like to see himself in actual life, as is Elisabeth: Leo recreates her personality, representing her as helpless. Realizing that she has become weak (as portrayed in the novel), Elisabeth tries to leave Leo. However the author, as creator of the narrative, refuses to let her take this decision: “‘Aber jetzt nicht”, sagte er. “Nicht in dieser Geschichte.”” (*Ruhm* 201) As John Pizer notes, Leo ‘emerges as the rather sovereign author of the story’.<sup>135</sup> It is the male author who shows off his literary power and asserts his masculinity in the end. Authors create identities for their characters in their stories. According to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Leo dominates women; here the female character invents his male character according to standards of hegemonic masculinity. Again it is media, in this case the traditional medium of a book, which

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<sup>135</sup> John D. Pizer, ‘Subverting the Institutionalized Reading Tour: Rafik Schami and Daniel Kehlmann’, *Oxford German Studies*, 43/1 (2014), 55–68 (p. 65).

make this masculinity possible. And again media serve as an extension of reality. Hegemonic masculinity is shown to be fictitious and virtual, but at the same time the story points to the role of authors in influencing gender discourse; they too are engaged in the creation of masculinities. As Connell notes, the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a ‘discursive construction’ needs to be constantly recreated.<sup>136</sup> Leo does exactly this.

In ‘Rosalie geht sterben’ the main character, Rosalie, is portrayed as a strong woman, just like Elisabeth. Rosalie is a person who knows what she wants, as opposed to the male characters in the stories of *Ruhm*. Rosalie is dependent upon the author of ‘Rosalie geht sterben’ — possibly this is also Leo — just as Elisabeth is upon Leo when he writes about her. Parts of the story consist of dialogues between the author and his character Rosalie. As the protagonists in *Die Vermessung der Welt* question the authenticity of the novel, Rosalie raises doubts about the veracity of the story (*Ruhm* 57). As in *Die Vermessung der Welt*, this creates an atmosphere of inauthenticity, ambiguity and equivocation. Rosalie also takes issue with the way in which women are depicted in the story: ‘Um sich abzulenken, blickt sie in den goldgerahmten Spiegel. Sind das wirklich wir? Diese Hütchen, Krokotaschen und wunderlich geschminkten Gesichter, diese gezierten Handbewegungen und lächerlichen Kleider?’ (*Ruhm* 57) This endorses Joan Riviere’s theory of femininity as a disguise and masquerade. Women are, moreover, shown to be created through male fantasy. In a sense, Rosalie questions the male authority of the author and can be seen as a figure contesting male dominance. She has an incurable illness and consequently takes the courageous decision to turn to medically assisted suicide. The author has the power to change her fate, but he constantly points out that he will not alter the course of the story, even though she begs him to do so. A struggle between the two of them develops about the storyline. Interestingly, the author then loses control of his plot:

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<sup>136</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, pp. xviii, xix.

‘Aber im Moment beschäftigen mich andere Dinge; es beunruhigt mich sehr, daß ich keine Ahnung habe wer der Kerl am Steuer ist, wer ihn erfunden hat und wie er in meine Geschichte kommt.’ (*Ruhm* 70–71) This can be interpreted as an intervention by the author Kehlmann, who changes the story Leo is writing.<sup>137</sup> At the end the author gives in and turns Rosalie into a healthy young woman.

Rosalie’s life is saved by the fictitious author of the story ‘Rosalie geht sterben’. However, the real author, Kehlmann, kills Rosalie in the end through the perspective of the fictive author and the reader becomes his accomplice: ‘so wie eben jetzt, da ich diese Geschichte endgültig verlasse, Rosalies Dasein erlischt. Ohne Todeskampf, Schmerz oder Übergang. [...] eine verblässende Erinnerung in meinem Gedächtnis und in Ihrem, während Sie diesen Absatz lesen.’ (*Ruhm* 77) Just like some of the characters and the author Leo, Kehlmann is showing off his literary power. The female protagonist who stands up to male authority is silenced by the author and the reader, pointing to the power of both. The irony and self-reflectivity of the text reveal that this male dominance remains virtual.

### **Summary**

All the characters in *Ruhm* are connected through various forms of media such as the Internet, mobile phones and books, highlighting their ability to open up a space in which to experiment with identity. In *Ruhm* the male characters switch identities with the help of modern technology or traditional media; they pretend to be someone else and try to live an alternative life. Some of them have professions that facilitate a change in identity, as they are authors or actors. The male characters switch identities because they do not live the lives they would like to. Insignificant male characters want some recognition or even fame. Some of them try to duplicate their lives. In a few

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<sup>137</sup> Balinth, p. 24.

cases, their virtual identities heavily impact upon their real lives and become an extension of their reality. What all the male characters have in common is that none of them conform to hegemonic masculinity entirely in their real lives; most of them try to do so through technology in their virtual identities. Far from developing an anti-hegemonic masculinity, they do not experiment freely with their masculinity and merely imitate hegemonic masculinity. The attempt to be someone else or to lead a double life fails; it makes the characters live a lie and is eventually very damaging, so much so that not even technology can save them. The switch in identity even turns into an annihilation of the self.

Linking irony and parody to Butler's gender theory, Kehlmann shows that gender is a social construct that may or may not be authentic — it is an imitation without an original. Hegemonic masculinity is more closely achieved via the Internet, mobile phones, television and fiction, reflecting Alexander Roesler's view that technology can increase performance. But even technology cannot enable hegemonic masculinity entirely. The concept of hegemonic masculinity becomes virtual — it is not real: men act, perform, use online, literary and mobile identities to achieve it and to show off. At the same time it becomes partly real, as it is part of an extended reality: 'Dies sei das Zeitalter der Bilder [...] Wirklichkeit geworden durch die Macht der Technik.' (*Ruhm* 31)

The real heroes of *Ruhm* are female. While Elisabeth supports Halberstam's argument that masculinity can exist independently of the male body, she does not manifest female masculinity. Whereas the male characters actively work towards their fame, as actors, authors and so on, the women do not seem to need any of these devices. Despite their courage and independence, female characters such as Elisabeth and Rosalie are subjected to male power and suffer the consequences. They become victims of the male use of technology and media. Even though hegemonic masculinity remains fictitious, the negative consequences for women become real. A strong masculinity, where men are courageous and in control of their lives, is a literary fantasy. At the



same time, *Ruhm* makes the point that masculinity or masculinities are produced by the media, thus reflecting Teresa de Lauretis's argument that gender, 'both as representation and as self-representation, is the product of social technologies, such as cinema [...] as well as practices of daily life'.<sup>138</sup> It is Kehlmann's narrative technique — the visibility of the male author — that reveals hegemonic masculinity as a concept which needs to be artificially sustained: 'Alles ein Trick.' (*Ruhm* 32) Through the use of irony as a literary technique, setting the author above the characters and the speaking conditions<sup>139</sup> and self-reflectivity, masculinity is unmasked as fiction and fantasy. While Kehlmann shows off his virtuosity as an author, it is the fictional author Leo who 'assumes control over the narrative of *Ruhm* in its concluding tale'.<sup>140</sup> Here Kehlmann consciously undermines the sovereignty of his 'Erzähldisposition'. Overall, a postmodern approach to irony prevails: copies and repetitions do not seem to have any original, nothing is what it appears to be. Through the interconnection of irony and narration, authenticity and realness are undermined, including the realness of gender: men create themselves in virtual spaces and women become the victims of the projections of male fantasy.

## 2.3 Conclusion

Kehlmann shows how a novel set in the past can have significance for our understanding of gender and masculinity today. The theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are insufficient to explain the unfolding characterizations in the various stories, and at the same time seem to suggest

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<sup>138</sup> Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 2.

<sup>139</sup> Colebrook, p. 115.

<sup>140</sup> Pizer, pp. 65, 66.

that the old theoretical concepts could still be relevant now; the idea of a masculinity built on pain, for example, may well be relevant in the construction of masculinity today. In *Die Vermessung der Welt* scientists sacrifice themselves for their careers; they renounce the many pleasures of life. This is further developed in *Ruhm*, where the male protagonists make similar sacrifices, submit to their superiors and suffer in order to approximate to the image of hegemonic masculinity. Kehlmann leads us to believe that men in the nineteenth century and those of today are somehow the same: the concept of hegemonic masculinity does not alter, neither from one generation of men to another nor from one century to the next, and is shown to be a concept resistant to historical and social change. It may be no coincidence that the end of the novel is set at a time when modern masculinity was constructed and ‘a stereotype of manliness emerged that we recognize even today’.<sup>141</sup>

Kehlmann uses irony both as a device and in terms of philosophy in relation to gender. He employs it to provide a deconstructive reading of gender, revealing the difference between what is said and what is presented and the gap between concepts of masculinity and reality. Irony becomes a narrative stance in his books. In *Die Vermessung der Welt* the characters criticize the narration and the author, questioning his male authority and the authenticity of the text, and at times attempt to rewrite the story themselves when it comes to the representation of their masculinity. When they do so, the narrator deploys situational irony and sarcasm to reveal their lies. Irony is also used in relation to fame, masculinity and ageing. Ageing is depicted as tragic and even ridiculous, coinciding with the characters’ loss of faculty and fame and eventually weakening their masculinity.

In *Ruhm* the characters also write their own stories and create their own worlds, which present them as being manlier, and constantly question whether what happens in the stories is real. Through

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<sup>141</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 17.

the author's use of irony the reader starts to wonder in both novels what is real and what is not. Butler notes that grammar imposes constraints upon thought and the thinkable;<sup>142</sup> she argues that achieving subversion involves 'contesting the grammar in which gender is given'.<sup>143</sup> Some of the characters question the form which gender is given by attacking the narration. Kehlmann creates a fictitious male author who intervenes in the narration to put the characters back in their place; he is also one of the characters in *Ruhm* who, in his own story, shows off male virtues which he does not possess in the other stories. When Kehlmann makes his own intervention in the plot visible he dominates the fictive male author, changing the storyline against his will and displaying his literary skills – thus mirroring the showing-off of the fictive male author and some of the male characters. In the last story the fictive male author realizes his fantasy about hegemonic masculinity and women; he triumphs in the end, as does the fictionally created image of hegemonic masculinity.

In this general atmosphere of inauthenticity, ambiguity and equivocation, gender is shown to be a social construct and hegemonic masculinity an imaginative yet powerful fiction. Male characters constantly create themselves in fantasy spaces and women find themselves in these spaces as male constructs, the fantasy and projection of male desire.

While Kehlmann offers a deconstructive reading of gender through the use of irony, criticism of knowledge and concepts is only one function of irony.<sup>144</sup> The question arises as to whether irony creates a certain kind of stability, or whether it problematizes and disrupts.<sup>145</sup> In fact irony can be a way of sustaining masculine domination: 'In criticising himself the white male subject of capitalism

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<sup>142</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xix.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. xx.

<sup>144</sup> Colebrook, p. 83.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

allows its images and fantasies to be given one more viewing.’<sup>146</sup> Indeed Kehlmann risks reaffirming the very structures he wants to criticize by the use of irony, as he does not really disrupt the traditional image of male and female, nor does he offer any positive alternative male identity. It is significant in this respect that Kehlmann only portrays privileged — white middle- or upper-class — men in both novels. Humboldt and Gauß are excelling in research; the male characters in *Ruhm* are IT specialists, actors or authors. As such they have access to the world of research, Internet, mobile phones, stage and film as well as literature, spaces of evasion that are not accessible to everyone. Kehlmann here recreates the link between masculinity and social and economic privilege.

Even though the male characters do not develop anti-hegemonic masculinities, some of them display anti-hegemonic subversion; several exhibit childish behaviour, for example, reflecting Bourdieu’s argument that the male characters are children playing men. This childish behaviour is intrinsically linked with the male quest for fame: ‘Ruhm ist etwas, das sich die meisten Menschen von Kindheit an wünschen. Es gehört zu den frühesten Sehnsuchtsvorstellungen eines Menschen, daß alle ihn kennen sollen. Eine kindliche, auch kindische Sehnsucht also.’<sup>147</sup>

Subversion is also apparent in the female characters, who are shown to be more courageous than men; indeed, some embody more male virtues than the male protagonists. However, there is no evidence that women produce their own masculinity. Courageous women such as Elisabeth and Rosalie are punished by the male author, who rejects their attempts at subversion through their stories. Again male authority and domination can only be achieved via the media and remain fiction — literary fiction.

In both *Die Vermessung der Welt* and *Ruhm* the male protagonists accept hegemonic

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>147</sup> Kehlmann and Kleinschmidt, p. 125.

masculinity as standard; no active attempts are made to create an anti-hegemonic alternative. Kehlmann's writings reflect Connell's argument that no man can entirely embody hegemonic masculinity, but that its great power lies in the fact that people generally accept it as the measure of masculinity. In their quest to correspond to hegemonic masculinity, the male characters in *Die Vermessung der Welt* react with extreme violence towards the other and the self, and authority through violence is shown to be a restorative force. Not succeeding, they escape into imaginary worlds, fantasies and imagined experiences. This strategy of evasion is further developed in *Ruhm*, where the male protagonists switch identity with the help of technology and media, through which they create images of hegemonic masculinity and show off, making themselves out to be manlier than they really are. Fantasy spaces become an extended reality, and therefore the images of hegemonic masculinity are partly real. Media, technology and discourse are shown to be forceful tools with which to create and sustain gender. Overall, hegemonic masculinity emerges on the one hand as a constraint: it implies adaptation, pain and sacrifice. In line with Tim Carrigan et al. Kehlmann reflects the view that hegemonic masculinity does not represent the true nature of men.<sup>148</sup> On the other hand it provides gratification through fantasy. The fictitious concept of hegemonic masculinity becomes a reality because men accept it as the standard for their masculinity and social technologies repeat this fantasy over and over again.

The topic of evasion developed in the discussion of Kehlmann's works is also a main feature of the novels by Doron Rabinovici, where the male characters play identity games, as the following chapter will show.

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<sup>148</sup> Carrigan, Connell and Lee, p. 106.

### 3 Doron Rabinovici: Playing identity games

A sense of estrangement and of belonging nowhere influences the development of Jewish male identity in Rabinovici's literary work. The main characters of his novels are men, most of them struggling with their identity. The analysis in this chapter will principally draw on the novel *Suche nach M.*, but will also integrate reading of the later novels *Ohnehin* and *Andernorts*.<sup>1</sup> Previous research into *Suche nach M.* has focused on the exploration of guilt and Jewish identity.<sup>2</sup> Research into the construction of masculinity in Rabinovici's novel, however, has only just started, and has found, for example, that there is a link between the re-evaluation of victimhood and failed masculinity in *Suche nach M.*<sup>3</sup> and that the functioning of memory is put into the context of gender performance in *Ohnehin*.<sup>4</sup> The question of male and especially Jewish identity, as well as the memory of and communication about the Holocaust, are indeed central to *Suche nach M.* and the other two novels.

As Allyson Fiddler and Florian Krobb note, 'Austrian culture continuously develops new ways of remembering and interrogating generational attitudes and destabilizing political mindsets.'<sup>5</sup> At the same time contemporary Austrian authors increasingly 'challenge a monolithic representation of

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<sup>1</sup> *Andernorts* was nominated for the *Deutscher Buchpreis* in 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Matthias Beilein, 'Unter falschem Namen. Schweigen und Schuld in Doron Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.*', *Monatshefte*, 97/2 (2005), 250–69, or Doerte Bischoff, 'Herkunft und Schuld. Identitätsverhandlungen in Doron Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.*', in *Herkünfte. Historisch – Ästhetisch – Kulturell*, ed. by Barbara Thums, Volker Mergenthaler and Nicola Kaminski (Heidelberg: Winter, 2004), pp. 249–79.

<sup>3</sup> Gratzke, 'Mullemänner', p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> Bitter, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Allyson Fiddler and Florian Krobb, 'Gauging the Millennium's First Decade', in *Austrian Studies* 19 (2011), 1–5 (p. 1).

contemporary Austrian culture and identity.’<sup>6</sup> This chapter will further explore the nexus between coming to terms with the past and masculine identity, enquiring if memory of and generational attitudes to the Holocaust also destabilize and challenge traditional male gender identity. It will address in particular the question of whether the construction of Jewish masculine identity can serve as a model for an anti-hegemonic masculinity, one that is not based on the domination of women and other men. It will further ask the following questions which arise from the primary material: How is Jewish masculinity constructed and is it represented as a concept of a masculinity apart? How do memory and gender intersect and what kind of influence does the past have on the construction of male (Jewish) identity? To what extent can Rabinovici’s novels be seen as belonging to the traditional genre of family stories dealing with the Nazi past and how does this connect with the construction of masculinity in the texts? These questions will be analysed drawing on selected theories on Jewish masculinity, as well as on postmemory theory embedded in the current discussion of family stories.

In order to answer these questions, this chapter will first give an overview of the discussion on Jewish masculinity and introduce the concepts of *Väterliteratur*, family stories, *Elternliteratur* and postmemory theory while also providing the specific Austrian context of coming to terms with the past. The novel *Suche nach M.* will then be analysed in detail and compared with *Ohnehin* and *Andernorts*. The analysis will look at various constructions of Jewish masculinity, the masculinity of other minority groups, the representation of women and the literary form of Rabinovici’s writing.

It will be demonstrated that Rabinovici develops a variation of the genre of *Elternliteratur* in opposition to family stories that comment on the attitude both of victims and perpetrators in dealing

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<sup>6</sup> Allyson Fiddler, ‘Shifting Boundaries: Responses to Multiculturalism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century’, in *A History of Austrian Literature 1918–2000*, ed. by Katrin Kohl and Ritchie Robertson (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), pp. 265–289 (p. 285).

with the Nazi past. This term will be used here to distinguish between the genres of *Väterliteratur* and family stories, as a different way of writing about the past. In Rabinovici's texts it is the relationship between parents and their sons, which is central to the process of coming to terms with the past. It will be shown that the troublesome *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* of the parents has a tremendous impact on their relationship with their sons, which in turn affects the development of the masculinity of both the second and third generations of Jewish men.<sup>7</sup> While the sons manifest elements of anti-hegemonic subversion, they fail to develop a positive alternative male gender identity, revealing a weak masculinity and fragile male identity. This third generation remain childlike and play identity games. At the same time, the few male Jewish characters from the second generation, who remember their suffering during the Holocaust but have been able to distance themselves from their past, are able to develop a stable male gender identity which is not based on the domination of others. Women are presented as being entirely different from men; they occupy the function of saviour figures. At the same time they show an instrumental attitude to masculinity, adopting masculine behaviour in order to achieve their specific objectives.

### 3.1 Theory on Jewish masculinity — an anti-hegemonic masculinity?

There has been a particular discourse about Jewish masculinity in the past. While Sander Gilman

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<sup>7</sup> The term 'second generation' has originally been used 'referring to the sons and daughters of Jewish Holocaust survivors' (See Erin McGlothlin, 'Generations and German-Jewish Writing: Maxim Biller's Representation of German-Jewish Love from "Harlem Holocaust" to *Liebe heute*', in *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Culture*, ed. by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), pp. 27–55 (p. 27)). The term is used here for the generation which witnessed the Holocaust and whose parents have also witnessed it. The 'third generation' do not have any first hand-knowledge of the Holocaust.



shows that a discourse on the ‘weakness’ of Jewish masculinity exists,<sup>8</sup> Frauke Matthes goes even further, speaking of a ‘historical emasculation’<sup>9</sup> that permeates current stereotypes about Jewish men. In his discussion of the creation of modern masculinity in Europe, George Mosse argues that the male ideal needed a countertype against which it could define itself.<sup>10</sup> In Germany and other European countries, the Jewish male served this function. In the nineteenth century Jewish men were labelled as effeminate.<sup>11</sup> Gilman shows how anti-Semitic discourse designated Jews as ‘hysteric and diseased’.<sup>12</sup> The Jewish male body was also associated with homosexuality and sexual perversion.<sup>13</sup> This construction of masculinity, where the Jew was ‘at best half a man’,<sup>14</sup> has to be seen in the context of the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe.

Tamar Mayer notes that the feminization of Jewish men has led ‘to the intersection of masculinity and nationalism among Jews’.<sup>15</sup> Masculinity became a project for Zionism: the idea was to form healthier, stronger Jewish men.<sup>16</sup> While this project aimed at a ‘re-masculinization’ of the Jewish man, a strand of it distinguished itself as anti-hegemonic:

Zionism promised an erotic revolution for the Jews: the creation of a virile new Hebrew man, as well as rejection of the inequality of women in traditional Judaism in favor of full equality between the sexes in all spheres of life.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 32, 99, 162.

<sup>9</sup> Frauke Matthes, “‘Echter Südländer — Reb Motke — Deutschmann’”? Debating Jewish Masculinity in Maxim Biller’s *Die Tochter*, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 48/3 (2012), 323–35.

<sup>10</sup> Mosse, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> Sander Gilman, ‘The Image of the Hysteric’, in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. by Sander Gilman et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 345–452 (p. 411).

<sup>13</sup> Raz Yosef, ‘National Troubles: Male Matters in Israeli Gay Cinema’, in *Brother Keepers — New Perspectives on Jewish Masculinity*, ed. by Harry Brod and Rabbi Shawn Israel Zevit (Harriman: Men’s Studies Press, 2010), pp. 113–32 (p. 113).

<sup>14</sup> Mosse, p. 63.

<sup>15</sup> Tamar Mayer, ‘Gender Ironies of Nationalism Setting the Stage’, in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism, Sexing the Nation*, ed. by Tamar Mayer (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1–24 (p. 15).

<sup>16</sup> Michele Aaron, ‘The New Queer Jew: Jewishness, Masculinity, and Contemporary Film’, in *Brother Keepers*, ed. by Brod and Zevit, pp. 174–82 (p. 178).

<sup>17</sup> David Biale, ‘Zionism as an erotic revolution’, in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied*

This construction builds on traditional Jewish masculinity while challenging the image of effeminacy. Daniel Boyarin argues that in the traditional Ashkenazi Jewish culture, ‘the soft man was the central and dominant cultural ideal’.<sup>18</sup> This ‘gentle’ masculinity is not based on the exercise of power over women and other, presumably weaker, men;<sup>19</sup> it was constructed as sexual attractiveness that was not based on physical prowess and economic power but on academic virtue.<sup>20</sup> Within this ideal, men are ‘unmanned but not desexualized’.<sup>21</sup> Potentially, this represents a ‘positive oppositional identity’ to hegemonic masculinity.<sup>22</sup>

Paul Lerner et al. argue that today ‘scholars are transcending the framework of anti-Semitic representations and internal Jewish self-critiques, and are now seeking alternative perspectives for the study of Jewish masculinities and Jewish male identities’.<sup>23</sup> The publication of *Brother Keepers: New Perspectives on Jewish Masculinity*,<sup>24</sup> a recent collection of articles on Jewish masculinity, is an example. In his introductory article, Harry Brod argues that gender shapes the way in which people express themselves, not only as individuals but also as Jews.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, some authors in this volume follow the line of the nineteenth-century construction of masculinity, in that it is a concept of masculinity based on difference. The authors Michael Reichert and Sharon Ravitch, who interviewed Jewish boys around the age of fourteen,<sup>26</sup> emphasize the positive aspects of Jewish

*Perspective*, ed. by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 283–307 (pp. 283–84).

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic conduct. The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Boyarin in Warren Rosenberg, *The Legacy of Rage: Jewish Masculinity, Violence and Culture* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Lerner et al., ‘Introduction’, in *Jewish Masculinities. German Jews, Gender and History*, ed. by Benjamin Baader et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp. 1–22 (p. 3).

<sup>24</sup> Brod and Zevit (ed).

<sup>25</sup> Harry Brod, ‘Introduction: Why now?’ in *ibid.*, pp. 7–17 (p. 17).

<sup>26</sup> Michael C. Reichert and Sharon M. Ravitch, “‘Everything that makes us Human’: Identity, Bonding, and

masculinity and depict a masculinity that is ‘gentle’. They found that the boys’ masculinities were grounded in kindness and respect for others, differentiating them from other boys.<sup>27</sup> They expressed their emotions freely.<sup>28</sup> The authors argue that ‘it was precisely their affiliation with the Jewish community that afforded them the freedom and confidence to resist pressures to conform to mainstream masculinity and to construct counter-hegemonic identities’.<sup>29</sup> They note that these findings are consistent with those of other minority boys’ groups. Jackson Katz comments that Jewish men in the United States are faced with the prejudice of being academically strong but physically weak.<sup>30</sup> He further highlights that he, like many other Jewish men, has been marked by the Jewish victimization.<sup>31</sup> He argues that Jewish men are shaped by the collective Jewish past. They can react to this legacy in two ways: either with a ‘conservative masculinity’ and violence or they can embrace non-violence.<sup>32</sup> Discussing American-Jewish authors, Warren Rosenberg notes that they are caught between two opposing constructions of masculinity: Rabbinic Judaism, ‘a culture that valorized scholarship, worship, sacrifice for family and community and non-violence’; and a European and North American culture of masculinity that ‘emphasized the physical over the mental, the individual over the family or group, that held up the warrior as the ultimate male’.<sup>33</sup>

Specific Jewish rituals also mark Jewish masculinity as different, *Brit Mila* — circumcision — being the most important. Eric Kline Silverman notes: ‘On one side, the rite ideally shapes infant boys and their fathers into loving, caring, responsible, and even motherly men. [It] shapes Jewish

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Resilience among Jewish Boys’, in *ibid.*, pp. 19–33.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Jackson Katz, ‘Not-so-nice Jewish Boys: Notes Violence and the Construction of Jewish-American Masculinity in the Late 20th and early 21st Centuries’, in *ibid.*, pp. 57–74 (p. 57).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> Warren Rosenberg, ‘Trouble on Max Nordau Street: Michael Chabon Rewrites Jewish Masculinity’, in *ibid.*, pp. 160–73 (p. 160).

men into a kinder, gentler masculinity.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the ritual can be interpreted as brutalizing young Jewish boys.<sup>35</sup> Kline summarizes the position of Ronald Goldman, who argues that the circumcised man is ‘more likely than his foreskinned counterpart to pursue deviant sexuality and sado-masochism, and to exhibit aggressive antisocial behaviours’.<sup>36</sup> Jewish masculinity is presented as being brutalized and brutal at the same time.<sup>37</sup> Such claims are more sweeping than research-based. Circumcision has indeed been over-interpreted and ‘has been read as a sign of everything’ in the West.<sup>38</sup> However, it is noteworthy that these assertions impact on the discourse on Jewish masculinity.

On the whole, historical, sociological and literary scholarship argues that Jewish masculinity, while not being monolithic in itself, can be seen as a concept of a masculinity apart. It is historically marked as an anti-hegemonic masculinity, but there were attempts at ‘re-masculizing’ the Jewish man in the framework of the Zionist movement. The Zionist construction of masculinity combines the physical aspects of hegemonic masculinity with the anti-hegemonic ideal of equality between the sexes. At the same time recent articles reveal the whole spectrum, from a ‘gentle’ to a ‘brutal’ masculinity. Others argue that the ‘[i]deal of the gentle-mannered, peace-loving father existed side by side with Jewish men actually comporting themselves as truly virile real men, capable of improper and aggressive behaviour’.<sup>39</sup>

Some authors argue that the construction of Jewish male gender identity is shaped by the traumatic experiences of the past — the Holocaust. Both the concept of a ‘gentle’ masculinity and

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<sup>34</sup> Eric Kline Silverman, ‘Circumcision and Masculinity: Motherly Men or Brutal Patriarchs?’, in *ibid.*, pp. 34–56 (p. 36).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 45).

<sup>38</sup> Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 57.

<sup>39</sup> Lerner et al., ‘Introduction’, in *Jewish Masculinities*, ed. by Baader et al., p. 10.

the theory of trauma and postmemory are important markers for the analysis of the construction of masculinity in the novels of Rabinovici, which engage closely with the coming-to-terms with the Nazi period. Is a 'gentle' masculinity presented as a positive alternative masculinity? How is the construction of masculinity affected by the past? In order to analyse how Rabinovici deals with the past through his literary work and the impact of the past on Jewish masculinity, the discussion of the concept of family stories and postmemory theory will be introduced in the following section.

### 3.2 From *Väterliteratur* and family stories to a new form of

#### *Elternliteratur*

It is important to note that public discourse on the Nazi era in Austria had its starting point in the notion of victimhood. The myth of Austria as 'Hitler's first victim'<sup>40</sup> was preserved until 1986, when Kurt Waldheim stood for President and it became known that he had been a member of the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party. The Waldheim Affair triggered a wave of anti-Semitism,<sup>41</sup> and at the same time a critical debate about Austria's involvement in the Second World War.<sup>42</sup> It was due to enormous international pressure that Austria was forced to confront her implication in the Holocaust.<sup>43</sup> Discourse then changed, in the 1990s claiming that Austrians had been 'both victims

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<sup>40</sup> Judith Beniston, '“Hitler's First Victim?” – Memory and Representation in Post-War Austria: Introduction', *Austrian Studies*, 11 (2003), 1–13 (pp. 2, 3).

<sup>41</sup> Lisa Silverman, '“Der richtige Riecher”: The Reconfiguration of Jewish and Austrian Identities in the Work of Doron Rabinovici', *The German Quarterly*, 72/3 (1999), 252–64 (p. 254).

<sup>42</sup> Matti Bunzl, 'Political Inscription, Artistic Reflection. A Recontextualization of Contemporary Viennese-Jewish Literature', *The German Quarterly*, 73/2 (2000), 163–70 (p. 167).

<sup>43</sup> Günter Bischof, 'Victims? Perpetrators? “Punching Bags” of European Historical Memory? The Austrians and Their World War II Legacies', *German Studies Review*, 27/1 (2004), 17–32 (p. 17).

and perpetrators' during the Second World War.<sup>44</sup> Steven Beller and Frank Trommler, however, argue that today 'many Austrians still cling to the notion of Austria as the "island of the blessed" rather than facing up to the reality of Austria's past'.<sup>45</sup> Austrian-Jewish intellectuals — among them Rabinovici — actively engaged in this debate, denouncing the repudiation of Austrian guilt. They also criticized Austrian Jews for turning a blind eye to the official discourse, remaining silent.<sup>46</sup> Günther Scheidl speaks of a 'Renaissance des jüdischen Romans nach 1986',<sup>47</sup> Hillary Hope Herzog of the 're-emergence of a self-consciously Jewish literature in Vienna'<sup>48</sup> and Pól O'Dochartaigh talks about a new German-Jewish literature.<sup>49</sup>

In 2000 the right-wing Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs entered the Austrian government coalition. Rabinovici's novel *Ohnehin* is set in an atmosphere of xenophobia preceding the 2000 election. The same authors who engaged in political writing during the Waldheim Affair played an important role in protests against this coalition, among them Rabinovici.<sup>50</sup> Dagmar Lorenz concludes that 'Germanophone Jewish literature has become increasingly political and activist,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Steven Beller and Frank Trommler, 'Austrian Writers Confront the Past, 1945–2000. An Introduction', *New German Critique*, 93 (2004), 3–18 (p. 16).

<sup>46</sup> Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, 'Imagined Identities. Children and Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors in Literature', in *German Memory Contests. The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film and Discourse since 1990*, ed. by Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), pp. 169–92 (p. 179).

<sup>47</sup> Scheidl defines Jewish novels as: 'Romane, die vorwiegend das Leben von Personen jüdischer Abstammung thematisieren und deren Verfasser sich selbst als Juden bezeichnen oder sich aufgrund ihrer Herkunft dem Judentum, auf welche Weise auch immer, zumindest verpflichtet fühlen.' (Günther Scheidl, 'Renaissance des "jüdischen" Romans nach 1986', in *Judentum und Antisemitismus: Studien zur Literatur und Germanistik in Österreich*, ed. by Anne Betten and Konstanze Fliedl (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2003), pp. 132–48 (p. 132)).

<sup>48</sup> Hillary Hope Herzog and Todd Herzog, 'Wien bleibt Wien: Austrian-Jewish Culture at Two *Fins de Siècle*', in *Literature in Vienna at the Turn of the Centuries, Continuities and Discontinuities around 1900 and 2000*, ed. by Ernst Grabovski and Hames Hardin (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), pp. 205–20 (p. 211).

<sup>49</sup> Pól O'Dochartaigh, 'Introduction', in *Jews in German Literature since 1945: German-Jewish Literature?*, ed. by Pól O'Dochartaigh (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2000), pp. i–ix (p. ix).

<sup>50</sup> Doron Rabinovici, 'Politik als Volksbrauch', *The German Quarterly*, 75/1 (2002), 1–8 (p. 3).

responding to domestic and international political and social issues.’<sup>51</sup>

Rabinovici’s interest in Jewish Viennese history, his political engagement with democracy and against anti-Semitism is indeed central to his literary work. While Rabinovici did not experience the Holocaust himself, it has deeply marked him. Rabinovici’s political engagement is not limited to anti-Semitism and the forgetting of the Holocaust; it extends into a larger project of commitment against xenophobia. Often his writings include other minorities in Austrian society, such as people from Turkey or the Balkans. ‘Rabinovici [not only] explores the relationships between Jews and other minorities’,<sup>52</sup> but he also makes political statements about other minorities and their position in Austrian society. As much as Rabinovici is a Jewish writer, he is also an Austrian writer and first and foremost a political writer. It is in this framework that Jewish-Austrian concepts of masculinity are debated in his novels.

The question of guilt and its impact on Jewish constructions of masculinity is indeed a prominent topic of Rabinovici’s three novels *Suche nach M.*, *Ohnehin* and *Andernorts*. Guilt is here to be understood as that of the second-generation survivors vis-à-vis the victims. Rabinovici focuses on the coming-to-terms with the past of the second and third generation of Jewish men. Lorenz notes a shift in Jewish writing ‘toward exploring the mentality of the perpetrators and their attitudes after the Shoah’.<sup>53</sup> She goes on to claim that Rabinovici’s writing contrasts the post-war experience of non-Jewish Austrians with those of Austrian Jews; it could be argued that it also reveals their similarities: the mechanisms of suppression of the past are the same. This suppression impacts on the male identity of both second- and third-generation men. This argument will be developed

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<sup>51</sup> Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, ‘Introduction’, in *Rebirth of a Culture: Jewish Identity and Jewish Writing in Germany and Austria Today*, ed. by Hillary Hope Herzog, Todd Herzog and Benjamin Lapp (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 1–17 (p. 5).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

further in the course of this chapter. First, it is useful to give an overview of how German-language literature has dealt with reconciliation with the past from both the perpetrator's and the victim's perspective, while also addressing questions of gender. Mapping out the literary engagement with the perpetrators will also serve for the later discussion of Arno Geiger's *Es geht uns gut* in Chapter Three.

*Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in German-language literature has taken specific forms. It has largely focused on the perpetrators. Aleida Assmann points out that the 1970s and 1980s were marked by the so-called *Väterliteratur* whereas the 1990s have seen a rise in *Familienromane*.<sup>54</sup> She differentiates between the two genres, noting that *Väterliteratur* is characterized by rupture through confrontation between sons and fathers; family stories are marked by continuity, thematizing the integration of the individual into the family context.<sup>55</sup> Anne Fuchs comments that contemporary German discourse on the Nazi past has been characterized by a remarkable increase in family stories about life in the National Socialist period.<sup>56</sup> Austrian authors have implemented this genre to deal with the Second World War as well.<sup>57</sup> Claudia Mauelshagen observes that German, Austrian and Swiss *Väterliteratur* is not really different.<sup>58</sup> In terms of dealing with the past, Fuchs argues about the gendered *Väterliteratur*:

[it] made a valid contribution to German memory contests by exposing the intergenerational dynamic that shaped post-war family life. Notwithstanding the emotional style of many of these narratives, the best examples of the genre helped to

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<sup>54</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis. Von der individuellen Erfahrung zur öffentlichen Inszenierung*, (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007), pp. 72–73.

<sup>55</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Generationsidentitäten und Vorurteilsstrukturen in der neuen deutschen Erinnerungsliteratur* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 2005), p. 26.

<sup>56</sup> Anne Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Martina Hamidouche, 'The New Austrian Family Novel: Eva Menasse's Vienna (2005)', in *Austrian Studies* 19 (2011), 187–99 (p. 187). See also Inge Stephan and Alexandra Tacke, 'Einleitung', in *Nachbilder des Holocaust*, ed. by Inge Stephan and Alexandra Tacke (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), pp. 7–17 (p. 9).

<sup>58</sup> Claudia Mauelshagen, *Der Schatten des Vaters. Deutschsprachige Väterliteratur der siebziger und achtziger Jahre* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995).



deconstruct a particular notion of masculinity, which has its bedrock in the *völkisch* ideology of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup>

The *Väterliteratur* of the 1970s and 1980s closely engaged with masculinity and the Nazi past, criticizing the authoritarian father figures who perpetrated the Holocaust and their silence about it. Rabinovici, who explores the victims of the Holocaust and the effect their past has on their children and their male identity, rejects these literary forms.

When it comes to dealing with the Nazi past, ‘the experience of survivor stories, or, for the younger, third generation, their parents’ survival stories, constitutes the biggest common denominator for Austrian-Jewish writers’.<sup>60</sup> Martina Hamidouche, however, argues that a new type of family stories has emerged in Austria focusing on how and why the characters remember, as well as what the consequences of those memories are for them.<sup>61</sup> Using the Austrian-Jewish author Eva Menasse as an example, Hamidouche shows how she aims at deconstructing an evident dichotomy of perpetrators and victims.<sup>62</sup>

The works of Doron Rabinovici also engage with the Nazi past through the lens of family history. However, Rabinovici criticizes the genre of family stories as a way of coming to terms with the Nazi past, as is shown in *Ohnehin*. Instead he develops a variation of the genre *Elternliteratur*, a term, first introduced by Ralph Gehrke, to designate a strand of West German literature that engaged with the Nazi past in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>63</sup> As with *Väterliteratur* and family stories, *Elternliteratur* has been written from the point of view of the children of the perpetrators. *Elternliteratur* examines the generation that lived during the Second World War from a

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<sup>59</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 21 — author’s emphasis.

<sup>60</sup> Andrea Reiter, *Contemporary Jewish Writing. Austria After Waldheim* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Hamidouche, p. 188.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>63</sup> Ralph Gehrke, *Elternbilder im Schatten der NS—Vergangenheit* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), p. 14.

biographical angle, transferring the discourses of guilt from the social to the personal level.<sup>64</sup> Rabinovici uses the genre of *Elternliteratur*, but subverts it by focusing mainly on the experience of the victims.

Andrea Reiter notes that in the protest against Waldheim, the younger generation of Austrian Jews assumed their Jewish identity and opposed the accommodationalist attitude of their parents.<sup>65</sup> As *Väterliteratur* marked the rupture between the perpetrator generation and their offspring, this new *Elternliteratur* marks that between the passive Jewish parents and their offspring. The examination of this confrontation between two generations reveals how the silence of the second generation and their emotional response affect their own idea of masculinity, and how this leads to the development of a fragile male identity in the third generation.

Research has shown that memory and postmemory play an important role in the genre of family stories. Both are also at the core of Rabinovici's texts. Hamidouche argues that the family stories are suitable 'for the discussion of issues that straddle individual experience and collective reaction precisely because it is situated at the intersection of individual and collective memory'.<sup>66</sup> She goes on to say that they provide a tool for authors not only to deal with memory and postmemory challenges, but also to criticize the political situation of today. Fuchs, focusing on novels about perpetrators, further highlights the importance of the role of memory in the genre of family stories. Memory is always an act of reconstruction; no memory can preserve the past.<sup>67</sup> The

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<sup>64</sup> Friederike Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2005), pp. 25 and 187.

<sup>65</sup> Reiter, pp. 1 and 2.

<sup>66</sup> Hamidouche, p. 199.

<sup>67</sup> Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), 125–33 (p. 130).

family is a 'lieu de souvenir' where memories are private and subjective.<sup>68</sup> In this context, Aleida Assmann speaks of a 'three-generation-memory': a family memory which can be supported and extended by records and documents, encompassing generally three generations which are in contact with each other. The grandchildren include parts of the memories of the elderly family members in their own memories, mixing them with their own experiences. This three-generation memory is important for personal memories and the temporal orientation of an individual.<sup>69</sup> This form of memory fails in Rabinovici's texts, where the parent generation remain silent about the past, and this in turn affects the masculine identity of the characters.

As Fuchs points out, '[w]e are now at the historical juncture where the immediacy of first-hand memory of the Holocaust is being lost and replaced by new forms of mediated and, at times, imaginary memories by members of the third post-war generation'.<sup>70</sup> This is true both of the perpetrator and victim generations. Rabinovici's texts deal with the generations of perpetrators and victims and their children. For the third generation of victims, Marianne Hirsch has introduced the concept of postmemory, which is differentiated from memory and history by its distance from a traumatic event and lack of direct personal experience of it. It is a specific form of memory in the sense that the process of recollection of the past is replaced by imagination and creation.<sup>71</sup> Experiences are transmitted to the third generation 'by means of stories, images and behaviours' only.<sup>72</sup> However, they are transmitted so profoundly and emotionally that they seem to become a memory, which this generation believes to be its own.<sup>73</sup> Even though the traumatic events happened

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<sup>68</sup> Aleida Assmann in Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), pp. 22 and 26.

<sup>70</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Mourning and Postmemory', in Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 17–40 (p. 22).

<sup>72</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today*, 29 (2008), 103–28 (p. 106).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

a long time ago their effects are transmitted in the present.<sup>74</sup> Hirsch hypothesizes that trauma can only be lived through and processed by the generation which has not experienced the traumatic event but felt its consequences.<sup>75</sup> Postmemory is a phenomenon linked to the family — a ‘generational structure of transmission’.<sup>76</sup> Hirsch also raises the question as to whether postmemory is limited only to the victims or whether it could also include perpetrators and, more provocatively, if so, whether this could challenge clear-cut distinctions as to how the offspring of both victims and perpetrators come to terms with the past.<sup>77</sup> As this chapter will show, there are indeed similarities.

Trauma theory is also relevant for the discussion of works that deal with the Holocaust. Fuchs differentiates trauma theory from postmemory: ‘While trauma theory proposes that history can never be witnessed due to its intrinsically traumatic nature, postmemory suggests, that the eyewitnesses’ testimonies, as well as our cognitive approaches to the past, are always subject to repression, displacement and distortion.’<sup>78</sup> Fuchs challenges trauma theory, arguing that it can deform the historic past if it is applied without reflection.<sup>79</sup> In Rabinovici’s novels, both trauma and postmemory theory are useful concepts to explore the idea that Jewish masculinity is marked by the victimization of the past.

Exploring the link between gender and cultural memory, Aleida Assmann argues that mostly women remember and that this at times can be a threat to men. At the same time men ask to be remembered, while women are forgotten.<sup>80</sup> Assmann argues, based on Nietzsche, that men, as

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Marianne Hirsch, ‘Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory’, in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. by Barbie Zelizer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), pp. 215–46 (p. 222).

<sup>76</sup> Hirsch, ‘The Generation of Postmemory’, p. 114.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>78</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 51.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>80</sup> Aleida Assmann, ‘Geschlecht und kulturelles Gedächtnis’, *Freiburger FrauenStudien*, 19 (2006), 29–46 (p.

actors, only remember parts of memory which can help to motivate action;<sup>81</sup> at the same time they long to be remembered, as being remembered in cultural memory equates with fame and timeless meaning.<sup>82</sup> Research on the interaction between gender and memory related to the Holocaust in contemporary German-language literature is still scarce. Anna Rutka has conducted research into memory and gender from the German perspective in family stories of the Noughties, carving out male and female genealogical and generational ‘Erinnerungserzählungen’.<sup>83</sup> Mirjam Bitter has presented a study on gender and memory in Jewish literature from Germany, Austria and Italy, also discussing Rabinovici’s *Ohnehin* and *Suche nach M*,<sup>84</sup> based on the assumption that gender and memory influence one another and are reciprocally involved in their respective creation.<sup>85</sup> In the Jewish context it is also important to note that Jewish culture has traditionally been associated with memory.<sup>86</sup>

In the following the three chosen novels will be introduced briefly and discussed within the theoretical framework outlined.

### 3.3 Multiplication of identities: *Suche nach M*.

Rabinovici’s novel *Suche nach M* is constructed in twelve episodes. Two Jewish-Viennese families are at the centre of this work: Mosche and Gitta Morgenthau and Jakob and Ruth Scheinowiz, all

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>83</sup> Anna Rutka, *Erinnern und Geschlecht in zeitgenössischen Familien- und Generationsromanen* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2011).

<sup>84</sup> Bitter.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 101.

second-generation Jews who survived the Holocaust and are struggling with their past. Their sons Dani Morgenthau and Arie Scheinowitz, third generation Jews, develop very particular talents. Dani pleads guilty to crimes committed by others. Whenever he is confronted with a perpetrator he cannot refrain from confessing in the perpetrator's stead. On being confronted with guilty people he develops an allergy, which forces him to wear bandages. He turns into 'Mullemann' — a 'man in bandages'. The whole of Austrian society starts to fear the crimes confessed by Mullemann and begins to hunt him down. Arie likewise develops a talent connected to guilt: while Dani identifies perpetrators through his physical reaction to them, Arie, inexplicably, is able to identify criminals without knowing their names or what they look like. This talent results in his being recruited by the Israeli Secret Service. Eventually Arie joins in the hunt of Mullemann, only to learn that Mullemann is his old friend Dani. After the police catch Mullemann his talents are also put to use to convict criminals.

In *Ohnehin*, set in Vienna at the time of the rise of the right-wing party *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ), the Jewish character Paul asks a medical specialist in neurology and memory loss, Stefan, for professional help for his neighbour Herbert, who is unable to remember anything for more than fifteen minutes. He believes that he lives in 1945 and reveals that he has served in the SS during the war. While his son Hans has come to terms with his father's past, his daughter Bärbel, shocked by this revelation, stages tribunals to make her father admit his guilt.

*Andernorts*, set in Vienna and Tel Aviv, tells the story of Ethan and Rudi, both intellectual authorities in the same field of Jewish studies. Ethan's father, Felix, was the only family member to escape the Holocaust. While Ethan wrongly claims to be the son of Felix, it turns out that Felix is not Ethan's biological father either. Ethan is the child of a deceased family friend, Dov.

### *Second generation*

Rabinovici presents the Jewish men of the second generation following the Shoah in an intermediary position between hegemonic masculinity and a ‘gentle’ masculinity. Their construction of masculinity comes close to the ideals espoused by the Zionist movement. In *Suche nach M.*, for example, Dani’s father Mosche is depicted as a gentle man; he takes the time to look after Dani and does not shy away from physical contact.<sup>87</sup> The same tenderness between father and son is also shown in *Andernorts*.<sup>88</sup> The caring, loving father reflects the notion of a ‘gentle’ Jewish masculinity. However, this physical affection stops when Dani grows up. Mosche then encourages Dani to be manlier, giving him physical attributes in line with the concept of hegemonic masculinity: ‘Groß bist du geworden und stark. Es war einmal ein Frauenverführer und der hieß Dani.’ (*Suche* 31) Mosche’s physical ideal of masculinity and what he wants for his son conform partly to hegemonic masculinity. The eroticism and virility promoted through Zionism is also clearly reflected in this quote.<sup>89</sup>

Jakob too partly adheres to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Like Mosche he wants his son Arie to become a strong man: ‘Sein Vater [...] hatte Arie bereits als Kind Taekwondo lernen lassen. “Dich soll keiner ungestraft schlagen, Arie. Hörst Du? Dich nicht”, hatte der Alte gesagt’ (*Suche* 49).

Jakob wants his son to conform to the Zionist idea of masculinity of building tough, physically fit Jewish men.<sup>90</sup> He wants his son to become strong so that he can never be a victim as he himself

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<sup>87</sup> Doron Rabinovici, *Suche nach M.* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), p. 26. Subsequently referenced as ‘*Suche*’ in the text.

<sup>88</sup> Doron Rabinovici, *Andernorts* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), p. 85. Subsequently referenced as ‘*Andernorts*’ in the text.

<sup>89</sup> Biale, pp. 283–84.

<sup>90</sup> Aaron, p. 178.

was. This is reflective of the view, here expressed by Jakob, that Jewish masculinity is marked by the victimization of the past. The same notion is conveyed in *Andernorts*, where Felix encourages his son to be a man, not in the sense of dominating others but rather of standing up for himself (*Andernorts* 231). The attitude of the fathers of the second generation supports Connell's argument that masculinity is constituted through physical performance.<sup>91</sup> However, their conception is not entirely hegemonic: the physical strength is not to be used to dominate others, but for self-defence. Postmemory theory argues that the memory of the past can be transferred through behaviour. Here the consequences of the past and the victimization are transferred through the behaviour of the fathers towards their sons and affect their development as men. Certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity are transmitted in order to protect the sons.

Moreover, the second generation behave according to the standards of hegemonic masculinity in that they refrain from expressing their emotions. Jakob does not accept men who show their emotions, not even in front of their wives (*Suche* 90). Contrary to the finding that it is part of 'gentle' Jewish masculinity to show emotions freely,<sup>92</sup> he is afraid to face his feelings. According to Jakob, men have to be tough — which corresponds to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity (*Suche* 95). Jakob puts on a mask of masculinity in order to hide his emotional side, for being emotional is traditionally associated with women.

While the third generation are a disappointment professionally and academically, the second generation of Jewish men seem to have achieved something in their professional lives and are more confident than their children. Jakob, for example, is a former Professor of German Studies. The gap in success between the two generations is well shown in the characters of Mosche and his son Dani:

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<sup>91</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 54.

<sup>92</sup> Reichert and Ravitch, p. 29.



Der berufliche Aufstieg des Vaters war mit der Enttäuschung, die sein Sohn ihm bereitete, eng verknüpft, denn je klarer die Mittelmäßigkeit des hageren Jugendlichen hervorstach, um so vorsichtiger und bedachter ging das Familienoberhaupt in jede Verhandlung, an jeden Vertrag, in jeden Abschluß und um so fremder wurde ihm Dani. (*Suche* 39)

As this passage exemplifies, the difference in achievement leads to an estrangement between the second and the third generation. Likewise in *Andernorts* the second generation, represented by Felix and Dov, have succeeded in the worlds of business and academia and are self-confident. The professional success of the second generation corresponds to the expectations of hegemonic masculinity, in which the image of the successful, capitalist entrepreneur prevails.<sup>93</sup>

As in the works of Daniel Kehlmann's analysed in Chapter One, hegemonic masculinity in *Suche nach M.* remains a fiction. Mosche tries to live up to the image, as he sees himself as the 'head of the family' (*Suche* 39). However, there is a huge gap between what he thinks and his reality — Mosche is not the head of the family. Instead of being in charge, Mosche is dependent on others, which is exemplified in his speech impediment. Because of his disappointment in his son, he changes declarative sentences into interrogative ones:

Er ähnelte darin seinem Sohn, der — sechzehnjährig — hochgewachsen, aufgeschlossen, ebenfalls Fragezeichen imitierte. Auch die Sprache des Vaters änderte sich, seine Stimme zerfaserte, verblich mit seinen Erwartungen und bog in einen Singsang ab, der von manchen als jiddisch mißgedeutet wurde, doch in Wahrheit dem Zweifel an der eigenen Existenz entsprang. Als folge die Melodie der Worte seiner geschwungenen, verschlungenen Wirbelsäule, kurvte jede seiner Aussagen in eine Frage. (*Suche* 38)

The passage establishes the similarity between father and son. At the same time it implies that Mosche's disappointment in his son has eroded Mosche's identity: it has led to feelings of insecurity and doubts about his existence. His existence as a man of the second generation of

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<sup>93</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 263.

survivors of the Holocaust, which had meaning because of his son, is called into question, as his son does not live up to his expectations. The preceding excerpt also illustrates the mechanisms of postmemory: Mosche transmits through his speech impediment the trauma of the past to his son. Mosche's destabilization is reflected in the body posture of his son: the supporting backbone is somehow absorbed into the body.

Hegemonic masculinity is also shown to be fiction in *Andernorts*:

So war es kein Wunder, wenn sein Zimmer im Krankenhaus zu einer Art Feldlager wurde, als wäre er Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Krankheit, ein General, der die Ärzte wie Kampfkameraden anfeuerte, ein Napoleon, der das gesamte Personal bei Vornamen kannte, er, Felix Rosen, der Held der medizinischen Abteilung. (*Andernorts* 89)

On the one hand this passage shows that the past is continuously present in *Andernorts* when Felix acts as if his life was a continuous 'struggle for survival'.<sup>94</sup> It shows how his masculine identity is marked by the victimization of the past. On the other hand, in this excerpt Felix, who in reality is in a weak position as a patient at the hospital, becomes an exemplary bearer of hegemonic masculinity: a commander, general, a hero and even Napoleon-like. The use of the subjunctive to expresses Felix's desire to comply with certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity underlines the fictitious nature of the latter. Reflecting Bourdieu's theory that men are 'playing men', Felix 'plays' at being an exemplary bearer of hegemonic masculinity: as a Napoleonic general. This is also indicative of masquerade theory: in a highly vulnerable situation, Felix puts on the mask of hegemonic masculinity in order to hide his weakness. The mask here works both as a shield to absorb the shock of the vulnerability he experienced as a victim of the Holocaust and to underplay his current defenceless physical situation.

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<sup>94</sup> Kirstin Gwyer, 'Beyond Lateness? "Postmemory" and the Late(st) German-Language Family Novel', *New German Critique*, 125/42 (2015), 137–53 (p. 144).

Rabinovici, like Kehlmann, uses situational irony to reveal the absurdity of playing a man according to hegemonic standards: Felix who is ill and fragile plays army games. Through the use of exaggeration, Rabinovici inflates Felix's traditional male virtues ('Held', 'Kämpfer' (*Andernorts* 62)) and his caring side ('Er liebte es, sich für die Seinen zu zerreißen.' (*Andernorts* 87)). Felix's tendency to self-sacrifice reveals his caring side. While self-sacrifice is framed here as a heroic attitude, it can also be read as a traditional trait of femininity. Felix becomes a satire of the ideal Jewish man promoted as part of the Zionist movement. The term 'tearing apart' is telling: the ideal of a virile and caring man who is physically strong, has a successful career, is a loving father and husband who treats his wife on equal terms, is not attainable. While Felix helps his wife with the work traditionally assigned to women, the work remains divided (*Andernorts* 91). *Andernorts* can be read as a satire of stereotypes of Jewish masculinity. In general, Rabinovici uses exaggeration when he describes the 'gentle' side of Felix:

Aber wer hätte Felix Rosen vorwerfen können, wie erbarmungslos er sein Kind bemutterte? Alle sahen, daß er die Familie mit seiner Liebe umzingelte. Jeder war von seiner väterlichen Opferbereitschaft überwältigt. Ethan wurde nicht von einer jüdischen Mame umhegt, sondern von zweien. (*Andernorts* 87–88)

Jokingly, Rabinovici here reflects the anti-Semitic construction of Jewish masculinity, which argues that Jewish men are effeminate.<sup>95</sup> The passage is also ironic in the sense that the reader's gendered expectations of how a man has to behave are undermined. At the same time, this passage reflects Sedgwick's theory that masculinity and femininity are orthogonal to each other: Felix scores highly on both feminine and masculine traits. Through the use of irony, Rabinovici shows that he adopts absurdly masculine and feminine roles.

Rabinovici also uses humour to criticize the sweeping claims of Goldman that circumcision

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<sup>95</sup> Mosse, p. 69.

leads to masochism<sup>96</sup>, when an elderly Jewish woman says to Ethan on a flight from Tel Aviv to Vienna:

Nicht einmal im Flugzeug, meinte sie, könne ihr gemeinsamer Stamm, diese masochistische Internationale, einen Moment still sitzen. Die Männer erfasse, vielleicht seit der Beschneidung, eine Unruhe, als litten sie unter einem Jucken in den Beinen, ein Fluchtreflex, der im Shtetl eventuell nützlich gewesen sein mochte. (*Andernorts* 17)

Rabinovici thus undermines the importance of circumcision for Jewish male identity.

Rabinovici shows that for the second generation of Jewish men, the ideal of hegemonic masculinity remains a point of reference: they try to conform to the Zionist ideal, which combines a ‘gentle’ masculinity with hegemonic characteristics. Through the use of satire, irony, exaggeration and humour, Rabinovici unmasks the absurdity of gendered expectations and stereotypes and shows that the masculinity promoted by the Zionist movement is impossible to attain.

In *Suche nach M.* Jewish men of the second generation have in common that they are struggling with their past. The past seems to have literally paralysed Mosche, for example: ‘Die Vergangenheit des Vaters lag im Dunkeln seines Schweigens. Es war, als verberge er sich noch immer in jenem Versteck am Warschauer Stadtrand, als verbliebe er in seiner Reglosigkeit.’ (*Suche* 29) Because of the past, Mosche has become a passive man. Likewise Jakob avoids engaging with history. He survived the concentration camps because he was mistaken for someone else. This confusion, which saved his life, may have triggered his desire to switch identities — something that he does frequently throughout the beginning of the narrative. Jakob is lost in this post-war world; he has not made any attempt to reintegrate himself into society: ‘Er wollte sich nicht zurechtfinden in der Welt, bloß in ihrer Alltäglichkeit entkommen.’ (*Suche* 13) Instead of being himself he pretends

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<sup>96</sup> Eric Silverman, pp. 40–41.

to be someone else, the husband of a woman whom he meets at a friend's house, initiating a scene of re-encounter. The episode leaves a bitter taste when it becomes apparent that Jakob survived the camps because he had been mistaken for the husband of this very woman.

This parallels the switch made by Felix's best friend Dov in *Andernorts*, who changes his identity in order to escape persecution as a Jew (*Andernorts* 66). Through Dov and Jakob, switching identity is connected to survival. However, even though there is no need to change identity to survive physically any more, Dov longs to continue doing so (*Andernorts* 66). Jakob Scheinowiz changes his identity for good when he finally marries: he becomes Jakob Fandler. It seems as if this shift in identity is the precondition for Jakob marrying. The traumatizing past, connected to his old name, prevents any long-term emotional commitment; it is only when he has stripped off his old name — and the past — that he can engage emotionally again. This switching is paralleled in *Andernorts* when Ethan, a third-generation man, changes his name for an Austrian one in order to make his relationship with Noa possible.

Jakob is just as troubled by the past as Mosche. Non-engagement with the past leads to paralysis and escape into multiple identities. This reflects the view that male Jewish identity is marked by the past. The escape into other identities is analogous to the behaviour of the characters in Kehlmann's works, who escape into fantasy spaces and virtual worlds and remain passive in their real lives. However, Rabinovici takes this a step further, as the characters switch their identity in real life.

The second generation in *Suche nach M.* is also presented as the ageing generation. While it seems as if Jakob can accept his ageing, he cannot accept that he will have to die one day. When he is diagnosed with a 'Bronchialcarcinom' he notes: 'Vielleicht wird alles wieder gut. Außerdem, ich bin alt und habe alle Verwandten meiner Familie überlebt ...' (*Suche* 95). He even pretends in front of his wife that the diagnosis was not for him but for another patient. Having survived the

Holocaust, it seems unacceptable to him to die because of an illness. Like Humboldt in Kehlmann's *Die Vermessung der Welt*, Jakob tries to deny the reality of death. The erosion of hegemonic masculinity is caused by intellectual decline in *Die Vermessung der Welt*, while it is due to physical decline in the novels of Rabinovici. The notion that illness and advancing age are an attack on the masculinity of the characters is reflected in *Andernorts*:

Hinter seiner Ironie verbarg sich Unsicherheit, eine Schwäche aus Angst und eine Angst vor Schwäche, denn hier lag Felix Rosen, ein Patriarch, dessen Macht und Vermögen weit über die Familie hinausreichten, lag hilflos und ausgeliefert und ließ sich nichts anmerken, sondern streichelte die Hand des Sohnes und erzählte, antwortete auf keine Frage, die ihm gestellt wurde, und gab Antworten, die keiner erbeten hatte. (*Andernorts* 82–83)

Like Jakob, Felix seems to stand above death: 'Im Grunde hatte er geglaubt der Alte würde alles überleben, auch das Sterben.' (*Andernorts* 254) This is because Felix has always fought with determination against his physical decline and illness: 'Sein Körper war besetztes Gebiet. Der Schmerz hatte ihn okkupiert, saß ihm in seinen Gliedern. Vater und der Schmerz. Ein gegenseitiges Belauern.' (*Andernorts* 104) Death is depicted as something tragic in *Die Vermessung der Welt*. The same notion of tragedy is conveyed in Rabinovici's novels: the survivors will have to die one day despite their denial and valiant struggle against death in the concentration camps.

The male characters of the second generation try to live up to the perceived ideal of hegemonic masculinity. However, they fail to meet their own expectations. Achieving hegemonic masculinity entirely remains a fiction. It has its uses, however; it is utilized as a mask with which to cover up their feminine side and to pass on elements of the standards of hegemonic masculinity to their sons so that they will never experience victimhood. The male characters also exhibit traits of a 'gentle' masculinity. Men who try to correspond entirely with the Zionist image of masculinity, combining both hegemonic masculinity and 'gentle' masculinity, become a parody. Through the use of irony, satire and humour Rabinovici criticizes the anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jewish masculinity, such as

its feminization. While the second generation seem to be confident and have achieved something in their professional lives, they are struggling with their past. This struggle paralyses the male characters and leads to a fragile male identity.

### ***Parent-son relationship***

The relationships between the parents and their children are burdened by the unmentioned past in *Suche nach M.* The father's history is a central theme in the relationship between Mosche and Dani, for instance. When Dani grows up and starts asking his father about his past, he replies by telling invented stories:

Stellte Dani seinem Papa Fragen über jene Zeit, winkte der Mann ab, wollte der Junge etwas hören aus jenen Tagen, lächelte der Erwachsene müde und sagte: 'Es war einmal ein kleiner Junge und der hieß Dani', woraufhin sein Sohn sich abwandte, mißmutig.  
(*Suche* 30)

The phrase 'Es war einmal' closes down all conversation between Dani and his father. The symbolic meaning of the phrase is multi-layered. It shows that Mosche treats Dani like a child, protecting him by not telling him the painful truth. His being a barrier to communication about the past becomes a barrier in the father-son relationship. It is also reflective of postmemory theory, with a slight twist: here already the second generation, who experienced the past, are engaged in a process of imagination in order to suppress painful memories of it. Memory is not transmitted to the next generation through real stories about the past, but invented stories. The imaginative investment made by the second generation acts here like a protective shield. It also protects Mosche's masculine identity in the sense that it keeps him from remembering a period of powerlessness and weakness. However, a fairy tale is also about the evil in the world, it tells about something that never took place but which has truth in itself, as Rabinovici notes in his essay on history and

literature.<sup>97</sup>

As with Mosche and Dani, the relationship between Jakob and Ariele is marked by the absence of communication about the past. It is, in addition, characterized by hostility:

In Ariele saß eine geheimnisvolle Schuld, vor der er nichts ahnte, die aber sein bloßes Dasein, der Gegenwart schlechthin, anhaftete. [...] Ariele war, als mißgönne der Vater ihm jegliches Gelingen und als bestätige sein gelegentliches Scheitern bloß des Alten Unmut. (*Suche* 49)

This passage reveals that the father-son relationship is burdened by guilt. As will be shown later, the survivors of the second generation feel guilty towards the Jews who were murdered and pass this guilt on to their children, whom they use as a justification for their survival. This source of guilt is shown to be a secret and suggests that there are things that father and son cannot talk about and which consequently become powerful in their relationship. It also shows that the children lack understanding of the source of this guilt. Dominick La Capra's theory on trauma is reflected in Mosche and Jakob's behaviour with regard to the past: 'Those traumatized by extreme events, as well as those empathizing with them, may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it.'<sup>98</sup> Whenever Ariele asks his father about his past, Jakob blocks the conversation. He represses it, which indicates trauma theory. Engaging with his past would mean engaging with his emotions, and this he cannot allow to happen. This suggests in part a gender-specific explanation for not dealing with the past. Being detained in a concentration camp is an emasculating experience. This emasculation continues in the present: Leon, a friend of Jakob, suffers from depression because of his experiences during the Shoah and his grandchildren laugh at him when he feels anxious in a crowded train. Engaging with the

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<sup>97</sup> Doron Rabinovici, 'Wie es war und wie es sein wird. Eine Fortschreibung von Geschichte und Literatur nach der Shoah' <[http://www.rabinovici.at/texte\\_wieeswar.html](http://www.rabinovici.at/texte_wieeswar.html)> [accessed 20 September 2015].

<sup>98</sup> Dominick La Capra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 22–23.



painful past goes hand in hand with facing up to one's emotions. This does not seem to correspond with Jakob's image of masculinity.

Rabinovici appears to suggest that the emasculation of Jewish men is not only historical in terms of discourse, but also in terms of experience during the Holocaust. Emasculation was not just experienced psychologically during the Holocaust: there was a 'programme of sterilisation with x-rays' where doctors tested the castration of Jewish men in the concentration camp at Auschwitz. Several doctors experimented with a 'gewaltsamen Unfruchtbarmachung' on Jewish men and women.<sup>99</sup> This is reflected in the character of Felix in *Andernorts*: 'Er könne gar keine Kinder zeugen, sagte der Vater. Er versuchte zu lächeln, aber es gelang ihm nicht. Es sei ihm gar nicht möglich. Das Lager, flüsterte er und schluckte.' (*Andernorts* 216) Judging by this passage, the fact that he has not been able to have children has been very painful for Felix. He and his wife made Ethan believe that he was their biological son; in reality his best friend Dov was his father. Felix also accepts the researcher Rudi, who believes that Felix is his father, as his son. Even when it is revealed that he is not, Felix still wants to cling to the idea that Ethan and Rudi are related. He insists that they are brothers. Ethan's fatherhood becomes a fantasy in order to preserve his sense of his own masculinity. The past is shown to have a damaging impact on the masculinity of the second generation: it has emasculated them psychologically and physically.

In Dani's family, it is not only Mosche who is incapable to talking about the past. Both Dani's grandmother and mother have survived the Ghetto and concentration camp. However, they remain silent about their experiences: 'Zwischen den beiden herrschte ein einmütiges Schweigen.' (SUCHE 28) When Dani asks his mother directly about the past, she answers in an abrupt way: 'die Mutter

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<sup>99</sup> Till Bastian, *Furchtbare Ärzte: medizinische Verbrechen im Dritten Reich* (Nördlingen: C.H. Beck, 2001), pp. 84–85.

beantwortete die wenigen Fragen in schärfster Kürze. “Stehend”, erklärte sie: “In *Viehwagons*”, und *bremste* den Jungen aus, ließ ihn *entgleisen*, bevor er noch recht in *Fahrt* gekommen war, um ihn *abzuhängen*, ihn verstummen zu lassen.’ (*Suche* 31 — my emphasis) Rabinovici uses words that allude to the deportation of Jews. The verbs clearly show how the mother tries to ‘ausbremsen’ (thwart) her son in his interrogations. The intentions of Dani’s parents are good. She ‘uncouples’ the train Dani is on, before he can arrive at the horror of the concentration camps. His mother is tight-lipped to protect her son: ‘seine Mutter, in der die Angst lauerte, sie könnte das Kind belasten mit ihrer eigenen Kindheit, könnte versagen — mit jedem Wort, jeder Silbe, jedem Blick’ (*Suche* 36). Assmann has argued that women remember, which can be a threat to men. In Rabinovici mothers do not transmit the memory to their children so as not to threaten their children.

The reasoning of his father is similar (*Suche* 36). Just like Dani’s parents, Jakob has not talked to Ariele about the past so as to protect him: ‘Ich fürchtete, es würde dich vergiften. Das war wohl ein Fehler.’ (*Suche* 57)

Assmann notes that the family is not only the origin of life, but also the place for remembering the dead. It is the framework for communication between the generations.<sup>100</sup> Memories are private; in *Suche nach M.* they become so private that they are not even passed on to the children. Because Dani’s parents and Ariele’s father never talk about the dead and the past, inter-generational communication fails. As Assmann remarks: ‘Und dennoch müssen wir festhalten, dass es die Erinnerungsfähigkeit ist, so fragwürdig sie auch sein mag, die Menschen erst zu Menschen macht. Ohne sie könnten wir kein Selbst aufbauen und nicht mit anderen als individuellen Personen kommunizieren.’<sup>101</sup> Rabinovici takes this a step further: children cannot construct a self if their

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<sup>100</sup> Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, p. 22.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

parents do not talk to them about their past. They cannot develop a stable identity. While the parents try to protect their children from the trauma of the past, ironically they transmit trauma by not talking about it. The fact that both his father and his mother refuse to talk about the past in a constructive manner fosters in Dani, who unconsciously absorbs the survivor guilt of his parents, a guilt complex which goes so far that he feels responsible for all the deeds committed by others (*Suche* 33). As a consequence, Dani also has trouble accepting his identity and his manhood:

und ihm ist, als erfasse ihn ein Kreisen, als werde er zum kleinen Jungen, und in ihm denkt es, nun werde ich von Vater hochgehievt, als Knabe durch die Lüfte geschleudert. Papa lässt seinen Sohn fliegen, und ich steige, bis es Dani schwindelt, bis ich kopfüber taumle, und sogleich zieht es mich hinab, stürze ich nieder, blitzt der Schrecken in mir auf, denn sagen höre ich Papa: 'Es war einmal ein kleiner Junge, und der hieß Dani.' (*Suche* 42)

The change of perspective from the first to the third person within one sentence already announces the detachment of Dani from himself. The passage also establishes a link between the failure to develop an identity and his father's invented stories about his past. Similarly, Jakob denies his past to the point that he forbids Ariele to take part in religious education, depriving him of his Jewish identity. He tries to keep his distance from the Jewish community and even from his Jewish friends (*Suche* 10). Lorenz argues that the Jewish characters in *Suche nach M.* lack acknowledgement by both Jewish and Austrian society.<sup>102</sup> As his father deprives him of his Jewish culture, Ariele lacks validation by his Jewish peers. The non-communication between father and son also results in alienation: 'Ich weiß nichts über dich, Vater; nicht, wer du bist, noch wer du warst' (*Suche* 49). The things that remain unsaid between father and son actually increase Ariele's interest in Jewish culture and he joins the Jewish student organization 'um zu finden, was zu Hause ihm vorenthalten worden war, um jene Chiffren und Kennworte des Codes zu erlernen, in dessen

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<sup>102</sup> Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, 'Intersection Vienna: Crime and Transnationalism in Post-Shoah Austrian Fiction and Films', *Journal of Austrian Studies*, 47 (2014), 65–87 (p. 74).

