INTERTEXTUAL INTERVENTIONS IN THE NOVELS OF MARLENE STREERUWITZ AND LILIAN FASCHINGER

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers prose texts by the Austrian authors Marlene Streeruwitz and Lilian Faschinger from the viewpoint of intertextuality. The research does not rely on the narrow definitions of intertextuality which are concerned with the appearance of an anterior text in a later text, or on studies of source and influence. Rather my treatment of the novels considers the way meanings are constructed by a network of cultural and social discourses which embody distinct codes, expectations and assumptions. This study discusses the ways in which the chosen texts, through their intertexts, display a postmodern impetus towards reappropriating authorized discourse in new and challenging ways, from feminist perspectives.

My intertextual readings are alert to two main threads − the critique of aspects of Austrian society evident in the novels of Streeruwitz and Faschinger and their place within the tradition of *Österreich-Beschimpfung*, and the interventions into issues pertaining to gender. I examine thematic similarities and differences in the texts, which draw attention to specifically Austrian or gender related issues, as well as scrutinizing formal and linguistic elements. Ultimately, my thesis poses and suggests answers to questions regarding strategies of intervention by feminist authors and the fruitfulness of intertextual readings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. We live our lives through texts. They may be read, or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us what conventions demand. Whatever their form or medium, these stories have formed us all; they are what we must use to make new fictions, new narratives.

Carolyn Heilbrun[1]

Intertextuality is based upon the assumption that all texts, far from being autonomous creations with finite meanings, are in fact fragments that reach out from beyond their pages in to other domains, preceding or contemporary to their own, for their construction and meaning. This thesis argues that the Austrian authors Lilian Faschinger and Marlene Streeruwitz produce texts which actively perform and foreground their intertextuality, i.e. their construction out of available discursive possibilities. Through close intertextual readings of six novels written between 1986 and 2004, this study sets out to establish that the urge to interrogate specifically female agency and the production of female subjectivity lies at the centre of the texts' agendas.

Streeruwitz and Faschinger are prominent voices in Austrian literature, yet, as I will argue, a lack of attention to the intertextuality of their novels has led to omissions in previous scholarship with regards to the dialogic richness of the authors' prose works. There has been little attempt made to approach the texts from the standpoint of theories of intertextuality, and I will show that the intertextual practices which are central features of the texts are highly effective tools of political, feminist critique.[2] By employing strands of intertextual

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[1]   Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1988), p. 37.

[2]   Christa Gasz's thesis on Streeruwitz and intertextuality explores the author's novels *Verführungen.*, *Lisa's Liebe.* and *Partygirl.* from the standpoint of allusions to other works of literature such as Charles Dickens and Edgar Allan Poe, references to music and TV programmes, and genre indicators. Gasz's study differs from the present one in that it does not set out to identify sites of political interventions in discursive and ideological formations. See

theory, I will contend that the authors' works incorporate signs of discourses that circulate within culture and consciously establish the ground for new meanings to emerge. In doing so, they subvert the dominant ideologies which are rooted in patriarchal discourses.

What is important for this thesis is the notion that rather than existing in isolation, individual identities are located and performed in discourse. This term is employed in a Foucauldian sense to indicate those areas of knowledge that construct subjects and subject matter, shape and constrain them, and are themselves vulnerable to change. For Foucault, interrogating discourse involved discovering, 'who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak [...] and which store and distribute the things that are said'.[3] At issue here is the way in which individuals are 'put into discourse' and socially produced through language. This approach seeks to understand power relations exercised through the conventions of domains of knowledge, those things which come to acquire the status of the 'natural' or 'common-sense'. In the novels of Faschinger and Streeruwitz considered here, these domains are primarily concerned with female and male bodies, sexuality, familial hierarchies, historical narratives and religious teachings. Their writing will be shown to be dependent upon, and set within, recognizable relations of power with a particular emphasis on gender. The ways in which female protagonists are positioned within discourses that form a common consensus, and the manner in which textual strategies challenge that positioning, will form a central argument of this thesis.

Christa Gasz, *Intertextualität in der Prosa Marlene Streeruwitz'* (unpublished Diplomarbeit, University of Vienna, 2005).

[3]   Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1978, first pub. 1976), p. 11.

The authors have been chosen for their foregrounding of intertextuality, the fact that they share an Austrian background, and that they speak from similar political agendas. Writing as a form of resistance is central to the authorial projects of both writers, and both have reflected on writing as a means by which to claim and exercise female agency. Indeed, Streeruwitz has written and spoken extensively in a series of *Frankfurter Poetikvorlesungen* on the process of her own fictional writing and its potentially politically transformative effect. The very act of writing is, for Streeruwitz, a political act; it is a means by which both reader and writer can recognize and analyze the discursive relations that constitute individuals as subjects: 'Wir sind Gemachte, die versuchen müssen, die eigene Machart herauszufinden. Und die Konstruktionsgeheimnisse aufzudecken'.[4] Interrogating their 'Machart' is the task of the enunciating subject who searches for 'secrets' of subject construction. This is not to be mistaken as a call to uncover an essential secret of the feminine that strives to construct a female space *outside* of patriarchal discourse. What is secret in our 'Konstruktion' is that which remains hidden from view by processes of normalization through language. For Streeruwitz, language is '(die) Sprache des Patriarchats'[5] as it is colonized by norms, orderings and classifications which subordinate the interests of women to those of a dominant system that endorses male power. Resistance for Streeruwitz takes place from within the norms and orderings of power relations that structure all aspects of life, that is through enunciations of existing discourse

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[4] Marlene Streeruwitz, *Können. Mögen. Dürfen. Sollen. Wollen. Müssen. Lassen. Frankfurter Poetikvorlesungen* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), p. 40.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

which are violated by textual and linguistic interventions, which then allow the emergence of alternative significations. The author maintains:

> Ich habe durch die Notwendigkeit des Akts der Beschreibung eines Unsagbaren im Ausdruck zu Kunstmitteln wie Stille, Pause, dem Punkt als Würgemal und dem Zitat als Fluchtmittel gefunden, um damit dem Unsagbaren zur Erscheinung zu verhelfen.[6]

The notion of the 'Zitat als Fluchtmittel' is fundamental to a study of intertextual operations. In Barthesian terms, the intertext is a quotation 'given without the quotation marks'[7] that, depending on the way it is reworked, provides an exit strategy, or Streeruwitz's 'Fluchtmittel', from the *effects* of discourse. Hence what I will explore with respect to three Streeruwitz novels, *Nachwelt. Ein Reisebericht. Roman.* (1999), *Norma Desmond. A Gothic SF-Novel* (2002), and *Jessica, 30.* (2004), is the degree to which intertextual reworking and resistance occur by way of 'Kunstmittel', including linguistic and generic interventions, disruptions caused by unpredictable punctuation and the fragmented narratives of the protagonists.[8]

In Faschinger's novels *Die neue Scheherazade* (1986), *Magdalena Sünderin* (1995) and *Wiener Passion* (1999), it is the female figures themselves who are the vehicles of critique. They are subjects who perform on the narrative stage and themes of theatricality, performance and story-telling are threads running through the texts, allowing the protagonists to perform within a variety of social terrains and flaunt a multiplicity of selves. In this way, Faschinger's texts force attention onto the identities that individuals assume in

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[6]   Marlene Streeruwitz, *Sein.Und Schein. Und Erscheinen. Tübinger Poetikvorlesungen* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), p. 48.

[7]   Roland Barthes, 'Theory of the Text', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, trans. by Ian McLeod, ed. by Robert Young (London: Routledge, 1981, first pub. 1973), pp. 31-47 (p. 39).

[8]   The titles of Streeruwitz's novels end with a full-stop, which forms part of the author's linguistic disruption as discussed in Chapter One. When citing Streeruwitz's texts, this thesis will conform to the author's linguistic strategy.

order to circulate and function in the world. It is often the mismatch between the identity assumed and social expectation that invokes the critical voice. There is an implicit paradox in the suggestion that roles are always pre-constructed, while protagonists are presented who find liberation and agency in the adoption and rejection of role performances.

Engaging with feminist texts intertextually, i.e. investigating the way discourses enter writing in mediated form and how their organizing principles are negotiated and reordered, can be considered part of a poststructuralist approach to reading. Chris Weedon formulates feminist poststructuralism as a mode of knowledge production that uses poststructuralist theories to understand the specific positioning of women within discourse, and that is able to offer 'an explanation of where our experience comes from, why it is contradictory or incoherent and why and how it can change'.[9] Texts are made up of culturally recognized narratives conveyed by language which is already qualified and inscribed by others. Interrogating these narratives and the way Faschinger and Streeruwitz write *against* rather than *with* them, can expose the way individuals are caught up in the dynamics of often damaging, and certainly limiting, power relations. The six texts considered construct narratives which exist within established fields of power and discourse, but they each perform acts of resistance whose possible meanings emerge powerfully from intertextual readings.

Intertextuality is characterized by performances of repetition and transformation, the citation of sign systems and their transformation by writer and reader. Judith Butler advances the same argument with regards to the

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[9]   Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, first pub. 1987), p. 41.

performance of gender, whereby gendered modes of being and processes of social power gain authority through repetition. She comments:

> Signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency', then is to be located within the possibility of variation on that repetition.[10]

If agency is situated in the possibilities of deviating from discursive repetitions, then Streeruwitz and Faschinger stake a claim on agency by means of critical iterations and borrowings of subject locations. Primary among these appropriations are the ideologies of the everyday and the normalized cultural codes that produce subjects, and that are, in turn, maintained by them. These are what Roland Barthes termed the 'résumés of common knowledge' which form the everyday 'reality' in which the subject lives.[11] Streeruwitz and Faschinger put into place for the reader structures of identification, using anterior texts to create resources on which readers can draw to construct meanings. These resources take the form of, amongst others, the mundane discourses of every-day lived experiences, the integration of familiar personalities from high and popular culture, the appropriation of genres such as science fiction, pop literature, chick-lit and travelogue, and borrowings from recognizable cultural paradigms such as fairy tale and myth. The authors' shared national background means that dominant narratives of Austrian social, political and cultural history inevitably form important strands of critique in their works. The borders of the Austrian homeland are synonymous, in the works of both authors, with confinement and restriction, and it is hardly

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[10]   Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999, first pub. 1990), p. 185.

[11]   Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 184.

surprising therefore that both writers choose to traverse national boundaries in order to position their protagonists in areas of experience outside of Austria. Protagonists are placed in a variety of European cities, as well as in Asia and the US, while specific locations range from rural dystopias to cityscapes and from the home to the workplace. The poststructuralist, feminist impulse to destabilize the position of the gendered subject within discourse is mirrored by the protagonists' movement beyond the physical and discursive confines of the Austrian nation.[12]

This thesis investigates mobile, unstable intertextual incorporations and coaxes from them instances of resistance which seek to dismantle models of domination over the female subject. As such, a central concern of this investigation is to consider the fine balancing act that the texts are engaged in, as they both *appropriate* prior texts while attempting to *transgress* their normative qualities and open them to critique. A key question examined in this thesis is that, if Faschinger and Streeruwitz intervene in discourse by incorporating systems of representation that grant meaning, do their texts succeed in counterbalancing *assimilation* with critical *intervention*?

Approaching texts intertextually could suggest that the novels aim to secure specific meanings by controlling the effect of intertexts. However, this thesis will demonstrate that an intertextual examination necessarily involves the overturning of authorial custodianship and the location of meaning within the space occupied by the reader. Hence the novels are shown to function on

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[12]   As the title of the volume they introduce indicates, Heike Bartel and Elizabeth Boa discern with respect to German women's writing of the late twentieth, early twenty-first centuries, a similar impulse, that is to push at boundaries in terms of gender and genre, to confront linguistic boundaries and to cross geographical borders. See 'Introduction', in *Pushing at Boundaries: Approaches to Contemporary German Women Writers from Karen Duve to Jenny Erpenbeck*, ed. by Heike Bartel & Elizabeth Boa (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 7-12.

what Michael Worton and Judith Still have termed 'an intertextual double axis', by which is meant a duality of 'texts entering via authors (who are, first readers) and texts entering via readers (co-producers)'.[13] This approach operates on the predication that the reader is located in a place *within* the text, a place where systems can be acknowledged and critically negotiated. While the 'implied' reader is so situated as to recognize the intertext, allusion or reference, and so interpret them from certain constructed standpoints, 'actual' readers outside of the texts do not hold such a privileged position.[14] They are inevitably only partially aware of intertexts, will privilege some over others, and will introduce the variable of personal, lived experience to the reading. This thesis argues that where clear political agendas and meanings emerge, an intertextual approach licenses the reader to construct their own in a process of co-production. Morwenna Symons argues for the productive power of the reader within intertextuality, contending that while the reader may succumb to the authority of the intertexts and the power of their discursive allusions:

> s/he is empowered by the intertext to assert her or his independence from this same authority, to 'talk back' at the text in the very act of responding individually to its multiple significations. It is in the effectiveness of this manoeuvring, by and of the reader, that the intertextual narrative can be shown to find its force.[15]

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[13]   Michael Worton & Judith Still (eds), 'Introduction', in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1991), pp. 1-44 (p. 2).

[14]   The terms 'implied' and 'actual' are used by Wolfgang Iser in his formulations of the different functions of the reader. While the 'implied' reader is constituted by 'a network of response-inviting structures', the 'actual' reader receives mental images coloured by external influences and their 'existing stock of experience, which acts as a referential background against which the unfamiliar can be conceived and processed'. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading*, *A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, trans. by David Henry Wilson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980, first pub. 1976), p. 34 & p. 38.

[15]   Morwenna Symons, '*Room for Manoeuvre: The Role of Intertext in Elfriede Jelinek's "Die Klavierspielerin", Günter Grass's "Ein weites Feld" and Herta Müller's "Niederungen and Reisende auf einem Bein"*', MHRA Texts and Dissertations, 64 (London: Maney, 2005), p. vii.

The reader occupies a pivotal position in intertextuality and thus in this thesis. Each chapter assesses the location of the reader as created within the text, and also those reader responses that are informed by possible reservoirs of experience unknown and unforeseen by the author.

Chapter One has a dual focus. It firstly locates the theoretical strands which combine to produce intertextual interpretations of the texts under consideration. The term intertextuality has been employed at various levels in literary and cultural theory to classify a wide range of critical procedures and techniques. Intertextual approaches range from a structuralist mapping of implicit or explicit sources and illusions transferred from one text and incorporated into another, to those poststructuralist projects which seek to undermine stable notions of the sign and signification. The proliferation of meanings that the term suggests indicates a need for a combined approach to theory. It is the novels themselves that determine the theoretical approaches and critical procedures which are brought to bear on each text. The intention is not to impose one intertextual framework or present a totalizing conclusion, but to engage with the frames of theoretical reference surrounding the term intertextuality in a way that has not hitherto been attempted with reference to Streeruwitz or Faschinger. The second focus places the texts in their social and cultural contexts, thus exposing the discourses in which they are steeped and that they display for critical renegotiation. The central questions that emerge concern the manner in which the intervention into particular and recurrent intertexts is employed as strategies of feminist critique. As the texts span a twenty year period, negotiations of gender will be examined against a

background of historically varied feminist agendas and critique, from the 1980s to the present day.

After laying the theoretical and contextual foundations in Chapter One, I will explore in the second chapter two novels which provide critical rewritings of 'old' texts from new directions, Faschinger's *Die neue Scheherazade* (1986) and Streeruwitz's short novel *Norma Desmond.* (2002). Taking into consideration the temporal gap of almost two decades between their publications, the chapter locates the feminist consciousness in both texts and the positions of social critique that form their crux. An intertextual investigation of genre transformation and the appropriation of familiar figures from popular and high culture, teases out the narrative scripts constituting the texts, and demonstrates how they are subject to a constant process of interrogation and reworking.

A key feature of Chapter Three will be my exploration of the way texts construct female protagonists within predetermined social structures. Faschinger's heroine in *Magdalena Sünderin* (1995) performs a series of playful masquerades, taking ownership of various social roles. The chapter contends that the protagonist in Streeruwitz's *Jessica, 30.* (2004) meanwhile, manifests only a limited awareness of the discourses she is emulating, and in fact comes to be owned by them, requiring the reader to act as the critical voice in the novel. A comparison of the two protagonists enables fruitful observations about intertextual interventions to be made.

In Chapter Four, I will consider the way palimpsests of cultural memory are creatively revived in Faschinger's *Wiener Passion* and Streeruwitz's *Nachwelt. Ein Reisebericht.*, both published in 1999. Intertextual

theory is based on the premise that a text provides a repository of signifying images within cultural memory, and acts as a locus of other texts. Renate Lachmann considers intertextuality to be the factor within a text that connects it to memory, as she states, 'das Gedächtnis des Textes ist seine Intertextualität'. Lachmann is interested in an 'Interpretation der Intertextualität (konkreter Texte) als eines mnemonischen Raumes, der sich zwischen den Texten entfaltet'.[16] Intertextuality opens up mnemonic spaces in which earlier texts are inscribed and transformed. The two novels display an intertextual memory by immersing the reader in familiar historical stories from, for instance, the Austrian Habsburg era, by mixing historical personalities with fictional characters and encouraging the reader to create meaning by calling upon their own memory store. Faschinger's *Wiener Passion* will be shown to deconstruct the multiple narratives which surround the Austrian capital in an attempt to present the games of power that collide in the city and that function to produce subjects.

This thesis argues that the intertextual strategies in evidence in the six novels under investigation prevent the seamless unfolding of linear narratives through processes of disruption, and that they actively encourage an intertextual reading. As Laurent Jenny observes, 'what is characteristic of intertextuality is that it introduces a new way of reading which destroys the linearity of the text. Each intertextual reference is the occasion for an alternative'.[17] When reading intertextually, one stumbles over elements which serve as a reminder that the text exists only as a node within a network, and

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[16]   Renate Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur. Intertextualität in der russischen Moderne* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), p. 35 & p. 11.

[17]   Laurent Jenny, 'The Strategy of Form', in *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, trans. by R. Carter, ed. by Tzvetan Todorov (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), pp. 34-63 (p. 44).

that it is variable and relative. This thesis provides an investigation into the anomalies and disruptions which compel the reader towards productive, new readings.[18]

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[18] Novels recently published by both authors display intertextual credentials which provide avenues for future research. Faschinger's *Stadt der Verlierer* (Munich: Hanser, 2007), is an ironic reworking of the detective novel and a study in the repetition of violence in everyday life, while Streeruwitz's *Die Schmerzmacherin.* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2011) pits personal freedom against state control post 9/11. Both texts show the development of an interest in themes of identity in a globalized world.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL AND CULTURAL FRAMEWORKS

Intertextuality as a critical tool

Worton and Still trace intertextuality back to Plato's concept of imitation,[19] but it was Julia Kristeva's coining of the term in the late 1960s that sparked a proliferation of debates surrounding the meaning and usefulness of intertextual theories. William Irwin maintains that intertextuality 'has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Julia Kristeva's original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence',[20] while Graham Allen comments that intertextuality, 'is one of the most commonly used and misused terms in contemporary critical vocabulary'.[21] Critics may rightly detect a blurring of theoretical parameters and confusion surrounding its definition; yet as Mary Orr points out, most theories and uses of intertextuality stem from the work of French theorists Kristeva, Barthes, Foucault and Gérard Genette, and the Russian Mikhail Bakhtin.[22] Indeed recent research investigating computer-based textualities as highly intertextual media, where texts are linked to numerous other texts and readers choose their own pathways through them, continues to be informed by

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[19]   Worton & Still observe: 'Certainly the work of art, for Plato, is not autonomous – it is crossed, for example by various references to social knowledge (military tactics, divination, statecraft, and so on)'. They refer to Bakhtin's location of heteroglossia and dialogism in the Socratic dialogues to confirm that intertextuality has existed 'wherever there has been discourse about texts'. See Worton & Still, 'Introduction', p. 4 & p. 2.

[20]   William Irwin, 'Against Intertextuality', *Philosophy and Literature*, 28/2 (2004), 227-242 (p. 228).

[21]   Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 2.

[22]   Mary Orr, *Intertextuality. Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 6. Orr argues: 'While inevitable variation comes by extension of the core list, applied and theoretical studies nevertheless reiterate, endorse and reinforce the roles of the central players'.

concepts proposed by the major players.[23] Marko Juvan for instance explains that studies of electronic hypertext, 'embody many poststructuralist concepts, among them Bakhtin's dialogism and polyphony and Kristeva's intertextuality' and that 'through the experience of digital textuality, it thus appears that the theoretical concept of intertextuality [...] is "viable" since it successfully explains the world we live in'.[24] My intention in this thesis is to draw on the intertextual theories developed by the main theoretical players, whilst acknowledging intertextuality as a set of practices and space of debate, which crosses paths numerous times with contemporary critical positions such as feminism, poststructuralism and metafiction.

Writing in a climate of social and cultural upheaval, when poststructuralist theories of difference were supplanting the certainties and boundaries of structuralism, Kristeva found in intertextuality a way of examining the relationship between texts which eschewed fixed meanings and handed authority to the reader. The term intertextuality was coined to describe not merely the influence of anterior sources, but also the wholesale transposition of various linguistic structures and practices into others. Kristeva's theories commented upon and developed those of Bakhtin concerning dialogism, written four decades previously. Bakhtin maintained that not only the meaning of the utterance, but also the very fact of its performance, 'is of historical and social significance, as, in general, is the fact of its realization in the here and now, in given circumstances, at a certain historical

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[23]   George Landow describes hypertexts as 'a fundamentally intertextual system', made up of blocks of texts and links that allow 'multiple reading paths which shift the balance between reader and writer'. See George P. Landow, *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006), p. 55 & p. 45.
[24]   Marko Juvan, *History and Poetics of Intertextuality*, trans. by Timothy Pogaĉar (West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2008), p. 2.

moment, under the conditions of the given social situation.'[25] This approach recognized the importance of locating language within specific social situations, drawing it out of the abstract system of Saussurian linguistics and positioning it in the social networks within which language is exchanged.[26]

This thesis adopts Bakhtin's understanding of the social specificity of language in the sense of *parole*, that is not as a system, but as a practice. This is central to an understanding of intertextuality's transformative potential, and will form a key role in understanding the dialogic nature of the texts presented. In Bakhtinian thought, rather than existing as a fixed sign, components of a language carry within them traces of other utterances and uses, rendering them unstable and open to meaning: 'Our speech is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness and varying degrees of 'our own-ness,'.[27] Utterances respond dialogically to other utterances, recall anterior texts, reappropriate traces of otherness and thereby resist both neutrality and authoritative meaning. From this perspective, a word has the potential to condense conflicting meanings within it; hence language can be recovered and reformulated at different times and by different socio-cultural groups, so that a word resounds with a multitude of voices. Bakhtin's challenge to the monologic, authoritative voice of the text proffers a useful vocabulary with

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[25] Mikhail Bakhtin & Pavel Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, trans. by Albert Wehle (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978), p. 120.