Geheimnis er daheim nicht eingeweiht wurde.’ (*Suche* 45)

*Ohnehin* shows that it is necessary to distance oneself from the horrible past and communicate about it in order to construct a stable male gender identity. Paul displays just such an alternative identity, which resonates with the concept of a ‘gentle’ masculinity. He is described as a reliable and humble businessman and does not crave great economic power.<sup>103</sup> He is gentle with others and even helps his neighbour Herbert, who is an old Nazi. He is a friendly person very much admired by others (*Ohnehin* 43). Interestingly, he impresses people with his excellent memory (*Ohnehin* 12). Unlike Mosche and Jakob, he remembers and at the same time is able to distance himself from the past (*Ohnehin* 30). Not much is known about Paul’s relationship with his son Mischa, but the snapshots given in the novel indicate that it is good, unlike the father-son relationships in *Suche nach M.*: ‘Der ihm nächste Mensch, sein Sohn Mischa’ (*Ohnehin* 37). Significantly, Mischa left Austria shortly after Kurt Waldheim was elected Austrian President despite the revelations about his Nazi past. This is a clear statement of his view of Austrian public discourse on Austrian involvement in the Holocaust. The fact that both Paul and Mischa are able to detach themselves from the past and develop a positive male gender identity and father-son relationship, whereas the inability to find distance from the past in *Suche nach M.* results in the opposite, underlines the important role of the past in the gender constructions in Rabinovici’s works. Interestingly, in *Suche nach M.* Jakob’s finally talking about the painful past with his son is a healing experience for him. It allows him to adopt his old name and identity. He starts to research his relatives and finds out that his mother had survived and had lived in Vienna until her death. It also leads to the insight that his behaviour made him a bad father: ‘Letztlich bin ich ein Versager, Leon. Alles an mir eine

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<sup>103</sup> Doron Rabinovici, *Ohnehin* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), p. 40. Subsequently referenced as ‘*Ohnehin*’ in the text.

Täuschung [...] Ich habe als Vater zwanzig Jahre lang versagt.' (*Suche* 97) Again Rabinovici emphasizes that confronting the past is healing, both for Jakob's sense of identity and his ability to relate to his son.

### ***Third generation***

In *Suche nach M.* the third generation of Jewish men develop a fragile identity and display anti-hegemonic subversion. A striking feature of the third generation is that they remain childlike and that they play identity games that ultimately influence their masculinity.

Since Dani's parents do not tell him about the Holocaust, he starts to fantasize about it, reflecting the theory of postmemory as imagination and recreation of the past: Dani creates his own memories of the past. The silence of his parents is like an X-ray for Dani: 'Wie auf jenen medizinischen Aufnahmen des Gerippes waren alle Ausblendungen im grellen Kontrast zu sehen.' (*Suche* 30) Their silence intrigues and fascinates him: 'Dani zog es hin zu ihren Missetaten, er geriet in den Sog des Schweigens' (*Suche* 34). Dani's fixation with guilt becomes a personal talent throughout the second part of the novel: he is attracted by guilt and has the ability to see, in every detail, the crime the guilty person has committed. However, this talent takes its toll on his body. Being confronted with guilt, he develops an allergy to it and has to wear bandages covering his entire body. He turns into 'Mullemann'. The figure of 'Mullemann' has been widely discussed in secondary literature — interpreted as a Golem figure,<sup>104</sup> a Muselmann<sup>105</sup> and a symbol of collective guilt.<sup>106</sup> However, it is also symbolic of his fragile male identity. The description of Dani's

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<sup>104</sup> Cathy S. Gelbin, 'The Monster Returns: Golem Figures in the Writings of Benjamin Stein, Erster Dischereit, and Doron Rabinovici', in *Rebirth of a Culture*, ed. by Herzog, Herzog and Lapp., pp. 21–33.

<sup>105</sup> Beilein, pp. 258–9.

<sup>106</sup> Marieke Krajenbrink, 'Unresolved Identities in Roth and Rabinovici: Reworking the Crime Genre in Austrian Literature', in *Investigating Identities, Questions of Identity in Contemporary International Crime Fiction*, ed. by Marieke Krajenbrink and Kate M. Quinn (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 243–60 (p. 259).

transformation into Mullemann is marked by a change in perspective, which exemplifies his detachment from his self and his struggle with his identity: ‘Stunden später rührt sich Mullemann in seinen Qualen, kann er meinen Arm heben [...] Schafft es sogar, mit den Fingern den Verband über einem Auge zu lockern, einen Schlitz freizumachen, der mir einen unbemerkten Ausblick ermöglicht.’ (*Suche* 109) While the text itself associates Mullemann with Ashaver, the wandering Jew, it has also been seen as a Golem figure. It is based on the legend of Rabbi Lowe of Prague, who ‘created a “super” body, a truly impermeable being, who could save the people — the golem’.<sup>107</sup> The meaning of the Jewish Golem has evolved over time. At one point it ‘metamorphosed into a figure of haunted memory’.<sup>108</sup> It is also linked with persecution and defence.<sup>109</sup> Dani is beset by the thoughts of the Holocaust that he has invented because of his parents’ silence about it. Beilein points to the association of the word ‘Mullemann’ with ‘Muselmann’, the slang for a concentration-camp prisoner who has given himself up.<sup>110</sup> Rabinovici’s mother wrote about the Muselmann:

Der sogenannte "Muselmann", wie die Lagersprache den sich aufgebenden und von den Kameraden aufgegebenen Haftling nannte, hatte keinen Bewußtseinsraum mehr, in dem Gut oder Böse, Edel oder Gemein, Geistig oder Ungeistig sich gegenüberstehen konnten. Er war ein wankender Leichnam, ein Bündel physischer Funktionen in den letzten Zuckungen.<sup>111</sup>

Muselmann is the old word for Muslim. It may have been used because of the ‘similarity between the near-death prone state of a concentration camp *Muselmann* and the image of a Muslim

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<sup>107</sup> Rosenberg, *Legacy of Rage*, p. 71.

<sup>108</sup> Cathy S. Gelbin, ‘Of Stories and Histories: Golem Figures in Post-1989 German and Austrian Culture’, in *German Memory Contests*, ed. by Fuchs et al., pp. 193–207 (p. 193).

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>110</sup> Beilein, pp. 258–9.

<sup>111</sup> Schoschana Rabinovici in *ibid.*, p. 259.

prostrating himself on the ground in prayer'.<sup>112</sup> The bandages Dani wears have many layers of significance. They reflect the anti-Semitic discourse on the Jewish male body, which qualified it as 'diseased'. They serve as Dani's defence against the world, which he feels not ready to face. The male body with open sores also represents the painful past and the bandages covering it, the escape both from that painful past and one's identity. It is the overwhelming guilt complex that made Dani wrap himself in bandages: 'Der Junge fühlte sich für unsere Leiden verantwortlich, er kapselte sich ab und hüllte sich in Selbstvorwürfe.' (*Suche* 243) The 'Mullemänner', which the artist Otto Toot paints in *Suche nach M.* are 'Schmerzensmänner in Mull' (*Suche* 198) and 'Auslöschung im Schmerz' (*Suche* 198). Finally, the figure of Mullemann is also an extreme illustration of postmemory: Dani literally embodies the traumatic past of his parents and brings it to life.

As Ariele points out in his letter to Dani, Dani is afraid to accept himself and his identity: 'Du fürchtest nur eines: Dich' (*Suche* 260). Dani remains childlike, never having taken any responsibility for his life: 'Nichts verantwortest Du, alles bekennt Du.' (*Suche* 259) Ariele's call to get rid of the bandages is very revealing: 'Du aber streife erst Deine Wundwindel ab, diesen familiären Verband, den Dir Gitta und Mosche, Deine rührenden Eltern, bei den Besuchen mitbringen.' (*Suche* 265)

The word 'Verband' means both 'bandage' and 'union'. 'Binden' means both 'bandage' and 'bonding'. It is out of loyalty to his parents, by whom he is 'touched' ('be-rührend'), that Dani becomes Mullemann. This leads to an infantile and fragile ('Wundwindel') male identity. 'Binden' can also be translated as a woman's sanitary towel, which could be read as a feminization of Dani. Mullemann stands for a fragile and unstable male identity.

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<sup>112</sup> Shoah Resource Center, The International School for Holocaust Studies, 'Muselmann' <[http://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206474.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206474.pdf)> [accessed 19 December 2015] — emphasis in the text.

Dani's sexuality is curiously linked to bandages and nappies:

Mullemann sehnt sich danach von ihr neu gewickelt zu werden, und da — mit einem Mal — gleitet der Stoff in frische Bahnen und legt sich um. Sollte die Schwester tatsächlich versuchen, Mullemann zu wickeln, so sehe ich, wie sie sich in seinen Schleifen verheddern würde: Aufschlingen, das weiß ich genau, müßte Mullemann sie, könnte sie nicht mehr loslassen und er würde sie in sich würgen, sie gänzlich einsaugen und verdauen. (*Suche* 113)

The description of sexuality is destructive and it is curiously linked to a mother-child relationship. It is in stark contrast to hetero-normative sexuality, where the man penetrates a woman. Here it is the man who absorbs the woman. The devouring of the mother is linked to infantile sexuality through Freud.<sup>113</sup> Birgit Dahlke notes that sexual motives play a prominent role in novels dealing with the Holocaust.<sup>114</sup> For Dani, the sexual secrets that preceded his conception fuse with the tabooed experience in the concentration camps:<sup>115</sup>

Bereits mit acht Jahren [...] wußte er von den Verbrechen der Massenvernichtung, bezweifelte er keineswegs, daß sie stattgefunden hatten, insgeheim aber, daß Papa, Mutti und Oma dabeigewesen sein konnten. Dies war ihm ein Rätsel, das nicht unähnlich den vielen sexuellen Geheimnissen schien. Im Grunde hatte die Mutter ihn über die menschliche Fortpflanzung aufgeklärt, doch daß er einer solchen Verquickung seiner Eltern entstammte, daß sie tatsächlich miteinander schliefen, konnte und wollte er sich nie vorstellen. (*Suche* 32)

Violence is inscribed in the act of procreating the child<sup>116</sup> and thus in his identity from the start. Dani consequently develops into a man who cannot articulate his own desires and turns into the expression of desires of others, which is always a destructive behaviour.<sup>117</sup> This illustrates the

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<sup>113</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory* (New York: The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, 1910), p. 40.

<sup>114</sup> Birgit Dahlke, 'Lachverbote. Veränderte Erzählstrategien in Literatur und Film über den Massenmord an Juden', in *Tabu und Tabubruch in Literatur und Film*, ed. by Michael Braun (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), pp. 69–84 (p. 81).

<sup>115</sup> Bischoff, 'Herkunft und Schuld', p. 254.

<sup>116</sup> Dahlke, p. 81.

<sup>117</sup> Bischoff, 'Herkunft und Schuld', p. 254–5.



theory that the development of masochism has its source in childhood.<sup>118</sup> Masochism is also associated with sexual arousal in Dani. Mullemann's sexuality is linked to fetishism by Arie's wife Navah: 'Manche bevorzugen Leder, andere Gummi, und Sina und du wollen eben fest gewickelt sein.' (*Suche* 217) She could allude, in fact, to the sexual practice of 'bondage', making the link between sex and pain again ('Schmerzensmänner'), but also with control, domination and infantilization. She could also refer to adult baby role play here. The passage mirrors the association of perversity with Jewish male sexuality in the nineteenth century<sup>119</sup> and Goldman's view that circumcised men are more likely to pursue deviant sexuality and sado-masochism.<sup>120</sup> However, Navah seems to accept these sexual kinks.<sup>121</sup> That Dani absorbs guilt reflects the theory of moral masochism; according to Freud, the ego 'submits — almost pleasurably — to the strict norms of the superego and develops feelings of guilt, which are expressed in the wish to be punished'.<sup>122</sup>

Dani's masochism is reflective of Humboldt's behaviour in Kehlmann's *Die Vermessung der Welt*. The identities of both Dani and Humboldt are marked by violence towards the self. Dani's parents' refusal to talk about the past leads to a 'deep sense of insecurity about his origin'.<sup>123</sup> Dani's construction of masculinity remains passive, fragile and anti-hegemonic. The theory that Jewish masculinity is marked by victimization in the past is reflected and developed further: not only do the second generation of men suffer from it, but their trauma is passed on to the next generation.

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<sup>118</sup> Gratzke, *Liebesschmerz*, p.14.

<sup>119</sup> Yosef, p. 113.

<sup>120</sup> Eric Silverman, pp. 40–41.

<sup>121</sup> The findings of recent studies 'support the idea that BDSM is simply a sexual interest or subculture attractive to a minority, and for most participants not a pathological symptom of past abuse or difficulty with "normal" sex.' (Juliet Richters et al., 'Demographic and psychosocial features of participants in bondage and discipline, "sado-masochism" or dominance and submission (BDSM): data from a national survey', *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 5/7 (2008), 1660–68).

<sup>122</sup> Pfeiffer, pp. 109–10.

<sup>123</sup> Daphne Seeman, 'Moving beyond Post-Traumatic Memory Narratives: Generation, Memory and Identity in Doron Rabinovici, Robert Menasse and Eva Menasse', *Austrian Studies*, 19 (2011), 157–72 (p. 159).

While theory argues that this victimization can lead to violent behaviour in men, Rabinovici shows that it results in violence towards the self: the third generation have absorbed the feelings of guilt of their parents and express them through masochistic behaviour. At the same time Dani's masochism reflects Noyes and Savran's theory: by becoming Mullemann and thus torturing himself, Dani becomes someone powerful who is feared by society.

As with Dani, Ariele develops a fragile male identity. The representation of Ariele seems to conform to the stereotype of Jewish men as academically strong but physically weak. Ariele is accomplished in mathematics, but physically he fails to correspond to the image of hegemonic masculinity (*Suche* 48–49). He shows a general lack of achievement (*Suche* 49). Ariele's cognitive world is connected to mathematics, a domain associated with hegemonic masculinity:<sup>124</sup>

Ihm schien, er müsse wie bei einer komplexen Gleichung mit mehreren Unbekannten erst nach einem Teilergebnis sinnen, das in Beziehung, in Funktion, zu den übrigen Variablen stand; er wollte mit einer Person, die mit den anderen eine Summe bildete, beginnen. (*Suche* 50)

Mathematics is curiously intertwined with the 'unknown person' here. In German, as in English, an 'Unbekannte' can mean both the unknown person or the unknown variable. On the one hand this passage points to Ariele's passion to hunt the unknown: perpetrators of crime. On the other hand it can be read as a metaphor for Ariele's fragile and incomplete identity. As he does not know about the past, he is not a whole person. His identity is not fully developed.

Like his father, Ariele starts a masquerade. He pretends to be someone else — a move motivated by guilt and the quest for the unknown. To Ariele, the search for guilty people becomes an addiction and a passion (*Suche* 51). He first starts to hunt Nazis in Austria when a neo-Nazi

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<sup>124</sup> Connell sees the abstract beauty of mathematics as part of the positive culture produced by hegemonic masculinity (Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 239).

attacks a black man. This is the first time he identifies as a Jew.<sup>125</sup> In order to be able to track the neo-Nazi down, Ariele imitates him and dresses like him (*Suche* 50–51). Ariele finally kills him, illustrating Kimmel's theory of violence as a restorative force for men. After the killing Ariele goes to Israel to become a secret agent and to begin a family: the act of violence has paved the way for him to become a man.

When Jakob notes that Ariele dresses like a Nazi, he becomes worried to such an extent that he finally speaks openly to his son and talks about the horrors of his past, about the murder of his former wife and his daughter. After the conversation with his father Ariele changes his last name to his father's original last name, demonstrating his desire to go back to his Jewish roots. In his work as a secret agent in Israel, Ariele then becomes the copy of his father, switching identities and even worse: 'der Sohn wechselte die Namen öfter als sein Vater es je getan hatte.' (*Suche* 139) The Viennese Rabbi Adolf Jellinek — a nineteenth-century writer — generalizes the talent of taking of other identities as a Jewish talent: 'Their most distinctive quality is their universalism, their ability to absorb a variety of different cultures. Hence Jews are talented actors. Their imitative ability guarantees that they will adapt to western culture.'<sup>126</sup> Interestingly, he then goes on to say that this is one of the features that Jews share with women.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, shifting identities leads to the development of a fragile male identity in *Suche nach M.*: Ariele and his father's switch in identities point to a general Jewish identity crisis.<sup>128</sup> Even more, this 'carnivalism' of changing identities practised by Jakob exemplifies the inability to carry the trauma of the past. Ariele's wife confirms

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<sup>125</sup> Lisa Silverman, p. 258.

<sup>126</sup> Ritchie Robertson, 'Historicizing Weininger: The Nineteenth-Century Image of the Feminized Jew', in *Modernity, Culture and 'The Jew'*, ed. by Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 23–39 (p. 27).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Robert Lawson, 'Carnivalism in Postwar Austrian- and German-Jewish Literature — Edgar Hilsenrath, Irene Dische, and Doron Rabinovici', *A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 43/1 (2007), 37–48 (p. 43).

that ArieH reproduces his father's behaviour, pointing at his failure as a father and husband (*Suche* 152). Since ArieH's father did not talk with his son about his past in time and since he kept him away from any Jewish culture, ArieH was not able to develop a stable male identity. As the character Leon points out, ArieH is a 'Mullemann' as well: 'Mullemann ist dir nicht unähnlich [...] wie dieser Mullemann glaubst du, du könntest dich in anderen finden.' (*Suche* 187) Just like Dani, ArieH is hiding to protect himself: 'Ich werde Maskeraden und Tarnung hinter mir lassen.' (*Suche* 259) ArieH is indeed a 'mirror-figure' of Dani. ArieH wraps himself in bandages in order to find out how Mullemann feels. For him, the bandages symbolize injury and failure but also healing, hiding and recognition:

Sie sind Bekenntnisse aller Verletzungen, die Offenlegung von Versagen und Makel doch ebenfalls der Genesung. Das Blut, das Eiter, die Salben... All das sind Erinnerungsspuren. Anhand dieser Textur, dieses Gewebes, könntest du jeden identifizieren nicht wahr? Mit einem Verband kannst Du jemanden verstecken und bestimmen oder wiedererkennen; du kannst ihn ver mummen und enthüllen zugleich. (*Suche* 216)

Masquerade is on the one hand a metaphor for the impossibility of showing the terror of the Holocaust. On the other hand the male characters use it in order to hide their vulnerabilities connected to this past. The word 'Erinnerungsspuren' is revealing: it points to Dani's fragile male identity, which is grounded in the failure of his parents to talk to him about the past. Rabinovici also makes a statement about the discourses of memory and theory of memory here. The word 'Erinnerungsspuren' indicates the unreliability of memory: memory is always only partial. The memory of a traumatizing past leaves psychological wounds. People try to cover it up. At the same time the past and memory are a source of identity. Memory not only reveals parts of the past; it also discloses who we are. ArieH is like Dani, he does not accept being himself: 'Deine Erschöpfung, ArieH, rührt von deiner Unruhe, dieser Suche nach anderen, mit der du Dir ausweichst.' (*Suche* 145) ArieH is 'auf ewiger Flucht' (*Suche* 153) — a trait that fits perfectly with his job as a secret agent.

Arieh, however, believes that he and his father are strong men: 'Ich bin kein Opfer, und ich werde nie eines sein. Auch mein Vater, Jakov Scheinowiz war kein gebrochener oder armer Mann; er war stark, humorvoll, erfolgreich.' (*Suche* 219) This is indeed a misconception. Strength and success — traits associated with hegemonic masculinity — remain a fiction. Both Arieh and his father have a fragile male identity and weak masculinity.

There are striking similarities between the third generation of Jewish men in *Suche nach M.* and *Andernorts*. They all have in common an insecurity about their origin and their male identity. When Ethan meets Noa for the first time, he presents himself under a false name, Johann Rossauer, in order to avoid any discussion about his identity. While Noa is very attracted by Ethan-alias-Johann, this switch of identity provokes self-estrangement in Ethan (*Andernorts* 24). There seems to be a disconnection between Ethan's identity as a man and his body — a parallel to Dani: 'Er war im Höhenrausch, und zwischen Mutter und Vater sitzt der Bub, der er war, hockt in Ethan Rosen.' (*Andernorts* 10) The 'game' of switching his name to Johann Rossauer when he is with Noa has a deeper meaning. When Ethan is Johann, he can strip himself of his Jewish identity, which weighs heavily on his shoulders: 'Im Dunklen nannte sie ihn Johann und Rossauer. Bei ihr konnte er außer sich sein.' (*Andernorts* 98)

### ***Men as perennial children***

The men of the third generation largely remain childlike in Rabinovici's novels. In *Suche nach M.* Dani feels as if he becomes a young boy again (*Suche* 42). Ethan in *Andernorts* succeeds very well in the world of adults, the world of academia, but he has remained like a child in his personal relationships. This is an interesting parallel with the character Gauß in *Die Vermessung der Welt*. Ethan is a vulnerable man looking for the affection of his parents: 'Er wollte schnell zu den Eltern [...] Dieser Gedanke und ein kindliches Bedürfnis nach Zuwendung fraßen sich in ihm fest'

(*Andernorts* 247). Dani's maintaining the role of a child in his relationship with his parents is directly related to their failure to convey their experiences of the past. Dani's parents also have extremely high expectations of Dani because of this past:

Er sollte ein Bursche sein wie alle anderen seiner Klasse, doch durfte er sein Herkunft nicht vergessen, sollte den anderen seine Gleichwertigkeit und die der Juden schlechthin beweisen, sollte mithalten in der deutschen Sprache, ja besser noch als die Übrigen sein, und gleichzeitig Hebräisch studieren, sollte die Dichter und Denker herbeten können, doch nie an sie glauben, sollte das Fremde sich aneignen, ohne sich dem Eigenen zu entfremden. (*Suche* 36)

We can see a strong biographical connection with the author here. When Rabinovici reflects on his own childhood he writes: 'Ich sollte das Fremde mir aneignen, ohne mich dem Eigenen zu entfremden.'<sup>129</sup> Dani's parents expect him to develop a hybrid Austrian-Jewish identity, in other words: multiple identities. This sense of multiple identities is also reflected in *Andernorts* in the character of Ethan. His identity is marked by the two poles, one Austrian and the other Israeli: 'Du bist ein Mischmasch aus Tel Aviv und eine Melange aus Wien, Ethan.' (*Andernorts* 50–51) Somehow both are in themselves mixed up and then form a mix of two mixes. It is impossible to define Ethan, who switches between languages and countries.<sup>130</sup> The character Ethan also reflects biographical traits, as we see in the following quotation by Rabinovici on his childhood:

Ich lernte, wovon israelische Kinder nichts wussten, und kannte eine Welt, von der die Wiener Schulkameraden nichts ahnten. Der Bub, der ich war, fand sich in der Rolle des Mischmasch. Ich war ein Wechselbalg verschiedener Länder und Kontinente, wurde dabei zum Überbleibsel jahrhundertealter Heimatlosigkeit und zum Mitbringsel neuer Migration.<sup>131</sup>

In fact, the parents see in their children their reason for their survival: 'Dani Morgenthau sollte

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<sup>129</sup> Rabinovici, 'Kindheitserinnerungen'  
<[http://cdn2.vol.at/2006/01/Kindheitserinnerungen\\_von\\_Doron\\_Rabinovici.pdf](http://cdn2.vol.at/2006/01/Kindheitserinnerungen_von_Doron_Rabinovici.pdf)> [accessed 16 October 2013].

<sup>130</sup> Helmut Böttiger, 'Doron Rabinovici "Andernorts" Komisch verzweifelt', *Die Zeit*, 9 October 2010  
<<http://www.zeit.de/2010/40/L-Rabinovici>> [accessed 20 September 2015].

<sup>131</sup> Rabinovici, 'Kindheitserinnerungen'.

die Wiederauferstehung der Juden, ihres Glaubens, Denkens und ihrer Würde sein.' (*Suche* 71)

Leon extends the high expectations expressed by Dani's parents to all the Jewish parents who have survived the Shoa: 'So seid ihr Kinder: Mit euch sollten alle, die ermordet worden waren, wieder auferstehen [...] in euch wollten wir überleben, wollten uns freikaufen von allen Schuldgefühlen gegenüber den Opfern' (*Suche* 188). He makes the point here that the first Jewish generation that has not witnessed the Holocaust are still children. Leon notes that the parents have projected themselves into their children. More importantly, this passage reveals that their children serve as a justification for their survival and as a means of freeing themselves from the feeling of guilt towards the Jews who were murdered during the Shoa. In *Ohnehin* the character Lew is very much aware of his parents' heritage and their expectations: 'Seine Eltern sahen in ihm ihre Erfüllung, ihre Rechtfertigung vor den Ermordeten, und Lew wußte, daß er für sie die Zusammenfassung ihrer Existenz darstellte. Er war die Summe all ihres Guthabens und Liebhabens' (*Ohnehin* 166). Like Dani in *Suche nach M.* he feels the pressure of the past, exerted by his parents, on his shoulders. Children are depicted as being the sum of previous generations, the uncashed cheque. However, the children fail. They only become 'Teilsummen', like Ariele, because the parents hide their past. Extremely high expectations of the third Generation are also reflected in *Andernorts* (*Andernorts* 115).

Kirstin Gwyer argues that the parents want their children to be successful in order to give meaning to the struggle they had to endure.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, remaining a child has a more complex meaning, as the following passage shows: 'Ihr wollt die Wahrheit? Seid ihr sicher? Könntet ihr denn überhaupt damit leben? Eure Generation? Ihr seid doch ewige Kinder. Was ist ein Vater?' (*Andernorts* 223) The quote suggests that Ethan's generation will always be a generation of

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<sup>132</sup> Gwyer, p. 145

children with a fragile male identity since their parents do not tell them the truth about the Holocaust. At the same time, they remain like children because their parents' generation attach so much importance to the fact that they have children. They still treat them as such even into adulthood as they continuously try to protect their children's innocence by concealing their own suffering during the Holocaust: 'Um sie die Kinder. [...] Alles dreht sich um die Überlebenden.' (*Andernorts* 48) As a consequence, the sons act like 'petty children', playing identity games in order to avoid assuming responsibility, and fail to develop a stable masculine identity.

The phenomenon of identity changing is a striking parallel between the three novels. Bourdieu argues that men play games that are socially assigned to them. Here the parents assign them the game of playing, both in their own culture and the Austrian culture, while at the same time withholding the basis of their Jewish identity through non-communication about the past. Their children become men who play different men and adopt different identities; they get lost on the 'playing field', which weakens their male identity. Nevertheless, these games make them powerful — a characteristic of hegemonic masculinity: Ariele extends the power game of hunting classmates into his adult life and becomes a secret agent both because of his talent to switch identities and to hunt people. Dani-alias-Mulleman likewise extends his childhood game of taking the blame for deeds he has not committed (which can be seen as an internal power game) to confessing the crimes of others when he is an adult, which makes him feared by the whole of Austrian society.

All Jewish male characters of the third generation develop masculinities subversive to hegemonic masculinity; however, they do so without questioning the model of hegemonic masculinity and without constructing a positive alternative male identity. They switch identities just as their fathers do. They play identity games and become worse than their fathers as they change



identities even more often. The common feature of the third-generation males is that they remain childlike and irresponsible. They are in a state of limbo between childhood and adulthood. By playing games, both Ariele and Dani try to become 'real men' and heroes, Ariele as a secret agent and Dani in the fantastical figure of 'Mullemann'. While they are the offspring of the victims, they try to embody the experience of the perpetrator;<sup>133</sup> they use violence towards the self and the other, attempting to re-establish their power. However, this does not help them to escape the past and to find a stable male and Jewish identity. Both Dani and Ariele switch identities and adopt a strategy of passivity to avoid a constructive engagement with the self:

Es ist als säßest Du in einem Café unserer Geburtsstadt. Du wählst Dir Identitäten aus dem Menü. [...] Du [...] bezeugst Deine Liebe, versicherst Deine Freundschaft, bekennst Deine Schuld, bloß um nicht zu lieben, nie zu handeln, nichts einzuhalten, denn du fürchtest nur eines: Dich, Dein Sein, Dani Morgenthau. (*Suche* 260)

All Jewish male characters in *Suche nach M.* are 'Mullemänner', fragile men wounded by the past and by its repression.

### ***Other Minority Groups in Austria***

As mentioned in the Introduction, Rabinovici writes not only about the Jewish minority in Austria but also about other minorities. One subplot in *Suche nach M.* concerns the young Turk Yılmaz, who is accused of having shot his boss, Çecil, because the latter made advances towards his wife Gülgün. During the trial, Yılmaz denies his guilt and says that he has only admitted the crime to save his honour. He behaved in accordance with the expectations of his community (*Suche* 74), which expected Yılmaz to take revenge by attacking Çecil's wife and fighting like a man: 'Ich hätte seine Frau in Anatolien vergewaltigen sollen, meinten manche, ihn während einer seiner Geschäftsreisen stellen sollen. In der Heimat hieß es, würde es ein Kampf unter Männern sein.'

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<sup>133</sup> Reiter, p. 162.

(*Suche* 74) Yılmaz had been a modern Turk before the crime (*Suche* 76), however the pressure of his community forced him to show his conformity to a traditional Turkish masculinity, which is strongly hegemonic. Rasim Özgür Dönmez, for example, argues that '[t]he Turkish Republic has had hegemonic masculinity in its nature'.<sup>134</sup> Values such as honour and bravery were emphasized, turning men into the 'protectors of society'.<sup>135</sup> Traditional images of Turkish masculinity such as the 'tough uncle' and the 'protector of the social order' are still very present in current popular culture in Turkey.<sup>136</sup> Paul Scheibelhofer conducted interviews with young Turkish men who live in Vienna and whose parents had emigrated from Turkey on their construction of masculinity. He found a wide spectrum, from the image of the protective man, which is connected with control of the woman, to critical views on hegemonic masculinity. Scheibelhofer concludes that there is no such thing as a specific Turkish Muslim masculinity in Austria. One of his conclusions is that male honour is present in the environment in which these young men grow up. The role that male honour plays in their lives, however, is the result of an active personal 'Aushandlungsprozess'.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, he notes that for these young men taking care of the family is connected with controlling the family. Yılmaz has to pay for the standards of masculinity that he has rejected intellectually but forced to abide by socially through his peers. Although he has the choice of developing his own masculinity, as the young men interviewed by Scheibelhofer do, he felt compelled to correspond with the image of masculinity of his community once his masculine honour had been challenged in public.

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<sup>134</sup> Rasim Özgür Dönmez, 'Coups d'état and the Masculine Turkish Political Sphere: Modernization without strong Democratization', in *Gendered Identities. Criticizing Patriarchy in Turkey*, ed. by Rasim Özgür Dönmez and Fazilet Ahu Özmen (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), pp. 1–32 (p. 23).

<sup>135</sup> Senel Symons, *The Routledge Intermediate Turkish Reader. Political and Cultural Articles* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 9.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Paul Scheibelhofer, 'Ehre und Männlichkeit bei jungen türkischen Migranten', in *Die soziale Konstruktion von Männlichkeit. Hegemoniale und marginalisierte Männlichkeiten in Deutschland*, ed. by Nina Baur and Jens Luedtke (Opladen: Budrich, 2008), pp. 183–99 (p. 195).

Rabinovici shows here that men may be free to choose their masculinity in private, but that the pressure of society and the community can become a strong force, which limits personal choices. The trial of Yılmaz becomes a symbol of failed emancipation from an archaic image of masculinity. It shows the power that hegemonic masculinity holds over men and how it pressures them to conform to this standard. Yılmaz has a mirror character in *Ohnehin*. Mehmet had modern views before coming to Austria (*Ohnehin* 185, 186). He came away from Turkey to leave the Turkish traditions behind. Mehmet married Yelda against the will of Yelda's father and her family. However, once in Austria both start to fall back into their old traditions: 'Es schien, in diesem Land mußten sie zu jenen Türken werden, die sie nie gewesen waren.' (*Ohnehin* 186) This is a parallel with Yılmaz in *Suche nach M.*, who had modern views but then was obliged to comply with the norms imposed by the Turkish community. Being uprooted from their home country and faced with the reality for migrants in Austria, Mehmet escapes into nostalgia and tradition (*Ohnehin* 186). This also has implications for the power relationships between the genders in the family:

Der Vater vertrat zwar, trotz säkularer und sozialistischer Überzeugungen, die Autorität der Tradition und die Tradition der Autorität; die Söhne wiederum gebärdeten sich gerne als seine Stellvertreter, und die Mutter fügte sich dem Diktat der Männer, doch es war Sirin, die Tochter, die das Geschäft leitete, die den Kontakt zum Marktamt pflegte, die alle Briefe an Behörden schrieb, die jeden Auftrag vermerkte, die es auf sich genommen hatte, die Bücher zu führen. (*Ohnehin* 163)

This passage, however, reveals that the male hegemonic claim does not correspond with reality. As exemplified in Mosche in *Suche nach M.*, the hegemonic masculinity of men of the Erketin family is not real; it is an ideal image that they preserve with the support of Yelda (*Ohnehin* 187). The term 'sich gebärden' is telling and links with Butler's theory on gender performance. The men only act as men, they are performing their gender. They are copying their fathers and through the repetitive action their gender becomes a social reality — here shown in the behaviour of the mother who submits to male authority. Mehmet's sons behave in the same way Tanner in

Kehlmann's *Ruhm* acts out hegemonic masculinity on stage. While gender feels authentic, the 'staged aspect' shows that gender is to a certain extent flexible.

The masculinity of the Turkish minority in Austria is shown as a backlash to a modern male identity. The Turkish men in Rabinovici's novels set aside their principles in order to conform to hegemonic masculinity, the ideal demanded by the Turkish community living abroad.