[26] As the founder of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure differentiated between the signifier and the signified in language, to emphasizing the non-referential and arbitrary meaning of a sign. Each linguistic sign has its place within a system of language (*la langue*), rather than a pre-existing meaning of its own. Signs within a system have meaning only in relation to other signs, as de Saussure states: 'Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas, nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system'. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Wade Baskin, ed. by Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye & Albert Riedlinger (London: Fontana, 1974, first pub. 1916), p. 120.

[27] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by Vern W. McGee, ed. by Michael Holquist & Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986, first pub. 1979), p. 89.

which to explore the central tensions in the writing under consideration. Both Streeruwitz and Faschinger exploit the fluidity and flexibility of language when it is produced by and within a variety of discourses to explore the inherent instability of apparently fixed, closed systems. Their writing is heteroglossic through the incorporation of a multiplicity of voices that operate in specific socio-cultural environs, which clash and are ruptured. Bakhtin observed that 'a sealed-off interest group, caste or class' which exists within an internally unitary and unchanging core,

> [...] cannot serve as socially productive soil for the development of the novel unless it becomes riddled with decay or shifted somehow from its state of internal balance and self-sufficiency. [...] It is necessary that heteroglossia wash over a culture's awareness of itself and its language, penetrate it to its core, revitalize the primary language system underlying its ideology and literature and deprive it of its naïve absence of conflict.[28]

In the texts considered here, the consensual values which characterize the 'sealed-off' universes of, for example, patriarchy, Catholicism and Austrian national identity, are 'riddled with decay' and detached from prevailing codes through exposure to strategies of discursive reshaping. The internal balance of discourse shifts as the semantic space opens up for critical negotiation.

This thesis will couple Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism with Kristeva's post-structuralist approaches which move away from a concentration on language to employ the concept of the 'text' in its widest sense. Kristeva regards the 'literary word' as 'an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural

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[28] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, trans. by Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, first pub. 1930), p. 368.

context'.[29] Any text is defined by its relationship to other texts as they are 'read' by the author, and subsequently by the reader. What is termed the 'transposition' of one text into another has the potential to destabilize central, accepted meanings and make fluid the boundaries between signifiers, and between signifier and signified.

Kristeva thus combines a Saussurian theory of the social sign system with the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism which places sign systems in relation to one another and in relation to the producers of the text, i.e. the writer and the reader. The writer is the 'reader-writer', inserting signifying structures into a text 'in relation or opposition to another structure'.[30] Meaning is thus not transmitted directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through the codes which 'external' texts transmit. Thus for Kristeva, there is nothing outside the 'text'; culture, society and history are themselves texts within a host text. For a woman, the impossibility of stepping outside of discourse carries distinct implications, as Kristeva acknowledges: 'A woman is trapped within the frontiers of her body and even of her species, and consequently feels *exiled* both by the general clichés that make up a common consensus and by the very powers of generalisation intrinsic to language'.[31] Kristeva recognizes the construction of the female subject by those signifying practices which convey stability, and which, although inevitably illusionary, are necessary for functioning in the everyday.

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[29] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine & Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1980, first pub. 1966), p. 36.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] Julia Kristeva, 'A new type of intellectual: the Dissident', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 292-300 (p. 296).

Allied to the illusory state of subject stability and consensus is the notion that individuals work, apparently freely, to adopt positions that may or may not be in their best interests. Louis Althusser's concept of ideological 'interpellation' allows an awareness of the way this process occurs. A subject is hailed into, and assumes a place within, the social formation, participating ostensibly 'freely' in ideological practices that appear normal and obvious, but which are in fact manifestations of ideological apparatuses.[32] From this perspective, ideology is not an abstract concept but a material presence in social apparatuses and practices, 'a system (with its own logic and rigor) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts …) endowed with a historical existence and a role within a given society'.[33] The central question that feminist authors must confront, and one which lies at the heart of this present investigation, is how to intervene in, rather than reinscribe those naturalized gendered stories surrounding, for instance, motherhood, aging and sexuality. What are the textual strategies employed to draw attention to the 'hailing' of the subject into ideologies which have powerful systems of representations, and how do texts go about resisting the call? Intertextual readings can shed light on the processes involved in this subversion. The novels considered in this thesis inspire feminist readings that notice the highly recognizable clichés rooted in the 'common consensus', refuse full interpellation and encourage reader participation in the purging of previous significations. An investigation into the intertextual operations at work interrogates the presence of ideological traces, in order, in Catherine Belsey's

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[32] See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 121-173.
[33] Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005, first pub. 1965), p. 231.

words, 'to *produce* a recognition of the ideological status of what is "obvious"'.[34] An acknowledgement of ideological subjection and its material existence in the lives of women forms the fundamental basis of Faschinger's and Streeruwitz's critique. Acts of defamiliarization in their writing aid in the process of recognition and reveal what Butler termed 'the violence of gender norms' that are inherent in ideologies and the codes which support their authority.[35] Taking into account the way texts work within discourse whilst simultaneously performing acts of resistance to that discourse, it is clear that tension and conflict will reside at the centre of the intertextual investigations undertaken here.

A clear antagonism lies in the apparent adherence to certain textual conventions, such as genres, titular designations and photographs, which is displayed by the six novels under consideration, and the subsequent subversions unleashed by imaginative manipulations. In order to investigate the authors' frequent play with textual conventions, this study engages with Genette's structuralist-inspired applications of intertextuality which identify individual textual devices that are grafted onto another text in a process of hypertextuality. What Genette named 'paratexts' such as illustrations, epigraphs and titles, constitute liminal conventions that mediate between author and reader, with each element performing specific literary functions.[36] Paratexts act as cues, codes and carriers of meaning which structure relationships to other texts and provide the reader with pointers as to how the text is to be read. Manfred Pfister explains that in Genette's version of

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[34]   Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 63.
[35]   Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xix.
[36]   See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997, first pub. 1987).

intertextuality, the author retains authority, 'and the reader does not get lost in a labyrinthine network of possible references but realizes the author's intentions by decoding the signals and markers inscribed into the text'.[37] This pragmatic approach to intertextuality involves identifying specific textual relations and parameters that provide implicit indicators of authorial intention.

A Kristevan approach clearly goes further than Genette's formalistic procedures, and regards texts from the point of view of their emergence within, and junctures with, the social context. So although Genette's approach will be useful in lending terminology to various textual appropriations, what remains important for this thesis is not the pre-determined effects of paratexts, but the space created by them in which authorial intentions, social texts and reader responses are free to coincide or collide. The argument will be advanced that Streeruwitz and Faschinger's novels do indeed engage with paratexts, such as genre indicators and photographs, but in a subversive way, to undermine their signifying practices and confuse the markers they inscribe in the text.

Both Faschinger and Streeruwitz play extensively on assumptions evoked by generic signals that predispose a reader to various expectations and attitudes. They have produced texts which encompass recognizable genres, for instance historical narratives and fictionalized biographies in *Wiener Passion* and *Nachwelt.*, sci-fi in *Norma Desmond.*, confessional modes in *Magdalena Sünderin* and so-called chick-lit novels in *Jessica, 30..*[38] Resisting their

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[37]   See Manfred Pfister, 'How Postmodern is Intertextuality?', in *Intertextuality, Research in Text Theory*, ed. by Heinrich Plett (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), pp. 207-224 (p. 210).

[38]   The genre given the derogatory and infantilizing name of 'chick-lit' with which *Jessica* has been aligned, normally focuses on the everyday life of thirty-something women, often with a first-person female narrator who is orientated towards prevailing attitudes of style and the consumer culture, obsessed with body image, shopping and food.

ideological import involves simultaneously allowing their entry into a text and then challenging them through 'complicitous critique', a process which involves both inscription and subversion.[39] For Faschinger and Streeruwitz there is a feminist political imperative implicitly involved in these types of discursive interventions, but what intertextual readings offer are not enclosed spaces demanding 'correct' responses from the reader, but vantage points from which to survey the critical agendas of the texts.

Situating the reader

Irwin situates the reader as passive recipient of a text, reducing intertextuality to its most reductive terms when he states, 'the reader can no more create meaning than the author can; the reader is just a vessel or empty space in which language speaks. All the reader can do is to discover relations among texts, since that is all meaning really is, according to intertextuality.'[40] This appraisal denies any recognition of the reader as a force in the text, a recognition that is central to a more fruitful perspective of intertextuality. At the other end of the critical spectrum from Irwin, Barthes' announcement of the 'death of the author' was accompanied by the 'birth of the reader', in whom a text could achieve a degree of synthesis. The reader provides a focus for the multiplicity of the text and is the space 'on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin,

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[39]   Linda Hutcheon employs the term 'complicitous critique' to describe postmodern literary manoeuvres whereby texts rely on styles, codes and approaches whilst establishing an ironic distance from available modes of representation. See Linda Hutcheon 'Incredulity Toward Metanarrative. Negotiating Postmodernism and Feminisms', in *Collaboration in the Feminine: Writings on Women and Culture from Tessera*, ed. by Barbara Godard (Toronto: Second Story, 1984), pp. 186-192 (p. 187).

[40]   Irwin, 'Against Intertextuality', p. 234.

but in its destination'.[41] While agreeing with Barthes in his proclamation of the birth of the reader, this thesis takes issue with the perception of the reader as a unified destination, preferring instead to regard 'the reader' as a construct within the text, implying multiple readers and destinations. Intertextual investigations that view the text as a site of engagement with other texts, position the reader not as the decoder of some identifiable unified meaning, but rather as a constitutive element in the production of meanings, in the dynamic space of the text, participating in the intertextual dialogue.

The reader plays a key role in recognizing and responding to textual signals deploying, in Hans Robert Jauß's terms, an *Erwartungshorizont* producing meaning in relation to the shifting experiential and expectational 'horizons' of a reader. Jauß, deriving his terms from Gadamer's concept of reader 'horizon', insists on the 'dialogue between work and audience',[42] which ensures that works do not exist in isolation, as single, historical events, but rather elicit responses from historically variable readerships, thus undergoing alterations in the process. Jauß emphasizes the way texts function in the world as fluid and evolving:

> A literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period [...]. It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers and that frees the text from the material of the words and brings it into contemporary existence.[43]

Far from existing in an historical vacuum, a literary work is appreciated at various historical moments by readers who bring structures of expectation to

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[41] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana/Collins, 1977), pp. 142-149 (p. 148).

[42] Hans Robert Jauß, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory', in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 3-45 (p. 19).

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

the text, expectation informed by a cultural memories, and current social, political and cultural trends. This will become apparent in an investigation of Faschinger's and Streeruwitz's prose works published during a period of twenty years and over the turn of the century.

When a work is read, it enters an already existing context, or horizon, that influences its reception. Jauß underscores the importance of establishing how a work reconstructs specific horizons of expectation to invoke associations and elicit responses, through overt strategies in the text such as parody or pastiche, or more subtly through formal and generic transformations. Jauß notes how a change in reader horizon can occur, 'through negation of familiar experiences or through raising newly articulated experiences to the level of consciousness'.[44] Jauß also focuses attention on the way the horizonal gulf may diminish over time as norms and expectations shift, leading to the diminishing of the text's subversive potential. The network of discourses with which a text is involved, and the text's position within it, will change, so that the original horizon is no more authoritative than any later context. Jauß offers no explanation of how a reader's horizon of expectation (social and literary), might be measured. However his theories do offer a useful avenue into the techniques employed by the authors in their deliberate play with reader expectations. It is crucial to note the way subjective values brought to bear by successive readers on the text result in its continued proliferations of meaning, a process which is productive for both reader and the text.

The vital role of the reader as posited by Jauß can be combined with feminist strategies of deconstruction to show how playing with conditioned

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[44]   *Ibid.*, p. 25.

responses dismantle privileged, largely patriarchal, positions. As Linda Hutcheon terms it, 'we have to feel the seduction in order to question it and then to theorize the site of that contradiction'.[45] The presence of the reader in the text is vital, as 'a function implicit in the text, an element of the narrative situation'.[46] In a similar vein, Streeruwitz has written of the importance of creating within her writing, 'einen Raum, an dem die Geschichte des Lesers und der Leserin ihren Platz findet. Einen Raum, in dem der Leser und die Leserin den Text über ihr Eigenes vollenden und damit zu ihrem Text machen können'.[47] By experiencing the 'seduction' of recognizable subject positions in a text and locating one's own experience within them, the reader assumes a position as active participant. The reader is therefore not only subject to the intended effects of the author, but can also exercise a certain degree of control in the process of generating meaning.

How 'dead' is the author?

Barthes' declaration that the reader's birth arrives through the demise of the author clears the way for the birth of the reader-producer, and indeed, the texts under scrutiny here invite the reader in through the intertextual avenues they open.[48] From a feminist perspective, Nancy K. Miller finds the suppression of the authorial subject and the consequent emergence of, in Miller's terms, a

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[45]   Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1993, first pub. 1989), p. 154.

[46]   Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 139.

[47]   Streeruwitz, *Können*, p. 55.

[48]   Barthes maintained: 'As an institution, the author is dead: his (*sic*) civil status, his biographical person have disappeared; dispossessed, he no longer exercises over his work the formidable paternity whose account literary history, teaching and public opinion had the responsibility of establishing and renewing'. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976, first pub. 1973), p. 27.

'disembodied and ownerless écriture', problematic.[49] While acknowledging the affinities that exist between feminist criticism's challenge to the institutionalization of the God-like author and Barthes' own challenge to authorial authority, Miller highlights the need for *new* concepts of (female) authorship. The Barthesian dethroning of the author has 'repressed and inhibited discussion of any writing identity in favour of the new monolith of anonymous textuality'.[50] For Miller, not only the identity of the author, but their *gendered* identity is important, and she argues that the very fact that women writers have historically not experienced access to dominant powers and so have not viewed their identity in relation to the institutions of power in the same way their male counterparts have, has had unmistakable implications for their writing. The declaration of the death of the author would deny the very question of agency so vital for women asserting their subjectivity in a text. If women are to challenge rather than replicate dominant ideologies and the interplay of discourses of representation, if, in other words, they seek to dislodge rather than merely recoup the intertexts, then a recognition of the gendered writing subject does matter.

The avenue taken by this thesis is one which neither reinstates the omnipotent author, nor prohibits her presence from the text. Instead, it aligns itself with the Foucauldian concept of the authorial figure as 'a variable and complex function of discourse',[51] an integral operation of power *alongside* the reader. Hutcheon positions the author as the enunciating or encoding agent within the textual space, indeed, as one of the 'essential constitutive factors of

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[49]   Nancy K. Miller, *Subject to Change* (New York: Columbia UP, 1988), p. 103.

[50]   *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[51]   Michel Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', in *The Foucault Reader*, trans. by Josué V. Harari, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991, first pub. 1969), pp. 101-120 (p. 118).

the text'.[52] The 'author' is thus a variable, complex function which is historically and ideologically determined and does not refer 'purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects-positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals'.[53] The authorial element is a significant and powerful organizing principle in that it groups together and differentiates texts, validates experiences and decides what to include and what to leave out. It is vital to recognize however, that the textual space can be a site of struggle between the authorial element on one hand, and language and discourses which exert their power on the other, especially with regards to female authors, who deal with discourses which are damaging to the female subject. Recognizing the authorial presence remains critical to any response to women writers who take a specific political (feminist) position, and for whom female agency within dominant discourses retains a vital importance.

Intertextuality, postmodernism and the implications for the female subject
Attention has already been drawn to the positioning of intertextuality in the poststructuralist discussion, one of the strands which in turn nourishes the postmodern debate. The texts examined in this thesis span a period from the late 1980s, which saw the emergence of a postmodern feminist literature, to the early 2000s, where texts steeped in popular culture and exhibiting so-called 'postfeminist' credentials continued to exhibit postmodern notions of dispersed and unstable identities. Writing in the early 1990s, Pfister highlighted the co-dependence of intertextuality and postmodern art, and went so far as to claim

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[52]   Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 88.
[53]   *Ibid.*, p. 113.

that 'postmodernism and intertextuality are treated as synonymous these days'.[54] Indeed, Ihab Hassan's list of what constitutes postmodern art includes intertextuality as a key element.[55] Postmodernism's characteristic double-codedness, the simultaneous *deployment* of and *challenge* to existing modes of representation, ensures its involvement in any investigation of intertextuality. Reappropriating and recontextualising, installing and subverting, playing with complicit critique – these are the ways in which postmodernism manifests itself and they feature as key components in the investigation of the intertextual weave. Postmodernism is, according to Hutcheon, 'rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said. (Its) distinctive character lies in this kind of wholesale 'nudging' commitment to doubleness, or duplicity'.[56] This doubleness arises from the integration of the already known and its reformulation through techniques of ironic distancing which function to 'de-naturalize' it, and expose it as constructed representation, rather than as 'natural'. The intertextual dependency on the incorporation of various recognizable and authorized forms inevitably runs the danger of obscuring political critique, of reinforcing rather than overturning, and this remains a real and ever present danger for feminist authors who seek to change rather than inscribe, a danger which is explored at various points in this project.

Reflections on the instability of language, the reliance on preformed anterior texts, and the mixing of so-called 'high' and 'popular' culture, are

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[54]   Pfister, 'How Postmodern is Intertextuality?', p. 207.

[55]   See Ihab Hassan, 'Toward a Concept of Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. by Thomas Docherty (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993, first pub. 1987), pp. 146-156 (p. 152). Other postmodern tendencies which feature in Hassan's list and are also present in descriptions of intertextuality include reader participation, the text as process/performance, textual playfulness, and irony and indeterminacy of meaning.

[56]   Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 2.

common features of the postmodern project and are salient features of the writing of both Faschinger and Streeruwitz. In the context of postmodernism in German and Austrian literature, and a decade after Jürgen Habermas defended the 'project of modernity',[57] Ingeborg Hoesterey felt moved to comment on the effect still exerted by 'das von Frankfurt aus gesendete Feindbild der Postmoderne' on West German and Austrian literary reception. It was, she contended,

> in hohem Maße dafür verantwortlich, daß bundesdeutsche wie auch österreichische Literaturwissenschaftler lange davor zurückschreckten, zeitgenössische Texte auf Kriterien hin abzuklopfen, die gegebenenfalls einer Vorstellung von Postmoderne zugeordnet werden könnten.[58]

Hoesterey perceived a 'jahrelang negative Besetzung des Begriffs "Postmoderne"'[59] which Anna Kunne attributes to the ambition to separate Austrian literature from its international, particularly North American, counterparts, as well as a mistrust of 'postmodern playfulness'.[60] While 'österreichische Literaturwissenschaftler' may have expressed their scepticism, aspects commonly held to feature in postmodern art forms can be traced back to earlier Austrian traditions, which came under different cultural classifications. In Austrian cultural history, and in particular the Viennese experience, a line of continuity from the *Wiener Moderne*, through the literature of the post-war years to postmodernism has been detected and

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[57]   Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', *New German Critique*, 22 (1981), 3-14 (p. 6).

[58]   Ingeborg Hoesterey, 'Postmoderner Blick auf österreichische Literatur: Bernhard, Glaser, Handke, Jelinek, Roth', *Modern Austrian Literature*, 23/3 (1990), 65-76 (p. 66).

[59]   *Ibid*.

[60]   Kunne argues that 'the discussion was based on two prejudices: (1) "postmodern unseriousness" is a characteristic of bad (often American) novels and (2) whatever text wants to be considered a good (Austrian) novel can therefore never be "postmodern"'. See Andrea Kunne, 'Cultural Identity and Postmodern Writing in Austrian Literature', in *Cultural Identity and Postmodern Writing*, ed. by Theo d'Haen & Pieter Vermeulen (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 87-118 (p. 87).

described. Jacques Le Rider distinguished in Viennese modernism 'a

postmodern moment' in European culture,[61] while Allyson Fiddler's

description of the *Wiener Gruppe*'s literary techniques could equally be used to

describe contemporary postmodern Austrian literature. She argues that,

> members of the Wiener Gruppe used techniques such as montage and
> collage, devices of concrete and dialect poetry, and characteristics from
> older traditions of Viennese Volkstheater, baroque literature, and fairy
> tales, as well as more modern and 'trivial' phenomena such as comic
> strips and travelogues.[62]

The modernist preoccupations with fragmented, chaotic worlds which can be

found in the work of Robert Musil and Hermann Broch for instance, anticipate

the postmodern preoccupations of Austrian authors such as Jelinek and

Christoph Ransmayr. Indeed, Kunne has argued that the central features of

postmodernism are particularly suited to 'the Austrian situation', with texts

displaying postmodern credentials able to scrutinize the way knowledge is

legitimized and question the credibility of the grand narratives of nation.

Kunne observes that writers incorporating postmodern elements into their work

such as intertextuality, chronological anachronisms and a mixture of

discourses, 'share the ambition to undermine the way the Republic of Austria

manifests itself to others [...]. They deconstruct the image of the Austrian

model nation in history, culture and tourism'.[63]

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[61]   Le Rider continues: 'The moderns of turn-of-the-century Vienna may well have prefigured certain central themes of postmodernism: the triumph and crisis of individualism [...]; the quest for mythologies capable of regenerating modern culture [...]; and the questioning of scientific and technical rationality'. Jacques Le Rider, 'Between Modernism and Postmodernism. The Viennese Identity Crisis', in *Vienna 1900*: *From Altenberg to Wittgenstein*, trans. by Ralph Manheim, ed. by Edward Timms & Ritchie Robertson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000, first pub. 1989), pp. 1-10 (p. 3).

[62]   Fiddler adds, '[t]he use of preformed linguistic material in the guise of quotation and montage was a common technique among all members, and is symptomatic of the driving force which united the group: an intense concern with language and a need to work and experiment with it'. Allyson Fiddler, *Rewriting Reality*: *An Introduction to Elfriede Jelinek* (Oxford: Berg 1994), pp. 20-21.

[63]   Kunne, 'Cultural Identity', p. 106.

The novels of Streeruwitz and Faschinger display unmistakable postmodern credentials by merging various representational forms such as film, photography and historical narratives, by playing with genre and reader expectation, dissolving genre boundaries and permeating the borders between high and low culture. These textual manoeuvres certainly 'deconstruct the image of the Austrian model nation', and evoke disorientation in the reader in order to foreground possible versions of reality. This is not done for the sake of playfulness, rather the postmodern techniques drive home questions and issues concerning gender, national identity and class which, as I will argue, lend them a political urgency. By arguing that the texts under consideration deconstruct conventional categories of difference and regard language as constructing both gender and the meaning of experience, this intertextual investigation is one informed by poststructuralist feminism. Weedon argues that a poststructuralist approach is one where bodies, at different moments of history, 'are constituted within a wide range of often competing and conflicting discourses and are effects of both power and resistance'.[64] According to this standpoint, gender must be placed within the relations that structure it; it cannot be isolated as a social category. Furthermore, gender is a language and a discourse that produce 'the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world'.[65] Identity is therefore a social locus, a matter of locality, and 'woman' is a relational term which is identifiable only within a constantly changing context.

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[64]   Chris Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 102.

[65]   *Ibid*., p. 32

The dangers of reconciling feminism with this poststructuralist approach that may be seen to discredit the notion of an epistemologically significant subjectivity has been recognized by Linda Alcoff, who enquires where the political subject is located if the meaning of 'woman' is questioned. In an attempt to bridge the gap between politics and poststructuralist theory, Alcoff, following Foucault, posits the notion of 'positionality', which lends this present intertextual study a useful vocabulary. 'Positionality' permits a determinate, though fluid, identity of woman that does not fall into essentialism, nor into an 'undecidability' that effaces the importance of female experience in gender identity. Alcoff maintains that the positions and contexts women find themselves in, 'can be actively utilized (rather than transcended) as a location for the construction of meaning, a place from where meaning can be discovered'. As opposed to 'a locus of an already determined set of values', the concept of 'woman' as positionality 'shows how women use their positional perspective as a place from which values are interpreted and constructed'.[66]

An intertextual reading contributes to an understanding of the way a poststructuralist approach to subjectivity need not lose sight of political issues, in the way Alcoff proposes. It considers the positionality of the subject and interrogates its locations and positions within representations by way of what has the potential to be a politically transformative process. If, as Jonathan Arac maintains, 'the power of representation is something sought, indeed passionately struggled for, by groups that consider themselves dominated by

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[66]   Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), p. 148.

alien and alienating representations',[67] then a mere feminist critique of representation is not enough. What is required is the production of alternative meanings. An intertextual reading of subjectivity as constructed through discourse, exposes the mechanisms of oppression and the production of distinct categories of gender which serve the needs of specific social groups. It can illuminate how ideology is produced and thus how and why women work by themselves to reproduce patriarchy. And it hands over to the reader a degree of control so that the reader herself becomes a location for the construction of meaning.

Streeruwitz likens her fictional works to 'Forschungsreisen ins Verborgene. Verhüllte',[68] by which she is referring not to the quest for a hidden, female identity, but rather the impulse to unravel the positionality of women within social discourses. This thesis will demonstrate the way the novels comply with a notion of a dense web of power relations which have infiltrated all areas of life, as opposed to an overarching monolith of patriarchy against which to fight.[69] As Streeruwitz asserts: 'Die gewalttätige ödipale Auseinandersetzung wurde durch den sanfteren und meist nicht mehr auftretenden Vater, also den abwesenden Vater, ersetzt. Die sanftere Patriarchalität in allen Bereichen'.[70] Faschinger's novels contain mothers who whisper this 'sanftere Patriarchalität', the worn clichés which are intended to

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[67]   Jonathan Arac (ed.), 'Introduction', in *Postmodernism and Politics* (Manchester, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. ix-xliii (p. xxi).

[68]   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, p. 9.

[69]   In this they follow Foucault's contention that power is a relational network rather than, for instance, a visible authority of state. Power should be considered an evolving dynamic, which allows resistance to come not only in the form of 'great radical ruptures', but also, and more frequently, as 'a swarm of points of resistance' which effect the dynamics of power, 'producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings'. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 96.

[70]   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, p. 23.

perpetuate the status quo in their dutiful, or sometimes not so dutiful, daughters. In Streeruwitz's texts, women are frequently positioned as collaborators in their own oppression. *Jessica* for instance presents women who have reached their profession peak by walking, as Streeruwitz puts it, 'auf patriarchalen Beinen',[71] and who are disciplined by regimes of beauty having internalized the male gaze.

The notions of the female subject as fluid and relational mean that metaphors of movement occur throughout the novels examined, and in particular apply to female subject positions. Investigating the vocabularies of travel in postmodern theory and criticism, Janet Wolff argues that 'histories of travel make it clear that women have never had the same access to the road as men', and that this physical marginalization has led to a feminist interest 'in destabilizing what is fixed in a patriarchal culture […] and hence methods and tactics of movement, including travel, seem appropriate'.[72] The protagonists considered in this thesis move beyond the boundaries of Austria into other European countries, the US and Asia, fleeing localized narratives in order to engage with wider concerns, whilst the texts also demonstrate that the limiting discourses of patriarchy extend well beyond national borders. A central tension constructed within the novels is that which exists between, on the one hand, an attachment to the normative conditions of an Austrian tradition of *Heimat*, and on the other, the urgency to flee. Whilst demonstrating a certain degree of absorption of the discursive arrangements of *Heimat* in its many manifestations, the texts also enact movement and border crossings in both

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[71]   Streeruwitz, *Können*, p. 26.

[72]   Janet Wolff, '"On the road again". Metaphors of travel in cultural criticism', *Cultural Studies*, 7/2 (1993), 225-240 (p. 229 & p. 232).

theme and form. Faschinger's protagonists shift freely between Austria, Persia and Wales, while cultural intertexts reach across various spheres to encompass both high and popular culture. Streeruwitz's protagonists seek fulfilment outside of familiar Austrian territory, across the border into Germany, over the Atlantic to California, or, in the case of *Norma Desmond.*, across the threshold of the neatly tended Viennese 'Schrebergarten' and into the chaotic world of the 'Wildnis'. This physical movement away from the *Heimat* will be seen to parallel complex intertextual conversations. The narratives, like their narrators/protagonists exist in a state of flux, demonstrating attachment to the familiar textual habitats of genres, styles and themes, whilst simultaneously displaying the compulsion to flee their restrictions.

'Ich habe dann keine Heimat mehr'.[73]

A consideration of the socio-political and cultural landscapes from which the novels of both authors emerged, forms a vital part of any attempt to illuminate Austro-specific intertexts and to comprehend the drive to place their protagonists in alternative environments. As contemporaries, both born in 1950, Faschinger and Streeruwitz grew up in a country struggling to establish a post-war identity, and unsurprisingly their texts participate critically in debates surrounding Austrian national culture and politics. Lines of comparison and similarity between Faschinger's and Streeruwitz's treatment of Austria as *Heimat* will occur throughout this thesis. What is also apparent is the way their social background has shaped the form and language of their work. It will be

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[73]   Marlene Streeruwitz, *Gegen die tägliche Beleidigung. Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2004), p. 11.

useful therefore to shed some light on those dominant Austrian narratives out of which the novels arose and which serve as areas for textual interrogation.

Different trends which polarized post-war Austrian writing still exist as currents on the socio-cultural scene. Writing from a West German perspective in the highly politicized decade of the 1970s, critic Ulrich Greiner focused attention on what he perceived to be a specific post-war Austrian character manifesting itself in literature in a way which distinguished it from the politically engaged trends of West German writing. Greiner maintained:

> Die österreichischen Autoren jedoch sind in ihrer Mehrzahl apolitisch, und dies nicht etwa aus Mangel an Intelligenz oder Phantasie, sondern infolge einer Geisteshaltung [...]. Der Gesellschaftskritiker benötigt einen Ort, von dem aus die Unterscheidungen zwischen richtig und falsch, und damit Kritik, möglich ist. Diesen Ort gibt es in der österreichischen Literatur nur bei sehr wenigen Autoren.[74]

Politically resigned and conservative literature reached back for inspiration to the traditions and perceived virtues of the Habsburg Empire, bringing with it, according to Claudio Magris, a mistrust of history as a dynamic, changing process and a preference for 'Fortwursteln'.[75] Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger argues that the formative post-war social myth that Austria was an 'Insel der Seligen' was supported by the consensus-driven politics of a 'Sozialpartnerschaft'. Referring to those born after the war, she comments:

> This generation was raised on the 'Island of the Blessed', where the will to compromise and reconcile had brought stability and prosperity […]; where unperturbed politics guaranteed domestic tranquillity; where the status of neutrality provided a strong sense of national security; where the Heimat's ancient history and cultural treasures created a profound sentiment of continued greatness and superiority. And finally, where the Heimat's natural beauty was cultivated to attract tourists so they would

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[74]   Ulrich Greiner, *Der Tod des Nachsommers. Aufsätze, Porträts, Kritiken zur österreichischen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Munich: Hanser, 1979), p. 45.

[75]   Claudio Magris, *Der habsburgische Mythos in der österreichischen Literatur*, trans. by Madeleine von Pasztory (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 2000, first pub. 1966), p. 15.

escape en masse to the 'island of the blessed', where the hills are alive with the sound of music.[76]

As Lamb-Faffelberger intimates, the perceived values of the Second Republic were informed by a strongly-felt connection with the imperial past and by the cultivation of the notion of *Heimat* with its respect for conservative values. The influence of the Catholic Church ensured the perpetuation of traditional attitudes towards power which were endorsed in the private sphere by the family, and in the public arena by institutions of state. Postwar critical voices have focused on the problematic process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in Austria, whereby an *Opfermentalität* was fostered and a series of myths disseminated, which hindered any productive discussion of Austria's role in the war.[77]

Klaus Zeyringer sums up the implications for cultural production, where a desire to rock the boat, delve too deeply into the recent past, or appear anything other than positive in outlook was discouraged:

> Die Österreich-Architekten des 'Wiederaufbaus' nach 1945 stellten die Zweite Republik auch auf das Fundament eines restaurativen Konservatismus im Sinne einer vorgeblich ewigen Kultur-Sendung. Der Rückgriff auf die Tradition, vor allem – wie im Ständestaat – auf Barock und Katholizismus, verlangte ein positives Welt- und Staatsverständnis; eine derart rückwärtsgewandte Austriazität konnte freilich experimentelle Literatur nicht (ge)brauchen und vernachlässigte kreative moderne Kunst, innovative Tendenzen.[78]

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[76]   Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger, '*Beyond The Sound of Music*: The Quest for Cultural Identity in Modern Austria', *The German Quarterly*, 76/3 (2003), 289-299 (p. 294). In 1971 Pope Paul VI described Austria as an 'Insel der Glücklichen' on the occasion of a visit to the Vatican by President Franz Jonas, a phrase which was reformulated as 'Insel der Seligen' and which for many sums up the insularity and self-contentedness of the Alpine nation.

[77]   The perception of itself as 'Opfer' was rooted in the Allies' 1943 declaration of Austria as 'das erste freie Land, das der Hitlerschen Aggression zum Opfer gefallen ist'. Cited in Heidemarie Uhl, 'Kontinuitäten – Diskontinuitäten. Zum Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit', in *Die "österreichische" nationalsozialistische Ästhetik*, ed. by Ilija Dürhammer & Pia Janke (Vienna: Böhlau, 2003), pp. 33-48 (p. 34).

[78]   Klaus Zeyringer, *Österreichische Literatur seit 1945: Überblicke, Einschnitte, Wegmarken* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2008), p. 55.

Experimental, avant-garde literature would be in conflict with the prevailing political climate. However, as Lamb-Faffelberger remarks, 'literature begins where reality breaks down, where the facts crack and leave a gap. This gap becomes the space for fiction'.[79] A powerful critical tendency did indeed emerge to provide alternative voices to prevailing apolitical impulses. Out of the innovative formal techniques of writers like Konrad Bayer and Hans Carl Artmann and other members of the *Wiener Gruppe* formed in the mid 1950s, emerged a reshaping of the myth of *Heimat*, and a dismantling of the national narrative of cohesion. A critical participation in the debate about Austrian national identity by authors such as Ernst Jandl and Gerhard Rühm challenged versions of reality circulating in the public domain and were denounced accordingly. Peter Turrini and Michael Scharang introduced radical socialist positions in the 1970s, and by the 1980s, the term *Nestbeschmutzer* was being attached to artists who participated in *Österreich-Beschimpfung* and jeopardized the sanctuary and sanctity of the 'nest'.[80]

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[79]   Lamb-Faffelberger, '*Beyond The Sound of Music*', p. 295. She continues in an optimistic vein: 'Literature is an intriguing blend of reality and invention, of fact and fiction. Hence, it is the Other, aesthetically dispensed; the Other, that serves as a looking glass through which we may rediscover the world and see new and different possibilities and prospects'.

[80]   In her discussion of Jelinek's reputation as *Nestbeschmutzer*, Fiddler comments that rather than it being issues surrounding pornography and female masochism which provoked controversy in the reception of *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983) and *Lust* (1989), it was 'her bold deprecation of her own mother country which first aroused the public's disdain and won Jelinek her notoriety'. Allyson Fiddler, 'Demythologizing the Austrian 'Heimat': Elfriede Jelinek as "Nestbeschmutzer"', in *From High Priests to Desecrators: Contemporary Austrian Writers*, ed. by Ricarda Schmidt & Moray McGowan (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 25-44 (p. 25). The label *Nestbeschmutzer* was alive and well in 2000 when German critic Gabriele Killert, responding to Jelinek's novel *Gier*, made remarks which are aimed not only at Jelinek, but a wider artistic community in Austria: 'Man kann nur immer wieder staunen über die kindliche Selbstüberschätzung dieser österreichischen Literaten. Sie glauben, weil sie so mächtige selbstverliebte Hasser oder verliebte Selbsthasser sind, muss die ganze Welt so böse und so hässlich sein. [...] Und in diesem Fall natürlich die ganze unbekömmliche Heimat mit ihren toten Seen, toten Seelen und Totmachern'. Gabriele Killert, 'Das Buch Xanthippe', *Die Zeit* (19/10/2000), <http://www.zeit.de/2000/43/Das_Buch_Xanthippe>, [accessed 13/11/2009].

A prime example was the publication, shortly after the so-called 'Waldheim affair' of 1986, whereby President Kurt Waldheim's war-time participation in National Socialism was exposed, of a searing attack on Austria's role in the war launched by Thomas Bernhard in his drama *Heldenplatz* (1988). Turrini reflected on the extreme impulses evoked by the particular nature of Austrian socio-political culture in writers such as Bernhard: 'Es bleibt ein lebenslanger, unheilbarer Zwang: Wir leben in einem Land, aber wir möchten ein anderes hervorbringen auf Papier, [...] mit Bitten und Klagen, [...] flehend und protestierend'.[81] Writing in the 1990s, Robert Menasse considered Austria a fertile breeding ground for national criticism; indeed the country embodies for him 'die Anti-Heimat par excellence'.[82] He maintains that while other countries produce literature which may be critical of their own particular 'trivial[e] Klischees und verlogen[e] Idyllen', in the end such literature evokes 'ein positives Bild der beschriebenen Heimat'.[83] Austrian literature, Menasse maintains, tells a different story, as 'jede Destruktion von Klischees und Idyllen' led directly 'zur völligen Destruktion jeglichen positiv besetzten Heimatgefühls'. Once the Austrian notion of *Heimat* is tainted, 'dann ist überhaupt nichts mehr da, worin man sich heimisch fühlen könnte'.[84] It is as if Austria exists through its clichés, the destruction of which leaves an emptiness which cannot be filled. Menasse employs an image from the theatre, 'die Kulissen der Heimat', to suggest the notion that the Austrian façade could easily be brought down, leaving an empty stage. In 2000, Jörg Haider's far-

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[81]   Peter Turrini cited in Lamb-Faffelberger, '*Beyond The Sound of Music*', p. 296.

[82]   Robert Menasse, *Das Land ohne Eigenschaften. Essay zur österreichischen Identität* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 112-113.

[83]   *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

[84]   *Ibid.*, p. 114.

right FPÖ entered into a coalition government with the ÖVP and the European Union imposed sanctions on Austria, just as it had done during the Waldheim affair. As Fiddler has pointed out, a wave of protest succeeded these political events, and the artistic community raised its voice against Haider's xenophobic, revisionist politics which, it appeared, had been accepted by the Austrian electorate.[85]

Faschinger and Streeruwitz, in their readings of contemporary discursive formations within Austria, can be positioned within the critical trends that emerged on the post-war Austrian literary scene, and which continue into the twenty-first century. At the centre of their work lie strategies of social and cultural commentary which deconstruct dominant socio-cultural narratives. The texts of 'life' as read by the authors are the codes which contribute to contemporary versions of reality and Austrian national identity, including those of culture and history. These are incorporated and rewritten to provide alternatives to the 'official' Austrian narrative. Discourses surrounding memory and relationships to the past, in particular the Holocaust, are debated in Streeruwitz's *Nachwelt.*, which also exposes the post-war Austrian 'Opfermentalität' designated as one of the nation's prevailing myths by Lamb-Faffelberger. *Jessica* includes numerous references to the Austrian political climate, indeed the protagonist's lover Gerhard is a member of the ÖVP and is implicated in a murky sex scandal which Jessica seeks to expose. In Faschinger's *Magdalena Sünderin* and *Die neue Scheherazade*, the Austria which emerges is steeped in a discourse of parochial narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy and insularity. Social inwardness is mirrored by geographically

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[85]   Allyson Fiddler, 'Of Political Intentions and Trivial Conventions: Erika Pluhar's *Die Wahl* (2003) and Marlene Streeruwitz's *Jessica, 30.* (2004)', *German Life and Letters*, 64/1 (2011), 133-144 (p. 134).

isolated locations and borders which exist on a physical and psychological level.

Both Faschinger and Streeruwitz have commented upon the sense of imprisonment, physically and metaphorically, which they attach to their homeland. Faschinger comments:

> Ich [habe] manchmal das Gefühl, wenn man in Österreich bleibt, bleibt man in einem bestimmten Kontext gefangen, in so einem leicht weinerlichen, was mir gar nicht hilft, so daß ich auch deshalb Angst hab' zurück zu gehen, Angst, daß mich das wieder einfangen könnte, daß ich dort nicht genug Kraft oder freie Sichtweise aufbringen könnte für weitere Visionen von einer Art von Freiheit.[86]

The urge to find escape routes is clearly evident in *Magdalena* and *Scheherazade*, whereas *Wiener Passion*, I will argue, displays protagonists trapped in the 'bestimmten Kontext' of which Faschinger is so fearful. For Streeruwitz, *Heimat* is a 'Glaubensbegriff' which leads to polarizing concepts of belonging and exclusion: 'Und weil es ja auch den Ausdruck "irgendwo zu Hause sein" gibt, entschlage ich mich des Begriffs Heimat als hierarchischen Ausdruck von Zugehörigkeiten. Ich habe dann keine Heimat mehr'.[87] This sense of homelessness is experienced by the characters in *Norma Desmond.* and *Nachwelt.*, and although indicating an element of fear or compulsion on behalf of the protagonists, is positive in the way in which it permits discursive movement and flexibility.

A vein of social and political commentary in Austrian literature has been underpinned by *Sprachkritik*, which emerges, with particular variations, in the texts considered here. As a critical awareness of the properties of language and its inadequacies, *Sprachskepsis* had already been nurtured in the

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[86] Gisela Roethka, 'Lilian Faschinger im Gespräch', *Modern Austrian Literature*, 33/1 (2000), 84-103 (p. 92).

[87] Streeruwitz, *Gegen die tägliche Beleidigung*, p. 11.

realms of both literature and philosophy in the nineteenth century, in the comedies of Johann Nestroy for instance, which employ a satirical play-on-words in the service of political critique.[88] Half a century later, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's protagonist in the fin-de-siècle 'Chandos-Brief' experiences a linguistic crisis in which abstract nouns melt in the mouth like 'modrige Pilze',[89] leaving him speechless, while his contemporary Karl Kraus's linguistic pastiches employ a technique of intertextual citation which anticipates Elfriede Jelinek's quotational style. In the realm of philosophy, Ludwig Wittgenstein's seminal work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* with its description of language as the medium which exerts limits on thought, wielded influence on writers concerned with exploring representations of reality.[90] A key concept for Wittgenstein was that of 'language-games' which he developed in order to escape the tyranny of language when it reduced the world to its 'essential' properties. Instead, Wittgenstein proposed viewing language as embedded in a variety of social practices and in specific contexts, so that meaning was conveyed only through the connection between language and social practices.[91]

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[88]   See, for example, Johann Nestroy's *Freiheit in Krähwinkel* (1849), which mocks small town bourgeois pettiness through parody and word-play.

[89]   Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Chandos-Brief', in *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, Bd. 2, ed. by Herbert Steiner (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1972, first pub. 1902), pp. 7-20 (p. 13).

[90]   This is encapsulated in the oft-quoted statement, '[d]ie Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt'. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995, first pub. 1921), p. 244.

[91]   Rather than a single, unified characteristic of the uses and meanings of a word, Wittgenstein proposed the existence of 'Familienähnlichkeiten', similaritites between words which constructed 'ein kompliziertes Netz von Ähnlichkeiten, die einander übergreifen und kreuzen'. Words 'mit verschwommen Rändern' often give a clearer indication of meaning than those which have firm meanings and fixed boundaries applied to them. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2003, first pub. 1953), p. 66 & p. 71.