### ***Female characters***

In Rabinovici's novels women are either depicted as saviour figures and as entirely different from men, or as being able to embody certain characteristics of masculinity. Strikingly, it is only when Dani-alias-Mullemann meets a woman, the art historian Sina Mohn, that he shows his human side. This relationship helps Mullemann to become himself again: his rash begins to heal and he is able to take off some of his bandages. At the end of the novel, Ariele recommends that Dani go back to Sina, because that is where he is able to remove his bandages and to be himself. Ariele suggests that Dani should have a relationship with a woman and maybe have a child. In other words, he asks Dani to become a 'normal man'. Cathy Gelbin speaks of the 'female principle as the redeeming symbolic',<sup>138</sup> which is reflected in the female characters of Sina and Mosche's wife, Gitta. Because of his speech impediment Mosche cannot cope with the daily routine alone any more; he can only survive with the help of a woman, his wife (*Suche* 255–56). Just as Mosche is not viable without his wife, his son Dani needs a woman to exist. In *Suche nach M.* Sina's profession is also significant: it is no coincidence that an art historian helps Dani to take off his bandages. It suggests that you can only develop a stable identity, that you can only become a man if you face and analyse the past. In *Andernorts* women are presented as being entirely different from men: 'und wieder fühlte er sich ihr

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<sup>138</sup> Gelbin, 'Monster return', p. 30.

nah und fern zugleich, weil er nicht verstand, was diese Frau, die ihm wie aus einem anderen Universum schien, an ihm fand.’ (*Andernorts* 55)

Ethan’s dependence on women and his insecurity make him fear constantly that his girlfriend may leave him or that he is no match for her (*Andernorts* 57). This ties in with *Suche nach M.*, where men are only viable because of their female partners. Rabinovici seems to suggest that women, or at least love, can save men. Salvation in love — Rabinovici displays quite a traditional view of the relationship between men and women here.

Rabinovici also portrays women who are able to appropriate certain characteristics of masculinity in order to achieve a goal. Gülgün in *Suche nach M.* is an example. She is a modern Turkish woman who has been educated as a European. In fact, it was Gülgün and not Yılmaz who killed Çecil; she turned the male tradition of revenge around. By doing so, she does not create new masculine behaviour or transform the mechanisms of masculinity in the sense of Halberstam. Instead she reproduces a masculinity practised by men. However, this is never mentioned in the text directly, and so reflects the taboo of talking about a woman who has taken over the duty of a man. It is rather ironic when the supervisor at court says: ‘Die Ehre der Türkinnen werde [...] von den Herren verteidigt.’ (*Suche* 82) This also echoes the stereotypical attitudes of Austrians towards the Turkish population<sup>139</sup> and the way in which the dominant society limits the identity of minorities through its discourse.<sup>140</sup> Rachel Ramsay argues that ‘Gülgün ruthlessly pursues her own independence and, like a true *femme fatale*, proves the downfall of the man who loves her’.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Bodemann and Yurdakul argue that Rabinovici links the Jewish and Turkish population through the similarity of prejudices they face by the Austrian population. (Michal Bodemann and Gökge Yurdakul, ‘Deutsche Türken, jüdische Narrative und Fremdenangst: Strategien der Anerkennung’, in *Islamfeindlichkeit*, ed. by Thorsten Gerald Schneiders (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2010), pp. 215–43 (p. 236).

<sup>140</sup> Ramsay, p. 9.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

Ramsay continues to argue that while the text attempts to counter the image of the powerless Turkish woman, it actually reproduces traditional representations of oriental women.<sup>142</sup> One can argue that in trying to prove that Turkish women are not powerless, Rabinovici makes the female character adopt traditional male Turkish behaviour.

Yelda in *Ohnehin* is a mirror figure to Gülgün. When her daughter becomes pregnant and Yelda's husband still puts his reputation before his family, she becomes independent of Mehmet. It is now Yelda who makes the decisions, even the ones concerning the business (*Ohnehin* 201). It is only with other men that Mehmet can still behave as a patriarch: 'Mehmet thronte breitbeinig neben dem hageren Freund' (*Ohnehin* 201). Rabinovici illustrates that gender roles can be challenged, even in very patriarchal societies.

In order to challenge masculine oppression, Gülgün and Yelda need to take control. However, when they do this they reproduce the behaviour of hegemonic masculinity: 'Eine Woche nachdem er sich Yeldas Diktat unterworfen hatte' (*Ohnehin* 201). The relationship between men and women remains the exercising of power by one over the other, only here it is reversed. Both Gülgün and Yelda have an instrumental attitude to masculinity: they assume elements of it to achieve their specific goals and use it against violent men. By doing this they become complicit in hegemonic masculinity. The portrayal of both female Turkish characters shows that Rabinovici makes conscious points about gender.

Bärbl in *Ohnehin* likewise uses masculinity to achieve her goal: a confession of guilt from her father. When she stages the tribunal against him she dresses up as a 'Hauptmann':

Ihre Aufmachung verfehlte nicht die Wirkung, schüchternete Herbert Kerber ein, und sie erkannte an seinem Blick, daß er immer wieder vergaß, ja, innerlich darüber rätselte,

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., pp. 11–12.

welchen Geschlechts sie war. Diese Irritation machte ihn schließlich so unsicher, wie sie es angestrebt hatte. (*Ohnehin* 132)

To a certain extent this reflects Halberstam's assumption that women can own masculinity. Bärbl calls her father 'Märchenvati' (*Ohnehin* 133), both because he has told fairy tales about his past and because he has not been a real father to her. This is a striking parallel to *Suche nach M.*, where Mosche tells fables to his son when asked about the past. The same mechanism of repression of the past is at work.

It has been argued that masculinity is an institutional mask with which men want to keep women and other men from finding out about their secret: that constructions of masculinity are simply what social institutions define and convey as such.<sup>143</sup> When Bärbl puts on a mask, she not only tries to find out about her father's secret past,<sup>144</sup> but also becomes a symbol for the social construction of gender. When Bärbl is caught dressed up as a 'Hauptmann' by her brother, he thinks that she has gone crazy: 'Bist du noch ganz normal? Was soll diese Travestie?' (*Ohnehin* 134) Butler argues that gender parody 'reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without origin'.<sup>145</sup> Hans, however, immediately remarks that Bärbl is copying a man and male behaviour and thinks that this is far from being normal. Hans has internalized the view that there is an original gender. Stefan's reaction to Bärbl's new physical appearance is rather different: 'Deine neue Frisur sieht urcool aus. Und der Anzug ist richtig retro. Du wirkst rundum erneuert. Darf ich raten? Ein neuer Mann?' (*Ohnehin* 134) Stefan's last remark has a double meaning: he thinks that Bärbl has changed her looks because she has met a new man. However, this

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<sup>143</sup> Klaus Theweleit in Inge Stephan, 'Im toten Winkel. Die Neuentdeckung des "ersten Geschlechts" durch *men's studies* und Männlichkeitsforschung', in *Männlichkeit als Maskerade*, ed. by Benthien and Stephan, pp. 11–35 (p. 29).

<sup>144</sup> See also Bitter, p. 128.

<sup>145</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 188.

could be read as a comment on Bärbl's male appearance, that she is a new man. Interestingly, Bärbl seems to see the need to be dressed as a man in order to exercise power. She reproduces masculinity and it is attached to the male body, contrary to Halberstam's theory that masculinity can be detached from it. The fact that a woman becomes a strong man ('Flintenweiber' (*Ohnehin* 129) and 'Ein neuer Mann') underlines the fragility of the other biologically male characters in the novel. That Bärbl has to dress up like a man in order to extract a confession from her father can be read as a criticism of *Väterliteratur* in which the conflict between father and son was central and the role of the daughter was neglected.

### ***Masculinity, genre and narrative structure***

In *Ohnehin*, Rabinovici rejects *Väterliteratur* as a relic of the past (*Ohnehin* 135–36) and criticizes family stories as a literary form with which to engage with the Nazi past: 'Sucht euch doch einen anderen für eure Verrücktheiten. Für euren ganz persönlichen Familienroman. Das ist nicht meine Geschichte.' (*Ohnehin* 109) Family stories are a distortion of reality: 'Ich hoffte, sie würden sich nicht in deren Familienwirren verstricken.' (*Ohnehin* 149) Family stories have indeed been criticized as a 'Verharmlosung historischer Zusammenhänge'.<sup>146</sup> Bärbl tries to equate the fate of the children of perpetrators and victims: 'Die Kinder von Tätern und Opfern haben ja viele Gemeinsamkeiten.' (*Ohnehin* 117) This reflects the comparative case studies done by Gabriele Rosenthal, which suggest that children and grandchildren of both victims and perpetrators display similar symptoms.<sup>147</sup> Bärbl's answer to the provocative question raised by Hirsch as to whether postmemory can include perpetrator generations and whether such an approach challenges the clear-cut division line between victims and perpetrators, is affirmative. While the mechanism of

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<sup>146</sup> Eigler, p. 9.

<sup>147</sup> Gabriele Rosenthal in Seeman, p. 161.



repression of the perpetrators and victims may be the same, *Ohnehin* makes it clear that the children of the perpetrators and victims cannot morally claim to be in the same situation (*Ohnehin* 119).

In an essay on history and literature Rabinovici also criticizes the stories about the victims, which are distorted by a false romanticism.<sup>148</sup> Family stories — be it those of the perpetrator families or the families of the victims — distort history and divert attention from what is important: accepting responsibility for one's life and for the present. As Rabinovici points out in his essay on history and literature:

Ich schreibe vom Umgang mit der Vertreibung, der Verfolgung und der Vernichtung. Ich spreche hier vom Umgang mit diesen Fragen, und meine nicht bloß die historische Auseinandersetzung mit der Shoah, sondern ebenso die aktuelle, die politische Handhabung von Flucht und Genozid in der Gegenwart. [...] Literatur kann verdeutlichen, wie es gewesen sein wird, und das bedeutet nicht bloß, wie es wohl geschehen sein könnte, sondern heißt weiters, eine Kalkulation, ein Zählen im Erzählen, eine Abrechnung mit dem, was uns noch zustoßen kann.<sup>149</sup>

Rabinovici's literature functions as a warning: to draw lessons from history, accept one's responsibility for the present and do everything to avoid the errors of the past.

Considering *Väterliteratur* as obsolete and family stories as an inadequate literary form with which to deal with the past, Rabinovici develops an interesting variation of *Elternliteratur* in his novel *Suche nach M.* with which to engage with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The traditional *Elternliteratur* is here extended from the perpetrator to the victim's perspective. On the one hand he criticizes the Austrian way of dealing with the past, on the other hand he criticizes the silence of the Austrian Jews, implying complicit behaviour in the sense that they remain silent about the past, as do the perpetrators of the Holocaust. The silence of the Austrian Jews is exemplified most prominently in the behaviour of the parents in *Suche nach M.*. Dani's guilt complex, which robs

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<sup>148</sup> Rabinovici, 'Wie es war'.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

him of his identity,<sup>150</sup> is rooted in his relationship with his parents. He believes that they have survived the Holocaust for him:

All ihre Gefühle der Schuld — er sog sie auf. [...] Dani verbarg alle Gedanken an Revolte und Befreiung. Jedes Aufbegehren, das in ihm wohnte, weckte sein Gewissen, schien ihm eine Vernichtungsdrohung gegen die Überlebenden, gegen die Opfer, gegen seine Eltern. Sein Scheitern machte ihn zum Täter, zum Komplizen der Menschen, die heute noch haßten. (*Suche* 83)

This passage shows that the children become for the parents a means to free themselves from feelings of guilt. They absorb guilt. Dani is unable to rebel against his parents and to develop into an adult because his parents are victims and because of his guilt complex. In doing so he becomes a ‘perpetrator’ himself. Not confronting his parents about the past makes him guilty. Dani’s grandmother and mother do not talk to him about it — the three-generation-memory characteristic of family stories fails. For Ariele and Dani, the development of a stable male identity is hampered by the inability of the previous generations to come to terms with the past and to talk openly about it with their sons.

Rabinovici suggests that you cannot develop a stable self if your parents do not communicate about their past. A specific form of postmemory is at the centre of *Elternliteratur*. Already the second generation who witnessed the Holocaust fantasizes about it. Since no real memory is transmitted about the traumatic experiences, the third generation of men push the process of imagination and creation of memories of the past further: they start to fantasize about the past, literally embody it and bring it to life. As with postmemory, the effects of the past are transmitted to the present; the victimization of the male parent generation has a direct impact on the masculine identity of the third generation. Hirsch has argued that artistic expressions and testimonies of the

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<sup>150</sup> Eva Reichmann, ‘Jüdische Figuren in österreichischer und bundesdeutscher Literatur der 1980er und 1990er Jahre — der schwierige Weg jüdischer und nichtjüdischer Autoren aus dem mentalen Ghetto’, in *Jews in German Literature since 1945*, ed. by O’Dochartaigh, pp. 237–50 (p. 248).

postmemory generation are ‘shaped by the child’s confusion and responsibility, by the desire to repair, and by the consciousness that the child’s own existence may well be a form of compensation for unspeakable loss.’<sup>151</sup> Dani alias Mullemann and Ariele as a secret agent try to repair by catching or helping to convict criminals.

*Suche nach M.* not only departs from family stories in terms of content, but also in terms of literary form. While family stories are characterized by continuity,<sup>152</sup> the novel is episodic, as its subtitle announces: ‘Roman in zwölf Episoden’. This subtitle reveals two things: first, the word ‘Episode’ can mean ‘minor point’ in German. As such Rabinovici could indicate again that the Shoah is only treated accidentally in Austrian discourse. Second, it indicates the fragmented structure of the novel: there is no unity, as with the rupture which the Shoah caused in Jewish identity. Marieke Karjenbrink remarks on the effect of the episodic style:

A complex network of family and community relations gradually unfolds whilst the episodic structure allows for a multiplicity of different perspectives, narrative voices and configurations [...]. Bizarre and surreal elements feature strongly, and particularly striking are the use of mirror structures, mirror images and doubles, and the recurring pattern of mistaken identity<sup>153</sup>.

Indeed, the complexity and non-linearity of the novel reflect the confusion in identity of the male characters: it consists of different stories, all connected to each other, in which one and the same person has different names, or the same name sometimes appears in its Jewish form, sometimes in its Austrian form (Jakob versus Jakov, for example). The reader experiences the same trouble with identities as the main characters. The episode on Mullemann is one of the surreal features of the novel. That Mullemann is an invention is a point that is made in the novel itself: ‘Die beiden Freunde erfanden “Mullemann”’. (*Suche* 245) Robert Lawson has noted that Rabinovici uses

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<sup>151</sup> Hirsch, ‘The Generation of Postmemory’, p. 112.

<sup>152</sup> Assmann, *Generationsidentitäten und Vorurteilsstrukturen*, p.26.

<sup>153</sup> Krajenbrink, p. 255.

‘the central elements of carnivalism — including masquerade, role reversal and grotesque realism both as a means of expressing the incomprehensible nature of twentieth-century chaos and atrocities and as a vehicle for social criticism.’<sup>154</sup> Carnivalism and masquerade are here seen as a way of conveying the truth; a direct representation of the Holocaust is impossible, but carnivalism and masquerade have the power to impart it indirectly. Beyond this, they are a means of protection against the trauma experienced in the past. Moreover, switching identities and wrapping up in bandages hides the vulnerability of the male characters and acts as a mask protecting men from being seen as unmanly. The difficulty of placing *Suche nach M.* in a literary genre is not a coincidence, as Rabinovici remarks: ‘Was damals geschah, läßt sich nicht in mir geläufigen Kategorien fassen.’<sup>155</sup> Clearly, its fragmented form stands in contrast to the continuity of form of family stories. In *Suche nach M.* the parent-child relationship is central to the process of remembering the past, showing a direct cause-and-effect relationship and emphasizing personal responsibility.

### 3.4 Conclusion

In Rabinovici’s novels *Suche nach M.*, *Ohnehin* and *Andernorts* the past has a profound effect on his Jewish characters. The Jewish men develop a fragile male identity and weak masculinity.

Rabinovici’s characters from the second and third generation frequently switch identity. For the second generation of men, changing identity was a question of survival; for the third generation it becomes a marker of a fragile male identity and immaturity. Switching identity is also a common

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<sup>154</sup> Lawson, p. 37.

<sup>155</sup> Rabinovici, ‘Wie es war’.

theme in the stories of Kehlmann's *Ruhm*. The male characters all pretend to be someone else and try to live an alternative life. Rabinovici, however, takes this further: they do not only switch their identity through the use of fantasy spaces, they do so in real life. As with Kehlmann, the male characters change identity to escape reality. Moreover, with Rabinovici they also do so in order to escape the painful past. It is part of a strategy of evasion.

In *Suche nach M.* both the second and the third generation of Jewish men try to live up to the ideal of hegemonic men, but in reality they fail to comply. Arie and Dani, for example, invent the figure of Mullemann to become men: 'Sie umwoben ihn mit Legenden, flochten ein Gebilde aus Heldengeschichten' (*Suche* 245). However, as in Kehlmann's works analysed in Chapter One, hegemonic masculinity remains a fiction, an invention like Mullemann. The third generation of Jewish men display hegemonic subversion: they are hampered in their development and act like petty children, playing identity games. These male characters mirror the childlike researchers in Kehlmann's *Die Vermessung der Welt*. The third generation remain immature because their parents continue to treat them like children in order to protect them. The parent-child relationship creates, for the third generation, a comfort zone where they do not need to assume any responsibilities. At the same time they play identity games, which spill into their real lives, in order to become powerful, reflecting Bourdieu's theory.

The father-son relationship is central to the development of masculine identity in all of Rabinovici's novels and it is strongly linked with coming to terms with the past. However, as we have seen, the relationship between mother and son is important as well for the development of a masculine identity. The parents who do not talk about the past with their children become complicit with the perpetrators, who also want to hide the past. Dani and Arie are symbols of a family conflict that becomes public — engagement with the past can never remain private and be confined to the family only. This is an inversion of *Elternliteratur*, which dealt with the perpetrators and

where the discourse on guilt was transferred from the social to the private sphere. The genre of *Elternliteratur* as developed by Rabinovici allows the author to show the direct consequences of the past for the present and the need to engage with the past in order to develop a stable identity. Expanding the common *Elternliteratur*, it becomes a literary form that criticizes how both the perpetrator generation and the victim generation deals with the past. As Norma Moruzzi points out, memory loss is mixed with relief:<sup>156</sup> you can leave your painful past behind, which is what Mosche and Jakob try to do. However, this has a devastating effect on their sons, who develop a fragile male identity. This reflects the theory that the construction of Jewish male gender identity is shaped by the traumatic experiences of the past. The absence of certain parts of Jewish men's history can shape their lives.<sup>157</sup> It is the secret of origin that leads to the development of a fragile male identity in the third generation. Rabinovici takes the theory that Jewish men are marked by the victimization of the past further: the trauma is passed on to the third generation who have not experienced the victimization. While it has been argued that the traumatic past can lead to violent behaviour in Jewish men,<sup>158</sup> Rabinovici shows that it also results in violence towards the self. Jews who are able to distance themselves from the past are not hindered in the development of their male identity: 'Aber um Schritte machen zu können, muß ich erinnern, wie es war, und daß es fort ist.' (*Ohnehin* 203–04) In order to be able to live in the present, we must remember the past. Rabinovici illustrates that the mechanisms of repression of the past are the same for the victims and the perpetrators. However, neither can the children of the perpetrators morally claim to be in the same situation as the children of the victims, nor is the effect on the children the same: Bärbl is even able temporarily to become a strong man.

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<sup>156</sup> Norma Claire Moruzzi, 'Asking Questions/Telling a story', *The German Quarterly*, 73/2 (2000), 179–84 (p. 181).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>158</sup> Katz, p. 73.

The second generation of Jewish men use the concept of hegemonic masculinity as an instrument to protect their sons. As they do not want their sons to become victims, they transfer to their sons, behaviour that is in line with hegemonic masculinity. This reflects the theory that the construction of Jewish masculinity as 'gentle' has been influenced by the Western view of masculinity, which values the physical over the mental. Central to this phenomenon, however, is the past. In line with postmemory theory, the consequences of the past are transferred to the next generation through behaviour and in the form of gender codes, which are thought to protect the children. At the same time the second generation put on masks of masculinity, both to absorb the shock of the traumatizing events of the past and in order to hide their feminine side. Postmemory and switching identity act as a protective shield to contain the shock of the Shoah and to protect the masculine integrity of the characters.

Inventing stories or fantasizing about the past avoids engaging with the painful and emasculating experience of the Holocaust. The need to switch identity shows both the impossibility of dealing with the past and the horror of the Holocaust. The theme of coming to terms with the past in Rabinovici's novels sheds light on the way in which public discourse in Austria dealt with it: with trivialization, suppression and the covering-up of her role during the Second World War. Rabinovici is engaged in a revision of the mainstream narrative of Austria's involvement in the Holocaust.<sup>159</sup>

The failure to comply with hegemonic standards is not only exemplified in the Jewish characters. Both Turkish male characters want to be modern men, hegemonic countertypes. But it is the reality of life in Austria and within their peer community that forces them to attempt to comply with hegemonic masculinity. In the end, they fail. Rabinovici shows that the Turkish men perform

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<sup>159</sup> Lorenz, 'Imagined Identities', p. 180.

their gender, in line with Butler's argument. They stage their masculinity just as in Kehlmann's *Ruhm* and their masculinity becomes a social reality. Through the Turkish male characters it is exemplified that gender is on the one hand forced upon people by the expectations of society and on the other hand that, even though it is an act, it becomes a social reality through repetitive performance. The behaviour of the Turkish male characters also points to some shortcomings in the concept of hegemonic masculinity: it has neglected to consider not only the geographic interplay of masculinities,<sup>160</sup> but also the effect on immigrant men of the interplay between the concepts of masculinity of the country of origin and those of the new homeland.

Interestingly, the Turkish women manage to reverse gender roles. They display masculine behaviour, reflecting Halberstam's idea that women can also own masculinity.<sup>161</sup> However, in doing so they reproduce male hegemonic behaviour, instead of creating their own masculinity in the sense of Halberstam. Gülgün and Yelda become female accomplices to hegemonic masculinity. They use it in order to achieve their goals and to dominate others, showing an instrumental attitude towards masculinity. This instrumental approach is also reflected in *Ohnehin*: Bärbel needs to dress up like a man in order to be accepted as such. This suggests that, contrary to Halberstam's argument, masculinity is still connected to the male body and imitation. Women are represented as entirely different from men in Rabinovici's work. They have the capacity to save men and make their existence viable. This implies that women are indispensable to the construction of a stable male identity, which men alone are unable to do. Rabinovici's texts reveal that hegemonic masculinity is an instrument for both men and women: it is used to protect and to achieve certain goals.

Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity artificially creates a dualism between hegemonic

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<sup>160</sup> Connell and Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity — Rethinking the Concept', p. 849.

<sup>161</sup> Halberstam, p. 2.



masculinity and non-hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, however, is capable of hybridization and adaptation.<sup>162</sup> Rabinovici shows that this hybridization is to a certain extent possible: Mosche and Felix can be caring fathers and at the same time tough businessmen. The concept of masculinity promoted by Zionism is built on this aspect of hybridization, combining elements of hegemonic masculinity such as physical strength with anti-hegemonic elements of a 'gentle' masculinity. Rabinovici overstretches this concept when he gives the character Felix very caring and traditionally female traits. Rabinovici takes the concept of the orthogonality of gender to an extreme. Kehlmann uses irony and satire to show the artificiality of concepts of masculinity and to reveal that hegemonic masculinity does not exist. Again through the use of irony and satire, Rabinovici shows that the ideal of masculinity as promoted by the Zionist movement is very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. It tears characters such as Felix apart. Interestingly, the notion of healthier and stronger men capable of defending themselves promoted through Zionism very much resonates with the concept of masculinity promoted by Jahn which emphasized physical strength and 'Wehrhaftigkeit' as ideals for German men in the 19th Century. The heroic Israeli masculinity can be seen as an extension of Jahn's idea of masculinity; strikingly both concepts work in the context of a people which is considered to be 'oppressed'.

The theory that Jewish masculinity is gentle is reflected in characters such as Mosche and Guttmann. The Jewish male characters do not dominate their female counterparts; this partly reflects the Zionist project as anti-hegemonic, favouring the equality of sexes. Guttmann displays a 'gentle' masculinity without corresponding with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Interestingly, he is one of the most stable Jewish male characters. This seems to suggest that men need to renounce entirely, not only partly, the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity in order to develop

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<sup>162</sup> Demetriou, p. 355.

a stable positive male identity.

No generalization about Jewish masculinity is made, either in its own right or in comparison to Western masculinity. That the Jewish male characters develop a weak masculinity and fragile male gender identity is not used as a strategy to present stereotypes about Jewish men; rather it is shown to be the result of the traumatizing past and failed communication. That Dani and Ariele can become powerful male figures works against a stereotypical description of Jewish men. A wide spectrum of constructions of masculinity of varied complexity is dealt with. However, the concept of a 'gentle' masculinity is shown to have potential as an ideal for a positive male gender identity. The analysis of Geiger's work will show that 'gentle' masculinity is also a useful concept with which to analyse non-Jewish male character.



## 4 Arno Geiger: New men? Towards a strategic passive, and caring masculinity

Of the three authors whose works are analysed in this research, Arno Geiger is the most conscious of gender politics. He writes his books with a 'gender agenda', presenting subversive gender constructions. In his novels he closely engages with the effect of the empowerment of women on masculinity. The recent history of masculinity is one of decline, according to the author:

Die Geschichte der Männer im 20. Jahrhundert ist eine Geschichte des Verlierens. Was auch immer sie angefangen haben, ist schiefgegangen, dazu kam der familiäre Machtverlust und das erfolglose Verteidigen anderer patriarchaler Pfründe. Das Leben war nicht in Einklang zu bringen mit dem, was man ihnen in ihrer Kindheit versprochen hatte. Die Frauen hatten die Geschichte auf ihrer Seite.<sup>1</sup>

While men of today seem to cling to an ideal of hegemonic masculinity,<sup>2</sup> Geiger appears to suggest that men of his generation do have the freedom to choose their gender role and their role in relation to women. Talking about the main male protagonist of the novel *Es geht uns gut*, he notes:

es ist klar, dass die Emanzipation der Frau zwangsläufig auch die Emanzipation des Mannes ist. Auch Philipp fühlt sich nicht gezwungen, sich einem bestimmten Rollenklischee entsprechend zu verhalten. Er hat die Möglichkeit zu wählen. Nur ist er ein bisschen entschlosslos. Dieses Entscheidungsproblem ist das Problem einer neuen Generation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Schneeberger, "‘Das sprengt die Vorstellungskraft’ Schriftsteller Arno Geiger im Interview", *Profil* <<http://www.profil.at/articles/0818/560/204798/das-vorstellungskraft>> [accessed 19 October 2015].

<sup>2</sup> Wippermann, pp. 32–33.

<sup>3</sup> Matthias Prangel, 'Komplexer als ein Wirtshaus. Arno Geiger spricht über das Problem, einen Roman über das Familienleben zu schreiben', *Literaturkritik.de*, May 2007 <[http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez\\_id=10727](http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=10727)> [accessed 19 October 2015].

This chapter will try to find an answer to the question of whether Geiger develops a diversity of male identities, which can be freely chosen, independently of any conventions. In short: does he show a new empowerment of men? Drawing on the concepts of hegemonic masculinity, female masculinity, gender performance, the orthogonality of gender, masculine domination, men as children playing men, the masculine block and the past as a constituting factor of masculinity, this chapter will address the following questions, which arise from studying the primary texts: How is the empowerment of women presented and how does it affect the male characters? Are the male characters free to choose their gender role and do they develop an alternative positive masculinity? Are the female characters able to take up roles traditionally considered as male? How does the treatment of the past, memory and gender intersect?

The construction of masculinity will be analysed drawing principally on the two novels *Es geht uns gut*<sup>4</sup> and *Alles über Sally*, as female empowerment and gender considerations are central to the narrative of each. *Es geht uns gut* also closely engages with the way in which Austrian discourse dealt with the Holocaust, as Rabinovici's novels analysed earlier, which impacts on constructions of masculinity. Both *Es geht uns gut* and *Alles über Sally* address the question of ageing related to masculinity, linking them to both Rabinovici's and Kehlmann's works. The analysis will be complemented by research into *Der alte König in seinem Exil* and to some extent *Selbstporträt mit Flusspferd*. It will be demonstrated that there is a development towards anti-hegemonic subversion in the constructions of masculinity. The male characters in Geiger's works develop masculinities, which can be categorized into four types: a disintegrating hegemonic masculinity; a helpless complicit masculinity; a strategic passive masculinity; and a gentle, caring and emotionally literate masculinity. The latter two qualify as subversive, anti-hegemonic masculinities.

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<sup>4</sup> Arno Geiger received the *Deutscher Buchpreis* for *Es geht uns gut* in 2005.

As in Rabinovici's texts, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has an important impact on these constructions of masculinity. The preceding chapter has outlined the peculiarities of Austrian memory discourse on the Holocaust and introduced the literary genre of family stories as well as postmemory theory. They are of particular relevance to the novel *Es geht uns gut*. The first section of this chapter will provide a short summary of the novel and then analyse how it deals with the past and memory within the literary genre of family stories. Then the construction of masculinity of each generation will be analysed. Finally, the discussion will explore how the female characters engage with the past and how they impact on evolving constructions of masculinity. It will be shown that *Es geht uns gut* portrays a decline in men's power from one generation to the other. All the male characters have in common that they are blocking out the past. As in Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.*, both the avoidance of dealing with the past and the non-communication about it have a tremendous impact on the sons' relationships with their fathers, which in turn affect their masculine identity.

#### **4.1 Moving towards a strategic passive masculinity: *Es geht uns gut***

Narrating twenty-one days between 1938 and 2001, *Es geht uns gut* provides a glimpse of the lives of the three generations of the Sterk family. After marrying Richard Sterk, Alma gives up her studies and soon gives birth to Otto and Ingrid. Meanwhile Richard has a prolific career. Coinciding with the *Anschluss* in 1938, he starts an affair with the family's nanny, Frieda, which he ends after selling Alma's family business so that she can stay at home with the children. To keep Alma busy, he lifts the beehive of his Jewish neighbours — who had to flee Austria — over the garden wall. As an adolescent, Otto joins the army and dies during combat. After the war Richard, now an influential member of the *Österreichische Volkspartei* (ÖVP) becomes a government minister. Unluckily, in 1955 he misses the highlight of his career, the ceremony for the signing of the state

treaty, because of an infected tooth. Meanwhile Ingrid starts a relationship with Peter Erlach. Despite pressure from her father, who disapproves of her choice, Ingrid marries Peter and gives birth to two children, Sissy and Philipp. While Peter unsuccessfully tries to place a board game on the market and finally starts to work for the bureau for road safety, Ingrid finishes her studies in medicine. Things then take a dramatic turn: Richard's political career comes to an abrupt end when the ÖVP removes him from his ministerial post and Ingrid drowns during an excursion on the Danube. Peter now has to bring up their children alone. At the same time, Alma has to place Richard in a care home for the elderly as he suffers from dementia. After the death of his grandparents, Philipp, now an author in his late thirties, inherits the family house. As Philipp is incapable of clearing out the family villa, Johanna — his married girlfriend — sends him two illegal workers, Steinwald and Atamanov, who quickly get the house into shape. When Atamanov announces that he is getting married, Philipp asks him if he can come to his wedding in Ukraine. After some hesitation Atamanov agrees and Philipp, out of sheer joy, climbs onto the new roof of the house and sits astride it.

### ***The Past***

*Es geht uns gut* was fittingly published — intentionally or not — during the Austrian Jubilee Year 2005 (sixty years of liberation and fifty years of the state treaty).<sup>5</sup> The novel is marked by the nexus of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and gender. Geiger essentially explores a single family's history; while the National Socialist past is not central to the narrative, it appears here and there since it is part of the family story. At the same time Geiger also tells the story of change in gender relations, as exemplified by the Sterk family. The latter aspect has been neglected so far by critics and

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<sup>5</sup> Daniela Strigl, 'Kam Kaiser Franz Joseph vor oder nach Hitler?', *Cicero*, 15 October 2009, <<http://www.cicero.de/salon/kam-kaiser-franz-joseph-vor-oder-nach-hitler/45011>> [accessed 19 October 2015].

scholars. In fact, the ways in which the male characters deal with the memory of the Second World War and with female empowerment are closely related.

While it is true that the Nazi past is not explored in minute detail in the novel, it is present all the time, symbolized in the form of a cannonball, the attic and the family photographs. At the same time, the pictures, attic and cannonball also stand for the family past in general. It is because of the repression of the past that this very past becomes a powerful force in the Sterk family, with all its consequences. Michaela Schmitz notes: ‘Haben Sie schon mal versucht, gezielt an den Ereignissen vorbeizuschauen? [...] Ein Effekt, den der österreichische Autor Arno Geiger in seinem neuen Roman ‘Es geht uns gut’ zum Erzählprinzip macht. [...] Aus Details entwickeln sich Geschichten. Wiederholungen bilden Muster.’<sup>6</sup> It is the *Vorbeigucken* that makes the past more present. The ‘presence’ of the past is reinforced by the fact that, as remarked by many critics and scholars, Geiger uses the present tense consistently throughout the novel,<sup>7</sup> a stylistic device that serves to treat each generation’s family stories equally, giving them equal importance.<sup>8</sup> This technique of bringing the past into the present on an individual basis is an effective way, amongst other things, of emphasizing the influence of the past on constructions of masculinity in the present.

*Es geht uns gut* is part of a new trend in current German and Austrian literature that deals with the uninformed third generation<sup>9</sup> and is constructed as a transgenerational traumatising for both perpetrators and victims.<sup>10</sup> Philipp reconstructs the past by inventing stories and photographs.

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<sup>6</sup> Michaela Schmitz, ‘Wer kennt schon Österreich?’, *Rheinischer Merkur*, 6 October 2005, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Franz Haas, ‘Sieben Jahrzehnte und acht Jahrestage: Arno Geigers grosser Roman “Es geht uns gut”’, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 27 September 2005, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Maribel Hart and Alexander Wolter, *Werkstattgespräch mit Arno Geiger. Der Schwamm ist leer, jedenfalls dort, wo man gedrückt hat* (Oldenburg: Fruehwerk, 2008), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> The Second generation designates the generation which has experienced the Holocaust at young age. The Third generation has no first hand knowledge of the Holocaust.

<sup>10</sup> Ulrike Vedder, ‘Erblasten und Totengespräche. Zum Nachleben der Toten in Texten von Marlene Streeruwitz, Arno Geiger und Sybille Lewitscharoff’, in *Literatur im Krebsgang. Totenbeschwörung und*



In this sense the text reflects postmemory theory: from the little he has heard and the photos he finds in the house, he creates his own stories and even photographs, thereby distorting and imagining history. Philipp's imagination raises questions about the authorship of the eight historical chapters in the novel. Ulrike Vedder identifies Philipp as the author of these chapters.<sup>11</sup> Bernhard Jahn and also Julian Reidy, on the contrary, note that the author remains undetermined and that Philipp is rather unlikely to be the author as it is not clear from where he would have got the historical knowledge about his family.<sup>12</sup> It is indeed unlikely that Philipp is the author. While Philipp may have found out about Richard's affair, because Alma has stored the lovers' letters in the attic, it is very unlikely that he is able to recount the chapter about his father's war experience.<sup>13</sup> As the text points out, Philipp has neither asked his father about the past, nor was his father willing to tell him about it (*Gut* 10, 290). On the other hand, the invented stories are clearly marked out as being created by Philipp, which is not the case for the historical chapters. What is important is the dialectic effect of the historical chapters: while Philipp tries to avoid the past, the dead become lively narrators of it. It is as if the dead oppose the process of forgetting.<sup>14</sup> Reidy speaks of a 'nicht identifizierbare Erzählinstanz'.<sup>15</sup> This can be interpreted in the context of the larger discourse on the Nazi past in Austria: the State cannot be identified as the narrator of the National Socialist past. Official discourse in Austria suppressed the past and was unreliable; the true narratives of the past

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"*memoria*" in *der deutschsprachigen Literatur nach 1989*, ed. by Arne de Winde and Anke Gilleir (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 227–42 (p. 228).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>12</sup> Bernhard Jahn, 'Familienkonstruktionen 2005. Zum Problem des Zusammenhangs der Generationen im aktuellen Familienroman', *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 16 (2006), 581–96 (p. 596). Julian Reidy, 'Die Unmöglichkeit der Erinnerung, Arno Geiger's *Es geht uns gut* als Persiflage des Generationenromans der Gegenwartsliteratur', *German Studies Review*, 36/1 (2013), 79–102 (p. 90).

<sup>13</sup> Arno Geiger, *Es geht uns gut*, (Munich: dtv, 2007), pp. 102–30. Subsequently referenced here as '*Gut*'.

<sup>14</sup> Julia Freytag, 'Generationentransfer und -konflikt in den Familienromanen von Dimitré Dinev, Arno Geiger und Tanja Dückers', in *Kulturkonflikt und Kulturtransfer*, ed. by Mark Arenhövel, Maja Razbojniskova-Frateva and Hans-Gerd Winter (Dresden: Thelem, 2010), pp. 211–24 (p. 219).

<sup>15</sup> Reidy, p. 95.

were kept dispersed as a multitude of voices, which were never forged by the State into one. Parallel to this, it could be argued that the fact that the male main character cannot assume the narrator role and that the narrator remains undefined, points to a dispersion of male power and uncertainty.

*Es geht uns gut* is also a novel about historical change in gender relations; it deals with the changes in the construction of masculinity and the relations between women and men. Anne Fleig remarks that the ‘concept of generations’ — on which family stories are grounded — as such has a male connotation.<sup>16</sup> Sigrid Löffler notes that these classic family stories are inopportune, as they focus on the already finished-off ruler figure ‘den Familientyrannen, den eisernen Vater als männliches Herrschaftsprinzip’.<sup>17</sup> Today this conflict potential has indeed become obsolete, as exemplified in *Es geht uns gut*: Philipp does not stage any tribunal to challenge the power of father or grandfather as paternal authority has already collapsed.<sup>18</sup>

With the example of *Es geht uns gut*, Fleig shows that there is a shift in the way family stories treat gender today: they question the continuous sequence of generations, both in its content and form.<sup>19</sup> As mentioned in the Introduction, there is a decline in the ‘strength’ of masculinity in *Es geht uns gut*, a decline that has been identified as a general trend in family stories.<sup>20</sup> Fleig argues that the technique of using the present tense leads to an equal treatment of both sexes:

Darüber hinaus trägt es zur Gleichberechtigung der Figuren bei. Auch die Generationenfolge wird nicht einseitig durch die männliche Linie, sondern durch die Partnerschaften der Großeltern, der Eltern und des Enkel vergegenwärtigt. In der

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<sup>16</sup> Fleig, p. 271.

<sup>17</sup> Sigrid Löffler, ‘Die Familie. Ein Roman : geschrumpft und gestückelt, aber heilig.’ *Cicero*, 28 October 2009 <<http://www.cicero.de/salon/geschrumpft-und-gestueckelt-aber-heilig/45211>> [accessed 19 October 2015].

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Fleig, p. 273.

<sup>20</sup> Volker Hage, ‘Wühlarbeit im Haus der Ahnen’, *Der Spiegel*, 29 August 2005, pp. 154–56.

Schilderung der einzelnen Tage kommen die beteiligten Männer- und Frauenfiguren in selbem Maße zum Zuge.<sup>21</sup>

In this sense, *Es geht uns gut* also reflects the shift in gender roles, both in its literary genre and in its content: from the paterfamilias Richard and the rivalry between him and his daughter Ingrid to the shallow relationship between his son-in-law Peter and Peter's son, Philipp, the insignificance of the father figure is evident. Reflecting on the male characters, Tholen speaks of a 'genealogisch verkettetes Kollektiv des Scheiterns'.<sup>22</sup> While Richard is irritated by advancing female empowerment, he does not adjust his behaviour towards women. Peter grudgingly accepts that his wife has a career as a medical doctor but insists that she must also perform the housework and take care of the children. His son Philipp also refuses to take on any responsibility towards his female partner and continues to admire hegemonic masculinity. Just as the *Vorbeigucken* is characteristic of the way in which the male characters deal with the past, it is also characteristic of how they deal with female empowerment. While Geiger wants to give a private aspect to 'big history', he also shows how the greater social development of increasing gender equality is accommodated in private by men with rejection. They ignore it, because they do not know how to deal with it. While the male characters try to suppress the memory of the past and disregard female empowerment, the form of the novel, in employing the present tense even in discourses on the past, both makes the past alive and gender equality a reality. This creates a tension between the form of the novel — acting as the larger social picture — and the inner life of the male characters — symbolizing the private.

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<sup>21</sup> Fleig, p. 280.

<sup>22</sup> Tholen, 'Männerbilder im Wandel?', p. 66.

***First-generation: ‘disintegrating hegemonic masculinity’***

The decline of masculinity in *Es geht uns gut* will be illustrated by looking at the different male characters of each generation in more detail. The analysis will start with Richard, whose relationships with women are hierarchical and result in their subordination. However, Richard progressively loses control over the women of his family. It will be argued that Richard’s masculinity can be labelled as a ‘disintegrating hegemonic masculinity’.

Richard’s view on gender roles has been formed by his conservative and religious family: ‘In seiner oberklerikalen, reichen Familie hatte er ja so gut wie keine Spielräume.’ (*Gut* 40) Communication is very limited in the Sterk family. Richard’s father never talked to Richard when he was little. As with Richard and his father, there is no tenderness between Richard and his own children. Richard is referred to as an ‘Analphabet des Gefühls’ (*Gut* 147) by his daughter. The inability to show feelings is a trait, which is usually attributed to men. The studies of the psychologist Rainer Krause, however, have shown that there is no gender-specific difference in feeling emotions. However, he notes: ‘Es sind vielmehr die Ausdrucks- und Wahrnehmungsregeln (“Gefühlsnormen”) von Affekten, die solche geschlechtsspezifischen Unterschiede bedingen.’<sup>23</sup> Richard’s inability to show feelings is a result of his upbringing (*Gut* 47). His parents transmit to him what Michele Adams and Scott Coltrane call ‘the masculine imperative for emotional distance’.<sup>24</sup> For Richard his family is simply a tool to reinforce his power: ‘Dr Richard Sterk: Jede familiäre Regung ein Attribut seiner großmächtigen Person.’ (*Gut* 73)

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<sup>23</sup> Matthias Franz and André Karger, ‘Vorwort der Herausgeber’, in *Neue Männer – muss das sein? Risiken und Perspektiven der heutigen Männerrolle*, ed. by Matthias Franz and André Karger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Adams and Coltrane, p. 235.

As head of the family, Richard makes all the decisions for his wife Alma. Consequently he deprives Alma of any possibility of self-realization outside the family. Alma gives up her studies when she becomes pregnant but the family business that she has inherited from her parents allows her to be professionally active outside the family. However, at the time of the *Anschluss* Richard decides to sell Alma's parents' business without consulting her beforehand. To keep her busy, he takes over the beehive from their Jewish neighbours, who have had to leave their home. Richard justifies the selling of the business with the patriarchal argument that it harms the children to have their mother working (*Gut* 89). Now Alma can be at home all day in order to take care of the children and the household. Moreover, this decision makes the nanny, with whom Richard was having an affair, superfluous.

By selling the business, Richard asserts his domination over his wife. Bourdieu argues that the masculine and feminine are organized as an opposing system and that the divide between the sexes is present in things such as the house.<sup>25</sup> The heritage of Alma's parents had the potential to question this system of oppositions. Richard not only crushes this potential because he is influenced by modes of thinking produced by male domination, but also for pragmatic reasons. He imposes on Alma the 'traditional man-as-provider, woman-as-family-caretaker model'.<sup>26</sup> In general, Richard behaves in a deprecatory manner towards Alma: 'Davon verstehst du nichts, hört sie dann meistens. Und dazu dieses siebengescheite Minister-Getue. Immer das gleiche. Wie oft schon.' (*Gut* 25) Alma, on the other hand, idolizes and admires her husband (*Gut* 22). Possibly Alma needs a man she can look up to, which would support Bourdieu's argument that the dominated can support their domination by recognizing and submitting to the structures of domination.<sup>27</sup> Richard, in any case,

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<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Adams and Coltrane, p. 240.

<sup>27</sup> Bourdieu, pp. 155 and 27–28.

only establishes relationships with women when he is in control. He has sexual relationships with women who are highly dependent on him, such as the nanny and his secretary.

Richard also tries to impose his dominance on his daughter, Ingrid, but fails. Ingrid makes fun of her father's outdated claim to power: 'Papa omnipotens. Was aus seinem Mund kommt ist Diktat.' (*Gut* 143) Geiger alludes to the emancipation of women when he makes Richard feel that the (gender) world is changing: 'Die Welt verändert sich, sie verändert sich an Stellen, von denen man es nicht erwartet: in der Gestalt von Töchtern zum Beispiel.' (*Gut* 148)

Like Herbert in *Ohnehin*, Richard is characterized as a 'Familiencyrann', and again as in *Ohnehin* his power is challenged by the daughter instead of the son. Richard feels helpless whenever he is confronted by his daughter. This can be read as helplessness towards female empowerment in general. Gradually, Richard loses control over his wife too. Interestingly, Richard's loss of power in his private life coincides with his decline of power in the public sphere and the diminution of his rationality when he starts to suffer from dementia. As Gratzke notes, Richard's masculinity is strongly connected with his role in politics.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, Richard's career is linked with his rotten teeth. He misses the climax of his career as a minister (the signing of the state treaty) because he has to have his rotten teeth removed. In psychoanalysis the loss of teeth is frequently associated with the loss of power: for Freud, the removal of teeth was a symbol of castration.<sup>29</sup> The rotten teeth show that while Richard embodies the traits of hegemonic masculinity, he too is a damaged man. Richard's teeth are also connected with his ageing. His dentures become a sort of 'objet fétiche' — they have not been repaired for ages. The discussion between Alma and Richard on the state of his dentures, which spans several pages in the novel (*Gut* 23–28), illustrates

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<sup>28</sup> Gratzke, 'Mullemänner', p. 104.

<sup>29</sup> Eric Csapo, *Theories of Mythology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p.101.

the importance of the teeth for Richard. As he ages, Richard's body also becomes weak — he loses a struggle with a fellow resident who physically attacks him in the retirement home — pointing to a further decline in his masculinity. As Thomas Gerschick notes, '[b]odies are symbolic. One's body serves as a type of social currency that signifies one's worth.'<sup>30</sup> Richard is trying to conform to hegemonic masculinity, but his body lets him down, which makes him feel that he is less worthy: 'weil Krankheit für einen Mann wie ihn eine schwer zu ertragende Schande ist, vergleichbar mit mutwilliger Sachbeschädigung' (*Gut* 28). As Sara Arber, Kate Davidson and Jay Ginn assert, men tend to equate illness with weakness.<sup>31</sup> They are traditionally taught to deny pain.<sup>32</sup> The term 'mutwillige Sachbeschädigung' means intentional damage of an object: Richard seems to see his body as an instrument through which he exercises power. Yet he is declining both physically and mentally. Richard's ageing and his Alzheimer's make him lose his mental and physical control. For Anna O'Driscoll, Alzheimer's is a symbol for Richard's increasing lack of control.<sup>33</sup> To develop this further, Richard's disease can be read as a metaphor for his decline in power as a man. Showing weakness is contrary to Richard's standard of masculinity and not being able to comply with these standards makes him aggressive: 'Alma hatte schon oft die Beobachtung gemacht, daß in Situationen, in denen Richard Schwäche zeigen mußte oder wenigstens nicht auftrumpfen konnte, es meist nicht lange dauerte, bis er innerlich die Fäuste ballte.' (*Gut* 27) This shows that Richard still feels like a man despite his age, and that he struggles to uphold his masculinity. Richard's behaviour parallels the findings of Davidson, Daly and Arber, who note: 'For men, increasing age

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<sup>30</sup> Gerschick, p. 372.

<sup>31</sup> Sara Arber, Kate Davidson and Jay Ginn, 'Changing Approaches to Gender and Later Life', in *Gender and Ageing, Changing Roles and Relationships*, ed. by Sara Arber, Kate Davidson and Jay Ginn (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003), pp. 1–14 (p. 5).

<sup>32</sup> Sabo, pp. 332–34.

<sup>33</sup> O'Driscoll, p. 157.

does not necessarily herald a reduction in masculine identity.<sup>34</sup> However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity remains vulnerable to the process of ageing. As in Kehlmann's *Die Vermessung der Welt*, ageing weakens masculinity and is connected with a decline in power. Ageing is either depicted as a success story or as dehumanization and degeneration in contemporary German-language literature.<sup>35</sup> Ageing in *Es geht uns gut*, in continuity with the literature of the 1980s and 1990s, reflects 'die schonungslose Thematisierung des Alters als Verfall'.<sup>36</sup>

In his relationship with other men, Richard behaves in accordance with Connell's theory that there are degrees of subordination within masculinities.<sup>37</sup> Richard rejects Peter as a partner for his daughter because he thinks that Peter will not be able to take care of her. Richard calls Peter a 'Windbeutel', 'Weiberheld' and 'verwaschener Sozialist' (*Gut* 222). He believes that Peter does not conform to the standards of hegemonic masculinity. He therefore subordinates him. Richard's view on Peter also says something about Richard: he may be afraid of a masculinity which is not entirely hegemonic and which could undermine the stability of his gender world.

Throughout the narrative there are various references to Richard's past during the National Socialist regime. He profits from the new system, as symbolized by his taking over his Jewish neighbour's beehive. Later in life Richard never talks about his arrangement with the Nazis to his children or grandchildren. Interestingly, it does not harm his political career: 'Richard musste nie für die Jahre vor 1945 Rechenschaft ablegen, als es um seine Karriere ging.' (*Gut* 26) It seems as if this period has been erased from his memory, as it has from Austrian public conscience. During the

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<sup>34</sup> Kate Davidson, Tom Daly and Sara Arber, 'Exploring the social worlds of older men', in *Gender and Ageing*, ed. by Arber, Davidson and Ginn, pp. 168–85 (p. 183).

<sup>35</sup> Heike Hartung, 'Zwischen Verfalls- und Erfolgsgeschichte; Zwiespältige Wahrnehmung des Alter(n)s', in *Alter und Geschlecht. Repräsentationen, Geschichten und Theorien des Alter(n)s*, ed. by Heike Hartung (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2005), pp. 7–20 (p. 8).

<sup>36</sup> Helmuth Kiesel, 'Das Alter in der Literatur', in *Was ist Alter(n)? Neue Antworten auf eine scheinbar einfache Frage*, ed. by Ursula Staudinger and Heinz Häfner (Heidelberg: Springer, 2008), pp. 173–88 (p. 184).

<sup>37</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 37.



rare moments in which Richard thinks back on this time, he trivializes his behaviour: ‘Zum nochmaligen Überwintern wie im Krieg, als er sich für ein paar Jahre geduckt hat, ist er zu alt.’ (*Gut* 200)

Richard has suppressed the past and later suffers from dementia — a metaphor of his failure to deal with the past.<sup>38</sup> The previously mentioned scene in which Richard loses the struggle with a fellow resident of his retirement home is interesting in this respect. Sindelka attacks Richard, because he thinks ‘sein Bett sei widerrechtlich von Richard okkupiert’ (*Gut* 342). The word ‘okkupiert’ could allude to the war, possibly Austria’s occupation during the Second World War. The name Dr Sindelka may have been chosen with care by Geiger: Dr Josef Sindelka, the former chief of Telekom Austria AG, was born on 24 May 1938,<sup>39</sup> exactly the day on which Hitler decided to divide Austria into seven ‘Gäue’.<sup>40</sup> Even at the retirement home Richard cannot escape his Nazi past. When Richard’s grandson Philipp writes a play as an adult he includes Richard as a character, writing: ‘Bravo, bravo, lieber Sterk! Er ist ein tüchtiger Untertan, eine Zierde für das Vaterland! [...] Sterk empfängt die Dukaten mit untertänigstem Dank.’ (*Gut* 55) This can be read as a reference to Richard’s compliance with the Nazi regime. Instead of remembering the past and trying to come to terms with Austria’s history, the politician Richard Sterk wants to make history himself. While Mosche and Jakob in *Suche nach M.* suppress the past to protect themselves and the children, Richard suppresses and distorts it to become powerful.

Richard’s son Otto dies during the Second World War. There is no possibility of exploring the intergenerational conflict between Richard and his son, as in the typical constellation of *Väterliteratur*. There is, however, a conflict between Richard and his daughter Ingrid, who violently

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<sup>38</sup> See also O’Driscoll, p. 161.

<sup>39</sup> <<http://www.aeiou.at/aeiou.encyclop.s/s595019.htm>> [accessed 19 October 2015].

<sup>40</sup> <[http://www.chroniknet.de/daly\\_de.0.html?year=1938&month=5&day=24](http://www.chroniknet.de/daly_de.0.html?year=1938&month=5&day=24)> [accessed 19 October 2015].

refuses to subordinate herself to him. This is quite significant for the evolution of masculinity: women seem to take the initiative in changing gender roles and this initiative is related to dealing with the past. This is also reflected in Rabinovici's *Ohnehin*, where Bärbl challenges her father.

In conclusion, though Richard tries to comply with hegemonic masculinity, he fails. However, his power is disintegrating — one may speak of a disintegrating hegemonic masculinity. Dealing with the past is connected with male power: Richard suppresses the past and forgets history, in order to be able to 'make' history himself.

***Second generation: 'helpless complicit masculinity'***

The second generation of men is represented by Peter Erlach. It will be argued that his masculinity can be designated a 'helpless complicit masculinity'.

Peter has all the physical qualities of an attractive man: 'Ein schlanker, muskulöser Mann [...] Er sieht aus wie ein Mann mit Selbstbewußtsein, wie einer, der sich seiner Wirkung bewusst ist.' (*Gut* 306–07) The term 'sieht aus wie' is already telling: Peter is not the self-confident man he appears to be. Richard's fears that Peter is a failure are not unfounded. Peter is characterized by his idleness and Ingrid is afraid that her children may become the same: 'Gleichzeitig hofft sie natürlich auch, daß die Zwanghaftigkeit, mit der Peter sich mit Nebensachen vertieft, nicht an die beiden übergegangen ist.' (*Gut* 262) When Philipp starts dating Ingrid, he neglects his university studies and tries to sell a board game called *Wer kennt Österreich*, to no avail. Peter can partly be associated with the category of complicit men.<sup>41</sup> He profits from the concept of hegemonic masculinity by accepting its norms:

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<sup>41</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p.79.

Er hält sich in ihr eine Putzfrau, eine Köchin, eine Gouvernante für die Kinder und ab und zu eine Geliebte, die aber nicht befriedigt wird. Die seltenen Male, die er sich für seine frühzeitigen Ejakulationen entschuldigt, sind gezählt. Und die Verwandlungskunst geht weiter: Wäscherin, Büglerin, Tippse. Und alles sehr billig. Die Früchte des langen Kampfes für die Emanzipation der Frau. (*Gut* 249)

No less than seven roles are assigned to Ingrid here. Peter's construction of gender roles results in his failure to support his wife, which puts an enormous strain on their relationship (*Gut* 259). He refuses to take any responsibility, neither for the children nor for the housework. He wants his wife to stay at home and refuses to hire a domestic helper (*Gut* 260) — an interesting parallel to Richard, who sent the nanny away. It seems as if Peter does not perceive and value Ingrid as an individual or respect her work as a doctor. Indeed, he sees his wife and children as a 'Personalunion' (*Gut* 262). Connell notes that men who are complicit in hegemonic masculinity can also be respectful of their wives and do their share of the household.<sup>42</sup> Peter, however, does not embody any of these positive characteristics. The relationship between Peter and Ingrid fails because of a clash between Peter's traditional and Ingrid's modern views on gender roles.

Peter's emotional development was influenced by his mother's cancer and how the family dealt with it. During the bombings of the Second World War Peter's ill mother lay helplessly in the house, screaming in pain and fear. Peter was not able to help his mother because of gendered perceptions as to what a boy should and should not do — a traumatizing experience that produced a feeling of helplessness. Peter feels the same impotence when he is confronted with Richard and the criticism of his wife, Ingrid. Even worse, Peter senses that the illness of his mother isolated him within the family. It is a haunting memory of his childhood: 'Wie er neben der kranken Mutter von einer Ecke in die andere und schließlich an den Rand der Familie geschoben wird, weil er nur Arbeit macht und niemandem eine Hilfe ist, selbst wenn er sich nützlich machen will.' (*Gut* 129) As

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

Michelle Mattson notes: ‘The scene reveals how individuals of both genders strategically occupy particular caring roles and block the opposite sex from performing certain tasks.’<sup>43</sup> The scene reflects Adams and Coltrane’s argument that ‘[g]endered parents transmit gender-laden assumptions and values to their children’<sup>44</sup>. Peter seems to have a caring side — a traditionally female characteristic, which is reflective of Sedgwick’s argument that men and women can have male and female traits.<sup>45</sup> The concept of the orthogonality of gender, i.e. that a man and woman can score high both on feminine and masculine traits, seems to be rejected by Peter’s parents. Following Bourdieu, male domination works as a powerful machine of thought,<sup>46</sup> denying Peter the right to help his mother just because of gender perceptions. Mattson rightly notes that this scene is crucial to Peter’s emotional development.<sup>47</sup> It hampers him from developing relationship skills. He develops a ‘partnerschaftliche Minderbegabung’ (*Gut* 262), which takes its toll in his relationship with his wife Ingrid. Gender stereotypes are here shown as a constraining force going against human nature and masculine norms as an obstacle to a healthy emotional development.

Peter’s father was never satisfied with his son and often went so far as to hit him. Peter traces the bad relationship he had with his father back to their inability to deal with his mother’s illness:

Manchmal kommt es Peter vor, als seien er und sein Vater in der gemeinsamen Unfähigkeit, mit dem Krebs der Mutter umzugehen, zu Gegnern geworden, wo sie sich doch besser zusammengetan hätten, unter Männern, wie seine Schwestern sich mit der Mutter zusammengetan haben, unter Frauen. (*Gut* 111)

Peter’s father is a Nazi who has completely accepted Hitler’s ideology. Discussions about the war are the only level on which father and son are able to interact (*Gut* 126). Peter experiences his

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<sup>43</sup> Mattson, p. 208.

<sup>44</sup> Adams and Coltrane, pp. 233–34.

<sup>45</sup> Sedgwick, pp. 15–16.

<sup>46</sup> Bourdieu, pp. 22–23.

<sup>47</sup> Mattson, p. 208.

conscription to the *Volkssturm* as redemption as it allows him to escape from his mother's illness. But this is not his only motivation in joining the armed forces, an institution of hegemonic masculinity.<sup>48</sup> He also does so because he is looking for acceptance by his father: 'Während der T34 ausbrennt, wünscht sich Peter, daß ihn sein Vater sehen könnte, dem würde er so gerne gefallen.' (*Gut* 111) At the end of the war Peter feels betrayed by his father: 'Er möchte sich hinsetzen, er möchte nicht weitergehen, so zum Umfallen müde ist er, so sehr drückt ihn das Gewicht so vieler Dinge: der nutzlosen Toten, der Trauer, daß ihn das Leben, das ihm sein Vater vorgemacht hat, zum Idioten stempelt' (*Gut* 121). Peter's memories about the Second World War are linked with his disappointment about the most important male authority in his life. Therefore Peter blocks out his memories of the war.

In the passages on Peter's horrible war experiences as a child the following reflection comes up twice: 'Krieg, ein paar Zahlen, Statistiken, Markennamen, Vorkommnisse (Effekte) und da und dort ein Ereignis, das nicht jeden betrifft.' (*Gut* 123) Geiger here criticizes the Austrian attitude towards the Second World War using Quintillian irony. Peter has rationalized and trivialized his experience in order to be able to deal with his trauma. That this trivialization and suppression of the Nazi past is a general Austrian phenomenon is symbolized in the board game *Wer kennt Österreich* that Peter created: 'Ein Reise- und Geographiespiel, das die kleine, besetzte [...] Republik in ihrer Schönheit und Harmlosigkeit in den Mittelpunkt stellt.' (*Gut* 161)

When Peter is confronted with the Nazi past by his children, he adopts the strategy of silence even when his daughter accuses Peter's parents of having been Nazis: 'Obwohl der Vorwurf auch ein wenig ihm zu gelten scheint und obwohl er es satt hat, sich wegen seiner Geburt und seines Jahrgangs und seiner wie in einem Giftschränk weggesperrten Kindheit schuldig zu fühlen, lässt

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<sup>48</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 213.

Peter den Vorwurf auf sich sitzen. [...] Seit Ingrids Tod hat er sich ein paar Strategien zurechtgelegt, wie er mit den Kindern über die Runden kommt.' (*Gut* 290) Again, as in *Ohnehin*, it is the daughter who challenges the father. Just as Mosche in *Suche nach M.* invents fairy tales to block the conversation about the past with his son, Peter has implemented strategies to avoid such an exchange. In fact he feels helpless in dealing with his children and copes by not communicating at all. The non-communication functions as a shield to protect himself from the painful past.

In *Es geht uns gut*, the non-communication in the family about the Nazi past mirrors the silence among the Austrian population. The board game *Wer kennt Österreich* is linked both to the past and to failure: Peter's inability to market the game is curiously intertwined with the past. Certainly, the traumatizing war events had an impact on Peter's emotional development and his construction of masculinity.

Peter engages neither in a dialogue about his war experiences, nor about the death of Ingrid with his son Philipp. He, who had always left the upbringing of the children to Ingrid, now has to assume this role. This offers him the opportunity to readjust his construction of masculinity and to live his caring side, which was stunted in his younger years. However, this does not happen. Peter, having not been allowed to take care of his mother when he was a child, is now unable to take emotional care of his own children. It can be presumed that the parental transmission of gender codes takes its toll on Peter as well. Developing Bourdieu's argument that women are hostage to the structures of thought of the dominating gender, it is shown here that men are hostage to it as well. Peter is struggling in his new role as a single father and he feels helpless. Just as, based on the standards of hegemonic masculinity, Richard has subordinated Peter, Peter now subordinates his own son, Philipp. He denies Philipp's masculinity: 'Ja wahrlich, ein kleiner Depp. Er kann einem richtig leid tun. Nicht einmal Peter ist bislang aufgegangen, welche Talente der Rotzfresser mitbringt. Er besitzt keinen Ehrgeiz, weder im Sport noch bei den Mädchen, die interessieren ihn

noch gar nicht.’ (*Gut* 294) This statement implies that masculine men, in Peter’s opinion, should be sporty and aggressive in their pursuit of women. Gendered parents ‘expect and encourage boys to pursue cultural ideals of masculinity’.<sup>49</sup> For example, through sports boys are taught ‘to symbolically correlate competition, violence, power, and domination with masculinity’.<sup>50</sup> The same mechanisms in Rabinovici’s *Suche nach M.* are present in *Es geht uns gut*, with slight variations. The non-communication between father and son about the past and Peter’s low opinion of Philipp, as well as the absence of a mother figure, impedes Philipp in developing a positive alternative male gender identity.

To recapitulate, Peter is a man who profits from complicit masculinity until Ingrid’s death. It is only when Ingrid is no longer present that his weak, lazy and evasive behaviour becomes dysfunctional. Peter starts to embody what may be called ‘helpless complicit masculinity’. Geiger here shows that the model of complicit masculinity is only successful with the complicity of women: it only works as long as Ingrid does all the housework on top of her professional obligations.

### ***Third generation: ‘strategic passive masculinity’***

Peter’s son Philipp personifies the third generation. Philipp takes Peter’s evasive behaviour even further and develops a ‘strategic passive masculinity’.

When Philipp inherits the family house his first desire is to relieve the place of all its inherent memories by scrubbing them away (*Gut* 52). Johanna criticizes Philipp for his alleged disinterest in his family and the past, which is exemplified in his ignorance of the origins of the cannonball in the family home (*Gut* 8). Philipp reacts defensively to his girlfriend’s reproach, criticizing the non-

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<sup>49</sup> Adams and Coltrane, p. 237.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

communication within the family: ‘Wenn allgemein nicht viel geredet wird –’ (*Gut* 8). In the light of the cannonball as an historical object this statement develops a different meaning: the Sterk family never talked much about the past. The cannonball is linked symbolically to the past, failed communication, rejection and eventually masculinity. Philipp recalls a memory connected with the cannonball, which is marked by repudiation: ‘Was Philipp jetzt einfällt, ist, daß ihn die Großmutter während einer der wenigen Begegnungen zurückgewiesen hat, bei der nächsten Ungezogenheit werde man ihn auf die Kanonenkugel setzen und zu den Türken zurückschicken.’ (*Gut* 12) This analepsis suggests that Philipp had very little contact with his grandparents and that the few encounters were not necessarily pleasant. A cannon itself can be seen as an ‘aggressive phallic symbol’.<sup>51</sup> Philipp faces up to his ignorance about the cannonball by inventing a story about a count. The text later reveals that this invented story is wrong and links the cannonball to the male sexual organ (‘Eichelverzierung’ (*Gut* 58)). A Turkish cannonball appears also in the stories of Baron Münchhausen, the count about whom Philipp is thinking. Baron Münchhausen has even found his way into the German *Duden* as ‘Lügenbaron’, designating a person who is suspected of lies and treachery.<sup>52</sup> This suggests that the untold past in the Sterk family becomes a lie and treachery, with a devastating effect on Philipp’s sense of male identity.

Many critics have argued that Philipp is not interested in the past.<sup>53</sup> This is not entirely true. He engages creatively with the past (*Gut* 10). His motivation in imagining the past results from the non-communication in his family. When Philipp remarks that his father has unlearned how to speak, Johanna replies: ‘Und deshalb drehst du dir lieber deine eigenen Geschichten zusammen, ja?’ (*Gut*

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<sup>51</sup> Manfred Wagner, *Europäische Kulturgeschichte: gelebt, gedacht, vermittelt* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009), p. 76.

<sup>52</sup> <<http://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Luegenbaron>> [accessed 19 October 2015].

<sup>53</sup> See for example Hage, or Peter Landerl, ‘Arno Geiger. Es geht uns gut’, 31 August 2005 <<http://www.literaturhaus.at/index.php?id=1145>> [accessed 19 October 2015].



98) Philipp is a member of the third generation, which does not have first-hand experience of the Nazi past. Fuchs notes that postmemory theory proposes that ‘our cognitive approaches to the past are always subject to [...] distortion’.<sup>54</sup> Like Dani in *Suche nach M.*, Philipp takes this distortion of the past to an extreme. He envisions his family history through imagined photographs and through creative writing. In many family stories research into the family’s history is triggered by accidentally found notes, letters, diaries or photos of the ancestors.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, in *Es geht uns gut* photos are both real and imaginary (*Gut* 15–16, 141). For example, shortly after Philipp has seen a real photo of his mother Ingrid and his uncle Otto (*Gut* 9), he imagines a class photograph:

Er malt sich ein fiktives Klassenfoto aus, mit vierzig Kindern in den Bänken, [...] die weder von den Jahren, in denen sie geboren, noch von den Orten, an denen sie aufgewachsen sind, zusammenpassen. [...] Philipp geht durch die Reihen durch und fragt sich: Was ist aus Ihnen geworden, aus all diesen Toten, die täglich mehr werden? Das Mädchen mit den Zöpfen, die Kleine, die wie die anderen Kinder ihre weißen Hände vor sich auf dem Pult liegen hat? [...] Sie heißt Alma. Als junge Frau hat sie einen Verwaltungsjuristen in der Elektrizitätswirtschaft und späteren Minister geheiratet. Aus der Ehe sind zwei Kinder hervorgegangen. Das eine, der Bub, ist 1946 im Alter von vierzehn Jahren in der Schlacht um Wien umgekommen, das jüngere, ein Mädchen, hatte in [...] *Der Hofrat Geiger* einen kleinen Auftritt. Auch das Mädchen ist eine reizende Mitschülerin. [...] Sie hat sich sehr jung für einen sechs Jahre älteren Burschen entschieden und sich dessentwegen mit ihren Eltern überworfen. [...] Ein netter Kerl, wenn auch nicht ganz der Richtige zum Heiraten. Als junger Mann hatte er Spiele erfunden und mit diesen Spielen bankrott gemacht, obwohl eines dieser Spiele ganz erfolgreich war: *Wer kennt Österreich?* Und der da, in der ersten Bank der Fensterreihe: Das bin ich. Ich bin einer von ihnen. Aber was soll ich über mich sagen? Was soll ich über mich sagen, nachdem ich über all die anderen nachgedacht habe und dabei nicht glücklicher geworden bin. (*Gut* 15–16)

This photograph summarizes Philipp’s family history. It can be seen as a metaphor for Philipp’s memory. Even though the people in the photograph cannot be of the same age, they are all presented as such. It shows the displacement and distortion that Fuchs refers to. Fuchs speaks of

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<sup>54</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 51.

<sup>55</sup> Eigler, p. 26.

‘fantasy’<sup>56</sup> and Hirsch about ‘imaginative investment and creation’,<sup>57</sup> both of which describe Philipp’s invented photo. The photo is ‘fiktiv’, which makes the point that memory is not necessarily a reconstruction of real facts, but that imagination may shape what we remember. The process of imagination may also be symbolic of the third generation, which has no knowledge or memory of the Holocaust and to which no memory is transferred. The imagined photograph reflects Rabinovici’s essay on history and the phrase ‘Wie es gewesen sein wird.’<sup>58</sup> In the last part of the passage, Philipp identifies with the people in the photograph — his family. However, he does not manage to give a description of himself. The text reads as if he cannot relate to his family history and that this void has an impact on his identity, making him a man without characteristics and without a sense of belonging. Again this shows decline — from family members with a ‘history’ to Philipp who does not have any ‘history’. A person who engages with the past will be confronted with himself.<sup>59</sup> Philipp may avoid engaging with his family’s past in order to avoid dealing with himself and his own sense of masculinity: ‘Je geistreicher du zu sein versuchst, Philipp, desto mehr rennst du vor dir selbst davon.’ (*Gut* 187) Here is a parallel with Mosche in *Suche nach M.*: inventing fairy tales prevents him from engaging with the painful past and with himself. Dealing with themselves would mean becoming active agents in their lives.