This viewpoint appealed to authors linked to the *Wiener Gruppe* of the 1950s who viewed language as a way to explore and unmask the restraints imposed upon the individual by those social conventions which determine behavioural patterns and expectations. Representations of reality were to be interrogated through experimentation with those linguistic forms which eschewed the tyranny of official discourse, as Rühm, a founding member of the *Wiener Gruppe* declared, 'gerade in [der] unabhängigkeit von einer sanktionierten gebrauchsweise besteht die chance, neue anschauungsformen zu provozieren, zu "verändern"'.[92] Form and language were manipulated as a strategy not simply for and in itself, but as a tool to encourage political and historical debates. Bachmann's political interventions were practised through her attempts to transcend the limits of 'die schlechte Sprache – denn das Leben hat nur eine schlechte Sprache', through poetic language,[93] and Jelinek's early works, for instance *wir sind lockvögel, baby!* (1970), combine avant-garde experimentation with political engagement. The very manipulation of language and the disruption of syntax and semantics became an integral part of textual critique.[94]

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[92]   Gerhard Rühm (ed.), 'Vorwort', in *Die Wiener Gruppe. Achleitner, Artmann, Bayer, Rühm, Wiener. Texte, Gemeinschaftsarbeiten, Aktionen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1985, first pub. 1967), pp. 7-36 (p. 27). For an overview of the relationship of the *Wiener Gruppe* to language, see Antje Wulff, *Positionen der Sprachkritik und ihr Einfluss auf die 'Wiener Gruppe'* (Munich: Grin, 2008). With reference to the group's linguistic experimentations, Wulff states: 'Dem arbiträr-konventionellen System begegnen sie mit einer mehr oder weniger großen Distanz, aus der heraus sie ihre künstlerische bzw. persönliche Freiheit zurückgewinnen wollen. [...] semantische Bezüge sollen als willkürlich und bewusstseinsmanipulierend entlarvt und aufgehoben werden. Um eine Abbildung der Wirklichkeit ist es den Künstlern im Grunde nicht mehr zu schaffen', p. 26.

[93]   Ingeborg Bachmann, *Kritische Schriften*, ed. by Monika Albrecht & Dirk Göttsche (Munich: Piper, 1995, first pub. 1960), p. 344.

[94]   As Beatrice Hanssen argues, Jelinek uses 'linguistic destruction or *Sprachzertrümmerung* as a radical way to realize her ethical and poetic responsibilities'. Hansen detects a difference in the *Sprachskepsis* of Bachmann and Jelinek, arguing that the violence Jelinek imposes on language exposes the 'violent excess of language' to 'taunt the morals of her fellow citizens', whereas Bachmann's interventions remain committed to a utopian non-violence, communicability and dialogue. See Beatrice Hanssen, *Critique of*

The prose works of Streeruwitz and Faschinger can be viewed within this Austrian tradition of linguistic intervention. For both writers, the 'tyranny' of the single perspective is firmly linked to the encoding of power in language, specifically male power, which is linguistically legitimized and constantly reinstated. The 'Sprachskepsis' evident in Faschinger and Streeruwitz's texts form part of an overall poststructuralist strategy aimed at considering those identities which are produced within specific discursive formations. These strategies do not constitute an *écriture feminine* which strives to construct a female space *outside* of patriarchal discourse.[95] Forming part of their project to recognize that women's lived experiences, and specifically 'female' identities are the effects of complex social and cultural practices which structure society, the authors investigate the way in which women's writing can deconstruct claims of authority by prior (patriarchal) linguistic structures which determine social relationships, from *within* the very discourses they describe.

Constituted by social texts, the novels are inextricably bound to unfolding social processes and will inevitably manifest the ideological conflicts which are a feature of language. Streeruwitz has repeatedly emphasized the importance her texts attach to locating and deconstructing claims of authority by prior, patriarchal discourses which determine gender relationships within society and culture. She demonstrates particular concern with the language and structures informing a woman's 'Schau des Selbst'.[96] What is important, 'ist, daß wir die Diagnosen, wo der autoritäre Charakter in unserer Kultur archiviert

Violence: Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 228 & p. 229.

[95]   The term *écriture feminine* was used by Hélène Cixous in the 1970s to describe specific language forms in which women are able to 'write the body' and reorder linguistic hierarchies that favoured the masculine dimension through writing. See Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans. by Keith Cohen & Paula Cohen, *Signs*, 1/4 (1976), 874-893.

[96]   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, p. 35.

wird, in welchen Formen, in welchen Sätzen, in welchen Strukturen, noch deutlicher, noch öfter beschreiben müssen'.[97] As part of the textual 'Diagnosen', the female protagonists demonstrate a vulnerability to the norms and conventions of speech which structure the conditions of their existence, and so an important question to be posed is how far the female narrators' speech acts perform resistance.

For Butler, the notion of 'foreclosure' is important in the emergence of agency, the term being understood as an enforced, exclusionary restriction or censorship which determines the conditions of the speech act, but also depends on its very repetition for legitimacy. If, as Butler contends, 'one speaks a language that is never fully one's own, but that language only persists through repeated occasions of that invocation',[98] then opportunities exists for repetitions with *difference*, whereby familiar, performative linguistic acts are imbued with unfamiliar restructurings.

The language of Streeruwitz's and Faschinger's protagonists resounds with that which they must 'foreclose' in order to exist in the world, and they repeat authoritative practices which have gained authority through this very act of repetition. Simultaneously, the texts demonstrate how the very act of voicing conventions of speech may offer resistance. Faschinger's characters Scheherazade, Magdalena and Rosa for example depend to a large extent on restrictive regulatory norms endorsed by socio-cultural institution such as the Catholic Church, the family and the narratives of high and popular culture. However, the texts respond to Butler's call for 'a repetition that might disjoin

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[97] Marlene Streeruwitz, *Tagebuch der Gegenwart* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2002), pp. 179-180.

[98] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 140.

the speech act from its supporting conventions such that its repetition confounds rather than consolidates'.[99] The very conventions that structure the conditions of existence through language are perpetually mobilized, but their patterns and contexts undergo constant disruption.

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[99]   *Ibid.*, p. 20.

CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL RE-WRITINGS. LILIAN FASCHINGER'S *DIE NEUE SCHEHERAZADE* (1986) AND MARLENE STREERUWITZ'S *NORMA DESMOND. A GOTHIC SF-FI* (2002)

> Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for woman more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves.
>
> Adrienne Rich[100]

In the novels of Faschinger and Streeruwitz presented in this chapter, there is an understanding of the world and of female subjectivity as Adrienne Rich sees them, as saturated with assumptions about how things have been and are 'supposed' to be. The authors under consideration enter antecedent texts from different directions, as acts of survival for their protagonists, the 'new' Norma and Scheherazade, so that intertextuality provides escape routes out of the old and into the new. The paratextual elements on the title pages extend an invitation of expectation to the reader of encounters with familiar female figures from the cultural sphere: Scheherazade, the female narrator and protagonist of the Middle Eastern Epic *The Arabian Nights*, and Norma Desmond, the faded silent-movie queen in the classic Hollywood film *Sunset Boulevard* (1950, dir. Billy Wilder). Each name functions as a generator of meaning, and acts, in Naomi Jacobs' terms, as 'a convenient and concentrated reference code to an elaborate set of associations in the reader's and/or writer's mind'.[101] It is the reader's familiarity with intertextual triggers which endows

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[100]   Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 35.

[101]   Naomi Jacobs, *The Character of Truth. Historical Figures in Contemporary Fiction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1990), p. 131.

the texts with their political critique, for in both novels, it is the very familiarity of representations that functions to challenge that which it appears to inscribe. As Hutcheon contends, 'we have to feel the seduction in order to question it'.[102] Seduction is central to *Scheherazade* and *Norma Desmond.*'s intertextual transformations. The reader is attracted by the recognition of not only the names of the main female protagonists, but by generic indicators such as science fiction and gothic horror. Familiar discourses to do primarily with identities of gender, nation and aging have a seductive quality through their very familiarity, and are used as productive generators of meaning against which the texts assert their difference.

Both Streeruwitz's Norma and Faschinger's Scheherazade are ripped from their historical and cultural coordinates and placed in novel environments. The scripts which constitute *Scheherazade* are taken from a wide social and cultural realm, so that while Faschinger's contemporary 'ich' narrator, Scheherazade Hedwig Moser, remains in one place for the duration of the novel − a sofa in an apartment in the Austrian city of Graz − the novel is primarily concerned with movement on the level of form and content. Providing the dynamic of the text is the creative imagination and female voice that tells tale after tale in an act of survival against the threatening forces of patriarchy. Into her tales, the modern Scheherazade weaves a host of references from the artist Christo to the author Christa Wolf, from fairy-tale to fascism. Familiar male personalities such as the actor Clint Eastwood, musician Tom Waits and director Roman Polanski are taken out of their familiar habitats to mix with fictional characters. A textual space is created which has the quality

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[102]   Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 154.

of familiarity, but which is 'riddled with decay […] shifted somehow from its state of internal balance and self-sufficiency'.[103] The seamless flow of meaning is disrupted and cultural representations problematized.

Streeruwitz's Norma Desmond ostensibly bears little resemblance to director Wilder's movie version. Indeed, the location of 1950s Hollywood is replaced by a twenty-third century dystopia which moves from Vienna across continents to the US and Japan. The new Norma is positioned in a futuristic 'Wildnis' of robots and cyborgs, where nature is controlled by the push of a button, and human reproduction has been eradicated in favour of human manufacturing. Streeruwitz's protagonist does not agonize about her fading looks like the aging movie star, but is able to take rejuvenating drugs that restore her body to that of a teenager. *Norma Desmond.*, like *Scheherazade*, appropriates cultural allusions and appeals to the reader's cultural memories by including within it multiple references to, amongst others, films of the twentieth century, an evocation of the *Bluebeard* legend, and the incorporation of scenes from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*. The effect of this amalgamation is the presentation, in a third person narrative voice, of a female subject constituted from a multiplicity of narrative scripts, ones that the reader recognizes, but which are then defamiliarized. Detached from prevailing codes, the internal balance of discourse shifts as the semantic space opens up for critical negotiation.

Both texts respond to Alcoff's call for resignifications by way of the positionality of their protagonists which permits a determinate, though fluid, identity of woman. The positions of the new Norma and Scheherazade are

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[103]   Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 368.

utilized as locations for the construction of meanings, and become places from where the reader can 'produce' the text. Returning to Kristeva's acknowledgement that a woman 'feels exiled both by the general clichés that make up a common consensus and by the very powers of generalisation intrinsic to language',[104] this chapter illuminates the ways Streeruwitz and Faschinger position their female subjects within discourses forming the 'common consensus', while questioning that very positioning. At the centre of both novels are acts of survival by the 'new' female characters who are liberated from their 'drenching' in old scripts. This destabilization is situated, rather than unbound, and is located in a feminist consciousness that acts as the source of productive interventions, rather than enacting disruption for its own sake.

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[104]   Kristeva, 'A new type of intellectual', p. 296.

2.1 Cultural clashes and the survival of the female voice: Faschinger's *Die neue Scheherazade* (1986)

Like the tale which frames the collection of stories which make up the *Arabian Nights*, Streeruwitz's *Die neue Scheherazade* positions at its centre a female character who recounts stories as an act of defiance against the murderous figure of patriarchy. A glance at the Arabic frame-tale affords a perspective on its attractiveness to contemporary women writers who wish to articulate the act of female speech as a strategy of survival. In the collection of tales, the character Sharazad is the latest bride-to-be of the sultan Shahriyar, who is so embittered by female infidelity that he vows to take a new wife every night before putting her to death in the morning.[105] Sharazad however outwits the sultan by employing the powers of her creative imagination to postpone her own demise. By recounting part of a tale each night, but leaving it unfinished at dawn, Sharazad keeps the sultan in a state of suspense, thus deferring the moment of her own death, and preventing the deaths of the remaining virgins who would have succeeded her.[106] Ultimately Sharazad's tales have a transformative, redemptive outcome, as they alter the sultan's state of mind and halt his killing spree. The very act of story-telling by Sharazad thus transforms the conditions of existence for herself and those women who would have been her successors in the vicious cycle. It proves an attractive paradigm for

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[105]   Names from the *Arabian Nights* survive in various forms, but when discussing the original, this chapter will use the translations of names and passages from *The Arabian Nights: Tales from a Thousand and One Nights*, trans. by Richard Burton (New York: Random House, 2004, first pub. 1885). Henceforth, this will be abbreviated to *Nights*.

[106]   The anonymous, omniscient narrator of the frame-tale explains that it was Sharazad, as a cultured, intelligent woman, whose choice it was to be put forward as the sultan's latest conquest: 'Now [the Minister] had two daughters, Sharazad and Dunyazad Hight, of whom the elder had [...] perused the works of poets and knew them by heart. She had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts and accomplishments. [...] Thereupon said she, "By Allah, O how long shall this slaughter of women endure. Shall I tell thee what is in my mind to save both sides from destruction?"' *Nights*, pp. 16-17.

Faschinger as a feminist writer seeking to intervene in the contemporary stories which condition female experience and diffuse the power of patriarchy.[107]

In the new *Scheherazade*, as in the old, speaking and resistance go hand in hand. When Faschinger's modern day Scheherazade figure and her sister Dunja, Dunyazad in the original frame-tale, make their entrance at the beginning of the novel, they take their places not in a harem in Persia, but on a sofa in contemporary Graz, from where Scheherazade outlines her purpose:

> Ich rede/schreibe um mein Leben [...]. Es handelt sich also in meinem Fall nicht um eine krankhafte, nicht eindämmbare Geschwätzigkeit, sondern um eine zwingende Notwendigkeit, um eine reine Notwehr, um eine von mir und meiner Schwester Dunja zur Verhinderung der Ausrottung unseres Geschlechtes ausgedachte List.[108]

This new protagonist is under threat from the forces of patriarchy represented by 'Schahriar, de[m] König' (DnS p. 9), and in a similar way to her literary namesake positioned in the closed environment of the harem, Faschinger's female story-teller occupies a paradoxical position. While she does not move from the spot, the tales which arise from her creative imagination provide the dynamics of the plot, propelling it forward into different worlds. Within these imaginary tales, Scheherazade herself appears in a range of personae as extreme as vampire and submissive housewife, rape victim and fairy-tale princess. The story-telling allows the text to move freely between discourses and identities, through Austria, Persia and Wales, between daily life in the city and the monotony of the provinces, and within the spheres of popular and high

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[107]   Reflecting on the feminist agenda of the text and the motivation which lay behind the specific appropriation of the Scheherazade figure, Faschinger remarked, 'was ich an dem altem Mythos, den ich etwas respektlos wiederverwendet habe, als schön empfand, ist, daß Scheherazade ja durch das Erzählen nicht nur sich selbst rettet, sondern auch viele andere Frauen. [...] Natürlich schreibt man, also ich jedenfalls, ums eigene Überleben. Aber wenn jemand anders dadurch auch überlebt, dann ist das etwas Schönes'. Roethka, 'Lilian Faschinger im Gespräch', p. 87.

[108]   Lilian Faschinger, *Die neue Scheherazade* (Munich: dtv, 2003, first pub. 1986), p. 9. Henceforth the novel will be referenced as DnS in parenthesis.

culture. The cultural mixing is embodied by the Scheherazade figure herself, who was born on a plane flying between continents and is of mixed Persian and Austrian parentage. The text demonstrates, to use Wolff's terms, 'an interest in destabilizing what is fixed in a patriarchal culture', and hence employs methods and tactics of movement.[109] Movement is suggested on both the discursive and physical levels in the text, enabling it to explore a variety of individual subject positions in relation to national identity, religion and gender.

As Scheherazade's speech lies at the centre of the novel, the enunciations of the female are privileged to prevent male utterances from gaining a foothold in the conversation, both literally and metaphorically. This, the text suggests, would lead to the demise of the female voice: 'Schweigen ist nicht Gold, Schweigen ist der Tod. [...] Solange ich rede/schreibe, hört man zu, solange ich rede/schreibe, redet er nicht, erteilt er den Palastwächtern nicht den Befehl, mich zu töten mit ihren schönen Krummdolchen' (DnS p. 9). This highly prized, female voice offers a vantage point from which to understand the familiar scripts of womanhood and open them up to scrutiny in a way that resists the subjugating effects of discourses. If identities are gendered because of the result of what Margaret Littler has termed, 'a complex effect of culture rather than an "essence" at the heart of the individual',[110] then story-telling may provide a suitable vehicle with which to investigate identities that are constructed within social relations. The women who populate Scheherazade's tales are exaggerated examples of gendered conventions and identity paradigms and assume a timeless quality in their depiction. They are at once

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[109]   Wolff, '"On the road again"', p. 232.

[110]   Margaret Littler, 'Women's writing of the 1980s and 1990s', in *Postwar Women's Writing in German*, ed. by Chris Weedon (Providence & Oxford: Berghahn, 1997), pp. 101-129 (p. 102).

extreme, and highly recognizable, including mute virgins who live in Austrian villages, silenced by years of patriarchal law, repressed housewives whose monologic discourses of domesticity spring from the pages of outdated housework manuals, and monstrous, artificial mothers fashioned from myth and legend. What is familiar and recognizable must be displayed in order for subversion to occur, and this chapter will interrogate how far the novel succeeds in moving away from, rather than reaffirming, the very discourses it inscribes.

The participation of an audience is crucial in realising subversion, and strategies are put into place to ensure that the status of the reader is one of participation *in* the text, rather than as passive recipient *of* the text. In a way, the reader is positioned as the sultan, seduced, like his royal highness, into wanting more and more of the tales and feeling moved to effect a change in the condition of the teller, i.e. the female voice. The new *Scheherazade* makes the reader a member of a community of readers whose awareness will be heightened through engagement with the text. The novel indicates that we are all implicated in the cultural stories which construct the subject, and indeed the text's concluding statement 'Red/Schreib. Das ist DEIN PLATZ' (DnS p. 186) can be read as a final instruction to the reader to continue the narrative.

This chapter will argue that a powerful intertextual tool which encourages collaboration between reader and text is the appropriation of recognizable figures from diverse sections of history and culture, who have the capacity to draw readers into a familiar world, play with that world, and draw attention to the very processes involved in reproduction and representation. By way of its intertextuality, the text has the effect of, in Wolfgang Iser's terms,

'bringing into play our own faculty for establishing connections',[111] thus installing the reader as co-producer of meaning. Like the collection of stories in the *Nights*, Faschinger's tales communicate with exterior texts and narratives that surround it spatially and chronologically, so that aspects of western and middle-eastern culture and society familiar in the 1980s are plundered. Through strategies of deconstruction and de-naturalization introduced by the narrator, the text conveys its feminist agenda. Faschinger's *Scheherazade* harnesses the pull of the familiar and operates from *within* certain cultural parameters whilst at the same time working *against* them. A constellation of recognizable characters arrive who are already loaded with meaning, each raising expectations in readers who have different degrees of recognition. Figures from film and music such as Clint Eastwood make an appearance and mix with fictitious characters from popular culture like Batman and vampires, as well as figures from the original *Nights* such as the genie in the lamp. Although these references were familiar to a 1980's readership, their intertextual effect, like that of the *Nights,* extends beyond this temporal restraint and is perpetuated with each new reading.

Crucial to the text's feminist agenda are scenarios in which gendered power relations are at once familiar, but are reformulated by the introduction of the unexpected. This occurs when the artist Christo, known for his art installations involving wrapping up public buildings and structures, takes his art to extremes when he wraps up women in an artistic gesture that objectifies and constrains the female form. In another story, the new Scheherazade is repeatedly raped by Clint Eastwood playing the part of 'der schwarze Reiter' in

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[111]   Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, trans. by David Henry Wilson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974, first pub. 1972), p. 280.

Dodge City, Kansas, and, problematically for the text, enjoys the experience. Familiar names share the textual space with purely fictitious characters like Scheherazade's Austrian Aunt Steffi, and her friend known only as B.. Naomi Jacobs comments that when known figures are cut free from their usual cultural coordinates to mingle with fictional characters in this way, they no longer provide 'truth claims' but serve as a kind of 'falsity claim' and reinforce the notion that, '[we] are all historical figures, as misrepresented in the fictions we make up about ourselves as in the plots written by others that we sometimes inhabit so uncomfortably'.[112] In the way it plays with reader perception and prior acquaintances with names and personalities, the text constantly intervenes in structures of knowledge and those every day fictions which take on the appearance of truth.

In this chapter, an examination of the tradition of adaptation of the *Nights* will place Faschinger's work in context, and will lead to a discussion of the motif of female survival that runs through the text. The power of the creative imagination is thematized, and this is considered against the background of crossing discursive boundaries. Central to this chapter's intertextual survey will be an evaluation of the degree to which Faschinger's intertexts do not merely exist as a site of postmodern playfulness, but invite critical engagement. I will argue that the text is not always successful in dealing critically with the caricatures and stereotypes it incorporates, and will reflect on the extent to which it sometimes reinscribes with only a limited degree of critique.

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[112]   Jacobs, *The Character of Truth*, p. 148.

The Scheherazade tradition

Like *Norma Desmond.*, Faschinger's text derives its effect by harnessing a female character from a pre-existent cultural sphere. The text can be situated as a contribution to women's writing of the 1980s which, already in their titles, self-consciously manipulate the recognizable realm of myth and legend to explore contemporary women's experience.[113] Since the *Nights* in its received form was translated from the original Arabic into French by Antoine Galland in the eighteenth-century, western perceptions of the Scheherazade figure have been fed by the tradition of its continual adaptation. Enlisting the Scheherazade intertext and positioning it in the title is, therefore, an explicitly non-innocent 'hypertextual transposition',[114] which establishes a connection between text and the reader, who, upon recognizing the reference, is positioned as a collaborator in the production of meaning. Loosened from its original context, new possibilities of meaning emerge, of which the author is only partially in control.

As this chapter unfolds it uncovers the extent to which Faschinger's Scheherazade figure is steeped in the myths and assumptions which surround the character's name within culture. Marina Warner notes that in the countries from where the book originated, the tales were regarded as popular trash, and in eighteenth century Europe the work was not taken seriously because, according to the Earl of Shaftsbury, it appealed to 'silly Women' who were swept up by its passions and the threat of being captured by a 'mysterious Race

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[113]   Texts published in the same decade include Grete Weil's *Meine Schwester Antigone* (1980), which probes a woman's engagement with history and memory, Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* (1985), a contemporary re-telling of the Cassandra myth from a woman's perspective, and Sigrid Weigel's influential critical study *Die Stimme der Medusa* (1987).

[114]   Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. by Channa Newman & Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln, NA: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, first pub. 1982), p. 212.

of black Enchanters'.[115] Despite this relegation to a lower literary status, the western fascination with the Orient encouraged an exaggeration of the exotic 'Other', leading to numerous adaptations in the realms of literature, music and art, so that the Scheherazade figure is positioned in the public consciousness by these adaptations, along with the figures who appear in her tales with names as familiar as Ali Baba, Sinbad and Aladdin. Cultural adaptations of the *Nights* such as Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's 1888 symphonic suite *Scheherazade*, later adapted as a ballet, and Ferenc Helbing's nude representation in his 1918 painting of the same name, endorse the exotic image of the Arabic beauty at the mercy of evil tyrants.