In fact in the novel photos are closely related to imaginative investment in masculinity:

er hätte gern ein Photo von sich und von seinen Gehilfen, weil sich das bestimmt gut macht: Von Steinwald und Atamanov in ihren dunkelgrauen Stiefeln flankiert, würde er anhand der gelben Stiefel leicht als hochstehende Persönlichkeit erkannt. Er stünde einen Schritt tiefer im Bild als die Arbeiter, sehr breitbeinig, hätte die Fäuste in die Seiten gestemmt und das Becken vorgestreckt, er würde lächeln, aber fast unmerklich, und alles in allem sähe er so aus wie Hans im Glück. (*Gut* 133)

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<sup>56</sup>Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*, p. 6.

<sup>57</sup>Hirsch, ‘Mourning and Postmemory’, p. 22.

<sup>58</sup>Rabinovici, ‘Wie es war’.

<sup>59</sup>Reinhart Koselleck in Aleida Assmann, ‘Einleitung’, in *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, pp. 9–14 (p. 10).

This passage captures Philipp's childish narcissism;<sup>60</sup> it also shows his longing to comply with hegemonic masculinity. He is very well aware that this does not correspond to reality, which is why he would like to have a photo that depicts his fictive superiority. As in *Ruhm*, hegemonic masculinity exists only through the media — here an imagined photograph. In fact Philipp imagines photographs because he is unable to take action in real life. Indeed, he is able to exert power over the workers through his photos by making them do what he wants: 'Es gelingt Philipp, Steinwald und Atamanov dazu zu bewegen, ebenfalls in ihre Gummistiefel zu schlüpfen. So posieren sie, die Gesichter gespannt dem Fotoapparat zugekehrt' (*Gut* 231).

Stories are very important to Philipp, an author by profession. He writes a play, for example, in which he names the main character 'Stanislaus Baptist Sterk', a direct reference to his grandfather, Richard. The omnipotence and virility of Richard is reflected in the play: 'Oha! Oha! Er ist ein kräftiger Kerl, der Sterk. Man möchte nicht hinter ihm gestanden haben.' (*Gut* 54) Just as Mosche in *Suche nach M.* invents fairy tales, Philipp invents stories about the past instead of truly engaging with it. Yet again this is linked to an imaginative investment in masculinity: Philipp rewrites a family history of male strength, which stands in contrast to the narrative of the novel. He writes against the novel.

A striking anti-hegemonic trait in Philipp is his childishness. For example, when Steinwald and Atamanov, two workers who help him to clean out his grandparents' house, want to buy boots, Philipp, like a child, insists that the boots have to be 'Gelb mit innen Rot' (*Gut* 132). This phrase is even linguistically childish. Philipp refuses to grow up: 'Beim Hören der Kinderstimmen kam es ihm vor, als hätte auch er gestern noch gespielt.' (*Gut* 374) The ambivalence between childhood and adulthood in Philipp is shown very well in the scene when his neighbour threatens him: 'Er ist

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<sup>60</sup> Mattson, p. 211.

hin- und hergerissen zwischen den drohenden Gebärden des Mannes und dem angenehmen Gefühl an seinem entblößten Bauch. Eigentlich würde er so gerne noch einen Moment so bleiben, die Beine in der Luft, die Armmuskeln gespannt.' (*Gut* 139) This is also a moment of a power game in the sense of Bourdieu. By refusing to become an adult, Philipp refuses to become a man. The word 'Gebärden' in this passage links with the behaviour of Sirin's brothers in Rabinovici's *Ohnehin*, who 'behave accordingly' to a man. Butler's theory that the gendered body is performative is reflected here:

That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts, [*sic*] which constitute its reality. [...] acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create an illusion of an interior and organized gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.<sup>61</sup>

However, the 'frame of reproductive heterosexuality' is undermined in the passage regarding Philipp's conflict with his neighbour: it has a homoerotic touch and shows Philipp's admiration of men with hegemonic characteristics. Reeser argues that women may find masculinity erotic in men or in themselves;<sup>62</sup> this passage suggests that men may find it erotic in other men and themselves as well.

While Philipp behaves like a child, he, like Dani in *Suche nach M.*, Stefan in *Ohnehin* and Ethan in *Andernorts*, does not have any children himself. Interestingly, Philipp becomes a father in his imagination, which seems to be satisfying enough for him (*Gut* 285).

With the imagined or staged photographs and invented stories, Philipp expresses his fantasy and desire to dominate. Following the theory of Bourdieu, Philipp is a child who plays a man. However, to succeed in his 'power games' he needs the help of media, in this case photographs.

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<sup>61</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 185–86.

<sup>62</sup> Reeser, p. 18.

Without them he cannot gain recognition as a man. The notion that these games serve to dispute power and privilege is also illustrated: the coloured boots are not only a childish *caprice* but also a symbol of distinctness and dominance.

Apart from childishness, Philipp's main characteristic is passivity. Right from the beginning of the novel he is described as a 'Taugenichts',<sup>63</sup> and Johanna implicitly denies his masculinity: 'sie hält ihn für nett, aber harmlos und hat sich deshalb schon einmal für einen anderen entschieden' (*Gut* 14). Philipp adopts a 'strategic passivity':

Alles was du machst, ist ein Versuch, Kontrolle zu bewahren. Deine Passivität ist eine strategische Passivität, die dich vor der Gefahr bewahren soll, dich Dingen auszusetzen, die nicht angenehm sind. Dein Vater hat sich die Aufgabe zum Beruf gemacht, die Wahrscheinlichkeit von Verkehrsunfällen zu minimieren, und du versuchst dasselbe in deinem Privatleben. Du glaubst, du kannst den Katastrophen ausweichen oder wenigstens deine Probleme vereinfachen, indem du dich so wenig wie möglich bewegst. (*Gut* 187)

Interestingly, this passage indicates that the development of Philipp's passive masculine identity has been facilitated by the evasive behaviour of his father. Two points are striking here: first of all the passivity is designated as 'strategic', and, second, it is expressed as a 'means of control'.

The novel leaves no doubt about the fact that Philipp is passive: 'Eigentlich ist Philipp auf allen Mauern seines Lebens eine Randfigur, eigentlich besteht alles, was er macht, aus Fußnoten, und der Text dazu fehlt.' (*Gut* 285) There are very interesting parallels between Philipp and the group that Connell has identified as 'sympathizing with feminism'. However, as already mentioned in the Introduction, there is little evidence that they are really feminist in the political

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<sup>63</sup> Julia Freytag, "'Wer kennt Österreich?'" Familiengeschichten erzählen. Arno Geiger *Es geht uns gut* (2005) und Eva Menasse *Vienna* (2005)', in *NachBilder des Holocaust*, ed. by Stephan und Tacke, pp. 111–24 (pp. 112–13).

sense. Rather they retract and become passive because they are helpless in the face of feminist criticism. Just like these men, Philipp has chosen a girlfriend who is dominant.<sup>64</sup> Johanna has a thriving career and she controls the relationship with Philipp. Connell notes that the relationships the sympathetic men have with women invite comparison with a mother-son relationship in early childhood.<sup>65</sup> This is another interesting dimension to Philipp's childlike behaviour. The men in Connell's study try not to be assertive. She notes that leaving hegemonic masculinity behind 'basically involves choosing passivity'.<sup>66</sup> While the men in Connell's study are not active feminists, Philipp is not a feminist at all.

For Philipp, passivity is a means of exercising control and preserving himself. This reflects Noyes's theory on masochism: 'male masochism is best understood [...] as a neurotic attempt at self-preservation, a strategy of enactment whereby rituals of helplessness and dependency are performed for the sake of maintaining some positive relation to perceived stereotypes'.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, Philipp idolizes hegemonic masculinity. Masochistic behaviour was already identified in the characters of Humboldt in *Die Vermessung der Welt* and Dani in *Suche nach M.* Philipp, Humboldt and Dani all react with violence towards the self; while this violence is physical and psychological for the latter two, it remains mainly psychological for Philipp.

The notion of passivity allows Philipp to reject any responsibility and direction in life. The inability to choose a course of action or direction is reflected in Geiger's latest novel, *Selbstporträt mit Flusspferd*, which tells the story of Julian who, after separating from his girlfriend, takes care of a hippopotamus and starts an affair with the daughter of its owner. Julian notes: 'Aber ich weiß in

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<sup>64</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 131.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>67</sup> Noyes, p. 179.

Wahrheit überhaupt nicht, was ich will, einmal diese Richtung, dann die andere, einmal alles, einmal nichts. Und immer fühlt es sich absolut richtig an.’<sup>68</sup> Philipp also has the opportunity to choose a new course, but his response to this freedom and to female empowerment is to remain strategically passive. That is, he does not choose at all.

Philipp’s behaviour could even be read as a passive contestation of female empowerment. Philipp, in his imagination, becomes a man who comes close to the standards of hegemonic masculinity. While Philipp is powerless in real life, he fantasizes about being mighty and embodying hegemonic masculinity: ‘Was bin ich für ein König, daß ich gleich zwei Helden zum Ausmisten brauche! Einen nach dem anderen laß ich köpfen! Genau! Ich Saukerl von einem König!’ (*Gut* 101) As with Leo in *Ruhm*, Philipp is shown as a vindictive male author who is able to bring to the fore hegemonic masculinity in fictional spaces. In his dreams Philipp’s sexual performance reflects the expectation that men ‘must succeed in sex’.<sup>69</sup> Moreover the text states that Philipp has an affair with the mail woman, who is depicted as being passive towards him (*Gut* 281). The affair with the woman may well only be imagined by Philipp. Philipp does not correspond with the image of a physically strong man and this makes him feel uneasy. He tries to do push-ups to compensate, as if this would make him more manlier (*Gut* 56). Philipp works on his body in order to fit the attributes of the normative masculine physique. Gerschick argues that:

attaining these attributes is often unrealistic and more based in fantasy than in reality, men continue to internalize them as ideals and strive to demonstrate them as well as judge themselves and other men using them. [...] Because of the tremendous pressures to conform and the perceived rewards associated with doing so, people will go to great lengths to make their bodies appear more normatively masculine.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Arno Geiger, *Selbstporträt mit Flusspferd* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2015), p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> Plummer, p. 182.

<sup>70</sup> Gerschick, p. 373.

Philipp not only refuses to develop a real bond with a woman, he also fails to forge any friendships. He is, however, looking for recognition and does not completely isolate himself. Philipp's admiration for hegemonic masculinity is reflected in his desire to get recognition from the two illegal workers, Steinwald and Amatanov, who embody aspects of hegemonic masculinity (*Gut* 336). Philipp dreams of having an affair with Atamanov's bride, which shows that he would like to out-perform Atamanov. Finally, when Atamanov invites him to come to his wedding in Ukraine, Philipp obtains recognition from the men he admires. This acknowledgement triggers an out-of-character reaction: Philipp sits astride the roof of his grandparents' house (a scene reminiscent of Münchhausen and Eulenspiegel):<sup>71</sup> 'Gleich wird Philipp auf dem Giebel seines Großelternhauses in die Welt hinausreiten, in diesen überraschend weitläufigen Parcours.' (*Gut* 389) In his fantasy, he has become a hero: 'Er wird den Löwen und Drachen auf den Kopf treten' (*GUT* 390). It is a scene of triumph, which can be interpreted in two ways: first, the triumph of recognition by the workmen he admires; second, as triumph over his family and the associated memories the attic holds (*Gut* 222). Fleig notes that Philipp frees himself from his own history.<sup>72</sup> One may say that he even releases himself. Philipp has not been acknowledged as a man, neither by his father nor by his girlfriend. At last, he becomes one of the adventurous, heroic figures he has written about. Savran argues that 'cultural texts constructing masochistic masculinities characteristically conclude with an almost magical restitution of phallic power'.<sup>73</sup> The end of the novel is Philipp's 'magic' moment.

Summing up, Philipp exhibits a contradictory construct of masculinity: he admires hegemonic men, but at the same time shows anti-hegemonic subversion. He develops a fragile male gender identity, partly because his father does not talk to him about the past and holds him in low esteem.

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<sup>71</sup> Gratzke, p. 105. See also Freytag, "Wer kennt Österreich?", p. 118.

<sup>72</sup> Fleig, p. 281.

<sup>73</sup> Savran, 'Introduction', p. 37.



He adopts a strategic passive masculinity. Savran has argued that men become masochistic and torture themselves as a form of backlash against feminism.<sup>74</sup> Philipp behaves passively, like a child and to a certain extent masochistically as a part of a strategy of self-preservation and passive resistance to female empowerment.

Contrary to Mattson's analysis that Geiger does not link 'an approach to history to any specific gendered perspectives',<sup>75</sup> this analysis of the three generations of men represented by Richard, Peter and Philipp illustrates that there is a specifically male approach to history in Geiger's novels. As demonstrated, the male characters in *Es geht uns gut* evade talking about the past and repress their memories of it. Richard avoids talking about the past and suffers from dementia. Peter suppresses the memory of the past in order to protect himself from the trauma of his war experiences. Philipp, like his father and grandfather before him, does everything to evade his family past.

### ***History and female empowerment***

Now how do the female characters in Geiger's novels deal with the past and memory compared to the male characters? Odile Jansen notes that women have a special role when it comes to memory:

women are in fact the 'storekeepers of memory'. Not because of their genetic structure or some other innate quality, but as the result of a lifelong, transgenerational training in caring for and nurturing others and a lifetime of unequal power status.<sup>76</sup>

Alma is a 'storekeeper of memory'. She remembers; it is through her that the reader learns most about the family's past and also the unpleasant truths connected with the family's history: 'Sie weiß noch, wie Otto, der vorbildliche Hitlerjunge, das beste Gut der Nation, sie sachlich streng an der Kübelspritze und am Sandeimer instruierte. [...] Sie weiß. Sie weiß. Lauter so Geschichten.'

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 5, 33.

<sup>75</sup> Mattson, p. 211.

<sup>76</sup> Odile Jansen, 'Women as Storekeepers of Memory: Christa Wolf's Cassandra Project', in *Gendered Memories*, ed. by John Neubauer and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 35–43 (p. 35).

(*Gut* 362) She recalls the historical moments of her time: ‘Also beginnt sie zu erzählen, von den Umstürzen bei den Nachbarn im Osten’ (*Gut* 346). It is through Alma that family history is preserved: the first and the last of the historical chapters are narrated from her perspective. As already mentioned, gender subversion is also reflected in the literary form. Here it is a woman, not the succession of male generations, who holds the narration together. It is only the narrative structure of the novel — the story of one month of Philipp’s life takes up two-thirds of the novel, intersected by the story of the family’s past, representing more than fifty years — that makes it appear that Philipp is the main character of the novel. In reality it is Alma who provides a framework. Alma is more or less present in all the historical chapters and motivates the narration technique of the novel:<sup>77</sup>

In der Schule hat Alma gelernt, dass sich die Farben eines rasch rotierenden Windrads im menschlichen Auge vermischen, blau und gelb zu grün. Wenn jedoch bei völliger Dunkelheit ein Blitz das rotierende Windrad für eine Hundertstelsekunde erhellt, wird das Windrad in Ruheposition gesehen, die Farben klar voneinander abgegrenzt. Aus demselben Grund scheinen die heim eilenden Vögel in der Luft erstarrt zu sein, wenn der Blitz sie erleuchtet. Ganz ähnlich frieren die Dinge in der Erinnerung ein; als würde die Erinnerung das Farbgemisch der Vergangenheit in seine Bestandteile zerlegen und einzelne Farben herauslösen, als würde die Erinnerung die Vögel (Tauben), die vor Jahren in eilender Bewegung waren, für einen Augenblick ans Gewitter nageln. (*Gut* 368)

Interestingly, she refers to pigeons here — the same pigeons, which have buried the memories stored in the attic of the house under their excrement. Pigeons are transmitters of information. While for Alma they are used as a symbol of recording the past, for Philipp they become a symbol of suppression.

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<sup>77</sup> Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, ‘Die Farben des Windrads: über den Erzähler Arno Geiger’, *Volltext.net*, 18 June 2007 < <http://volltext.net/magazin/magazindetail/article/362> > [accessed 29 November 2013].

Fleig notes rightly that only the women of the novel are critical of the Austrian self-image.<sup>78</sup> The female characters question the past and understand that the Austrian *Heimatlidylle* is a collective social lie.<sup>79</sup> Ingrid, who has played a role in the movie *Der Hofrat Geiger*, notes: 'Ich habe immer gedacht, ich hätte in einem süßlichen Heimatfilm mitgewirkt. So kann man sich täuschen.' (*Gut* 244) Alma summarizes the Austrian attitude towards the Nazi past sarcastically: 'Das Vergessen ist der beste Gehilfe des Henkers.' (*Gut* 371) She continues:

was anderswo eben erst passiert war, war in Österreich bereits lange her, und was anderswo schon lange her war, war in Österreich gepflegte Gegenwart. Ist es dir nicht auch so ergangen, daß du manchmal nicht mehr wußtest, hat Kaiser Franz Joseph jetzt vor oder nach Hitler regiert? Ich glaube, darauf lief es hinaus, wie bei einem Brettspiel hat eine Figur die andere übersprungen, die einträgliche Figur ist über die kostspielige hinweg, und plötzlich war Hitler länger her als Franz Joseph, das hat den fünfziger Jahren den Weg geebnet, das hat Österreich zu dem gemacht, was es ist, nur erinnert sich niemand mehr daran oder nur sehr schwach. (*Gut* 349)

As O'Driscoll remarks, Alma 'recognizes the circular nature of Austria's development, demonstrated by the ever-recurring accession to power of old men who perpetuate the conservative politics of their predecessors'.<sup>80</sup> Men distort the past to ensure their power:

Für die Jungen war kein Platz, Richard, das hat dir gefallen, stimmt doch, du warst dabei, wie die alten Männer losgelegt und an ihrem besseren Österreich herumgebastelt haben. Vergangenheit, nur als Beispiel, war für die jungen Leute ein irreführender Begriff, denn plötzlich hatten wir eine eigene Zeitrechnung (*Gut* 349).

*Es geht uns gut* not only suggests that there is a gendered approach to history, but also traces the history of changing gender relations. As shown, the male characters react with helplessness, incomprehension or strategic passivity and passive contestation towards these changes. What about

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<sup>78</sup> Fleig, p. 280.

<sup>79</sup> Freytag, "'Wer kennt Österreich?'" , p. 117.

<sup>80</sup> O'Driscoll, p. 159.

the female characters? Clearly, in *Es geht uns gut* they endure the patriarchal authority of men.<sup>81</sup>

Alma, for example, suffers under the hegemonic masculinity of her husband. In her reflections there is a parallel with Connell's view that hegemonic masculinity is reproduced and that it involves the subordination of women:

Es hat mit dem zu tun, was diese Männer als Buben in den sogenannten guten Häusern und in der Schule gelernt haben: Daß Frauen haushalten sollen, ab und zu im Bett funktionieren [...] und daß zum Kinderkriegen und -großziehen Intelligenz nicht erforderlich ist, weil das nötige Hirnschmalz durch die sporadische Anwesenheit des Haushaltsvorstandes eingebracht wird. Was aber Entscheidungen, Finanzen und technische Dinge anbelangt, haben Frauen das Maul zu halten, ja. Klappe. (*Gut* 25–26)

Geiger clearly displays the view here that gender roles are socially constructed and acquired.

Ingrid, like Alma, takes a critical stance towards traditional gender roles. Ingrid sharply criticizes Peter's perception of women — a statement that she generalizes to cover all men:

Stundenlanges Kochen wird honoriert, weil es ins Bild der vorbildlichen Gattin, Hausfrau und Mutter paßt, wie es an den Fassaden der Gemeindenbauten prangt: ein Heimchen mit Holzschuhen und Nackenhaarenknoten, eine Garbe Ähren im Arm, links und rechts Kinder. Ansonsten? Kein Wort der Anerkennung. [...] Das läßt Peters Egoismus nicht zu. Er schafft es nicht, sich aus dem Zentrum zu nehmen, das ist die Pathologie der Männer, da sind sie alle gleich, und wenn nicht alle, so die meisten. (*Gut* 246)

While Ingrid claims to be a feminist, she still cooks for her husband and does the housework (*Gut* 162–63). Ironically, she even looks for her old doll's kitchen, which she wants to give to her daughter Sissi (*Gut* 218). As Adams and Coltrane argue, 'gender-appropriateness is reinforced through toys'.<sup>82</sup> Playing with the doll's kitchen, Sissi will learn the conventional role of a woman who does the cooking. Geiger makes the point here that even feminist women who have a

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<sup>81</sup> Freytag, "Wer kennt Österreich?", p. 117.

<sup>82</sup> Adams and Coltrane, p. 235.

professional career can still be trapped in traditional gender roles; they remain accomplices of hegemonic masculinity. They have agency, which can sustain the patriarchal model.

To sum up, there is a gendered approach to history and memory in *Es geht uns gut*. While the male characters actively repress the memories of the past and either refuse to engage with or reinvent it, the female characters face the truth of the past. Acting as ‘storekeepers of memory’, they hold the family story together and criticize how Austria deals with the past. Men distort the past to claim power. While the male characters do not reflect on female empowerment, the female characters question — at least in theory — the patriarchal system and engage critically with gender roles, showing them as being socially constructed.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, Geiger shows a decline of masculine ‘strength’. While Richard tries his best to correspond to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, the concept is shown to be eroding. Richard represents a disintegrating hegemonic masculinity. The fact that Richard suffers from dementia when he is an old man is no coincidence. It points to the general dementia of the male characters in the novel when it comes to remembering the past and can be associated with a decline of traditional concepts of masculinity. Geiger makes a more important link between forgetting the past and Austrian society in general, as he remarks in an interview: ‘Das Scheitern der Familienkommunikation verdeutlicht auch einen Aspekt der österreichischen Gesellschaft. Nach 1945 gab es einen Umgang mit Geschichte, der gewisse Strategien der Problemlösung vorexerzierte. Das Nicht-Aussprechen, Verdrängen und Vergessen wurde dann auch im Kleinen angewandt.’<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Schneeberger.

Peter also fails in communicating about the past. He can be associated with complicit masculinity, with a slight variation: once his wife dies he becomes helpless and his masculine behaviour can at best be subsumed under the term ‘helpless complicit masculinity.’ Expanding Bourdieu’s argument that women are hostage to the structures of thought of the dominating gender, it is shown in the example of Peter that men are hostage to it as well: he does not allow himself to readjust his masculinity. The refusal to engage with the past and the non-communication between the generations prevents the male children from developing a stable male identity; as in Rabinovici’s *Suche nach M.*, Philipp is afraid to subscribe to marginalized masculinity. He exhibits anti-hegemonic subversion and admires men who live according to traditional male standards. He authorizes hegemonic masculinity. While Philipp shares characteristics with Connell’s men, who sympathize with feminism, he still seeks and gains approval from embodied masculine hegemony, of which, in his invented photographs and stories, he becomes an exemplar. This hegemonic masculinity remains imagined and virtual, as with the male characters of Kehlmann’s novel *Ruhm*. Philipp’s behaviour can be read as a passive contestation of change in gender roles. He thereby creates an alternative masculinity, which does not fit any of Connell’s categories of masculinity. He creates a masculinity of ‘strategic passivity’, reflective of the theory of masochism as a strategy of neurotic self-preservation. Philipp’s masculinity further reflects aspects of Demetriou’s argument of a ‘hegemonic masculine block’. Demetriou reasons that hegemonic masculinity is hybrid and can adapt to different historical contexts. It can transform ‘what appears counter-hegemonic and progressive into an instrument of backwardness and patriarchal reproduction’.<sup>84</sup> Philipp’s strategic passive masculinity, which seems counter-hegemonic, is a good example of this. He somehow remains a child that is ‘on its way’ (*Gut* 377). His childlike behaviour is connected to irresponsible

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<sup>84</sup> Demetriou, p. 355.

conduct on the one hand and the desire to dominate on the other. As suggested by Bourdieu, Philipp is a child who plays a man in order to obtain power.

What Richard, Peter and Philipp have in common is that they are all seeking recognition of their masculinity. However, all of them experience impotence; they fail in their construction of masculinity, which leads to a fragile male identity and for Philipp also to a weak masculinity.

Memory and coming to terms with the past are strongly gendered in *Es geht uns gut*. While men repress and avoid the past, women remember and talk about it. The female characters take a critical stance towards Austria's dealing with the past and they engage critically with the changing gender roles. The male characters, on the contrary, remain passive towards female empowerment. That *Es geht uns gut* is a novel about the history of female empowerment and its effect on constructions of masculinity is not only reflected in the content but also the form of the novel: *Es geht uns gut* is a family story in which the historical chapters are narrated from both female and male perspectives. Male power is on the decline from one male generation to the next.

While set in Austria, the novel *Alles über Sally*, which will be analysed in the following section, is less Austria-specific than *Es geht uns gut*. As in *Es geht uns gut* the novel addresses female empowerment and the readjustment of masculinity to the change in gender relations.

## **4.2 Caring, gentle and emotionally literate masculinity: *Alles über Sally***

Alfred, who works as a curator in a museum, and Sally, a teacher, both in their fifties, have been married for over thirty years. Sally, half British, was raised by her grandfather in Austria, while her mother worked as a nanny in England. Sally and Alfred got to know each other in Cairo, where Sally was working for the Austrian Cultural Institute while Alfred was trying to acquire Egyptian

art for Western museums. Alfred and Sally have three children, Gustav, Alice and Emma. At the beginning of the narrative the relationship between Alfred and Sally has cooled down. During a holiday in England they get a call from their neighbours and friends, Nadja and Erik, who inform them that their home has been burgled. Alfred and Sally immediately cut short their stay and return to the scene of the crime. The burglary traumatizes Alfred for not only has the house been ransacked, but also the intruder has scribbled on his diaries, which are sacred to Alfred. While Alfred becomes depressed, Sally starts a passionate affair with her neighbour, Erik. To her dismay, Sally learns that Erik has left his wife, not for her but for a younger woman. Eric divorces his wife and moves in with his new girlfriend. Sally reacts with jealousy, but in the end she rediscovers her feelings for Alfred. Alfred, who always knew that he wanted to stay with Sally, is able to overcome the depression caused by the burglary.

In the following analysis, Sally's view on men and masculinity will be examined. After considering the relationship between Sally and Alfred, Alfred's masculinity will be studied. It will be argued that there is subversion in conceptions of gender. While Sally is portrayed as a strong character who displays traditionally masculine characteristics, her husband Alfred shows anti-hegemonic subversion. He develops a gentle, caring and emotionally literate masculinity.

### *Sally's view on men*

Sally's opinion of men and masculinity is ambiguous. On the one hand she admires masculinity and on the other she has had negative experiences with men:

Das lag bestimmt auch daran, dass Sally in ihrer Kindheit Männer fast ausschließlich als inferior erfahren hatte. [...] Zusammen genommen ergaben sie ein eher unrühmliches Sortiment, von dem Sallys Männerbild geprägt war. Bedauerlicherweise



gruppierten sich auch die Männer, die sie frei hatte wählen können, zu einer ziemlich törichten Auswahl.<sup>85</sup>

The relationship with her grandfather has had the greatest influence in forming her image of men. Her grandfather exhibits features of hegemonic masculinity: he is jealous of any relationship that she has with other men and tries to control her (*Sally* 29). It seems as if he has a habit of crossing the line and violating Sally's intimacy: 'Auch Sallys Großvater gehört zu den Männern, die ihr beim Schwimmen zugesehen hatten – dort ist der Augenblick, das allererste Mal, der Anfang von Himmel und Erde, von Wasser und Luft, von Schönheit und Zorn.' (*Sally* 119) This scene is key to Sally's contradictory and ambiguous feelings towards men. Apparently she appreciates the fact that her body is desired by a man. At the same time the man — here her grandfather — crosses boundaries and abuses his power. In order to rebel against her grandfather Sally behaves like a 'schlechtes Mädchen' (*Sally* 119). Using this term makes the point that the generation of Sally's grandfather has a certain norm of what a 'good' and a 'bad' girl is. A good girl is a girl who behaves according to the gendered expectations of a girl. Despite the fact that Sally experiences men as being inferior, she wishes she were a boy:

Unter der Dusche erinnerte sich Sally, dass sie als Mädchen lieber ein Bub gewesen wäre [...] Buben durften alles und mussten nicht brav sein. [...] Für die Buben war das Leben einfacher, sie mussten viel weniger denken, sie durften ohnehin fast alles. (*Sally* 90)

Masculinity is depicted here as something that is desirable, because it means more freedom. The fact that Sally recalls this memory under the shower is significant. It could allude to Freud's theory of penis envy. The ambiguous image that Sally had of men as a child and adolescent is still present when she is in her fifties. As an adult, she still feels inferior:

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<sup>85</sup> Arno Geiger, *Alles über Sally* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2010), pp. 117–18. Subsequently referenced here as 'Sally'.

Ich kann nicht mithalten, weil ich mich noch immer insgeheim dafür rechtfertige, dass ich eine Frau bin. Das ist leider so, wenn man sich als Kind diese Krankheit zugezogen hat [...] das leise Bedauern, nicht als Mann geboren worden zu sein. (*Sally* 124)

At the same time, she despises the macho behaviour of men, even though she acknowledges that the attitude of Austrian men has improved over the past years: ‘Sich aufspielende Männer gab es überall, aber hierzulande waren sie in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten besser geworden, nicht alle, aber viele. Ein wenig jedenfalls. Eine Plage waren sie trotzdem.’ (*Sally* 241–242) Possibly because of envy, Sally also has a tendency to deprecate men: ‘Sally hatte Männer immer für eher simpel gehalten, wenn auch deswegen noch lange nicht für durchschaubar.’ (*Sally* 262) Interestingly, this sentence says exactly what men usually say about women: that they are mysterious, not transparent.

At school Sally is in a position to observe young men and their reaction to the new gender relations. Sally’s image of the boys at school is more favourable than of girls (*Sally* 242). While boys remain strange beings for Sally, she admires them:

Die Buben waren Sally fremd, aber sie gefielen ihr. Egal, ob gut oder schlecht erzogen, sie konnten realistisch und charmant sein. [...] Die allermeisten Buben gaben sich nicht preis – was wenig verwunderlich war, wenn man bedachte, dass es zunehmend schwierig wurde, in dieser Gesellschaft männlich zu sein. [...] Die weiblichen Tugenden hingegen besaßen einen Eigenwert unabhängig von Leistungsbilanzen – soziale Kompetenz und Kommunikationsfähigkeit, das waren Qualitäten, so oder so. Die Buben, die durch ihren Übermut oder ihre Eigenbrötlerei auffielen, hatten sich derweil damit abzufinden, dass sie Mängel Exemplare waren, das Ergebnis von Gottes erstem Versuch, leider missglückt, beim zweiten Versuch gings besser. (*Sally* 242–43)

This passage reflects a certain discourse that — according to some — can be found in the media today: masculinity now is less accepted, men cannot be ‘real’ men any more, they have trouble in finding their place in society, they fail in school and are considered to be human beings with defects.<sup>86</sup> This is certainly an extreme view of media discourse on masculinity, covering only

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<sup>86</sup> This is also reflected in *Neue Männer – muss das sein?*

one strand of gender discussions. The last part of the passage is ironic and mildly feminist. Interestingly, the passage reveals that Sally holds a very rigid view on male and female characteristics. Sally likes boys but at the same time she pokes fun at them (*Sally* 242). She both admires and criticizes masculinity.

While Sally shows admiration for masculinity, she also has feminist ideas. She has been influenced by feminist writings, such as those of Simone de Beauvoir, which she has read secretly (*Sally* 29). When she goes to Cairo to work for the Austrian Embassy she is able to free herself from the narrow-minded world of her grandfather:

Die klar linierte Zukunft, die ihr der Großvater vorgezeichnet hatte, war mit einem Schlag vom Tisch [...]. Strikteste Moralvorstellungen, nur ein einziger Mann im Leben, Treue, kein Wortbruch [...] In Kairo war die Zukunft plötzlich unvorhersehbar [...] Ein muffiges Leben als Hausfrau und Mutter unter dem Begriff Zukunft zusammenzufassen, war ihr schon mit vierzehn absurd erschienen. (*Sally* 28–29)

Sally has to leave Austria to rebel against the gendered world her grandfather stands for. She uses her new liberty and sleeps with several men; she stands for the generation of women who have fought for gender equality and achieved a certain degree of freedom.

Sally believes that the young women of today have a negative attitude towards feminism and betray its cause: ‘Sallys Schülerinnen ruhten sich auf den Lorbeeren ihrer Mütter und Großmütter aus. Oder anders ausgedrückt: Sie fielen ihnen in den Rücken. Das dachte Sally. Denn von feministischen Dingen wollten die Schülerinnen nichts hören.’ (*Sally* 243) At the same time, Sally is not as rebellious as she may seem; in fact she is a character full of contradictions. On the one hand she believes that monogamy and marriage are an invention of men: that both serve as a consolidation of male power and the institution of marriage is outdated (*Sally* 126). On the other hand she is much more conservative: ‘Aber sie fand es gut, dass man sich im Gespräch auf einen Ehemann beziehen und im Alltag gelegentlich darauf zurückgreifen konnte.’ (*Sally* 292)

Sally is presented in the novel as a strong character. She embodies several characteristics that are traditionally attributed to men, however she does not exhibit a female masculinity, a masculinity that is given rise to by women independently from men. Sally has force, participates in sports, controls her emotions and hesitates to make long-term emotional commitments: ‘Sally fühle sich sehr geliebt. Doch darauf einzugehen vermochte sie nicht, so feige vor Gefühlen.’ (*Sally* 150) Stereotypically, men are expected to be afraid of their feelings and of serious commitment. Here Sally adopts this male trait and becomes a female version of a ‘male predator’. Ken Plummer confirms that women’s attitudes to sex have changed: ‘They are assertive, objectificatory, lustful — not only do they want to have fun, they want to fuck.’<sup>87</sup> This is very true of Sally.

While Sally enters traditionally male domains she also clearly claims the spaces that are traditionally female as her own: ‘Die Küche gehört mir!’ (*Sally* 47) She renovates the house and does all the paperwork. Sally is affirmative: she chooses to inhabit both the female and the male space. This is the opposite of Ingrid in *Es geht uns gut*, who occupies the female space of the household only grudgingly because Peter refuses to help.

With Sally, Geiger demonstrates that masculinity is not necessarily tied to the male body. This follows Halberstam’s argument. However, Sally does not create innovation in masculinity, she is much too conservative in her view on what men and women are to be able to do. Her character combines rebellion and conservatism. When she was a child, she wanted to be a boy — she was looking for ways to imitate boys. Halberstam’s argument that women can innovate masculinity was based on the analysis of homosexual women; *Alles über Sally* seems to suggest that this theory cannot be extended to heterosexual women. Sally copies masculinity, following Butler’s assumption that all gender is imitation. She combines aspects of male and female gender

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<sup>87</sup> Plummer, p. 190.

performance in her behaviour. She shows that women can perform as men. Her character reflects Sedgwick's theory of the orthogonality of gender, arguing that masculinity and femininity are 'independently variable':<sup>88</sup> Sally scores high on both the masculine and feminine scale at the same time. In Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.* and *Ohnehin*, the female Turkish character displays masculine behaviour which is in effect female complicity in hegemonic masculinity. The Turkish characters also have an instrumental attitude to their masculinity, using it to achieve specific goals, to exercise power against violent men. Sally likewise deploys masculine behaviour as a means to an end — to take liberties and fulfil her sexual desires. These findings have relevance for the discussion of masculinity in men. In Chapter Two we saw that men use hegemonic masculinity as a tool as well; it emerges as a concept which, independently of the male body, guarantees power and freedom.

### ***Relationship Sally-Alfred***

The development of the relationship between Sally and her husband is central to the novel. It is in a rather bad state. The way in which it is described gives further insight to Sally's image of masculinity. She was first attracted to Alfred because he was different from all the other men she had ever met in her life:

Die meisten Männer in Kairo, ob Ausländer oder Einheimische, konnten nicht genug von sich selber kriegen, es herrschte eine infantile Männlichkeitssucht [...] Alfred war im Vergleich dazu schüchtern und unsicher, er wurde leicht rot [...] In seiner Gegenwart verspürte sie eine gewisse Entspantheit, die sie bei anderen Männern nicht verspürte, sie wurde ruhiger und sicherer, obwohl weiterhin Wellen von Egoismus und Unberechenbarkeit durch sie hindurch gingen. (*Sally* 147)

Egyptian society is one in which patriarchy 'operates on many levels'.<sup>89</sup> This patriarchal masculinity is unmasked by Sally as egoistic and childish. It is the radical difference between

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<sup>88</sup> Sedgwick, pp. 15–16.

<sup>89</sup> Marcia C. Inhorn, "'The Worms are weak': male infertility and patriarchal paradoxes in Egypt", in *Islamic*

Alfred and this behaviour which attracts Sally. Now in her fifties, Sally feels uneasy about Alfred's lethargy and his lack of physical fitness (*Sally* 8–9) and is even disgusted by his appearance (*Sally* 16). Alfred's body is the opposite of the social ideal of an achievement-oriented male physique which Sally buys into as she feels that Alfred's physical state is not normal for a man of his age (*Sally* 8). A symbol of Alfred's physical state is his 'Thrombosestrumpf', which Sally describes as follows: 'Er bedeutet alt und krank und irritiert mich. Der Besuch bei Mama hat mir gereicht. Mein Bedarf an körperlichem Verfall ist für den Rest der Ferien gedeckt. [...] "Ich fühl' mich wie neben einem Invaliden", sagt sie.' (*Sally* 13) Daniela Strigl has observed that the 'Thrombosestrumpf' becomes a cast in the end and that Sally finds this attractive.<sup>90</sup> This says something about Sally's preferences in men: the 'Thrombosestrumpf' stands for fragility. The cast, on the other hand, is hard. Sally seems to be attracted by the 'hard' side of masculinity. She is looking for what she considers to be a real man and lover: 'Was sie brauchte, war ein starker, selbstbewusster, erfahrener Liebhaber — nicht zimperlich — wie Alfred.' (*Sally* 219) As noted earlier, women can find masculinity in men erotic.<sup>91</sup> Sally is sexually attracted to men who embody the standards of hegemonic masculinity. Erik is the male character in the novel who comes closest to this ideal, both physically (*Sally* 52) and in his behaviour: 'Nüchtern betrachtet, ist Erik wie die meisten Männer, faul und hilflos. Seine Hemden bügeln? Niemals! Es muss also jemanden geben, der es für ihn macht.' (*Sally* 280) Erik's behaviour betrays features of what Connell calls 'complicit masculinity' in the sense that he exploits women for the housework. However, Geiger does not directly imply that he does so in order to receive the 'patriarchal dividend'. It is rather because he is helpless,

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*Masculinities*, ed. by Loahoucine Ouzgane (London: Zed Books, 2006), pp. 217–237 (p. 226).

<sup>90</sup> Daniela Strigl in 'Lesung: Arno Geiger', *Literarisches Colloquium Berlin*, 16 March 2010 <<http://www.lesungen.net/lesungen/studio-lcb-1306/>> [accessed 19 October 2015].

<sup>91</sup> Reeser, p. 18.

egoistic and lazy. Men who fall into the category of complicit masculinity are here shown to be weak. At the same time, Erik approximates the male seducer.

To sum up, Sally's view of masculinity oscillates between fascination and rejection. To her, masculinity is desirable as it is linked to freedom; at the same time she has feminist ideas and exhibits masculine behaviour. However, she does not give rise to a masculinity of her own. In the relationship with Alfred she assumes conventional male tasks without giving up traditional female spaces such as the kitchen. Despite her exposure to feminist ideas and the freedoms she fought for, her views on gender remain rigid. Sally seems to use feminism as a means of personal empowerment and to obtain her freedoms rather than as a tool to advance the project of gender equality as a social endeavour.

### *Alfred's masculinity*

To analyse Alfred's masculinity, a narratological analysis is needed. Sally is used as a focal point throughout the novel, providing a biased view of Alfred. In large parts, the novel conveys a woman's idea of a man. As the title of the novel already indicates, the narration is all about Sally. She appears to be a strong and dominating woman because her character is positioned in a prominent position throughout. With few exceptions, all the chapters are introduced from her point of view. The second chapter, for example, starts as follows: 'Sally ist immer wieder beeindruckt vom Wechsel der *Offen-* und *Geschlossen*-Perioden in ihrem Leben.' (Sally, 20 – author's emphasis) The narration covers more of her professional and private life than Alfred's and most of the activity and plot development is initiated by her. It is Sally who starts the affair with Erik, for example. In short, Sally dominates the cognitive structure of the text — and, moreover, its linguistic structure.

In contrast to Sally, Alfred is frequently associated with passive words ('versunken', 'träge', *Sally* 8) and this passivity in relation to Sally is also expressed in linguistic structures: 'Alfred folgte Sallys Sehlinie' (*Sally* 37). Indeed, it seems as if the narrator sides with Sally. At times it is hard to distinguish Sally's perspective from that of the narrator: "'Es ist wirklich ein Elend mit dir", sagte Sally. Mit noch immer hängenden Hosenträgern stand Alfred hilflos da.' (*Sally* 74) Is it Sally or the narrator describing Alfred as helpless? It is through the eyes of Sally that Alfred is depicted in a negative manner throughout the text, which leads to a biased view. For example, via Sally's perspective the reader is led to believe that Alfred lacks spontaneity, is inert and passive (*Sally* 15–16, 76). However, his actions contradict this: 'Alfred sagte kurz entschlossen, er wolle sie begleiten.' (*Sally* 103)

This biased view also colours the way in which Alfred's masculinity is presented. He is labelled 'subversiv' (*Sally* 128), but the anti-hegemonic subversion in his masculinity is not presented in a positive light. Sally attributes female qualities to him. For example, Alfred is described as a very sensitive man (*Sally* 32), which is interpreted as a female quality by Sally: 'Und angeblich weinen auf der Insel die Männer mehr als die Frauen, so gesehen ist an Alfred ein Engländer verloren gegangen, dafür spricht auch seine Neigung, im Zweifelsfall lieber etwas Originelles zu sagen als etwas Kluges.' (*Sally* 14) This questioning of Alfred's masculinity can be seen throughout the text, for example: 'Wenn man Sally fragte, besaß Alfred eine ganze Menge weiblicher Energie.' (*Sally* 128) Just as Johanna questions Philipp's masculinity in *Es geht uns gut*, Sally questions that of her husband. This says more about Sally's attitude towards standards of masculinity than how manly Alfred actually is. It shows that Sally, despite her feminist convictions, has a traditional notion of masculinity. As mentioned earlier, Connell classes men who do not comply with socially imposed standards of masculinity within the group of 'subordinated masculinities'. Heterosexual men fall into this category as well when they are perceived to have



feminine traits. Sally subordinates Alfred. She could well call him a ‘mother’s boy’, an interesting development of Connell’s theory.<sup>92</sup> Her behaviour is to a certain extent reflective of Bourdieu’s argument that women become unconsciously complicit in sustaining male domination. Just as the study cited in Bourdieu shows that French women prefer a male partner who is older and taller than them,<sup>93</sup> Sally is sexually attracted to men who come close to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Geiger suggests here that it is not only men who subordinate men who do not comply with the standards of hegemonic masculinity, but that women do so as well. In this way they support the patriarchal system.

In fact Alfred develops a gentle, caring and emotionally literate masculinity. Just as the reader is falsely induced to think that Philipp is the main character of *Es geht uns gut*, because of the narrative structure we are deluded in *Alles über Sally*. Alfred is a much more positive character than the reader is led to believe by Sally in complicity with the narrator. For example, it is Alfred who tries to save their relationship (*Sally* 206), while Sally adopts the rather unhelpful solution of starting an affair. While Sally’s perspective sheds a negative light on Alfred’s masculinity, it is much more positive than the reader is led to believe. The penultimate chapter of the novel is key to an understanding of Alfred and his masculinity as it is the only chapter written from his perspective. It is constructed as a stream-of-consciousness narration, in one sentence stringing together one thought after the other in an unstructured way. The chapter can be read as one of Alfred’s diary entries. While characters such as Philipp in *Es geht uns gut* and Leo in *Ruhm* write in order to create hegemonic masculinity, Alfred escapes into his diaries to express his gentle, caring and emotionally literate masculinity. The chapter shows Alfred as a strong, stable, realistic and happy man. It

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<sup>92</sup> Connell acknowledges that women as well as men are bearers of masculinity (Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 230).

<sup>93</sup> Bourdieu, p. 56.

demonstrates that Alfred knows exactly what he wants and does not care about the opinion of the director of the *Kulturinstitut*,<sup>94</sup> indicating that Alfred is very conscious of and realistic about himself. He acknowledges his weaknesses and his egoistic side, which is in constant need of recognition and praise (*Sally* 347). Alfred accepts that he is not the superhero he wishes to be: ‘natürlich weiß ich, dass ich nicht der Athlet des Jahres bin’ (*Sally* 326). He also knows that he does not correspond to the image of a strong and courageous man (*Sally* 294). It turns out that Alfred is a man who is able to express his emotions. He is a gentle, caring husband. The chapter consists of several pages that are a declaration of love to his wife (*Sally* 348–50).

Alfred is also depicted as a loving father. He is very proud of his children: ‘Ich platze vor Stolz, wenn ich an sie denke.’ (*Sally* 210) He is a modern man in that he values time spent with his children and regrets that he has put his job first in the past. He is sorry that he went to Cairo for professional reasons when he had a six-week holiday as he would have preferred to spend the time with his children: ‘wie dumm, dass ich die unschätzbare Zeit, die ich mit ihnen hätte verbringen können, verkauft habe’ (*Sally* 337). Alfred is one of the rare good fathers in the texts analysed. Gauß in *Die Vermessung der Welt* behaves violently towards his son Eugen, as does Richard in *Es geht uns gut* towards his daughter. Mosche and Jakob in *Suche nach M.* and Peter in *Es geht uns gut* fail to communicate about the past to their sons, and Philipp in *Es geht uns gut* becomes a father only in his imagination.

Alfred’s caring attitude and sensitivity can also be seen in his approach to the past. Unlike Philipp in *Es geht uns gut*, Alfred likes to conserve things. This desire is expressed both in the fact that he writes a diary and in his job:

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<sup>94</sup> Strigl, in ‘Lesung: Arno Geiger’.

Ihre Meinung war es, dass Museen einen ganz lebensfalschen Dunst erweckten, im Museum hatte Alfred sich angewöhnt, eine Sache für den Inhalt zu nehmen. Außerdem vertrat er im Museum eine Mentalität des Bewahrens, und diese Mentalität setzte sich im Privaten fort. Alfred hatte eine besondere Freude an Kontinuitäten. (*Sally* 76)

It is no coincidence that Alfred is a curator: his approach to the past parallels the behaviour of Alma in *Es geht uns gut*. He proves that not only women are ‘storekeepers of memory’.

Alfred can be associated with the category of men who sympathize with feminism in Connell’s study. Alfred shares with them traits such as sensitivity, expressiveness and caring.<sup>95</sup> In line with Connell’s argument that the separation from hegemonic masculinity necessitates passivity,<sup>96</sup> Alfred behaves at times passively towards his wife. His attitude towards the empowerment of women is marked by astonishment and fascination: ‘Im Sommer hatte Alfred zu Alice gesagt, er finde es bemerkenswert, wie schnell die Frauen diesen Paradigmenwechsel hinbekommen hätten.’ (*Sally* 243) However, Alfred’s fascination with female empowerment does not make him a ‘feminist man’. He, like so many other men, remains a passive spectator of changes in the gender roles. Moreover, there are significant differences between Alfred and the so-called ‘feminist men’, who Connell found feel guilty taking the initiative sexually and renounce a career.<sup>97</sup> None of this is true of Alfred. He is successful professionally and takes the sexual initiative (*Sally* 8–9). Connell remarks that the project of remaking masculinity does not appear ‘well resolved or particularly stable’.<sup>98</sup> Alfred is an exception to this claim. He is a gentle, caring and emotionally literate man but does not fall into a gender vertigo. He is happy and stable and, contrary to Sally’s opinion, his masculinity is not in question. The fact that he has a fulfilling career, is a good father and has a heterosexual sensibility still makes him a man. While his body is described with adjectives that usually apply to a

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<sup>95</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 123.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

woman ('Alfred in seiner weichen Korpulenz', *Sally* 8), the text makes ample reference to his sexual organs (*Sally* 11, 210, 215, 239), leaving no doubt about the masculinity of his body. Alfred's physique is counter-hegemonic as it does not correspond with the attributes of the ideal masculine body, nor does Alfred strive to achieve them. However, it is clearly marked as masculine, showing that the male form can still be regarded as such even if it deviates from the ideal. Alfred parallels the character of Guttmann in *Ohnehin* in the sense that he embodies a gentle and stable masculinity. With Alfred, the 'gentle' masculinity is taken out of the Jewish context.

The positive alternative masculinity of Alfred is validated by an external view. Alfred and Sally's neighbour Nadja notes: 'Sei bloß froh, dass du mit Alfred verheiratet bist. Alfred ist ein wahrer Prinz, eine Seele von einem Menschen. Sally, du weißt gar nicht, was du an ihm hast.' (*Sally* 258) While Sally finds fault with Alfred for being too feminine, she also criticizes his typically male behaviour: 'Er brauchte von ihr ständig Brustfütterung oder ging ihr um den Hintern oder suchte in ihr ein verdammtes Kindermädchen für alles.' (*Sally* 204) Her contradictory expectations of Alfred as a man, together with her search for a self-confident and strong lover — attributes she does not recognize in her husband — and Nadja's longing for a sensitive and nice man — the opposite of Erik — illustrate the dilemma of modern masculinity. It seems as if the women in the novel are looking for a man who has gentle characteristics without being too female. Two important conclusions can be drawn: a positive alternative masculinity is possible and women have an important agency in remodelling it. As accomplices they are in danger of sustaining the standard of hegemonic masculinity.

Alfred's anti-hegemonic masculinity is curiously connected with ageing and childlike behaviour. As regards ageing, the above-mentioned 'Thrombosestrumpf' is important. The stockings, like the 'Staatsvertragszähne' in *Es geht uns gut*, are linked with ageing and decay. At the same time they are a kind of obsession for both Alfred and Richard. The 'Thrombosestrumpf'

not only supports Alfred physically but also gives him a kind of psychological comfort and stability. At the same time it is a symbol of Alfred's need to be nursed. As Meike Feßmann notes, it is a 'Sinnbild von Alfreds Verletzlichkeit'.<sup>99</sup> It seems as if he cannot do without it — just like a child who cannot sleep without a cuddly toy. Some writers have argued that ageing can facilitate a change in masculinity, a reduction in male hormones that may result in the development of a less aggressive, more caring lifestyle usually associated with female behaviour.<sup>100</sup> While Richard in *Es geht uns gut* becomes aggressive with advancing age, Geiger's depiction of Alfred seems to support the view that ageing can lead to more caring behaviour. Likewise, Geiger's novel *Der alte König in seinem Exil*, in which he documents the dementia of his father August, shows that ageing can have a positive effect on men, in the sense that they become gentler and more tender:

Es trifft mich immer unvorbereitet, wenn mir der Vater mit einer Sanftheit, die mir früher nicht an ihm aufgefallen ist, seine Hand an die Wange legt, manchmal die Handfläche, sehr oft die Rückseite der Hand. Dann erfasse ich, dass ich nie enger mit ihm zusammensein werde als in diesem Augenblick.<sup>101</sup>

In contrast to *Es geht uns Gut*, Geiger draws a positive image of ageing in both *Alles über Sally* and *Der alte König in seinem Exil*.<sup>102</sup> This process of growing old runs in parallel with the development of an anti-hegemonic masculinity.

An important part of Alfred's subversive construction of masculinity is his childlike behaviour, which is strikingly parallel to that of Philipp in *Es geht uns gut*, Gauß in *Die Vermessung der Welt* and the third generation of men in Rabinovici's texts: 'Immerhin: Als sie sich nach einem

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<sup>99</sup> Meike Feßmann, 'Artistik der Einfühlung. Laudatio zum Literaturpreis der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2011', in *Grenzgehen. Drei Reden. Arno Geiger* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2011), pp. 15–35 (p. 23).

<sup>100</sup> Arber, Davidson and Ginn, 'Changing Approaches to Gender and Later Life', p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> Arno Geiger, *Der alte König in seinem Exil* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2011), p. 183.

<sup>102</sup> See also Meike Dackweiler, 'Die Alzheimer-Narration am Beispiel von Arno Geigers *Der alte König in seinem Exil*', in *Merkwürdige Alte. Zu einer literarischen und bildlichen Kultur des Alter(n)s*, ed. by Henriette Herwig (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014), pp. 251–76 (p. 272) and Dackweiler, 'Das Thema "Altern"', p. 118.

Lavendelsäckchen bückte und dabei zu Alfred auf sah, so dass sich der Ausschnitt der ihrer Bluse ein zusätzliches Stück öffnete, blickte Alfred hin wie ein Halbwüchsiger.’ (*Sally* 44) Alfred is described as having childlike attributes on various other occasions in the novel (*Sally* 9, 24). Sally also sees Alfred as a child: ‘und sie sah in dem großen geschlagenen Museumskurator noch immer den rotzaufziehenden Buben’ (*Sally* 132) and she treats him as such (*Sally* 77). While Alfred exhibits childlike behaviour similar to that of other male characters in the texts analysed, he is aware of it and reflects on it, noting that his daughters may be offended if they knew that he feels more obligation to the boy in himself than to his father role (*Sally* 333).

In short, Alfred is a man who exhibits childlike characteristics. At the same time he succeeds in developing a gentle, caring and emotionally literate masculinity without calling his masculinity into question. He is one of the few stable male characters in the works analysed.

### ***Conclusion***

To sum up, *Alles über Sally* indicates a remodelling of gender roles. Sally is depicted as a strong woman. She has several traits which are traditionally attributed to men, while also possessing distinct feminine ones. Although her character supports Halberstam’s claim that masculinity is not only linked to the male body, Sally does not innovate masculinity and produce a female masculinity. On the contrary, she imitates masculinity as it is displayed by men. At the same time, her view on male and female characteristics is rigid and she does not reject her conventional role as a woman. While she enters the male orbit, she also actively claims traditionally female spheres such as that of the household. Moreover she subordinates men who do not correspond to the standards of hegemonic masculinity and degrades them as effeminate. To her, masculinity is desirable because it is linked with freedom. Sally has a utilitarian view of masculinity: she behaves in a masculine way to become independent and to satisfy her sexual needs. *Alles über Sally* adds another dimension to Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, in line with Bourdieu on the unconscious complicity of

women in male domination: it is not only men who support the patriarchal system — women also play a supportive role through their behaviour. As Alfred notes on female empowerment: ‘Bei einer Interessensgemeinschaft, die so klug und geschickt sei, ein derart kompliziertes Projekt in so kurzer Zeit durchzudrücken, wundere man sich, dass nicht schon früher Fakten geschaffen wurden.’ (*Sally* 243)

*Alles über Sally* points to the importance of female agency in gender constructions: it is not just men who are complicit, women are too. *Alles über Sally* adds yet another dimension to Connell’s category of complicit masculinity: men behave so not only because they are looking for a patriarchal dividend, but because they are helpless, egoistic and lazy, as exemplified in the character of Erik. Peter in *Es geht uns gut* falls into exactly the same category.

In the character of Alfred, who embodies a gentle, caring and emotionally literate masculinity, Geiger demonstrates that a positive alternative masculinity is possible. Despite several commonalities, he is a counter-model to the strategically passive masculinity developed by Philipp in *Es geht uns gut*. Alfred displays childlike features, but he is aware of this. Contrary to Bourdieu’s argument, Alfred does not ‘play’ in order to obtain power and privilege; rather, it seems as if being a boy is a natural state for him and represents freedom. His childlike behaviour also seems to be a way of protecting himself — remaining passive like a child makes it unnecessary to react actively to the new role of women and feminism. In this his actions recall those of Philipp. However, unlike Philipp, he does not passively contest female empowerment.

Alfred, in contrast to Philipp, is able to remember and preserve the past. His gentle and caring masculinity is supported by his advancing age. Unlike other men in the works analysed, Alfred tries to be a good father. Sally regards Alfred’s masculinity as effeminate and he has to escape into his diaries fully to live his caring masculinity, suggesting that society does not easily accept a remodelling of masculinity. This is reflected in the narrative structure of the text, which makes

Alfred look a much less positive character than he actually is, and is dominated by Sally, who has certain expectations of masculinity in line with the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. The narrative technique works according to the principle put forward by Bourdieu, who argues that masculine domination acts like a symbolic machine ratifying its domination through communication and structures of thought.<sup>103</sup> He further argues that when the thought and perception of the dominated conform to these structures of thought, they acknowledge and submit to them.<sup>104</sup> In *Alles über Sally* the reader follows Sally's structures of thought and acquiesces in them, acquiring a biased image of Alfred as a negative character and a man who does not conform to the expectations of male domination.

There are a few passages in the novel which suggest that the remodelling of gender roles of Sally and Alfred is successful. Sally, for example, is impressed by the attention and care Alfred gives to her (*Sally* 171), and Alfred feels secure with and protected by Sally (*Sally* 187). She has successfully adopted the role of the protector, even though this was not in her nature: 'Sie war Alfred gegenüber so beschützerisch gewesen, und das keineswegs, weil sie von Natur aus beschützerisch war.' (*Sally* 26) In the last chapter Sally and Alfred get back together, emphasizing the notion that their reworking of gender roles was effective. This balance is also reflected in the narration: this chapter, contrary to the others, consists of dialogue between the two of them, with a more equal proportion of speaking time.

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<sup>103</sup> Bourdieu, pp. 12 and 22–23.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 27–28.



### 4.3 Conclusion

In Geiger's works masculinity is depicted as being in decline, whereas women are becoming stronger. This is reflected not only in their content, but also in their form. *Es geht uns gut*, for example, is part of a new kind of family story in which male and female perspectives are treated in an almost equal manner. Moreover it is a woman, not subsequent generations of men, who holds the narrative together. Gender subversion is here reflected in the subversion of literary genre. Geiger illustrates a development from the men of the older generation, such as Richard, who to a certain extent embody hegemonic masculinity, to a generation that exhibits increasing hegemonic subversion, like Philipp in *Es geht uns gut* and Alfred in *Alles über Sally*. Geiger describes a variety of masculinities and shows that Connell's sociological categories of men, as in any sociological category, are fluid. The following masculinities emerge in Geiger's texts: disintegrating hegemonic masculinity, helpless complicit masculinity, strategic passive masculinity and caring masculinity.

Richard is an example of disintegrating hegemonic masculinity. He tries to comply with hegemonic masculinity by dominating the female members of his family and by exercising political power in the public sphere. However, he progressively loses control of his wife and cannot assert his authority over his daughter, who has feminist ideals. In the end he also loses his political power.

Peter and Erik can be assigned to the category of helpless, complicit men. These men have the physical attributes of hegemonic masculinity. They are complicit in the sense that they leave all the household work to women so they can profit from the time off this gives them. However, the men do not benefit economically from this patriarchal dividend. They behave in a complicit manner because they are helpless, egoistic and lazy. Without a female accomplice, the system of complicit masculinity collapses. Geiger reveals that men in this category are weak.

Philipp embodies a strategic passive masculinity — strategic in the sense that it allows the man to remain in a comfort zone. A fragile male identity is inherent in this new category. While such men remain passive and non-assertive towards women, they continue to admire hegemonic masculinity. In their fantasy and imagination they become powerful men who are successful with women. Hegemonic masculinity is shown to be a self-gratifying illusion. There is a parallel here with the men in Kehlmann's works analysed previously, who escape into imagined worlds and fictitious spaces. As in *Ruhm*, hegemonic masculinity is only possible through media: its projection into fantasy spaces can be seen as a passive contestation of the erosion of gender roles following female emancipation. The paradigm of strategic passive masculinity can be construed as a tactic on the part of these men to protect themselves, a neurotic self-preservation strategy which does not force them to take up a position regarding the change in gender roles that has taken place and, on the contrary, displays a passive resistance. At the same time this strategy is linked to masochism, which points to the psychological violence these men inflict upon themselves.

Finally, Alfred embodies a caring masculinity which parallels the gentle masculinity observed in Rabinovici's works, without the Jewish context. He is a sensitive man who is well aware of and acknowledges his weaknesses, a loving father who tries to make his relationship with his wife work. Moreover, Alfred is capable of expressing his feelings. While he remains passive towards female empowerment, he is fascinated by it.

A striking common feature of most of the men in this analysis is that they remain childlike and irresponsible. This is an important parallel to many of Kehlmann and Rabinovici's male characters. That the male characters stay in a medial position between childhood and adulthood may point to the fact that they have missed their own empowerment. Men such as Philipp, who are faced with a choice about how they want to live, simply do not make that choice. Men like Alfred live their new masculinity almost completely in fictional spaces. The metaphor of remaining a child here suggests

that these men are still on their way to asserting and claiming their new roles and masculinities. At the same time the childlike behaviour of Philipp reflects the theory of Bourdieu: he plays games in order to become powerful, just as some of Kehlmann's and Rabinovici's male characters do. Alfred, instead, behaves as an adolescent because it allows him freedom.

Memory and dealing with the past are strongly gendered in *Es geht uns gut*. The male characters suppress, avoid and imagine the past. Women, on the contrary, are 'storekeepers of memory', they are able to remember and take a critical stance towards Austria's dealing with the past. Men distort history to achieve their goal of becoming powerful. The silence of Austrian public discourse regarding the Holocaust coincides with the silence of the male characters on changing gender roles. Geiger's *Es geht uns gut* and Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.* and *Andernorts* are all concerned with the Nazi past. These works make a more general statement about how Austrian public discourse handles the Nazi past: they illustrate that it was marked by trivialization, suppression and the covering-up of Austria's role during the Second World War. In *Es geht uns gut* the way in which the male characters face up to the memory of the Second World War parallels their reaction to female empowerment: they try to ignore it because they do not know how to deal with it. Women, in contrast, 'have history on their side' (see quote by Geiger in the beginning of this chapter). The form of the novel, however, makes the past come alive and gender equality a reality, showing that ignorance is not the solution: both the past and female empowerment are structurally there and cannot simply be brushed away.

Hirsch has argued that gender can act as a 'protective shield [...] that absorb[s] the shock, filter[s] and diffuse[s] the impact of trauma, diminish[es] harm'.<sup>105</sup> When Philipp recreates the past

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<sup>105</sup> Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', p. 125.

through invented stories he imagines strong father figures,<sup>106</sup> re-establishing the privileged position of masculinity. Postmemory here acts as a protective shield both against the reality of the past and against changing gender relations. In Geiger and Rabinovici's works, the past also has a crucial effect on the construction of masculinity. All the male characters of the third generation evidence masculinities subversive to hegemonic masculinity. However, they do not succeed in constructing a positive alternative male gender identity, which is hampered by the inability of the preceding generations to come to terms with the past and to talk openly about it with their sons. The non-communication between fathers and sons on the subject makes a good relationship between them impossible and prevents identification of the sons with their fathers.

Failed communication about the past and non-communication about feelings in general emerges as a male phenomenon in Geiger's work. It functions as a mechanism with which to protect the male characters from the painful past. This inability to communicate seems to be passed on from one male generation to the other. As the men from the third generation, such as Philipp, have no knowledge of the past they start to imagine it, reflecting postmemory theory. Geiger's answer to the question raised by Hirsch, as to whether postmemory not only affects the victims but also bystanders and perpetrators,<sup>107</sup> is affirmative. Philipp rejects the continuity of remembering inherent to family stories. The avoidance of dealing with the past is a defence mechanism: if Philipp engaged with the past, he would need to engage with himself. Not facing his family's history allows him to remain passive. This is an interesting parallel to the characters Dani and Ariele in Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.*, both of whom adopt a strategy of passivity in order to avoid a constructive engagement with themselves and their identities. The phenomenon of developing a

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<sup>106</sup> See also Reidy, p. 87.

<sup>107</sup> Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', p. 106.

fragile male identity because of the failed communication about the past emerges as an Austria-specific phenomenon.

In the view of women, masculinity is presented as something desirable in *Alles über Sally* because it means freedom. Sally has feminist ideas and exhibits masculine behaviour. While confirming the argument that masculinity is not necessarily linked to the female body, Sally does not create a masculinity of her own as Halberstam suggests. In line with Butler, Sally shows that she is able to perform the male gender. Sally reflects Sedgwick's theory of the orthogonality of gender in the sense that she has very feminine and very masculine characteristics at the same time. Despite her struggle for empowerment, Sally's views on gender remain traditional. The same can be observed in the character of Ingrid, albeit to a lesser degree. Sally takes a utilitarian view of masculinity: she behaves in a masculine way to become independent and to satisfy her sexual needs. This parallels the female characters who exhibit masculine traits in the works of Rabinovici analysed in Chapter Two. They have an instrumental attitude towards masculinity as well; however, they use it against violent men.

In *Alles über Sally* Geiger shows that both men and women have social expectations of masculinity and femininity. Sally is sexually attracted to men who correspond to the standard of hegemonic masculinity and devalues and feminizes men who display anti-hegemonic subversion. Reflecting the line of thought of Bourdieu, Geiger suggests that women can support male domination by recognizing and submitting to the structures of thought that sustain it. Going further than Bourdieu, Geiger shows that with Peter, the same can be said about men: they are hostage to the structures of thought of male domination too. The narrative technique of *Alles über Sally* is a perfect illustration of how Bourdieu's argument works: following the structures of thought of Sally, the reader acquires a negative and biased impression of Alfred because he does not conform to the principles of male domination. Women such as Sally in *Alles über Sally* or Johanna in *Es geht uns*

*gut* see as subordinate men who do not embody the standard of hegemonic masculinity and as such they become its accomplices. *Alles über Sally* here illustrates that not only men support the patriarchal system but women too, as they can legitimize what is masculine and what is not.

Returning to the opening question of this chapter, changes in female gender roles and an increase in opportunities for women do not necessarily go hand in hand with positive changes in male roles and behaviour. In the case of Philipp in *Es geht uns gut* they lead to the opposite. The following quotation by Geiger is quite revealing in this regard:

Ich bin glücklich, dass ich 1968 geboren bin und dass ich meine Beziehungen so führe, wie ich es will, ohne jegliche Zwänge, in irgendwelchen Bereichen mehr Verantwortung zu übernehmen als mein Partner nur deswegen, weil ich vielleicht glaubte, es habe konventioneller Weise so zu sein.<sup>108</sup>

Men like Peter and Philipp react to female empowerment with irresponsibility. They do what they want, reject any constraints it imposes and refuse to take on more responsibility towards their partner and family.

The crisis of masculinity amplified by female empowerment does not lead to a change in masculinity in *Es geht uns gut*. Instead the characters attempt to restore hegemonic masculinity. However, as in Kehlmann's works, they only succeed in doing so in their fantasies. Hegemonic masculinity, which has become less acceptable in society, turns into a mere fantasy in the minds of men. Philipp's strategic passive masculinity can, at the same time, be read in line with Demetriou's argument that hegemonic masculinity can adapt to different historical contexts. Philipp's masculinity, which seems to be anti-hegemonic, is in reality an instrument of resistance and backwardness. For Alfred in *Alles über Sally* there is at least partial empowerment: he could be entirely empowered if society would embrace his caring masculinity. However, Alfred's example

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<sup>108</sup> Prangel, 'Komplexer als ein Wirtshaus'.

shows that there is potential for men to develop an alternative positive masculinity. As the male characters in Kehlmann's and Rabinovici's works, Philipp and Alfred react with a strategy of evasion: Alfred flees into his diaries to fulfil fully his gentle and soft side and Philipp enters the fantasy world of stories and invented photographs to live up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 General research findings

In the quest for a positive alternative male gender identity (anti-hegemonic masculinity), my thesis has analysed the construction of masculinities in selected novels by three German-language authors who were born or live in Austria: Daniel Kehlmann, Doron Rabinovici and Arno Geiger. This final chapter will present my main research findings, draw together the common themes in these works and thereby identify general trends in the presentation of masculinity in contemporary German-language literature. Thereafter I will set forth the implications of the findings for gender theory and briefly discuss literature as a theatre for gender fantasy; these findings will then be placed in relation to previous research on masculinity in German-language literature. The main conclusion of my research is that, although there have been debates on the construction and deconstruction of masculinities since the late 1960s, these three authors offer few positive images of alternative masculinities. They explore a wide spectrum of masculinities in which anti-hegemonic subversion plays an important role; however, the concept of hegemonic masculinity remains a powerful ideal against which masculinity is measured and from which men continue to profit. The texts studied reveal a gap between the ideal of hegemonic masculinity and reality. To bridge this gap, the men in these novels adopt two patterns of strategic evasion: evasion to hide their softer and gentler side, which is traditionally perceived as female, and escape into a world of fantasy where men can pretend to live up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

The degree of anti-hegemonic subversion varies from author to author. Kehlmann affirms gender stereotypes; while Rabinovici discusses gender implicitly, there is a conscious gender



discussion in Geiger, who pushes anti-hegemonic subversion the furthest.

Kehlmann shows that hegemonic masculinity is a virtual concept that has powerful consequences for reality. Creating a general atmosphere of inauthenticity, ambiguity and equivocation, he reveals that gender is a social construct and hegemonic masculinity a fiction — a masculine ideal which is resistant both to historical and social change. It emerges on the one hand as a constraint which demands sacrifices and on the other as a means to provide gratification through fantasy. The artificial concept of hegemonic masculinity becomes a reality for the male characters because they accept it as the standard for their own behaviour and because social technologies repeat this fantasy time and time again. Despite Kehlmann's experimental narrative technique, no experimental masculinity is developed; instead he reaffirms the link between masculinity and privilege.