This is not to dismiss the alternative voices which existed in adaptations in the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding Scheherazade's death in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Thousand-and-Second tale of Scheherazade* (1845) for example, the female figure proves herself to be a rational, enlightened being who exposes the realities of female conformity to unnatural standards of beauty and thus 'transgresses the limits set for any woman'.[116] Modes of critique have continued in contemporary works by women writers, particularly Arabic authors, who reclaim Scheherazade, as Susan Muaddi Darraj comments, 'as a rebuttal to the common usage of the famous *1001 Nights* heroine in works by western writers that portrayed Arab and Muslim women in passive and submissive roles'.[117] Somaya Sami Sabry recognizes the potential for feminist appropriations when she comments that in contemporary Arab writing by

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[115]   Marina Warner, 'Travelling Text', *London Review of Books*, 30/24 (2008), 15-16 (p. 15).

[116]   Susanne Enderwitz, 'Shahrazâd Is One Of Us: Practical Narrative, Theoretical Discussion, and Feminist Discourse', *Marvels and Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*, 18/2 (2004), 187-200 (p. 191).

[117]   Susan Muaddi Darraj, *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab and Arab American Women on Writing* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), p. 7.

women, 'the scantily clad dancing Scheherazade of Hollywood film is reincarnated [...] in myriad shapes, undermining the tendency to freeze her into a stereotype'.[118] The so-called 'war on terror' post 9/11, and the binary paradigms of good verses evil which it engendered, gave new impetus to interventions into simplistic portrayals of Oriental culture. Both Sabry and Muaddi Darraj mention Mohja Kahf's collection of poems, *Emails from Scheherazad* (2003), in which the image of the passive, silent Muslim woman is dismantled, and Scheherazade is positioned as a writer who is facing up to the challenges of life in the Arab-American diaspora. The reworking of Scheherazade continues to be an act of resistance to discursive practices governing affiliation to concepts of nation, identity and gender.

Seduction and desire are key facets of the original *Nights*, with the sultan of the frame-tale repeatedly seduced into listening to Sharazad's stories, through the pleasure of hearing enchanting stories of heroes, sailors, thieves and genies. The reader too is seduced by themes and characters from diverse cultural spheres which were compiled during different time periods. The *Nights* was supplemented and modified as late as the 18th century, as Eva Sallis remarks: 'Rebuilding the content of the *Nights* from available sources, oral or literary, appears to have been an ongoing pastime which was accelerated, not initiated, by the revival of interest of the 17th/11th and 18th/12th centuries'.[119] Mia Gerhardt expands on the *Nights'* intertextual memory by commenting that the collection of tales is not a closed and self-contained whole. Rather, 'it communicates on all sides with masses of narrative literature that surround it in

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[118]   Somaya Sami Sabry, *Arab-American Women's Writing and Performance: Orientalism, Race and the Idea of the Arabian Nights* (New York: Tauris, 2011), pp. 89-90.
[119]   Eva Sallis, *Scheherazade Through the Looking Glass* (London: Curzon, 1999), p. 28. Sallis gives the Islamic date preceded by the Christian date.

space and time: Hellenistic novel, Indian and Persian fiction, Arabic bibliography, anecdote and travel literature, Egyptian popular romance'.[120] A key aspect of the *Nights* is clearly its attraction for different readers at different times, readers who undergo a process of recognition according to their own cultural and historical horizons. Its fluidity of meaning due to its multiple layering is recognized by David Pinault: 'Each stratum corresponds to a deposit of stories which reflect the influence on the *Nights* of a given society and geographical locale during a particular historical period. [...] [The *Nights*] was never a static or fixed collection'.[121] Warner meanwhile views the *Nights* as literature 'with a thousand and one owners and users'.[122] It is clear that the stories exert a powerful pull due to their highly intertextual nature, a product of the work's multitude of creators and contributors. By virtue of its diverse characters and locations, Ferial Ghazoul has been moved to call the *Nights* a 'nomadic text', heterogeneous and wide-ranging in its content, its 'haphazard clutter' airing 'all the contradictions, tensions and repressions' of its age.[123] The voice of Sharazad provides a unifying element which permits this diversity. In Faschinger's version, there exists a similar tension between a fictional space in constant flux, and a coherent, guiding female 'ich' at its centre.

Lacking any traceable authorship, the stories in the *Nights* were composed at different times and by different people and provided 'a

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[120]   Mia Gerhardt, *The Art of Storytelling. A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), p. 50.

[121]   David Pinault, *Story-Telling Techniques in The Arabian Nights* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 6.

[122]   Warner, 'Travelling Text', p. 15.

[123]   Ferial Ghazoul, *Nocturnal Poetics: The Arabian Nights in Comparative Context* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1996), p. 151.

compendium of collective wisdom'.[124] An adventurous use of narrative is displayed, whereby outside of Sharazad's frame-tale, a variety of personalities assume the role of story-teller and the implied listener changes. This narrative variation has the effect that structurally, the work is a complex, loose chain of narrative performances in which narrators and their audiences are involved in a mutual negotiation of familiar scenarios and recognizable human experiences. Equally in Faschinger's 'new' *Scheherazade*, narrative performances are constituted by a polyphonic mix of competing voices, which has the effect of creating dialogic tensions between discourses within the text. As within the original *Nights*, it is not only female voices, but also included is what Robert Gillett has called a 'litany of patriarchy'[125] in the form of Austrian farmers and representatives of the Catholic Church, film stars and rock legends. They are accorded a voice, but are manipulated into a position of exposing assumptions that uphold conservative representations of women and gender roles. What follows is a discussion of the stories told by the new Scheherazade from her position on the couch, familiar stories whose retelling contributes to new discursive possibilities.

Familiar tales, unfamiliar tellings

The seduction felt by the sultan when he hears fantastical tales in the *Nights* is replicated in the new *Scheherazade*, when the reader is lured into the world of fairy tale and popular culture by figures and places that inhabit the public consciousness. Faschinger's character writes herself into familiar scenarios and

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[124]   *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[125]   Robert Gillett, 'Im Grunde komponiere ich ja ständig': The Polyphonic Poetics of Lilian Faschinger' in '*Whose story? Continuities in Contemporary German-Language Literature*, ed. by Arthur Williams, Stuart Parkes & Julian Preece (Berne & New York: Peter Lang, 1998), pp. 249-268 (p. 259).

creates out of them new stories; thus she is able to write herself out of the familiar roles they offer. The 'cultural clichés, personal icons, the stock characters of our secular mythologies'[126] are used and abused.

The paradigmatic story-line familiar from children's tales featuring the imprisoned maiden sequestered in her tower, is retold by the narrator who incorporates fairy-tale motifs and gives them a new twist. Scheherazade imagines the figure of the sultan as a wolf waiting outside the tower, ready to devour her: 'Der Efeu wächst, ich höre den Efeu wachsen. Unter dem Fenster steht der Wolf Schahriar mit den spitzen Eckzähnen, den Zähnen, die er zum Knochenbrechen, zum Reißen und Schneiden braucht' (DnS p. 84). But Scheherazade is a self-styled 'Dornröschen' (DnS p. 85) and a subversion of the traditional power dynamic is provided when the female refuses to fall asleep: 'ein kurzes Einnicken, und Schahriar würde sich auf mich stürzen' (DnS p. 84). Sleep would reinstate the fairy-tale character as victim, as it would mean succumbing to a story line which maintains patriarchal power structures. Dangerous slumber is replaced with creative action: 'Ich bin in keinen tausendjährigen Schlaf gesunken, sondern sitze redend/schreibend' (DnS p. 85). The process of rewriting the cultural paradigm involves imagining herself into a different role, that of female vampire: 'So werde auch ich zum Vampir, zum Wiedergänger, zum Nachzehrer. [...] Sobald er [Schahriar] sich auf mich gelegt hat, mir seinen heißen Atem ins Gesicht stößt, entblöße ich meine Eckzähne' (DnS p. 86). Scheherazade inverts the power dynamic of male violating the virginal female, and rewrites the end of the tale according to her own script: 'Ob ich zubeiße, ist eine andere Frage. – Schahriar ist weder jung

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[126]   Jacobs, *The Character of Truth*, p. 131.

noch schön' (*ibid*.). The female has assumed power in this particular relationship, but the inconclusive ending − will she bite or not? − exposes the unwillingness to endorse oppositional structures of victim and perpetrator, irrespective of gender. It has an additional effect on the reading process, offering the opportunity to 'finish' the story and rewrite the script.

The narrative voice in *Scheherazade* makes it clear at certain points in the text that recognizable moments and scenarios from films are being invoked, in a postmodern manoeuvre which seeks to unmask the constructed nature of cultural representations. The direct mention of Roman Polanski and the pointed allusion to his films for instance, trigger thematic associations that highlight a textual concern with the representation of women in popular visual culture. Scheherazade, as narrator, sets the scene:

> Um mich abzulenken, gehe ich ins Kino. [...] Es ist ein Film von Roman Polanski über eine Frau, die einen toten Embryo in einem langen durchsichtigen Plastiksack hinter sich herzieht. [...] Der Schauplatz ist Wien, und der Film zeigt, wie sie den Embryo durch die Straßen und Gassen der Innenstadt schleift, an einem Tag im Herbst, an dem der schneidende Wiener Wind blast. [...] Sie ist schön, und könnte Cathérine Deneuve sein. (DnS p. 96-97)

The actor *could* be Deneuve, because this is a film made up by the narrator out of recognizable elements. Scheherazade observes the star with the name Deneuve entering a bar and speaking soothingly to the embryo which, as the tale progresses, increases in size and reaches monstrous proportions inside the bag. The names of Polanski and Deneuve together with the reference to a baby, invoke associations with Polanski's early films depicting beautiful, naïve women placed in vulnerable positions. Writing in the 1970s, Molly Haskell detected a misogynistic tone in Polanski's films, maintaining: 'His blonde heroines all become instruments of the devil and fulfil his fear of evil, just as

the lobotomized actresses he chooses to play them fulfil his ideas of women'.[127] *Scheherazade* evokes these associations with its mention of Polanski and Deneuve acting as reality indicators, and the depiction of the mother and baby providing a stock image.

However, strategic textual interventions distance the reader from this representation. The setting is Vienna not New York, in fact exact locations are given which conjure images in the minds of readers familiar with Vienna: 'Kärntner Straße', 'Blutgasse' and the streets around the 'Stephansdom' and 'Oper'. Any familiarity is exploded however by the image of the woman roaming the streets with an embryo which is increasing in size with every step. Scheherazade begins by watching the film and narrating its events, but the fourth wall, the invisible barrier which separates the inhabitants of the stage from the audience, is contravened, when characters from 'outside' the film, including the narrator herself, enter the bar-room setting, and the actors step out of their roles in the film to assume parts as characters in the text: 'Die Tür geht auf, und meine Wiener Freundin B. kommt ins Panigl, mich an der Hand hinter sich herziehend. Wir stellen uns an die Theke, und B. stolpert über den Sack und sagt zur Frau: Passen Sie doch auf Ihr Gepäck auf!' (DnS p. 97). Polanski himself enters the bar, 'unauffällig und schüchtern wie in seinem Film *Der Mieter*' (DnS p. 98), and engages in conversation with the actors. Furthermore, appearances prove deceptive, when the actress Cathérine

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127   Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape. The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, first pub. 1973), p. 346. In *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), a young housewife is impregnated by Satan and carries a satanic embryo inside her, while in the earlier *Repulsion* (1965), Cathérine Deneuve plays a psychotic young women with a pathological hatred of men who murders a would-be suitor. Completing the so-called 'Apartment Trilogy', is *The Tenant* (1976) in which Polanski himself plays a man driven mad in part by the suicide attempt of the woman who inhabited his apartment.

Deneuve turns out to be 'eine unbekannte Schauspielerin aus Tucson' (DnS p. 97-98). This confusion between fictional and 'real' renders problematic the construction of the subject in culture, with the text encouraging an acknowledgement that reality is socially and culturally produced. Specifically we are confronted with the positioning of women as helpless victims who lack agency. To some readers there is a chilling intertextual reminder here of the murder in 1969 of Polanski's wife, actress Sharon Tate, who was eight months pregnant when her body was discovered with a rope around her neck. In *Scheherazade*, the male embryo grows to a huge size and, throttles its mother with its umbilical cord. This nightmarish scenario that represents the mother as helpless victim is abruptly shattered and its status as fiction exposed, as Scheherazade returns to her status as narrator to conclude the scene with a humorous note, 'vielleicht bekommt der Embryo den begehrten Filmpreis für die beste männliche Nebenrolle' (DnS p. 100). The intertextual allusion to the actual murder of Tate which can be determined in the image of the dead, throttled mother with her embryo, ensures that the reality of female suffering is not lost. However, the text suggests that the 'female-as-victim' or 'instrument of the devil' image represented through the distorted lens of visual culture, must be resisted through retellings.

The plasticity of recognizable names evident in the Polanski tale continues when the narrator Scheherazade moves her stories out of Austrian landscapes and imagines herself on a road trip across North America. Coming upon the wild west town of Dodge City, Kansas, Scheherazade encounters a character with layers of cultural associations, namely the actor Clint Eastwood, 'von dem ich schon als Fünfzehnjährige geträumt, von dem ich jeden Film

gesehen hatte' (DnS p. 155), who is playing the role of 'der schwarze Reiter' (DnS p. 154).[128] In characterizing Eastwood as such, the text plays with the 'mysterious Race of black Enchanters' that preoccupied Lord Shaftsbury in the original tales, with Scheherazade as one of the 'silly Women' swept up by his passions.[129] Scheherazade insists that what happens next is *not* a fiction but truth, as she places herself at the mercy of the 'black Enchanter': 'Den Einwand, diese von fern gesehene Filmszene habe meine Phantasie ausgelöst, und was folgte, sei lediglich ein Trugbild dieser gewesen, kann ich entkräften' (DnS p. 155). Scheherazade describes the way Eastwood, in the role of the black rider, raped her: 'Es war eine formvollendete, professionelle Vergewaltigung. Der schwarze Reiter hatte genug Übung darin, denn seine Tätigkeit beschränkte sich auf das Verhindern von Raubüberfällen und auf Vergewaltigungen' (DnS p. 155). In an ironic and dangerous gesture, the text positions the narrator at the heart of one of the prevailing myths about sexual abuse, that women gain pleasure from rape: 'Hätte ich gewußt, wie schön eine Vergewaltigung sein kann, [...] dann hätte ich mich schon vorher in Situationen begeben, die eine solche ermöglicht hätten' (DnS pp. 153-154).

This is a problematic moment in the text, one that runs the risk of supporting the myth of female enjoyment of male aggression. It raises the question of whether poststructuralist textual strategies can ever be reconciled with feminist politics, indeed Mary Hawkesworth contends that, 'rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment [...] are not fictions or figurations

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[128] This legendary figure is known from Carl Maria's Weber's 1821 folk opera *Der Freischütz*, which concerns a marksman who makes a Faustian pact with the devil to swap his soul for magic bullets in order to win the hand of the beautiful maiden Agatha. Later readers of Faschinger's text may recognize the motif of the black rider from a 1993 album of that name by Tom Waits, based on his musical adaptation of Weber's opera.
[129] Warner, 'Travelling Text', p. 15.

that admit the free play of signification'.[130] But the way rape is presented in Scheherazade's fictional account problematizes the discourses surrounding it, and, I would argue, whilst allowing for ambiguity, does not allow the free play of signification. Rape as an event is real. It is Scheherazade's enjoyment which is imaginary, as fictitious and culturally constructed as the figure of 'der schwarze Reiter'. Layers of cultural associations serve to denaturalize the scene, and enable the reader to consider the way rape is represented, rather than questioning the reality of rape. Scheherazade's enjoyment is a fiction, and remains one tale amongst many.

Alongside Eastwood, 'der schwarzer Reiter', Deneuve and Polanski in the cultural pantheon that Faschinger puts on display, is a character the text self-consciously names 'Frau Christa T'. Far from existing in an historical vacuum, it is clear that a text is appreciated at various historical moments by readers who bring conscious and subconscious structures of expectation, from an awareness of feminist agendas like those sparked by the Polanski debate, to a knowledge of the socio-cultural climate. Described as Scheherazade's neighbour in Graz, Frau T. is a barely concealed allusion to the heroine of Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968), as the text plays games with readers familiar with Wolf's serious and reflective character. The name functions as an ironic counterpoint to the small-minded gossip who is accorded the name in Faschinger's text. Embodying parochial insularity, Faschinger's Frau T. talks obsessively about royalty and indulges in celebrity tittle-tattle and is thus far removed from her literary namesake. Indeed, the character is aligned with pernicious policies which attempt to eliminate foreign influences made up

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[130]   Mary E. Hawkesworth, *Beyond Oppression: Feminist Theory and Political Strategy* (London & New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 146.

of 'Jugos, Muftis und Spaghettifresser' (DnS p. 15), when two 'Herren von der Geheimpolizei' (DnS p. 15) visit her apartment to express their gratitude for her constant surveillance of the other residents. The text connects with the speech of fascism and ethnic hatred, as one of the men adopts a chilling, Hitler-style tone of voice and vocabulary: 'Zucht und Orrdnung. Bürrgerrr und Bürrgerrrinnen. Sicherheit und abermals Sicherheit. […] Der Ausländerrr. Der Juuude. Rraus. Rrraus. Volksgut und Volk und Staat und Volk' (DnS p. 16). The men insist that difference, otherness and foreignness, pose a threat to national security.

The contrast engendered by the naming of Scheherazade's nosy neighbour is clear. Wolf's Christa T. argues for an integrity which rejects the brutality of fascism and the rejection of difference, the very beliefs adhered to by the 'new' Christa T. and 'Geheimpolizei'. The suggestion that post-war Austrian society is still affected by latent fascistic tendencies, characterized by a mistrust of foreigners, is difficult to mistake in Faschinger's text, and the novel seems pessimistic in its lack of alternatives to this state of affairs. Frau T. and her policemen visitors are allowed their rant uninterrupted by the narrator. However, the closing words of this section of the text include an unexpected stage direction, 'Vorhang' (DnS p. 16). This, together with the policeman's mimetic speech patterns, drive home the constructed nature of the drama played out in Frau T.'s flat, and, by extension, the artificial racism, while not denying its very real existence. It must of course be noted that the references to the smartly dressed State officials visiting Frau T. will have very different resonances for later readers who may recall Christa Wolf's dealings with and

surveillance by the Stasi.[131] Hence intertexts deployed by authors to orchestrate particular responses in the implied reader may invite later, 'real' readers to activate meaning through the filter of their own experience, with different and unforeseen consequences. The shifting reader responses bring forward a network of responses which contribute to the productivity of the text.

Joining Frau T. as one of a number of unsympathetic female characters in Scheherazade's tales are diabolical maternal figures. As Maria-Regina Kecht acknowledges, characters such as these constitute a powerful trend in Austrian women's writing of the 1980s, with writers such as Jelinek and Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch casting light on the maternal figure's complicit role in patriarchal structures, ensuring gendered behaviour patterns are reproduced. Kecht comments: 'The values of obedience and good behaviour, as propagated by the dominant culture, are fostered and promoted by the mother, only to continue the pattern of subordination'.[132] Mothers are depicted as conditioned to act as guardians of patriarchal law, with their murmurings informing daughters what conventions demand. Kecht continues, 'this largely unconscious maternal collaboration with the existing structure results in female self-hate, the consequence of the experience of inferiority and social impotence'.[133] Faschinger's monstrous mother materializes in the guise of a grotesque 'Mutterpopanz' (DnS p. 101), with rolling eyes and a bobbing head. This is a

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[131] After unification it was reported that Wolf was visited in her flat on a number of occasions by the Stasi, prompting claims that she had worked as an informant for the GDR state. See Sabine Mische, 'Medienreaktionen auf Christa Wolfs Stasi-Vorgang', in *Die Debatte um Christa Wolf*, ed. by Astrid Kleinfeldt & Sabine Mische (Munich: Grin, 2006), pp. 22-24.

[132] Maria-Regina Kecht, '"In the Name of Obedience, Reason and Fear": Mother Daughter Relations in W.A. Mitgutsch and E. Jelinek', *The German Quarterly*, 62/3 (1989), 357-372 (p. 358). In Jelinek's *Die Klavierspielerin* for instance, the maternal figure is authorized by state and family to be 'Inquisitor und Erschießungskommando in einer Person'. Elfriede Jelinek, *Die Klavierspielerin* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2003, first pub. 1983), p. 7.

[133] Kecht, 'In the Name of Obedience', p. 358.

representative figure, an ever-present instrument of discipline. The evil-working, normally male, *Popanz* has a tradition in literature, arriving as a gigantic, threatening presence in Ludwig Tieck's drama *Der gestiefelte Kater* (1796) for instance, where 'der Popanz' is an evil landowner who can transform himself into any creature he desires. Employed by Peter Weiss in the play *Gesang vom Lusitanischen Popanz* (1965), the gigantic figure is constructed out of scrap metal, and is intended to depict the hollowness of Iberian fascism. Faschinger mobilizes the horror properties of the figure, but transforms it into female form, as the embodiment of an institution that keeps the daughters in line with the laws of patriarchy.

The character Scheherazade's friend B. traces her obsessive behaviour and constant urge to clean and tidy back to the 'Popanz-Mutter', who greets her daughter with a disapproving roll of the eyes: 'Vielleicht hat es damit zu tun, daß die Mutter, soweit sie zurückdenken kann, bei den lächerlichsten Anlässen die Augen gerollt hat. [...] Sie merkte, daß sie sich schon sehr ans Augenrollen gewöhnt hatte und bei allem, was sie tat, mit dieser Reaktion rechnete' (DnS pp. 101-2). The eye-rolling Popanz has been internalized, fulfilling a function in society, and instilling in the daughter certain required standards of obedience and a sense of inadequacy. B. is imprisoned in a knot of oppression, so much so that she becomes an accomplice: 'Also gab sie der Mutter Grund, ihr ganzes Säuglingsalter und ihre frühe Kindheit, Vorpubertät und Nachpubertät hindurch die Augen zu rollen' (DnS p. 102).

In its presentation of the 'Mutterpopanz', *Scheherazade* does not rely on a single, unified image, instead borrowing from a range of cultural texts and myths:

> Dieser Popanz ist eine Mischung aus einem weiblichen Geist aus der Flasche, einem großen rosa Luftballon mit aufgemalten Augen, einer zotteligen Ziegenbockmaske aus einem Tiroler Perchtenlauf, einem bunten, wackelnden chinesischen Drachen aus Papier und einer streng und stumpfsinnig blickenden Pappmaché-Madonna aus einer italienischen Prozession. (DnS p. 101)

The juxtaposition of the diverse cultural materials that make up the 'Mutterpopanz' lend it the quality of a surrealist installation, a figure of cultural exchange.[134] The text suggests that the monstrous mother is a representation which is present in many cultures and not bound by time or space. As such, it is difficult to resist. Indeed, no resistance is offered to this figure, and B. remains trapped, with Scheherazade voicing her own resignation: 'Doch für eine Änderung des bestehenden Zustandes ist es längst zu spät' (DnS p. 102). What *does* remain is to articulate the situation on behalf of the silenced daughters, those who, like B., have no language to express anything other than the status-quo. The hope remains that, as in the original *Nights*, those who hear the tale will undergo a process of recognition and a transformation of outlook.

Survival of the female voice

Faschinger's use of Scheherazade's narrative voice underscores the text's feminist agenda, for if we follow Weedon's assertion that subjectivity is an active process, 'reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak',[135] then story-telling is part of the ongoing process of subject construction. The novel thus draws attention to the very process of subject constitution when it

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[134] The 'Perchtenlauf' is a Tyrolean winter tradition which involves a procession of grotesque masked figures that walk the countryside with the aim of banishing evil spirits, while the genie in the bottle is a figure that appears in the original *Nights*. In parts of Italy, the veneration of the Mary figure involves the procession of a paper maché figure through the streets on a cart which is eventually torn to shreds by the crowd looking for relics.

[135] Weedon, *Feminist Practice*, p. 33.

withdraws from its female protagonist the narrative 'ich' and Scheherazade becomes a 'sie' in her own stories. This mirrors the transference of the narrative voice in the traditional *Nights*, where Sharazad becomes the subject of the frame-story. Here, an anonymous narrator tells of Sharazad's relationship with the sultan and her decision to attempt to prolong her life through story-telling.[136] The narrative disruption in Faschinger's Scheherazade tales exposes the female as a subject within narrative, one who performs the cultural scripts which inform and produce identities. The reader's attention is drawn directly to the loss of status of the narrating 'ich' in a metafictional manoeuvre which explores the text's own meaning-making processes, the production of subject identities, and Scheherazade's life as textually constructed.

An example of this occurs when from her sofa, Scheherazade recounts how she turned the radio on and listened to a play in which she is a character:

> Ich habe etwas zu spät eingeschaltet, bin gleich mitten in der Geschichte, die von einer schönen Frauenstimme vorgelesen wird: '... fühlt sich die Frau nach dem entsetzlichen Ende dieser Liebe nicht fähig, ihr Leben weiter zu führen, wie sie es bisher getan hat. [...] Über das Hotel und den Friedhof führte eine breite Straße, deren Verkehr alles vibrieren läßt. Die Frau, die sich in der Rezeption als Scheherazade Hedwig Moser, Staatsbürgerschaft: österreichisch, eingetragen hat, geht durch die Stadt, ohne Stadtplan. (DnS pp. 79-80)

Scheherazade is a subject within the action, which has an unsettling effect on the reader, for as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan remarks, texts that play with narrative levels in this way, 'question the borderline between reality and fiction

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[136]   As a character in a frame-tale Sharazad is, therefore, both an intradiegetic narrator in so far as she appears as a character in the primary narrative, and heterodiegetic because she goes on to narrate stories in which she does not appear herself. These terms are employed by Genette to describe different narratological levels. Genette clarifies his terms with reference to the *Nights*: 'Scheherazade is an intradiegetic narrator because before uttering a single word she is already a character in a narrative that is not her own; but since the story she tells is not about herself, she is at the same time a heterodiegetic narrator'. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cornell UP, 1988, first pub. 1983), p. 84.

or [...] suggest that there might be no reality apart from its narration'.[137] The protagonist is presented as a product of a fictional story, while the reader is placed in the participatory position of considering the very narrative experience itself, its boundaries, and the way we are all, like Scheherazade, implicated in narrative whilst imagining ourselves choreographers of our scripts. In the radio play, the Scheherazade character is accompanied by 'de[m] Sänger Tom Waits' on a tour of the 'Höllenstadt Dis' (DnS p. 80), and is thus positioned as a modern day Virgil accompanying Dante on his spiritual journey. Dis is employed as a representation of iconic modern cities: 'Einmal gehen sie über eine eiserne Brücke, die über die Seine, den East River, den Main führt. [...] Mit der Subway, U-Bahn, Métro, Underground fahren sie zurück ins Zentrum' (DnS pp. 80-81). The city is a modern-day hell:

> Dann sehen sie einen Mann, der statt eines Auges eine offene Wunde, einen roten Krater hat. [...] Als Tom Waits auf die Toilette gehen will und die Tür öffnet, fällt ihm ein lallender Mann mit einer Nadel im Arm entgegen. Lachend macht Waits die Tür wieder zu. (DnS p. 81)

Within this infernal location, Scheherazade has relinquished her status as narrator, the 'ich' giving way to 'sie', or 'die Frau aus Österreich' (DnS p. 81): 'Sie geht in die Richtung, in der die Vororte liegen, vorbei an Plakatwänden mit zerrissenen, besprühten Plakaten, an Bahngeleisen, zwischen denen graues Gras wächst, an stillgelegten Fabriken. Sie merkt, daß sie sich verlaufen hat' (DnS p. 80). The 'ich' has lost its status as narrator, and simultaneously the 'sie' of the scene is, literally and metaphorically, disorientated. She is 'ohne Stadtplan', and roaming in dangerous territory, around the outskirts of the city and through the landscape of a lower hell, which is populated by people that

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[137] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction, Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1989, first pub. 1983), p. 95.

society groups together and pushes to the margins, the homeless, criminals, prostitutes and down and outs.

Confronted by this vision of hopelessness and suffering, the Tom Waits character assumes an impassive smile and sings lines from songs, immune to the effects of the hellish scenes of suicide and torture going on around him. Scheherazade and Waits perform scripts and inhabit familiar roles which are constructs and simplifications, Waits as the musician who sits at the piano 'und singt bis zum Morgen' (DnS p. 82), and Scheherazade as 'die traurige Frau', eventually abandoned by Waits who makes off with another woman. That this is a performance is foregrounded by the text, which draws attention to its artificial, scripted nature: 'Das war die Geschichte von Tom Waits und Scheherazade Hedwig Moser, ausgestrahlt von Ö 3 an einem Donnerstag' (DnS p. 82). The reader, like the protagonist, has been drawn into a world of representation, but is jolted out of it again by a reminder that this is, after all, fiction. Faschinger makes it clear to her reader that however seductive the stories or familiar the names, being submerged into the fictitious world of cultural constructs may involve being in a state of symbolic sleep, such as the beautiful *Dornröschen* in the tower. It is a dangerous, non-productive state to be in, as her protagonist makes this clear: 'Schlaf kann ich mir keinen leisten – ein kurzes Einnicken, und Schahriar würde sich auf mich stürzen. [...] denn er ist ununterbrochen hinter mir her' (DnS p. 84). The narrator cannot descend into a state of somnambulance within familiar tales or the forces of patriarchy would be after her. Similarly the text discourages a slippage into passivity on behalf of the reader, who, due to discursive disruptions, is involved in the play of difference.

Like Tom Waits, another familiar name, that of the artist Christo, is introduced as an imaginative concept in the text, one that is manoeuvred through a fictitious landscape in order to create tensions and open up textual meanings. Familiar to a 1980's readership for his wrapping up of bridges, landmarks and islands, including an enveloped *Pont Neuf* in Paris in 1985, Christo enters one of the tales as Scheherazade's lover. Scheherazade again foregoes her status as narrator and for a while, she is unable to participate in her own self-construction. It is left to her sister to tell the story of Scheherazade's encounter with the artist:

> Scheherazade Hedwig Moser spricht mit Christo Javatscheff über Städteplanung, und als sie ihren blaugelben Blick in seine unergründlichen grünbraunen Augen taucht, ihn zögernd wieder herauszieht und über das markante Profil, das energische Kinn und die sehnigen Hände gleiten läßt, ist es vollends um sie geschehen. (DnS p. 43)

The first person pronoun is replaced by 'sie', the female object which is affected by, but does not determine, the action. This loss of authority materializes physically in a scenario which constructs Scheherazade as an object of male art, when the protagonist is wrapped up by Christo and turned into a cultural artefact. Scheherazade is prevented from moving or talking, as Christo 'entwickelte sich zu einem besessenen Menschenverpacker' (DnS p. 48). The reader is hereby presented with a powerful image of the female body objectified and silenced, controlled by the male artistic hand and rendered passive. Faschinger toys here with those prior Scheherazade texts and adaptations which depict her as the 'Other', as the narrator loses her voice and status as 'ich' and is cast as a character in the narrative rather than as the controlling voice. Indeed, the process of submission is halted only when Scheherazade takes up the narrative again to continue the tale and imagine the

ending. In Scheherazade's version, Christo is arrested and taken away to 'eine Anstalt für abnorme Rechtsbrecher' (DnS p. 49). Scheherazade's voice has asserted its authority and provided an escape route.

It is not only art that threatens the female body and consequently female agency. A variety of techniques are on display by which the female body is disciplined into submission and silence. Religious confession is foregrounded as a particularly powerful weapon, as wielded by the Catholic Church. It is a practice which subjects the new Scheherazade to the paternalistic and ultimately condemnatory judgements of a higher power. In one tale, Scheherazade is in front of the 'Inquisitor' figure, an embodiment of patriarchal power who assumes a paternalistic tone and to whom she confesses her sexual encounters: 'Der Inquisitor sitzt im Beichtstuhl […]. Hast du gesündigt? Wie oft? Wann? Mit wem? [...]. Du wirst auf den Knien um die Kirche rutschen müssen, mein Kind, öfter als einmal, fürchte ich, sagte der Inquisitor mild' (DnS p. 139). When Scheherazade confesses to numerous sexual acts with a variety of men, the inquisitor responds by insisting on a litany of oral acts of atonement: 'Meinen ganzen Hostienvorrat wirst du aufessen müssen, fürchte ich. Ich werde mich dir gegenüber an den Tisch setzen und darauf achten, daß du auch wirklich alle Hostien ißt' (DnS p. 139). Not only Holy Communion wafers, but religious objects must be consumed, as the scene descends into farce:

> Und zum Dessert wirst du wohl auch noch deine Firmungskerze verspeisen müssen, da sehe ich keine andere Möglichkeit, sagt der Inquisitor mild, und alle Heiligenbildchen, die dir der Dechant im Lauf der Jahre als Belohnung für deine Kirchgänge geschenkt hat. [...] und wenn die Hartgesottenheit dann immer noch nicht von dir gewichen ist, ißt du auch noch das violette Karfreitags-Altartuch. (DnS p. 139)

This attempt at force-feeding Scheherazade the sacraments of the church can be viewed as a literal manifestation of Mary Daly's contention that women are forced into subjection by means of powerful religious symbols, 'that invade our beings from both sides'.[138] Daly remarks that women's bodies are subject to the church's desire to control and regulate sexuality and reproduction. The female voice has been silenced through religious laws which prohibit women from assuming key positions within the church hierarchy and therefore from assuming a voice, other than in the confessional. Faschinger's protagonist defies the priest, refuses to digest the sacraments and interjects in the inquisitor's monologic discourse. She lists her, albeit fantasy-driven, sexual activities with men from diverse social and cultural spheres: 'Soll ich Ihnen die sündigen Geschichten von [...] Clint Eastwood und mir, dem Hopi-Indianer Tom und mir und Johannes dem Täufer und mir erzählen?' (DnS p. 140) The female voice and the female body reassert themselves to defeat symbols and sacraments that threaten to overpower them, and to illuminate the forces that lie behind such subjugation, the paternalistic but ultimately restricting and damaging laws of patriarchy.

Scheherazade's insistence on being heard in this episode sits in contrast to a number of silent female figures in the text, the counterparts to the sultan's murdered wives in the *Nights*, those who are never accorded a voice, but merely function as a detail in the plot of the frame-tale. The female victims who haunt the pages of the modern tales are women whose voices are made conspicuous by their absence. Faschinger's women are presented in the traditional roles of farm girls and housewives, whose fate lies not under their

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[138]   Mary Daly, *God Beyond the Father. Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985, first pub. 1973), p. 138.

control but is determined by social structures and institutions, whether educational, religious or familial. Scheherazade tells of how the mute farm girls who populate rural Austria exist as domestically competent, but barely alive, wives, 'tot gingen sie zwischen Küche und Kammer hin und her, als lächelnde Leichen legten sie den Knechten die Knödel auf den Teller' (DnS pp. 72-73). This elevated, ballad-like language sits ironically against the muteness of the women who have no language of their own, apart from the language which frames them in the narrative. Their existence as vocal individuals has been denied by a system which is embodied by the Schahriar figure, and endorsed by a triumvirate of parochial farmers, educators, and priests who ensure they are hemmed in on all sides:

> Unter dem braunen Kärntneranzug des Direktors, unter den ledernen Kniehosen der Bauern verbargen sich die olivenhäutigen Könige, die längst beschlossen hatten, daß die Bauerntöchter keinesfalls lesen und schreiben und sich keinesfalls eine Sprache aneignen sollten. (DnS p. 72)

The text's feminist agenda illuminates in extreme form the crisis faced by women who are unable to express any sense of self which reaches beyond those projections of womanhood propagated by social institutions such as the church and family, women who have been raised in social conditions which do not allow them to acquire a language with which to express anything other than the status-quo.

In a similar vein, Scheherazade's friend B., expresses a monologic discourse of domesticity which shows her caught in a net woven by the self-imposed rules of housekeeping, a net which excludes dialogue. As previously demonstrated, these are rules which have been whispered by generations of eye-rolling mother figures. B. explains her domestic routine to Scheherazade

during a one-way telephone conversation: '[d]ann wischte ich die Fliesen und den Herd. [...] Dann stellte ich den Tisch und die Sessel ins Vorzimmer [...]. Dann stellte ich die Kakteentöpfe wieder zurück auf das Fensterbrett [...]' (DnS p. 38). Scheherazade fights for her voice to be heard above the torrent, 'B. atmet auf [...] und in diesem Sekundenbruchteil gelingt es mir, das Wort zu ergreifen' (*ibid.*). B.'s positioning within a discourse which determines her identity limits her access to a different means of expression.

By introducing the character B., *Scheherazade* can be read as partaking in a commentary on the sexual division of labour which bears the hallmarks of second wave feminism, in as much as B.'s entire identity is that of the housewife and regulated by the mundane repetitions of the domestic space. The text sets up an opposition between the public and the domestic spheres by recounting how in her youth, B. had left home and joined a circus: 'Sie zog also mit dem italienischen Wanderzirkus Franzetti durch Südösterreich, die Ostschweiz und Norditalien', before the discourses of feminine duty ingrained in her, reasserted control: 'Doch die unglückselige Erziehung, die sie genossen hatte, erwies sich auf die Dauer als stärker: sie begann im Wohnwagen aufzuräumen [...] sie tat es wie ein Automat, wie eine Schlafwandlerin' (DnS p. 105). The implication is that leaving the domestic space is a feminist aspiration, that the home signifies a shrunken world, with the public sphere offering possibilities of escape. With this opposition, Faschinger's text can be read as a product of its time, and a feminist discourse occupied with dispensing with the entrapments of domesticity. Indeed Faschinger's figures seem to inhabit the world of the bored housewife as depicted in Betty Friedan's 1963 study *The Feminine Mystique*, which argued that the fact that women were kept

from developing their full human capacities was 'the problem that has no name'.[139] Faschinger clearly discerned this female predicament to be still pertinent twenty years later, and her novel unambiguously sets out to name the problem, establishing its agenda by spelling out the nature of the discursive web in which women like B. are entangled. The discourses of domesticity wrap themselves tightly around the female subject leaving her silenced, like Christo's temporary wrapping of Scheherazade.

Under the system of oppression described in the novel, women themselves cooperate with the forces of domination; they are not only victims of patriarchal law, but co-conspirators. When 'die Mütter' whisper the laws of feminine behaviour into the ear of Scheherazade, a split occurs in the female self which displays two conflicting sides – the side that lives an independent life and recognizes the dangers of being caught in the patriarchal net, and that which resides in the Austrian village of Kirchdorf, birthplace of the new Scheherazade's father.[140] This latter self is one limited by the 'Einflüsterungen der Mütter' (DnS p. 169), the internalized maternal insinuations which demanded conformity. These voices are heard loud and clear by Scheherazade, and for the reader they are made impossible to ignore, with capitalizations drawing the eye towards the key words of patriarchal law: 'Begib dich an den Ort, wo du HINGEHÖRST, nimm endlich den Platz ein, der dir BESTIMMT ist' (*ibid.*). One version of Scheherazade acquiesces and marries the chimney sweep Otto O., assuming the socially sanctioned role of 'GUTE FRAU'. The new name the character is given, Scheherazade O., indicates that her identity

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[139]   Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1997, first pub. 1963), p. 57.

[140]   'Kirchdorf' is a common place name in Austria and as a word composed of church and village, acts as a moniker in the text for insularity and conservative values.

has been abandoned to that of her husband, with O. signalling a void, and the full stop, as with the friend B. evoking the character's confinement within strict parameters.[141]

The obliteration of the subject is evident when the protagonist goes to live in her father's birthplace, in order to carry out a role within the regulated spheres of marriage and motherhood. Appropriately, the first person narrative is replaced by the third: 'Ja, ich will Otto O., dem Rauchfangkehrer, eine GUTE FRAU sein, sagte sie. [...] Sie kocht drei Mahlzeiten täglich, wäscht die schwarze Wäsche des Rauchfangkehrers, hält die Wohnung in Ordnung und versorgt das Kind' (DnS p. 171). The character agrees to abide by the rules, and the narrative form with its reported distance, enacts the narrator's loss of agency. This illuminates a version of Scheherazade who, like B., is prone to the influence of certain damaging cultural practices.

The instruction manual available to this version of Scheherazade that enables her to understand her role, is an edition of Rosa Lindenmeyer's *Das goldene Hausfrauenbuch* (DnS p. 171) which was first published in Switzerland in 1934.[142] The intertextual incorporation of the *Hausfrauenbuch* into *Scheherazade* suggests the values of obedience and submissiveness demanded in the 1930s and 1940s continue to regulate personal behaviour. *Scheherazade* not only quotes passages from the *Hausfrauenbuch*, 'Sie sorgt

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[141]	The name 'Scheherazade O.' also begs an intertextual association with Pauline Réage's 1954 erotic novel *L'histoire d'O*, and the later film adaptation, *The Story of O*, (1975, dir. Just Jaeckin), whose themes of sexual subjugation and loss of voice resonate with Faschinger's text, in less extreme form. The protagonist of Réage's novel learns that to please her lover she must freely give up every part of her identity, indeed she is regarded by various lovers as a collection of orifices rather than an individual. Chained and physically abused, O willingly submits to her sexual domination. See Pauline Réage, *The Story of O*, trans. by Sabine d'Estree (New York: Grove Press, 1965, first pub. 1954).

[142]	See Rosa Lindenmeyer, *Das goldene Hausfrauenbuch. 2000 Ratschläge für die praktische Hausfrau, zur besten und billigsten Haushaltsführung in Stadt und Land* (Zürich: Wehle und Höfels, 1934).

für alle und das Gedeihen aller ist ihr schönster Lohn' (DnS p. 171), but provides a footnote with real publication details and page numbers, which has a double, contradictory function within the text. A footnote indicates the narrative has its interest in a 'reality' outside the text, whilst retaining an estranging function that reinforces its fictionality. As Shari Benstock remarks, using footnotes in fiction is a well-established convention to question the borders between fiction and non-fiction: 'Footnotes do not keep the text within its boundaries, locked into its narrative form; they insist on taking it always "out of bounds", taking the reader with them. They resist the very authority they purportedly serve'.[143] From this perspective, referencing the *Hausfrauenbuch* as a footnote can be considered a distancing technique which intrudes into the reading process, resists the authority of the non-fictional publication by positioning it within a fictional text, and blurs the boundaries between the two.

Other sources of information and role-models available to the Scheherazade O. incarnation are limited to lifestyle magazines and the Bible, which group together to form a disciplinary force. The subject positions offered to women by the publications are spelled out: 'In Kirchdorf gibt es außer der Bibel kein Buch, es gibt nur Frauenzeitschriften, FRAU IM GLÜCK, FRAU IM SPIEGEL, FRAU IM HAUS' (DnS pp. 172-173). Popular publications act as conditioning tools for the perfection of female behaviour, and the full force of the ideology inscribed within them is brought home through perpetual capitalization: 'GUTE FRAU', 'EHELICHE PFLICHTEN', 'BRÄUTLICHE UNSCHULD', 'GEORDNETE BAHNEN (DnS p. 167 & p. 170).

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[143]   Shari Benstock, 'At the Margin of Discourse', *PMLA*, 98 (1983), 204-225 (p. 220).

In order to undercut the so-called 'natural' roles of women as promoted in these publications and their vocabulary of limiting domesticity, they are juxtaposed with allusions to other gendered paradigms of femininity regarded as deviant or unnatural. For instance, when Scheherazade O. murders her husband Otto by throwing a hair-dryer into his bath and electrocuting him, the protagonist is cast in a role which transgresses the expectations of the nurturing female. Scheherazade O. becomes a modern day Clytemnestra, killing her spouse in the bath in order to be with her lover: 'Sie täuscht einen Unfall vor, aber ein voyeuristisch veranlagter Nachbar hat die Tat durch das Badezimmerfenster beobachtet. [...] Sie muß vor der wütenden Menge in Schutz genommen werden (Hang her high!)' (DnS p. 176). The contemporary revisioning of the powerful figure of the murderess is joined by a second paradigm enshrined in culture, with the phrase given in English within the text, 'Hang her high!' providing a further intertextual avenue. The phrase recalls the declaration in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* condemning the women accused of witchcraft: 'Hang them high over the town!'[144] In Kirchdorf, as in Miller's Salem, the protestations of the crowd rise to an angry crescendo against the women who are deemed to be subversive and dangerous. Witches or murderesses, these powerful female figures are examples of agency standing in opposition to patriarchal control.