Rabinovici's novels are set in the Jewish-Austrian milieu and focus on Jewish men. He does not make any generalization about Jewish masculinity, but rather shows a variety of constructions of masculinity. Both the second and third generation (counting from the Shoah) of Jewish men try to live up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, but fail to do so. Third-generation Jewish men develop a fragile male identity and weak masculinity as a result of the non-communication of their parents about their experiences during the Holocaust. Both second- and third-generation Jewish men switch identities frequently, which underlines their vulnerable male identity. Some of the men of the second generation stand as examples of a positive masculinity, reflecting the theory of a 'gentle' Jewish masculinity. Women are presented as being able to exercise masculinity, yet at the same time are shown to be entirely different from men — they are portrayed as saviour figures who make the existence of the male characters possible.

In Geiger's literary works masculinity is depicted as being on the decline. He indicates a development from the men of the older generation, who embody hegemonic masculinity, to a

generation that demonstrates increasing subversion of hegemonic models. Four forms of masculinity emerge in his texts: disintegrating hegemonic masculinity, helpless complicit masculinity, strategic passive masculinity and caring masculinity. The first category consists of male characters who behave according to the standards of hegemonic masculinity but progressively lose their power and influence. Men of the second group are complicit in hegemonic masculinity because they do not know how to react to female empowerment and want to keep their privileges. The third category represents male characters who adopt a passive stance towards female empowerment, thereby resisting it; they exhibit childlike characteristics and have a fragile male gender identity. The last group comprises men who are able to embody a gentle, caring and emotionally literate masculinity. Men in the second and third categories do not accept any responsibilities and reject any constraints on their freedom as men; moreover, they project their hegemonic masculinity into fantasy spaces. As hegemonic masculinity has become less acceptable in society, it turns into mere fantasy. Often women are depicted as being able to appropriate spaces traditionally attributed to men.

## 5.2 Common themes and trends

My analysis of masculinity in the texts has uncovered the following common themes: gendered memory, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and history; men who behave like children; violence as a restorative force; ageing men; women imitating men, and subversion in gender and genre. Some of the themes and trends emerge as Austria-specific.

### *Austria-specific trends*

In the works analysed the presentation of memory, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and history is gendered. An intriguing and consistent finding is that the masculine identity of the male offspring is

affected by the silence of the parents about their experiences during the Holocaust. Memory and masculinity are shown to influence each other, and memory emerges as a distinctive component in the construction of masculine identity.

The novels of Rabinovici and Geiger form part of the current trend of German-language literature which focuses on the third generation after the Holocaust. In their works, coming to terms with and talking about the traumatizing experience of the Holocaust is presented as a painful process for the male characters of the second generation; they are unable to pass on to their sons the traditional role of men in Jewish culture, and this has a devastating effect on the next male generation's ability to develop a stable identity and construction of masculinity. The relationship between father and son is shown to be very important: non-communication between fathers and sons about the past renders a good connection between them impossible and prevents the identification of the sons with their fathers. The concealment of the past coincides with failed fatherhood. Consequently, all male characters of the third generation develop weak masculinities and fragile male gender identities that are subversive of hegemonic masculinity. Interestingly, the Jewish male characters who have a strong memory of the Holocaust or are able to distance themselves from it have a positive alternative male gender identity; this seems to suggest that you can only develop a stable identity if you have come to terms with your past.

Looking at the second perpetrator generation, the father-son relationship shows a similar trend. There is a lack of communication in general, but especially about their Nazi past. This inability to converse is linked to their own masculinity. On the one hand, many of the father figures are unable to display or engage with their emotions; there is an odd absence of male friendship or bonding in general in the works examined. Relationships between men and women, when they exist, are reduced to sexuality and pragmatic necessity. Because of their emotional shortcomings, the fathers are incapable of talking about their traumatic experiences in the past. On the other hand — and this

is also true of the Jewish male characters — they put on a mask of masculinity to shield themselves from the shock of the past and to hide their female side. Likewise, postmemory acts as a protective shield for the Jewish characters: inventing stories saves them from being reminded of their emasculating experiences under the Nazi regime. Concealment of the past becomes a way of maintaining their masculine integrity. Finally, several third-generation men, both Jewish and non-Jewish, remain childless, some only able to become fathers in their imagination. If they do have children, they behave towards them in the same manner as their fathers did to them — with suppression of the past and emotional withdrawal. These characteristics emerge as a male phenomenon that is passed on from one generation to the other.

As third-generation men are not given any knowledge of their families' past by their parents, they start to imagine it, which is reflective of postmemory theory. The third-generation Jewish male characters, for example, are haunted by the void of the past and actively search for information about it and start to fantasize, pushing the concept of postmemory even further in the sense that they embody the past and bring it to life. The third generation of perpetrators, by contrast, avoid dealing with the past altogether: instead of facing the reality of their fathers' involvement with the Nazis they invent stories about it — a defence mechanism. Dealing with the past for all third-generation men would mean engaging with oneself; not doing so is comfortable and allows them to remain disengaged. The phenomenon of developing a fragile male identity due to failed communication about the past becomes Austria-specific.

In Rabinovici's novels the female characters, as with the males, avoid communication about the past. They refuse to talk to their sons about the trauma they experienced, in order to protect them. In Geiger's work, however, we can see the female characters, in contrast to the males, coming

to terms with the past and history. Women are presented as ‘storekeepers of memory’<sup>1</sup> who remember the unpleasant parts of Austrian history and talk about historic events, reflecting Assmann’s theory on gender and memory. Further developing her theory, Geiger shows in *Es geht uns gut* that first-generation men (they and their children experienced the Holocaust) forget about their implication in the Nazi past, which could be a threat to their present and future prospects. At the same time they wish to be remembered by entering the cultural memory of the country. Notably, here memory becomes a tool for extending masculine power.

The novels dealing with the past in relation to the Holocaust necessarily engage in political thought. Some of them shed light on Austria’s approach to its past: Rabinovici’s and Geiger’s reveal that Austria’s implication in the Holocaust was trivialized, suppressed and covered up. In Geiger’s novel this is conveyed through the metaphor of dementia — the ‘forgetting’ of the past — and in both authors’ novels the childlike behaviour of the male characters stands for the avoidance of taking responsibility. Rabinovici shows that both perpetrators and victims have actively repressed the painful history of the country, and his novels can be interpreted as a plea for active remembering. Through their literary work, Rabinovici and Geiger are engaged in exposing Austria’s implication in the Holocaust and adjusting the official discourse on it. A compelling finding is that in Geiger’s works, the silence of Austria’s public discourse about the Nazi past coincides with that of the male characters about changing gender roles: the irresponsibility of the previous male generation is extended to that of male characters in the present.

### ***General trends***

The novels studied reveal that the process of memorialization includes forgetting, distortion and

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<sup>1</sup> Jansen, p. 35.

recreation — it creates a future vision of the past: ‘Wie es gewesen sein wird’.<sup>2</sup> Imagination is at the core of Kehlmann’s work: he visualizes the past of historical figures and creates a ‘Gegenwartsroman, der in der Vergangenheit spielt’.<sup>3</sup> This points to the general issue of the presentation of history: historians can never portray the past exactly as it was. When people read history books and try to reconstruct how their ancestors lived, they necessarily use their imagination. Being conscious of the element of imagination, all three novelists are engaged in making history come alive in order to convey aspects of it which historians cannot.

Interestingly, several of the works analysed also convey a history of gender and of change in gender roles. Kehlmann’s *Die Vermessung der Welt*, for example, presents discourse on nineteenth-century masculinities. In Rabinovici and Geiger’s works, dealing with the past goes hand in hand with a general trend of loss of masculine strength from one generation to the next.<sup>4</sup> These works also reflect on the coincident rise of female empowerment. From generation to generation the male characters lose more and more control over women; masculinity is depicted as being on the decline, whereas women seem to become stronger. The metaphor of history is used on another level in relation to gender change: *Es geht uns gut* moves from men who embodied history, such as Richard, to men who are forced into history, such as Phillip. In Geiger’s *Es geht uns gut* ignorance about the past among the male characters coincides with the unawareness of change in gender roles. This same disregard can be seen in *Die Vermessung der Welt*, in which, as a contemporary novel, characters should be aware of female empowerment but are not.

A striking feature common to many of the male characters in the works of the three authors

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<sup>2</sup> Rabinovici, ‘Wie es war’.

<sup>3</sup> Kehlmann and Kleinschmidt, pp. 66–67.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Gratzke argues ‘that a cultural re-evaluation of victimhood in recent German-language literature runs in parallel to the creation of male characters who fail to meet social and familial expectations’. (Gratzke, ‘Mulle männer’, p. 98.

analysed is that they remain childlike and irresponsible. Some of them develop what can be called a 'strategic passive masculinity'. The third-generation male Jewish characters act like children in response to their parents' high expectations of them, their strategy of exorcizing their own feelings of guilt via their children and their wish to protect them from the past. While switching identities was a question of survival for the second-generation Jewish male characters, it becomes a symbol of being uprooted and immature for the third generation, who — like non-Jewish male characters — play identity games and develop fragile male personae. The male characters are able to switch identity using media and technology; they pretend to be someone else and try to live an alternative life, seeking fame and some sort of recognition — a quest which is in general presented as a childish desire. The identity games played by the Jewish men are extended to real life in order to gain power.

The readiness to switch identity suggests that the male characters feel dissatisfaction and uneasiness about their life and who they are; it allows them to disengage from any responsibility in the real world. That the male characters remain in an intermediate position between childhood and adulthood may point to the fact that they have missed their own emancipation; it indicates a general immaturity and can be read as a metaphor that they are still on their way to asserting their new roles as men. Interestingly, many of the male characters who exhibit childlike qualities have an empowered female partner. Instead of finding an alternative male gender identity, they create a strategic passive masculinity which can be seen as indirect resistance towards the change in gender roles that has taken place. Resorting to masochism is part of the concept of strategic passive masculinity. Masochism is expressed in many forms in the novels examined, which contain a vast range of *Schmerzensämmen*; for them, masochism is both a neurotic self-preservation strategy and a means of disengagement.

The gap between the ideal of hegemonic masculinity and its lived experience, as well as the

challenge to patriarchy from forces such as female empowerment, provokes a violent reaction in the male characters — a violence which they turn both on others and, more prominently, on themselves. In *Die Vermessung der Welt* the male characters react with extreme violence towards their family members or themselves when trying to correspond with the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, and in so doing gain authority. In Rabinovici's works the traumatic past leads the male characters to self-violence; some of them thus 'become men' and gain power. While self-violence is physical and psychological in Rabinovici's texts, it remains mostly psychological in Geiger's. Both authors link self-violence with masochism. The texts confirm that violence is a strategy for men to express and validate masculinity.<sup>5</sup> However, male self-violence can be read as a reaction to a changing social world which is less and less tolerant of violence towards others.

My research has shown that the representation of masculinity is also connected with ageing. The second-generation Jewish men engage actively with the topic of ageing and death; having survived the Holocaust, they feel invincible and reject the thought of dying because of old age or illness. In the works where masculinity is based on spirit and achievement, ageing is depicted as tragic and even ridiculous; it coincides with the loss of intellectual power and fame. The male characters who are strongly associated with hegemonic masculinity tend to get aggressive when they are not able to live up to their masculine standards because of advancing age. However, some of the characters who exercise hegemonic subversion acquire more feminine traits with age and become more caring. The concept of hegemonic masculinity, which is based on domination over women and other men, seems to be especially vulnerable to the process of ageing; it is thus not a stable construct and can be undermined by advancing age, despite the attempts of the characters to fight this.

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<sup>5</sup> DeKerseredy and Schwartz, p. 362.



While several of the women in the works analysed are subject to male power, many others are able to behave in a manner traditionally attributed to men. Some of them, such as Sally in *Alles über Sally*, are capable of combining very masculine and very feminine traits. The female characters are able to embody masculinity because of the fragile masculine gender identity of the male characters, which leaves a void that they can fill. Women, however, do not seem to develop a masculinity of their own, or a masculinity which is not based on the exercise of power — that is to say, a female masculinity. Just like men, they reproduce conventional masculine behaviour. They adopt a utilitarian approach to masculinity, using it to achieve their own aims. As such, the female characters become accomplices of the patriarchal system under which they themselves suffer. Interestingly, some female characters dress up as men when they want to incarnate hegemonic masculinity, implying that this standard of masculinity remains associated with the male body, which contradicts the earlier finding. This could suggest that women attempt to exercise power either through masculine behaviour or by resembling men physically. In Rabinovici's novels women are shown to be entirely distinct from men; at the same time they can save men and ground their existence. Likewise, in Kehlmann's and Geiger's works men need to be nursed by their wives. It is implied that men can only build a stable male identity with the help of women and that on their own they are unable to reform the construction of masculinity. The texts also suggest that women have their share of responsibility in the social construction of gender. While they reject certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity, they are not attracted to men who are too fragile or too soft; they subordinate them and as such become accomplices of hegemonic masculinity. This raises the question of how far one can push the construction of masculinity and points to the dilemma of modern men: When does a man remain a man and is still perceived by women as such?

Several of the works analysed reflect gender subversion in their literary form. Rabinovici, for example, develops an inversion of the literary genre of *Elternliteratur*, which deals with the

perpetrators of the Holocaust and transfers the discourse on guilt from the social to the private sphere. Rabinovici's *Elternliteratur* focuses on the victims and makes public the family conflict concerning the silence about the past. In contrast to the strongly male-gendered form of *Väterliteratur*, *Elternliteratur* stresses the importance of both parents for *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The fragmented form of *Suche nach M.* also stands in contrast to the male-gendered tradition of family stories, which are characterized by continuity. Both *Suche nach M.* and *Ohnehin* are critiques of family stories, which distort the past and prevent engagement with the present. *Elternliteratur* clearly demonstrates the consequences of the past for the present, as well as the need to engage with the past in order to develop a stable masculine identity. Rabinovici's *Elternliteratur* goes beyond its conventional form to become a genre that allows a critique of how both the perpetrator and the victim generations deal with the Nazi past.

Subversion of this genre is also at work in Geiger's *Es geht uns gut*. Family stories are usually held together through the line of three male generations. Here it is a woman who is the custodian of the family past, with male and female characters as narrators on an almost equal footing; Geiger thus provides an alternative narration of masculinity. In Kehlmann's *Vermessung der Welt* and *Ruhm* irony infuses the narration, thereby questioning the authenticity of the texts. Several male characters rewrite the story to positively reflect their masculinity. In *Ruhm* the self-reflexivity and different levels of fiction reveal how women are subject to male power. The narrative technique — the visibility of the male author — exposes the principle of hegemonic masculinity as an ideal which needs to be artificially sustained and constantly reinforced. Men in Kehlmann's works make themselves manlier than they are, by showing off; for example, Kehlmann's narration in *Ruhm* is essentially a performance of its own virtuosity. Kehlmann deconstructs gender through the use of irony, by questioning it without offering an alternative, and in so doing gives the structures of hegemonic masculinity yet another viewing. There is no disruption of traditional images of male

and female. The narrative of Geiger's *Alles über Sally* illustrates how male domination influences our ways of thinking: as we follow the perspective and thought processes of the main female character, we are pushed into a negative perception of the main male character as he does not conform to the principles of male domination. It has been argued that aesthetic qualities can be complicit in ideologies;<sup>6</sup> some of the texts studied here support this theory. The works examined expose mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity, male domination and female suppression and female emancipation, and make an attempt at gender equality in their form and narrative technique.

### 5.3 Implications for gender theory

Theoretical approaches to gender, as in any sphere, have their limits and need to be examined critically. My research project has, in the Introduction and throughout the analysis of the literary texts, suggested proposals to adjust and complement critical theory, thereby making a contribution to the development of studies on masculinities.

This thesis has by and large relied on the concept of hegemonic masculinity, in which the plurality of masculinities is inherent. The analysis has shown that the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in literary studies makes it possible to analyse the (power) relations between male and female characters as well as between male characters. Moreover, it allows for reflection on the impact of social change on the hierarchy of gender relations. When working with the concept of hegemonic masculinity, there is certainly a risk of analysing gender in the framework of power relations only. The concept is indeed constructed within the logic of a gender constellation which is

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<sup>6</sup> Federico. Kindle Cloud Reader.

patriarchal. Masculinity is, of course, not just differentiated by power relations.<sup>7</sup> Therefore the analysis of masculinity cannot rely on this approach alone.

Connell's categorization of men has proved to be helpful in providing orientation but, given the plurality of masculinities, it is no surprise that it was not possible neatly to assign every male character to one of Connell's sociological categories. Indeed, this study confirms that Connell's categories should not be interpreted as being comprehensive. Connell's category of men who sympathize with the feminist movement have features in common with some of the characters in the literary works analysed; however, these men neither engage actively in supporting female empowerment, nor do they construct a positive alternative male gender identity. Rather, they seem to retract and become passive because they are helpless; the markers of passivity and helplessness have been further developed in my thesis with the introduction of categories of helpless complicit men and strategic passive masculinity.

Based on Kimmel, Savran and Nye, this study has shown that some male characters resist gender equality, supporting with literary analysis the view that female empowerment can be obstructed through violence by men — violence which acts as a means of regaining control. We have seen how, in the texts examined, men turn violent towards others as well as themselves, the latter reflecting the theory of masochism as a male strategy with which to maintain power in the light of female emancipation. Masochism, which is part of strategic passive masculinity, is shown to be a narcissistic act of self-preservation.

Connell's category of 'marginalized masculinities' was useful in providing a framework for the study of the Jewish-Austrian and Turkish-Austrian characters in the texts. The analysis of the latter

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<sup>7</sup> Carrigan, Connel and Lee, p. 112.

has shown that Connell has not only neglected the geographical interplay of masculinities, but also the interplay between the concepts of masculinity of the country of origin and those of the new homeland of immigrant men. Jewish masculinity can be seen as marginalized and subordinated; here, however, it has been more prominently discussed as an anti-hegemonic masculinity in the positive sense, as a 'gentle' masculinity, a concept which it has also been possible to apply to non-Jewish men who emerged as caring men.

Rabinovici's texts are reflective of theory on Jewish masculinity, which argues that Jewish male gender identity is shaped by the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust. He goes beyond this argument, showing that the trauma is passed on to the third generation, which has not witnessed the Nazi crimes.

In supplementing the theory of hegemonic masculinity, Demetriou's idea that there is a 'hegemonic masculine block' and that masculinity is hybrid was helpful; the group of men in the novels who adopt a strategic passive masculinity can be interpreted in this light. It shows on the one hand that hegemonic masculinity allows for a certain degree of contradiction and otherness; on the other hand their passive behaviour and admiration of hegemonic masculinity can be seen as passive resistance to female empowerment and as a strategy to preserve hegemonic masculinity. We have also seen above that the concept of hegemonic masculinity neglects the personal experience of men in the construction of their masculinity; there is in fact variation in masculinity which has its source in individual experience.<sup>8</sup> The past, family history and its communication or non-communication, this study has argued, are essential to this individual experience.

My thesis has shown that hegemonic masculinity is not only an attractive model for men

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

because of the economic and social advantages that come with it, but also because they get a certain gratification out of it. We have seen how men have a desire to be admired by others, especially other men, and how they derive satisfaction from living their hegemonic masculinities in fantasy spaces — fantasies which have an impact on women, but also on the men themselves in their real lives. None of the male characters are able to embody hegemonic masculinity entirely — the concept is shown to be virtual, only fully achievable through media and fantasy, in books, chatrooms, text messages and photographs. We can therefore speak about a ‘virtual hegemonic masculinity’, created through media and communications technology. Gender is not only a product of several social technologies,<sup>9</sup> it also needs to be repeated over and over again through social media and technology. Even though nobody can comply with it, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is a powerful and accepted measure of masculinity for both men and women, and as such has strong implications for reality.

Bourdieu’s concept of ‘masculine domination’ has helped in the analysis of masculinities portrayed in the novels because, in addition to economic and social aspects, it stresses the power of thought produced by male domination and its effects. Both the behaviour of the characters and the form of the texts examined have supported Bourdieu’s claim that masculine domination is a powerful mechanism that produces symbols and structures of thought which have an effect on women, often making them unconsciously complicit in sustaining male domination. In addition, it has been shown above that this claim can be extended to men: they are, as much as women, hostage to the structures of thought of the dominators and as such become subconsciously complicit as well. Bourdieu’s argument that men are children playing men was helpful in analysing the phenomenon of childlike behaviour in men. While, in line with Bourdieu, the male characters are children who

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<sup>9</sup> De Lauretis, p. 2.

play men to obtain power in society, they also do so by refusing all responsibility and constraints.

The texts I have studied here are reflective of Butler's theory of gender performance, illustrating that there is no intrinsic essence to masculinity and no original form of it. Seeing masculinity as a social construct and a performance implies that masculinity can be reworked and is open to change. The texts have only partly supported this hypothesis.

The concept of masculinity as a masquerade has proved to be useful in exploring the conflict between a socially enforced ideal of masculinity and personal experience. In some of the texts masculinity has emerged as a mask with which to hide the female side of male characters. The concept of masquerade has at the same time helped to show that masculinity can be a constraint for the emotional development and self-expression of the characters. Hegemonic masculinity, moreover, can act as a protective shield with which to protect the self and others. This study has shown a reciprocal link between postmemory theory and masculinity as a mask: men put on a mask of masculinity to protect themselves from the shock of the past. Postmemory acts as a protective shield for the masculine integrity of the characters.

Bourdieu raises the question of women as agents in gender configurations. When revisiting her study *Masculinities*, Connell found that she had underplayed the role of women in the construction of masculinities. My thesis has shown that women are actively engaged in the evolution of masculinities. Following Butler's theory on performance, masculinity is not necessarily linked to the male body; consequently, both men and women should be able to display it. I have, therefore, also examined the masculinity produced by women. While Halberstam has argued that transgender men or women with a same-sex desire are able to form a masculinity of their own, my thesis has examined the possibility that heterosexual women can also create their own female masculinity. Halberstam's concept is very appealing, as it seems to suggest that innovation in masculinity comes from women, whereas men only reproduce a traditional masculinity. It suggests that there are

alternative models of gender variation in which masculinity is not necessarily equated with power.<sup>10</sup> However, the texts studied here have not revealed evidence of an innovative female masculinity; rather, women replicate masculinity in a traditional sense, which could lead us to conclude that the concept of female masculinity cannot be applied to heterosexual women. At the same time, this analysis should reflect critically on the claim that reactions to female masculinity are always, in one way or another, related to male masculinity.<sup>11</sup> Maybe these modes of thinking have prevented the authors from going any further? While Connell identifies ‘complicit men’ as one category of males, the literary texts suggest that the same category exists for women: they can become accomplices in hegemonic masculinity, which they use as an instrument with which to achieve their goals, just as some men do.

One of the novels, *Die Vermessung der Welt*, which is set in the nineteenth century, was read as a *Gegenwartsroman*. It reflects both modern gender theory and the concepts of masculinity of its time, suggesting on the one hand that the theories of the nineteenth century do not suffice to explain the phenomenon of masculinities, on the other that the concepts of the past may have relevance for interpreting constructions of masculinities today — including the concept of renunciation. It can explain masculinity as a constraint that asks the individual to make sacrifices.

## 5.4 Literature as a theatre for gender fantasy

A survey conducted by a popular German men’s magazine revealed that 75 per cent of men watch

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<sup>10</sup> Halberstam, pp. 28–29.

<sup>11</sup> Reeser, p. 134.



action movies when they go to the cinema.<sup>12</sup> Research has shown that men feel confirmed in their dominant behaviour when viewing these films,<sup>13</sup> which seem to cater to narcissistic male fantasies. The same may be true of literature, one of whose core functions is to entertain and provide enjoyment for the reader. Longinus judged that literature is of good quality when the reader feels taken away by it. He argued: 'It is natural in us to feel our souls lifted up by the true Sublime, and, conceiving a sort of generous exultation, to be filled with joy and pride, as though we had ourselves originated the ideas which we read.'<sup>14</sup> Thanks to their superior powers in *Suche nach M.*, Ariele becomes a secret agent and Danny turns into Mullemann, a figure feared by the whole of society. The male characters in *Ruhm* are able to become manlier through the help of media. Reading these texts, the male reader may indulge in fantasies of becoming someone else. He may be reassured of the power of masculinity, and consequently of his own power. He may well enjoy the scene in *Es geht uns gut* where Philipp sits astride the roof and is about to take off into an imaginary world of wish fulfilment — a magic moment of the 'true Sublime' for the male reader, one of euphoria which regenerates the idea of masculine strength with which he would like to identify. My research project has also revealed that men obtain a certain amount of gratification through fantasy in relation to hegemonic masculinity; the male reader may feel this when reading the texts analysed. Kehlmann has argued that *Die Vermessung der Welt* attracts more male readers than other books because science is a male topic, and because the novel deals with adventure, travelling and

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<sup>12</sup> 'Actionfilme' 1 June 2012 <<http://www.menshealth.de/themen/actionfilme.213051.html>> 1 June 2012 [accessed 15 January 2016].

<sup>13</sup> 'Action und Romantik: Warum Männer Männerfilme lieben', *Der Spiegel*, 22 July 2004 <<http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/action-und-romantik-warum-maenner-maennerfilme-lieben-a-309942.html>> [accessed 15 January 2016].

<sup>14</sup> Longinus, 'On the Sublime', in *Canonical Texts of English Literary Criticism*, ed. by Kapil Kapoor and Ranga Kapoor (Dehli: Academic Foundation, 1995), pp. 114–23 (p. 115).

mountain-climbing.<sup>15</sup> As a *Gegenwartsroman* set in the past, *Die Vermessung der Welt* allows for a lot of imagination. Its success with the male reader may derive from the fact that it permits him to escape to the adventurous world of South and North America, in which men can dwell on fantasies of male strength. Moreover it is set at a time of polarization of the male and female, assigning clear characteristics to each.<sup>16</sup> The ‘Gegenwartsbezug’ (relation to the present) of the novel is here formed by the convergence of the content of the novel and the imaginary world of the contemporary male reader and his longing for stable gender categories.

Literature not only reflects discourses on masculinities; it also creates virtual masculinities; it can reinforce or change our perception of reality. As a space for imagination, it can provide alternative masculinities. By the same token it can also create masculinities that are close to the hegemonic ideal. In fact, the escapist fantasies of the male characters in the works analysed function as a virtual reproduction of male strength. Literary texts can simultaneously be the arena for gender critique and gender fantasy; they can criticize traditional images of men and at the same time uphold them. The texts examined here have shown that gender fantasy can be both complicit in and critical of hegemonic masculinity because literature by its very nature allows for contradiction — the same contradiction and ambiguity men may feel about masculinity. In a context in which hegemonic masculinity is challenged and has become socially unacceptable, literature which simultaneously criticizes and presents fantasies of hegemonic masculinity may be comforting and enjoyable for the male reader. As such it provides a space for ambiguity and evasion.

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<sup>15</sup> Felicitas von Lovenberg, ‘Ich wollte schreiben wie ein verrückt gewordener Historiker’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 February 2006 <<http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/bucherfolg-ich-wollte-schreiben-wie-ein-verrueckt-gewordener-historiker-1304944.html>> [accessed 15 January 2016].

<sup>16</sup> Tholen, ‘Deutschsprachige Literatur’, p. 274.

## 5.5 Research context

The scope of my research project has the caveat of having been limited in the number of authors and works by each author analysed. Several of Geiger's and Kehlmann's earlier novels could have been included, had time and space allowed. Examining Kehlmann's latest work *F* (2013) would also have been fruitful, especially as it deals prominently with male homosexuality — a topic that is neglected or sidelined in most of the works studied here. Many non-fiction texts by Rabinovici could also have been consulted in order to explore connections with his literary texts more deeply. All three authors still leave great potential for the analysis of the literary presentation of masculinities. While academic articles on the works of Geiger and Kehlmann were sparse at the beginning of my research project, therefore limiting most secondary resources to reviews and newspaper articles, academic work on the authors has increased over the past six years. Secondary material on coming to terms with the past as reflected in Austrian literature has become vast, and it has only been possible to explore some of it for this thesis.

Despite these limitations, my research has produced findings which are valuable and relevant to current scholarship in the fields of literature and gender theory. Throughout the preceding chapters, these findings have been constantly linked to current research on gender and related fields, such as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, memory, fatherhood and ageing. The methodology of combining gender theory with close reading and reference to secondary sources, such as newspaper interviews with the authors as well as their non-fiction texts, has proved to be a fruitful approach for the analysis of the presentation of masculinities in fiction. However, working closely with the text has left less space for a sustained discussion of the critical theories. In my examination of the theory of hegemonic masculinities, I have resorted to other critical theory in an attempt to counterbalance the risk of analysing masculinities solely in the context of power relationships and domination;

however, the impact of this approach has remained somewhat preponderant. Using the concept of female masculinity has been useful, as it has allowed for the examination of masculinity disassociated with the male body. While this study has taken classifications of difference such as age and ethnicity into account, there was less space to discuss other categories, such as social class, thoroughly.

Gender and masculinity in some of the works by Geiger and Rabinovici have been previously analysed by academics, especially in the context of family stories. Academic work on masculinity in Kehlmann's novels, on the other hand, is near-absent. The main contribution of my research has been to make a first attempt to analyse the presentation of masculinity in some of Kehlmann's works and to expand the research on masculinity to other works by Geiger and Rabinovici, providing a more systematic account of its representation.

The main findings of my research follow Stefan Krammer's analysis of masculinity in Austrian literature of the 1980s and 1990s, in the sense that men remain tied to the concept of hegemonic masculinity and that they use violence towards others but also themselves to restore their power.<sup>17</sup> Looking at constructions of masculinity in German-language literature of the twenty-first century, Tholen identifies a new category of men, new fathers, who question the traditional view of fatherhood and are open to sharing family work between the genders. While Alfred in *Alles über Sally* can be assigned to this new category, my research has not confirmed it as a general trend. In German-language literature the construction of father figures is much more mixed. Caring fathers are the exception in the texts analysed; the theme of failed fatherhood emerges: fathers are unable to communicate with their sons, neglect their children or simply renounce fatherhood altogether.

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<sup>17</sup> Krammer, 'Polymorphe Herrlichkeit am Beispiel österreichischer Literatur der 1980er und 1990er Jahre', pp. 278–79.

Analysing German-language authors, Fuchs concludes that generational discourse goes hand in hand with that on gender, a trend confirmed in this study.<sup>18</sup> Walter Erhart found that family stories which appeared before 2000 often show weak male characters, while women come across as strong,<sup>19</sup> a tendency which, I suggest here, continues after 2000. When discussing literature in the light of postmemory theory, Hirsch has found that gender and the images that mediate it have a safeguarding function: they protect from the shock and trauma of the past.<sup>20</sup> My thesis has confirmed a link between postmemory and gender. The imaginative investment of men in the past acts as a defensive shield to the reality of the past and changing gender relations, as well as to the integrity of male identity. A significant outcome of my research has been the cause-and-effect relationship between the process of coming to terms with the past and the development of fragile male gender identities, as well as the link between gender and genre subversion in family stories, a current area of research interest. As such, this study has further developed research by Bitter, Gratzke, Fleig, Mattson and O'Driscoll on gender related to dealing with the past in the works of Rabinovici and Geiger. It has broadened the analysis of masculinity in the works of Rabinovici and Geiger and has suggested that Rabinovici creates an expanded literary genre to deal with the past, *Elternliteratur*.

Another significant outcome of my research is that literary texts can make a valid contribution to the discussion on gender theory; they are shown to reflect modern gender theory, but also illustrate the point that gender theory cannot encompass the full complexity of masculinities.

Examining the concept of masculinity in Kehlmann's work has proved to be a fruitful method for the interpretation of his texts. In a highly self-reflective manner, the novel *Ruhm* confirms

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<sup>18</sup> Fuchs, *Phantoms of War*.

<sup>19</sup> Erhart, *Familienmänner*, p. 406.

<sup>20</sup> Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', p. 125.

Erhart's argument that masculinity is a fictitious construct.<sup>21</sup>

My study has shown that masculinity is a thematic concern for Kehlmann, Rabinovici and Geiger and that they consciously engage with gender. It is clear that much more work remains to be done on this subject; the analysis of masculinities above needs to be broadened out to encompass works by the authors for which there was insufficient space here. In order to provide a more systematic analysis of a general trend in the construction of masculinities in current German-language literature, the range of authors studied should be significantly enlarged. Young Austrian authors such as Clemens Setz offer great potential for further research on masculinities.

Butler noted: 'Fantasy is not the opposite of reality; it is what reality forecloses, and, as a result, it defines the limits of reality, constituting it as its constitutive outside.'<sup>22</sup> If this is the case, then the fantasy of the male authors analysed here offers little hope for a radical change of masculinities in reality. It would therefore be interesting to include female authors in such a research project to see if their (de-)construction of masculinity is more radical. My research project has raised several important larger questions that require further attention: Why do men remember and deal with the past differently from women? What does it mean for the project of female empowerment that men react with a strategy of passivity and that some women are complicit in hegemonic masculinity? Does research that draws on the concept of hegemonic masculinity recreate the very structures it tries to explore critically? Likewise, do the authors give hegemonic masculinity a last viewing by showing it as a fantasy and disintegrating concept and thereby contribute to sustaining it? How far can the construction of masculinity be pushed and still speak about masculinity? Overall, this study suggests that a more extensive analysis of the construction of

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<sup>21</sup> Erhart, 'Männlichkeiten, Mythos, Gemeinschaft', p. 347.

<sup>22</sup> Judith Butler, 'Beside oneself: On the limits of sexual autonomy', in *Undoing Gender*, by Judith Butler (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 17–39 (p. 31).

masculinity in the works of the three authors analysed is needed, as well as a broader study on masculinity in current German-language literature.

## **5.6 A caring, gentle and emotionally literate masculinity as a viable model?**

In writing about gender and masculinity, all three authors are engaged in gender discourse and thereby also in the production and reproduction of masculinities. While they create masculinities that show anti-hegemonic subversion, there is no general trend for an alternative positive male gender identity. Several men of the third generation form masculinities subversive to hegemonic masculinity, but they do not question that model as masculinity's point of reference. The characters who have an opportunity to readjust their masculinity, either because of harsh reality (becoming a single father), the erosion of gender roles due to female emancipation or having access to fantasy spaces as extensions of reality, do not develop an alternative positive male gender identity — on the contrary, they use these opportunities to comply with the standards of hegemonic masculinity. This being said, the texts do provide a few positive examples. Rabinovici portrays Jewish male characters who do not dominate their wives, thus reflecting the theory of a 'gentle' masculinity and, partly, the Zionist project, which favoured equality between the sexes; these characters emerge as the most stable in his works. Paralleling the 'gentle' masculinity in Rabinovici's works, Geiger also depicts caring, gentle and emotionally literate men who are aware of their weaknesses; the concept of a 'gentle' masculinity is here taken out of the Jewish context. However, quite often these characters are clearly associated with female characteristics by their authors, who show that male characters are not yet free to choose their masculine gender identity; masculinities independent of conventions seem to remain the exception. My analysis opens up the larger exciting question of

whether a caring, gentle and emotionally literate masculinity can provide a viable model for a stable gender identity for modern men in general today.





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