Solutions to antagonisms and contradictions within the female subject as manifested by Faschinger's protagonist are not offered by the novel, but neither are the contradictions rigid and immutable. By presenting Scheherazade's movement within the subject positions of housewife, murderer

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[144]   Arthur Miller, *The Crucible* (London: Methuen, 2010, first pub. 1953), p. 130.

or witch, none of which are desirable, the text acknowledges that conflict is inherent in identity, indeed that female identities are constituted by conflict.

Border crossings

Faschinger's *Scheherazade* clearly foregrounds an exchange between multiple signifiers which constitute femininity. With the figure of B. as a point of comparison, there exists within the text the notion that female agency is in flux and relational in contrast to a fixed and immutable centre. This fluidity and destabilization of the dominant centre characterizes the text in both form and content, and chimes with the original *Nights*. Here, the sultan's harem was a paradoxical space, one of imprisonment where Sharazad was frantically attempting to stay alive, but where the imagination could roam free. In the fantasy world, the narrator could engage with a diverse range of characters, from thieves to genies, monsters to spirits. Faschinger too makes available a narrator whose physical space is limited, but who resides in alternative spaces of the imagination. The narrator voices a strong desire for 'Körperlosigkeit' (DnS p. 56), a state which champions the power of fantasy, but Scheherazade is not partaking in an act of disengagement from the world. As shown, her speech acts challenge the location of identities within positions that are socially and culturally overdetermined. Borders which hem in and suppress can be made dynamic and flexible, and indeed the transgression of borders, Faschinger has maintained, constitutes 'eigentlich das wichtigste Thema' in her writing.[145] Her texts interact creatively with physical boundaries and discursive borders, simultaneously dislocating themselves from predetermined subjectivities.

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[145]   Roethka, 'Lilian Faschinger im Gespräch', p. 91.

The modern Scheherazade performs border crossings on multiple discursive levels. Her physical appearance embodies pluralism, having inherited one blue eye from her Austrian father, and a yellow eye which 'geht auf meine Großmutter mütterlicherseits zurück' (DnS p. 14). The duality embodied by the protagonist and her moving feast of stories are set against rigid power hierarchies which seek to exclude on the basis of difference, and which legitimize and authorize discrimination. In one of Scheherazade's stories, she and her sister experiment with Austrian and Persian music whilst busking on the streets of Graz, and encounter the 'flaschengrün gekleidete Beamte der Exekutive' (DnS p. 32). These representatives of the dominant centre, similar in appearance and tone to the men who visit Frau T., regard an appreciation of other cultures as a direct challenge to a 'pure' Austrian musical heritage and the values which it is perceived to embody. The reaction of the 'Beamte' is intractable: 'Wir dulden hier keine Zweigleisigkeit, kein Verwischen der völkischen Merkmale. [...] Sie wollen doch nicht unser österreichisches Kulturgut lächerlich machen? Sie wollen doch nicht unser väterliches Erbe in den Schmutz ziehen?' (DnS p. 32). The word 'völkisch' has multiple resonances here. Redolent of the conservative movements of the nineteenth century which aimed at promoting a supposedly authentic national culture and racial identity, associations with far-right movements of the 1930s are also triggered. A rejection of cultural 'contamination' and an emphasis on unbroken traditions of nationhood featured large in 'völkisch' trends of the Nazi era and formed the core of racist ideology. In *Scheherazade*, the 'Beamte' of Graz are intent on defending an indigenous Austrian 'Kulturgut' against incursions from the outside, instructing Scheherazade: 'Entscheiden Sie sich

entweder für die persische oder für die österreichische Volksmusik (DnS p. 32). The Austria constructed by the text is in thrall to its past and harbouring a deep mistrust of cultural amalgamations.

In response, Faschinger incorporates characters whose names offer their own versions of cultural crossovers and open up intertextual avenues for readers to explore. The novel links in to a specific cultural era in Austria through the name it gives to Scheherazade's father, Hans Moser. This is a culturally loaded reference to the Austrian actor described by Franzobel as a 'Wiener Charlie Chaplin, Volksschauspieler schlechthin, der wie kein anderer den typischen Österreicher zum Ausdruck brachte'.[146] The name connects the text to an Austrian-specific, highly conservative culture, one which gives the impression of Austria as a country striving to recapture a golden past. Hans Moser therefore functions as, 'a convenient reference code to an elaborate set of associations in the reader's and/or writers mind',[147] in this instance a reference to the light romantic comedy genre the *Wiener Film* of the period between the 1920s and the 1950s. While Scheherazade provides the pleasure of recognition for readers familiar with the reference, it simultaneously rips the name from its social and cultural coordinates, attaching it not to a Viennese cultural icon, but to an unremarkable construction worker from rural Carinthia: 'Unser Vater Hans Moser, aus Kirchdorf in Kärnten gebürtig' (DnS p. 11). Faschinger's Hans Moser is a character who moves away from Austrian

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[146]   Franzobel, *Premiere für Franzobels "Moser"-Stück*, (24/02/2010), <http://wien.orf.at/stories/423244>, [accessed 27/09/2010].
Recent readers of *Scheherazade* may be familiar with Franzobel's play *Moser oder Die Passion des Wochenend-Wohnzimmergottes* which premiered in Vienna in February 2010. The old and the young Moser meet together at a tavern in a heaven full of Nazis, where they defend their actions during the war. Franzobel remarks on Moser's war-time involvement with National Socialism as one of mutual need: 'Die Nazizeit brachte ihn, den Unpolitischen, steil nach oben. Er wurde bestverdienender Schauspieler, wurde von den Massen geliebt und verkörperte das minimal widerständige Österreich'. See Franzobel, *Premiere*.
[147]   Jacobs, *The Character of Truth*, p. 131.

cultural confines, leaving Austria, marrying a foreign woman and therefore performing the cultural crossover so despised by the 'Beamte' of Graz.

It is pertinent to raise the question of how far the text succeeds in shining a light on familiar fictions and their ideological import and undermining fixed positions of nation and gender. After all, this thesis argues that Faschinger's intertextual plots set out to perform this very task. Accompanying the fragmentation of familiar narratives and the deliberate decentring of the subject, is the constant voice of an effective female agent. This does not preclude the narrator from unreliability however. Indeed, the narrative voice questions its own integrity, when it wonders 'wie befriedigend ist meine Beziehung zu Christo, von der ich nicht weiß, ob sie je bestanden hat' (DnS p. 56). This unreliability is coded in the grammar of the text, which is frequently framed in reported speech rather than as direct quotation, while uncertainty is explicitly flagged up through use of the subjunctive, for instance, 'Hätte Tante Steffi davon erzählt, so hätte sie vermutlich gesagt [...]' (DnS p. 75). The reliability of the narrative position is questioned in relation to the tales it is telling, and the narrator admits to relying on conjecture and second-hand accounts.

Family stories exist 'in verschiedenen Versionen, in der Version meines Vaters, in der durch die Version meines Vaters gefilterten Version meiner Mutter' (DnS p. 64), so the truth is available only in competing narratives. Indeed the epigram from Ödön von Horváth's *Der ewige Spießer* that begins the novel, 'Es schlug elf. "Es ist schon zwölf", sagte der Graf, denn er war sehr verlogen,' creates the climate for a novel in which different truth claims are endowed with equal status. This does raise the issue of the threat the text poses

to its own feminist purpose, for if it constantly challenges perspectives, can a consistent feminist agenda survive? There is a distinct lack of positive female role-models in the text to counterbalance the negative images of the monstrous mother figures, the obsessive housewives and the silenced victims of patriarchy. Furthermore, Scheherazade never leaves the comfort of her static physical position on the sofa. Herein lies part of the novel's resistance, in that it hands over responsibility to the reader to continue, with its concluding words, 'das ist DEIN PLATZ'. The text is not alleging that it, in itself, can effect change, but, like the tales of the original Scheherazade, the power to transform existing conditions lies with the one who hears. Competing forms of subjectivity are presented to the reader without any gaining overall power, instead they 'pass through the reader's mind as an ever expanding network of connections'.[148] They offer the opportunity to realize the political interests and social implications of particular versions of meaning.

Yet, as if working against its own project of plurality, fixed and unreflected national caricatures emerge with disturbing frequency in the text. When the novel was published in 1986, the Iranian Islamic revolution was fresh in the public consciousness and the Iran-Iraq War was in full swing. The text's response is to summon a world of Oriental tyrants who stone to death chador-dressed women for adultery, in a society which only grants permission for sexual promiscuity to its men, while the *Koran*, is dismissed by Scheherazade's Persian mother as 'nutzlos' (DnS p. 89). Indeed, the 'Persia' offered by the text fits the myth of the Orient as Edward Said saw it being depicted, as 'static, frozen, fixed eternally. The very possibility of

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[148]   Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 114 & p. 115.

development, transformation, human movement – in the deepest sense of the word' is denied.[149] The East is reduced to a few characteristics and complexity is collapsed into a unified vision, in contrast to the different spaces and characters which occupy the varied and complex 'Austrian' narratives in the text.

Faschinger's novel can thus be considered, to a limited degree at least, to be complicit in representing what is commonly 'known' about the Orient by a western readership. Hence, and ironically enough in a text that places so much emphasis on fluid identities, fixed discursive boundaries are discernible through an 'othering', especially when the image of the Orient is compared to other instances of national stereotyping. Being married to a Welshman for instance, Scheherazade's Aunt Steffi voices powerful notions about a Welsh national character: 'Sie habe gebebt vor innerem Groll, wenn sie sie Tee trinken sah und walisische Lieder singen hörte' (DnS pp. 60-61), and, in a tone reminiscent of Bernhard, Scheherazade describes Kirchdorf, where 'neunzig Prozent seiner Bewohner hinsichtlich ihrer Intelligenz an der Grenze zwischen Debilität und Imbezilität anzusiedeln sind' (DnS p. 60). This dogmatic lack of complexity with regards to national stereotyping is destabilized through techniques which invite the reader to question these apparent affirmations. After her tirade against 'die Waliser' for instance, Aunt Steffi bursts into laughter, an action which her husband regards as a threat, as he desperately tries to quell her mirth:

> Nachdem sie die Soße gekostet und diese so anders geschmeckt habe, als sie es sich vorgestellt hatte, [...], habe es wie früher um ihre Mundwinkel zu zucken, dann zu kitzeln angefangen. […] danach sei

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[149]   Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994, first pub 1978), p. 208.

> kein Halten mehr gewesen, und ihr Gelächter habe sich über den festlich gedeckten Tisch gewälzt. (DnS p. 62)

The implication is that national stereotyping has comic value. The power of the caricature of 'die Waliser' is uncrowned by Aunt Steffi's resistant mirth, as the text invites the reader to laugh along with the character and her own ludicrous statements.

What do emerge unambiguously from the text are versions of the female self which engage with and operate in the world, albeit as products of the creative imagination. Alongside postmodern playfulness and ontological uncertainty, a clear agenda infuses the novel. The scope of intertextual allusions, those which anticipate the interests of a late 1980's readership and those which reach beyond this, have a political impact in forcing a reconsideration of implicit ideologies. The encounters between familiar texts in unfamiliar contexts and the reader, encourage a process of 'perpetual confrontation',[150] with mutually productive results. Readers of the novel in 2012 may arrive equipped with knowledge of Roman Polanski's arrest in 2009 in connection with the case of statutory rape of a minor in 1977, which led to self-imposed exile from the US. And in a post 9/11 world, the images of Arabic tyrants will have profoundly different resonances to those available to a 1980's readership. The reader's horizon of expectation, first sparked by the novel's seductive title, is as Jauß explained, 'varied, corrected, altered'[151] by temporally shifting moments of recognition and subversion. The text is constantly enhanced by the experience and understanding brought to it.

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[150] Jauß, 'Literary History', p. 41.
[151] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

2.2 From Movie Star to Cyborg: Streeruwitz's *Norma Desmond. A Gothic SF-Novel* (2002)

First published in an anthology of science fiction stories in 2000, *Norma Desmond. A Gothic SF-Novel* indicates within its title a collision of intertexts: 1950s Hollywood movie star meets popular pulp fiction. What Genette termed 'a relationship of copresence between two texts'[152] allows for openings in the epistemological field of the novel, with an on-going conversation between film intertexts and gothic and science fiction narratives driving the plot and enabling Streeruwitz's thematic concerns to be interrogated. In a similar fashion to Faschinger's *Scheherazade*, Streeruwitz's strategy in *Norma Desmond.* is to highlight the constructed nature of representations and hence to undermine categorical claims to totalizing truths by drawing on a cultural reservoir, borrowing the name Norma Desmond from the classic black and white Hollywood movie *Sunset Boulevard*.[153] The novel is interwoven with filmic associations which expand out from this primary source to incorporate numerous cultural references that intersect and resonate with meanings and implied connections. In this way the text provokes responses to representations of gender, sexuality and age in cultural memory and encourages a consideration of how those representations continue to be perpetuated in the present. Reader attention is focussed on the text's construction and fictionality, and the way categories of identity arrive out of the cultural mix and are normalized. Like *Scheherazade*, *Norma Desmond.* seduces the reader into

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[152] Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 1.

[153] Director Billy Wilder was born in 1906 in Galicia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Before fleeing for the USA after the rise of Hitler in 1934, Wilder worked alongside film makers such as Fritz Lang and G.W. Pabst in Berlin's Ufa studio. The gothic undertones evident in *Sunset Boulevard* are attributable to the influence on Wilder of German Expressionism.

recognizing the 'almost' familiar and encourages a process of constructing alternative meanings, when that familiarity is disrupted.

Accelerating away from the temporal scope of *Scheherazade*, *Norma Desmond.* is set in the twenty-third century and in common with texts from the sci-fi genre, the novel incorporates elements of technological advancements, futuristic landscapes and disruptions of linear time. The locations through which the protagonists move span a range from a 'Schrebergarten' in Vienna, to the town of Yale, Connecticut, and a Tokyo bar. The characters themselves are an eclectic mix of flesh and machine. Norma Desmond is a woman of over 80 who is able to take rejuvenating drugs that return her to adolescence. Her companions are a cloned human male David, created with three penises for Norma's pleasure, and a 'Gartenroboter' Hugo, whose robotic arms are used as a means of defence against malign forces. These characters constitute a cyborgian triad who leave the confines of the 'Schrebergarten' to travel through a dystopian world in which individuals are created in laboratories, where they may be genetically altered and replicated multiple times.[154] Norma's deceased lover Donald is pushed around in a wheelchair, while parts of his body are removed and used by Norma to facilitate her entry into locations which are forbidden to women. Familiar words are ripped apart and reconstituted to become 'alien' words, like 'Klonmündel', 'explantiert',

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[154] The term 'cyborg' was coined in the 1960s to express the notion of the enhancement and augmentation of humans through technology: 'The Cyborg deliberately incorporates exogenous components extending the self-regulating control function of the organism in order to adapt it to new environments'. Manfred Clynes & Nathan Kline, 'Cyborgs and Space', in *The Cyborg Handbook*, ed. by Chris H. Gray (New York: Routledge, 1995, first pub. 1960), pp. 29-34 (p. 31). Donna Haraway appropriated the term to posit a vision of posthuman subjectivity in her seminal study, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', in Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge 1991), pp. 149-181. Haraway employs the cyborg as a metaphor for the possible fluidity between humans and machines and uses it to imagine a world without gender boundaries and categories.

'Altruismusgen' and 'Bodyfax'. This new, unfamiliar language further dispels any notion that the world of the text is a fixed, wholly 'knowable' one.

Into this fantastical, futuristic landscape, the text incorporates familiar twentieth century cultural archetypes; alongside the clones and robots, a malign scientist figure appears in the form of Dr. Packer, who experiments on human subjects; actors stage Goethe's *Faust*; and a glamorous Mamasan oversees a Japanese bar with its pulsating neon lights. These characters and landscapes combine to provide a narrative which can be viewed as a complex network of versions of reality from varied cultural realms. This complexity frees the narrative from the binary oppositions with which the text is primary concerned, those of male and female, young and old. The text represents these binaries then explodes them by subjecting them to a process of mixing and merging.

The landscapes too provide a fluid backdrop, and can be changed with the flick of a switch: '[Norma] schaltete die Vögel ein. Drückte auf Abendstimmung. Die Nachtigall begann zu singen'.[155] Nature is *entzaubert*, and exists completely at the will of human beings.[156] This changing landscape, and the individuals who are in a state of flux by dint of youth-inducing drugs or artificial body parts, are subject to the constant controlling and watching gaze of surveillance cameras. A persistent thread in the text is the subversion of this gaze by the female protagonist, who plays tricks on the camera to obscure its view. The 'reality' seen by the cameras is a manipulated version, as Norma

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[155]   Marlene Streeruwitz, *Norma Desmond. A Gothic SF-Novel* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2002), p. 43. Henceforth, the text will be referenced as ND in parenthesis.

[156]   What Max Weber called '[d]ie Entzauberung der Welt' is a phrase employed by Horkheimer and Adorno to describe the Enlightenment project of mastering nature through technical rationality, with nature considered an object for, and instrument of, human will. Max Horkheimer & Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1981, first published 1947), p. 7. For Weber reference see 'Wissenschaft als Beruf', in *Schriften: 1894-1922*, ed. by Dirk Kaesler (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2002, first pub. 1917), p. 488.

intervenes in the gaze. This serves as a microcosm of the main theme this chapter will consider; the intervention into representations which unlocks the framework of their construction.

The female protagonist's name is a powerful intertextual indicator of meaning, as the text ironically underlines in a self-referential remark made by a character the new Norma Desmond encounters on her travels: 'Norma. Was für ein Name. Welche Symbolkraft' (ND p. 56). The name acts as a trigger in a similar way to the arrival of the new Scheherazade, and functions as a reference code to a certain set of associations. Indeed, the text leads the informed reader into making direct connections with the aging actress of the silent screen played by Gloria Swanson: 'Norma Desmond hatte er (Donald) sie genannt. Sie hatte den Film gekannt. Die arme Filmschauspielerin. Es mußte ja auch schrecklich gewesen sein, [...]. Nicht mehr' (ND p. 11). The reference to the 'arme' film star offers Streeruwitz's reader a vantage point from which to view the 'new' Norma. Swanson's character was subject to the ravages of aging, she remained a recluse in her Hollywood mansion until she killed her young lover Joe and was taken away by the police. References to the film and its star thus serve as a fertile intertextual breeding ground of meanings for Streeruwitz's text. However, when Streeruwitz's Norma concludes her remark about her namesake with 'nicht mehr', the character suggests that a process of subversion will take place with regards to its main intertext, a process that will be undertaken by the protagonist herself.

Wilder's film *Sunset Boulevard* is set in a period of transition between the silent movies and the talkies. As an actress stuck fast in the prior roles she played in silent Hollywood movies, the old Norma is depicted as being unable

to move on and inhabit the world outside of her decrepit mansion. She spends her time re-enacting roles she played when younger and dealing cards with other former stars of the silent screen. Points of comparison and contrast with the 'new' text emerge immediately. The spaces of confinement for Streeruwitz's Norma are not a Hollywood mansion, but a 'Heim' to which Norma and other young girls were confined by unnamed authorities before the action of the novel begins, then a Viennese 'Schrebergartenhütte' in which Norma lives a limited and restricted life with Donald, amongst 'bunte Zwergenfiguren' (ND p. 9) whose diminutive size indicates the limited extent of Norma's shrunken world. The 'Schrebergartenhäuschen', situated, not on Sunset Boulevard, but in the ironically named 'Dauerkleingartenverein "Frohsinn"', serves as a representative microcosm of limitations imposed on the female subject. The new Norma has been confined in the garden which, like the old Norma's mansion, is the epitome of faded kitsch, while lover Donald was free to roam the world. Postcards of his overseas destinations are plastered on the walls, while Norma is left to stare at the walls, 'rosa gebleicht und staubig' (ND p. 9).

The advent of sound in the movie industry had led, ironically enough to Wilder's Norma losing her voice. This position is made starkly obvious by the fact that the narration of the film is a male voice, that of lover Joe played by William Holden, who is dead from the very beginning of the film. Unlike Wilder's protagonist, Streeruwitz's Norma actively partakes in the re-writing of her own script by stepping outside of the enclosed spaces which has kept her trapped in prior roles. The departure from the 'Schrebergarten' initiates the text's withdrawal from both the recognizable spatial realm and from its

accompanying dominant narratives. This is a feat never achieved by Wilder's movie star who remains holed up in her mansion and surrounded by the relics of the past. Physical movement signifies a subject in transition, so that while Norma's world expands from the ordered 'Schrebergarten' into a wide open space, the 'Wildnis', the possibilities for her as a subject expand. Inhabited by multiple layers of cultural and social meanings viewed through a gender-sensitive lens, the 'Wildnis' displays a copresence of order and disorder. It thus acts as an escape route for the female subject who rejects the 'natural' order with its normalized concepts of gender and power. The new Norma recognizes the possibilities: 'Über die Wildnis schweben war die einzige Möglichkeit' (ND p. 46).

The sci-fi elements incorporated into this new textual landscape increase its strangeness and decentre the narrative away from notions of unified bodies and linear chronology. The way the physical body in particular is presented in the novel constantly works against any concept of an original 'essence'. The text confronts the autonomy of gendered bodies with fragmented, dismembered and contested bodies in the form of clones, cyborgs, and robots. Human mortality is rendered meaningless when consciousness is downloaded from humans into machines by Dr Packer, so that human existence is guaranteed *ad infinitum* and the linear development of human life from birth to death is disrupted. The resistance displayed by the text to forms of wholeness or unity extends from the corporeal transformations of the characters and the perpetual traversing of national borders from Austria to the US, to the fractured language of the narrative, and its constant movement through elements from 'high' and 'low' culture. The chaotic 'Wildnis' is paired

with a mingling of genres, with narratives from the gothic novel and sci-fi combining with parody and scenes from Goethe's *Faust* for instance providing quotations from the world of high culture. This results in a text in tune with Streeruwitz's agenda of allowing exit strategies from the effects of discourse by way of the 'Zitat als Fluchtmittel'.[157]

This chapter will firstly consider the way a productive relationship of copresence occurs through the frequent integration of specific film references and allusions which connect the world of the text to another extra-textual realm. The reader moves beyond cultural representations into new realms of signification to focus on mechanisms of control which underlie power relations and the construction of norms rooted in gender, sexuality and age. It will then consider postmodern strategies displayed that decentre the subject through the mixing of the sci-fi and gothic genres, before suggesting conclusions about how successful the text is in unsettling and breaking the familiarity engendered by the intertextual fabric.

Cultural Illusions

From an intertextual perspective, allusion is the 'dynamic reconcentration of cultural meaningfulness. [...] it suffuses and extends meaning by alliance'.[158] The embedding of cultural allusions from the realms of film and literature within *Norma Desmond.* is a powerful intertextual manoeuvre which negotiates 'cultural meaningfulness'. Streeruwitz has reflected on the way our perceptions of the world are, to a large extent, in thrall to the visual image as mediated by mass culture. The author perceives that we are, 'in fast allen Bereichen unseres

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157   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, p. 48.

158   Orr, *Intertextuality*, p. 139.

Lebens zu Touristen degradiert. Es ist nicht die Einszueins-Realität des Augenblicks, sondern wieder nur Konserve, was wir sehen dürfen. Schein'.[159] Like tourists who look at the spectacle before them, we are constantly presented with representations concerned with the preservation and presentation of specific narratives. Returning to Arac's contention that 'the power of representation is something sought, indeed passionately struggled for, by groups that consider themselves dominated by alien and alienating representations',[160] what remains important in *Norma Desmond.* is the illumination of contingent forms of representation, appearance and reality.

This process of illumination is performed through the integration of different forms of representation, which are highlighted by an intertextual reading. Like Streeruwitz's novel, Wilder's film was haunted by the ghosts of previous texts, as Julian Wolfreys remarks:

> *Sunset Boulevard* is opened, and opens itself to our reading, by the constant, multiple projections of alterity which countersign the film with various traces of easily acknowledged frameworks, while neither settling, nor allowing the viewer to settle, into a cosy, domesticated familiarity with such traces.[161]

Wolfreys provides a useful vocabulary for viewing *Norma Desmond.* It too is 'countersigned' by traces of previous texts, and relies for both its narrative and its political power on breaks with aesthetic norms and familiar representations. By explicitly directing the informed reader towards comparisons of Streeruwitz's modern Norma with her celluloid namesake, 'die arme alte Filmschauspielerin' (ND p. 11), the novel summons a number

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159   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, pp. 50-51.
160   Arac, 'Introduction', p. xxi.
161   Julian Wolfreys, 'Hollywood Gothic/Gothic Hollywood. The Example of Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*', in *Gothic Modernisms*, ed. by Andrew Smith & Jeff Wallace (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 207-225 (p. 212).

of comparisons between the aging film star, and the new Norma of the twenty-third century.

Wilder's Norma was depicted against the background of antiques, old photos and film clippings that provide a safe environment and present her clinging to her faded glories in a world that has since moved on. Streeruwitz responds by positioning her protagonist at the beginning of the novel in the enclosed environment of the 'Schrebergartenhütte' in the 'Dauerkleingartenverein', situated in a suburb of Vienna, a space which invites ironic associations with suburban petit bourgeois propriety.[162] As a direct allusion to the fenced, urban garden allotments that first appeared in Vienna in 1903, the location is an anachronistic presence in a text set in the twenty-third century, and proves to be a space in which the authority of power relations involving the active male and passive female, are reproduced. Hermann Rudolph commented on the meaning the *Schrebergarten* assumed in the early part of the twentieth century which reflected the aspirations of the individual : 'die Apostrophierung des Schrebergartens als "Paradies", "Asyl", "Elysium", gehört sozusagen zum Selbstverständnis, und am Grund der kleingärtnerischen Selbstspiegelung mag man den alten Topoi des erfüllten Daseins aufscheinen sehen, den *locus amoenus*, das Paradies, den Garten Eden'.[163] In *Sunset Boulevard*, Desmond's mansion is hardly a paradise, but it reflects the subjectivity of the protagonist, and is described by the narrator Joe as isolated, existing in its own microcosm: 'The whole place seemed to have been stricken with a kind of creeping paralysis, out of beat with the rest of the

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[162]   The 'Schrebergarten' was constructed as a respite from the 'eisernen Stadt' and the pressures of city life. For a full explanation of its evolution, see Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna 1919-1934* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. 86.

[163]   Hermann Rudolph, 'Der Schrebergarten', in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte 3*, ed. by Etienne Francois & Hagen Schulze (Munich: Beck, 2009), pp. 363-379 (pp. 365-366).

world'. The new Norma too is gripped by a paralysis which positions her in an immobile state in the slice of 'Kleinbürgerlichkeit' inherited from Donald's grandfather.

> Sie starrte vor sich hin. Auf die Regale mit den 4 bunten Zwergenfiguren. [...] Eine Häkelpuppe stand da. Das Rosa der Wolle ausgebleicht und staubig. [...] Die Puppe hielt den Kopf geneigt und lächelte. Ein Wachsherz hing an einem Nagel. Ein Mann und eine Frau hielten ein Herz mit einer 9 darauf. Ansichtskarten von Taormina und dem Prager Dom. [...] Auf dem kleinen Tischchen vor dem Bett ein rot und weiß kariertes Tischtuch. Rechts das Fenster. Blätter von wildem Wein rund herum. (ND p. 9)

Cultural quotations are present in the interior space of the 'Hütte', linking the twenty-third century world to the western literary canon of previous centuries. The 'Wachsherz' recalls the gift of a young man to the Virgin Mary in Heinrich Heine's sentimental ballad 'Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar' (1827), an offering given in the hope that she will heal his broken heart, while colourful 'Zwergenfiguren' echo the 'farbige Zwerge' which form part of the apothecary's petit-bourgeois garden gently mocked by Goethe's 1797 work *Hermann und Dorothea*.[164] These intertextual quotations are not simply inserted to grant the reader the pleasure of recognition. They link the 'Schrebergarten' to a German, male literary canon and pastoral idylls of creeping vines and checked table cloths.

With its faded, sentimental furnishings and female figure positioned at its centre, there is a further implied correlation between the 'Schrebergarten' and the concept of *Heimat* as a space inscribed with the narratives of the past and providing the womb-like security of familiar gender assignations which have women bound to interior spaces. Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman

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[164] See Heinrich Heine, 'Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar', in *Sämmtliche Werke*, Bd. 2 (Philadelphia: Schäfer und Koradi, 1860, first pub. 1827), pp. 97-104 (p. 99), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Hermann und Dorothea* (Berlin: Grote, 1868, first pub. 1796), p. 35.

refer to the link between *Heimat* and domestic confinement, commenting that while in *Heimat* narratives, 'women are part of the package of hearth and home', for men, 'Heimat may become claustrophobic so that sons long to cut the umbilical cord and escape'.[165] Before the events of the novel take place, Donald had achieved his 'escape' through a twenty-third century mode of travel, the 'Bodyfax', and a replica of him is subsequently sent to holiday destinations in Europe, as suggested by the postcards tacked up in the 'Hütte' 'mit Reißnägeln an der Holzwand' (ND p. 9). The new Norma meanwhile resides in the space inherited from Donald's grandfather, and appears rooted to this interior province, 'sie starrte vor sich hin. Sie saß' (ND p. 9). Like her namesake confined to the Hollywood mansion, she is unable to exist outside of the conditions which nurtured her, after all, as the new Norma reflects, her fate as a woman had been outlined by the anonymous voices at the institution in which she and other women had been brought up: 'Sie würden immer in irgendeinem Heim leben müssen' (ND p. 36-7). For the new Norma, as for Faschinger's Scheherazade and her namesake in the harem, *Heimat* in its various forms is a paradoxical space, at once offering security but also housing oppressive power relations and, the text suggests, authorized by the western artistic canon.

The novel detaches itself from the very narrative which it inscribes by imparting in the new Norma a clear understanding of her condition, one which *Sunset Boulevard* does not concede to the old Norma. Streeruwitz's character acknowledges, 'sie wußte zu wenig. Sie hatte sich immer auf Donald verlassen können. Und in der Schrebergartenhütte mußte man nicht viel wissen' (ND p.

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[165] Elizabeth Boa & Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat. A German Dream. Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), p. 26.

22). Donald's death through an over-exuberant use of the 'Bodyfax' machine results in Norma's enforced departure, which on reflection, the character realizes may have a positive aspect: 'Vielleicht war es nicht so schlimm. Vielleicht machten sie nur irgendwelche Veränderungen' (ND p. 13). Recognition of her ignorance and dependency provides the impetus for movement: '[d]as war nun alles vorbei. Sie mußte fort. Fort von hier' (ND p. 10). With the repetition of the word 'fort', a textual link opens to the words of the eighteenth century poet Karoline von Günderode, and her lament that, as a woman confined by notions of *Heimat*, open spaces were not available to her: 'die Heimat wird zum Kerker. Darum fort und fort ins Weite aus dem engen dumpfen Leben'.[166] Unlike Günderode, whose escape took the form of suicide, or Wilder's Norma who descends into madness, the new Norma is accorded an escape route and the possibility of movement outside the 'Dauergartenverein'.

The protagonist's departure is enacted on the level of the text as it emerges out of the cosy discourse of domesticity into an uncertain narrative of shifting cultural allusions. Unlike Scheherazade's journey of fantasy, Norma embarks on a journey of discovery with her companions that leads her out of Austria and into new physical as well as discursive realms. Emerging onto the veranda, her first sight is of a deceased Donald sitting slumped in a wheelchair. His 'Bodyfax' may be holidaying abroad, but the original sits motionless in Vienna. Presented as a 'grauer Haufen im Rollstuhl' (ND p. 40), the male character's positioning provokes multiple cultural connections and reaches out to exterior texts. As the dead lover, the character evokes an association with the

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[166] Karoline von Günderode quoted in Elisabeth Bütfering, 'Frauenheimat Männerwelt. Die Heimatlosigkeit ist weiblich', in *Heimat. Analysen, Themen, Perspektiven*, ed. by Susanne Althoetmar-Smarczyk (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1990), pp. 416-37 (p.417). Bütfering remarks that Günderode was profoundly aware, 'daß das Weite ihr als Frau nicht offenstand'.

old Norma's dead gigolo Joe. He is murdered by Norma before the action of the film begins and is first seen floating in the mansion's swimming pool. However, the figure is invested with authority from beyond the grave and proceeds to narrate the events of the film. The male character is given a platform from which to comment on the present and as narrator, his voice directs the gaze of the viewer. Conversely, Streeruwitz's deceased male character is not invested with authority. Even his name, in a text shot through with cultural allusions, acts as a comic trigger to playful associations with a flat-footed Disney cartoon character, and far from being endowed with a voice or authority in the text, his body is manipulated and used by Norma. After her exit from the 'Schrebergartenhütte', his corpse is made use of when the iris recognition systems installed at certain points in the 'Wildnis' require the male gaze, and Norma is only able to gain access by manipulating Donald's face and tilting it towards the cameras. His body remains at the mercy of the female character when a male fingerprint is required to outwit the technology systems which allow access to the outside world. Norma resorts to drastic and macabre measures, removing the flesh from Donald's finger and placing it over her own: '[Norma] fuhr mit dem Messer zwischen Haut und Fleisch. Die Haut lag auf dem Boden. [...] Sie zog die Haut über ihren Finger' (ND p. 38). Donald's body is thus used when needed, the removal of the finger acting as a clear indication of the male figure's emasculation and his stripping of power within the narrative.

Donald's partial dismemberment and his positioning in a wheelchair both opens up the 'Wildnis' to the new Norma, and also expands the intertextual space. As with *Scheherazade*, multiple associations pass through

the reader's mind 'as an ever expanding network of connections'.[167] Aesthetic strategies which draw attention to representation through cultural images are amplified in the text through the constant presence of the voyeuristic, disembodied gaze of the surveillance camera. The spaces through which Streeruwitz's protagonists move resemble the Foucauldian panopticon, where there exists 'at once surveillance and observation, security and knowledge, individualization and totalization, isolation and transparency', and where bodies, which are under constant surveillance, are disciplined.[168] Streeruwitz's text allows its protagonists to subvert this panoptic gaze by tricking the cameras, with Norma pointing Donald's face at the zooming lens, instead of her own: 'Die Linse stieß schnarrend auf Donalds Augen zu. […] Ihre Augen durften von keiner Kamera erfaßt werden' (ND p. 20). The male body is rendered 'docile [...] subjected, used, transformed'[169] by the camera, '[s]ie hörte die Kamera näherzoomen. Die Kamera ging tiefer. Sie hielt ihn fest' (ND p. 21).

The paradigm of 'female as spectacle, as image' which Laura Mulvey has argued characterized films of the post-war era such as *Sunset Boulevard* (1950, dir. Billy Wilder). and *Rear Window* (1954, dir. Alfred Hitchcock),[170] is clearly subverted by the text. Indeed, the image of Donald in a wheelchair, the camera trained on his face, invites comparison with the wheelchair-using peeping-tom character in Hitchcock's film, where the male gaze is the gaze of power. Deprived of physical agency and emasculated, like Donald, by his

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[167]   Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 114 & p. 115.

[168]   Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995, first pub. 1975), p. 257.

[169]   *Ibid.*, p.136

[170]   Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *The Sexual Subject* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999, first pub. 1975), pp. 22-34 (p. 27).

position in the wheelchair, *Rear Window*'s male character regains power through the camera lens which he trains on the unsuspecting individuals in the apartment block opposite. Mulvey contends that the gaze in such movies is invariably male, and the 'liberal use of the subjective camera from the point of view of the male protagonist draws the spectators deeply into his position, making them share his uneasy gaze'. She goes on to remark that in a world ordered by gendered imbalances, 'pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly'.[171] The male narrator may dictate the image and hold the controlling gaze in Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, but in Streeruwitz's *Norma Desmond.*, the gaze is trained on the male body. The new Norma controls the gaze by manipulating Donald's head, while the text refuses to allow the camera to access her face. This is marked contrast to the old Norma of the silent movies, who remains desperate to be filmed, right until the moment she is taken away by the police, as her final words indicate: 'All right, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up'. The old Norma remains a spectacle captured by the camera, whereas Streeruwitz has invented new tricks for her Norma to avoid and subvert it.

Wheelchair-bound characters figure prominently in Hollywood movies which explore similar themes as those in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950, dir. Billy Wilder), and offer fruitful intertextual avenues for exploration. For instance, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* (1962, dir. Robert Aldrich), features a decaying mansion and a wheelchair-using sister who is terrorized by her sibling (Baby) Jane Hudson, as the pair descend into madness. A former child

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[171]   *Ibid.*

film star, Jane is, like Wilder's silent movie queen Norma, represented on screen as wedded to the past, and unable to occupy positions in the present. Norma and Jane both experience breakdowns through their refusal to accept their socially allotted positions as culturally discarded, ex-stars. In both films, the viewer is confronted by women who occupy definite positions in gendered discourse of aging, a theme continued in Wilder's later film *Fedora* (1978), which, like *Sunset Boulevard*, brings together performance with the obsession with youth. The story of former actress Fedora, confined to a wheelchair after a stroke and living in an isolated villa with a plastic surgeon whose task it is to make sure she retains her youthful looks, continues Wilder's exploration of Hollywood's obsession with youth and beauty.[172] Streeruwitz's text replies to these images of female age and aging with the new Norma assuming charge of a process of production and reinvention of the self which was withheld from the old Norma and Fedora. By swallowing rejuvenating drugs, her body is transformed from that of an elderly woman into a girl's: 'Ihr Busen war geschrumpft. Klein. Ihr Busen hing nicht nach vorne beim Vorbeugen. Nicht mehr schwer. Warm. Sie sah an sich hinunter. Die Haut glatt. Vollkommen glatt und straff über Brust und Bauch' (ND p. 40). The new Norma's transformed body becomes the site for the performance of youth, and replaces the dramatization of aging depicted by Hollywood.

It may be argued that the text runs the danger of rehearsing the subtext of a negative attitude towards the female body which does not accept the process of female aging. However, like Faschinger's *Scheherazade*,

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[172]   William Holden, the narrator in *Sunset Boulevard,* stars in *Fedora* as a down at heel producer attempting to lure aging actress Fedora into appearing in his latest blockbuster. The audience learn that Fedora's daughter has been impersonating the actress for years after one of the doctor's treatments disfigured her.

Streeruwitz's text clearly aims to foreground the exchange of multiple signifiers constituting femininity which refute notions of immutability. Streeruwitz's presentation of Norma acknowledges that the body cannot exist outside of its representation in discourse, but by drawing attention to those categories of youth which are continually rehearsed and performed, for instance the smooth, tight skin and emerging breasts of the nubile adolescent, the text does not deny the materiality of the body, but focuses reader attention on representation itself and the possibilities for female subjectivity within it. The idea of fixed identity is shattered, in contrast to films in which women are imprisoned in permanent identities secured by the controlling gaze of the movie camera.

The final scene of the novel is encoded with cinematic moments and described in a series of well established, but exaggerated narratives which draw the reader in to participate in shared cultural references. The 'Transkontinentaltunnel' (ND p. 50) which allows access to different parts of the world, leads Norma to a Japanese bar, whose red neon heart pulsating above the door is an ironic reply to the 'Wachsherz' of the 'Schrebergartenhütte'. What proceeds is a scene straight out of the Hollywood movie tradition: 'Sie war in einer Bar. 2 Männer saßen in der Ecke. Sie hatten eine Whiskyflasche vor sich. Sie schauten in ihre Gläser. Frank Sinatra sang "Strangers in the Night"' (ND p. 95). The image exploits the iconic Hollywood bar setting, but intervenes in its own representation when it positions behind the bar a figure named 'Mama-san': With long, 'rabenschwarze[m] Haar' and 'ein[em] feuerrote[n] Kleid mit goldenen Pailletten am Oberteil' (*ibid*.), the character evokes the image of the

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eponymous protagonist of *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960, dir. Richard Quine), again starring William Holden as an American artist who falls in love with the Hong Kong prostitute. In Quine's film, Suzie, donning a tight-fitting red cheongsam dress, works in a bar to support her baby, and is trapped in the whore/mother dichotomy. Indeed the film has been criticized for its objectification of Asian women as decorative and one dimensional, as 'Pearl of the Orient. Whore. Geisha. Concubine. Whore. Hostess. Bargirl. Mama-san. Whore'.[173] In *Norma Desmond.*, 'Mama-san', or 'Mamasan', written in two different ways in the text as if to destabilize her identity still further, is an ambiguous figure, a parody of abundance. The woman is an embodiment of the feminine in excess, 'der üppige Busen' on display and 'überhäuft' with jewellery: 'Sie trug mehrere Ketten. Mehrere Armbänder an jedem Handgelenk und einen Ring an jedem Finger. Lange glitzernde Ohrringe. Sie hatte rabenschwarzes Haar. [...] Diese Frau hielt Duda auf dem Arm. (ND p. 96). The presentation of the physical attributes of 'Mamasan' stands in contrast to the adolescent Norma's body with its 'geschrumpfte' breasts and thin, unadorned arms. The text documents various representations of the feminine here, as the highly decorated Mamasan strikes a Pietà-like pose, with baby Duda, the rejuvenated clone David, on her arm.

A woman sitting at the bar confirms this spectacle as performance: '"Mamasan", sagte die Frau an der Bar, und dann sprach sie weiter und schlug die Hände zusammen. Als klatschte sie Applaus. Begeistert' (ND p. 96). Here, the text works to draw the reader's attention to the explicit staging

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[173] Jessica Hagedorn, 'Asian Women in Film. No Joy. No Luck', in *Facing Difference. Race, Gender and Mass-Media*, ed. by Shirley Biagi & Marilyn Kern-Foxworth (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1997), pp. 33-38 (p. 33). Mamasan is the name given to the proprietors of East Asian bars or brothels, and to the cross-dressing male proprietors of Japanese gay bars.

of representations of femininity. Indeed, this performance appears all the more staged when it turns out that 'Mamasan' may be a version of Donald in a 'bodyfaxed', transformed state, '[d]iese Frau war Donald. Oder?' (ND p. 95). Her identity is uncertain, with Mamasan *performing* gender in what Butler has termed, 'a parody [...] of the very notion of an original'.[174] The excess of femininity defies legibility, so that a scene which is at once familiar to the reader with its encoding of cinematic images, is made strange through Mamasan's contested identity and the applause which greets the character. 'Die Einszueins-Realität des Augenblicks'[175] is disrupted, and the Mamasan character succeeds in bringing centre stage the illusion of the regulatory imperatives of gender, which thwarts the desire for certainty.

The intertextual resonances conjured by filmic allusions and the presence of the cameras focus attention on the way perceptions of reality are informed and guided by visual spectacle and performance. The text explicitly draws attention to this by incorporating film into the educational resources available to Norma in her twenty-third century world. Wilder's 1950s Norma is unable to distinguish any world outside of that represented by film. This finds its echo in Streeruwitz's version, when the reader discovers that life processes such as birth and death, which have been replaced by scientific procedures, are known to the new Norma only through mediated images: 'So, wie sie das mit dem Kinderkriegen gesehen hatte. In den Filmen. So war das schon mühselig' (ND p. 74). The new Norma places her trust in the visual image. The process of childbirth has now been rendered obsolete through various artificial means and individuals can rejuvenate and replicate themselves, so childbirth is only

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[174]   Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 138.
[175]   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, pp. 50-51.

captured as a moment on film, with Norma's perception of the process being derived from stock images rather from past or personal experience. There is a self-reflexive characteristic to the text here, because as this chapter has demonstrated, the novel itself makes available its meanings through representations, those conveyed by its multiple intertextual associations. Reading *Norma Desmond*. reminds us that we exist in a highly mediated reality, since whilst reading the novel, we are ourselves bathed in representations. What makes Streeruwitz's reader different from her protagonist however, is that the novel's intertextual quality offers numerous possibilities to draw on personal experience, an ability which no longer exists in Norma's twenty-third century world.

The notion that Norma's reality is available mostly through the mediation of visual images is brought home in the scene involving the scientist Dr. Packer. As Norma enters his house, her actions are directed by what she has seen in films: 'Der Raum hinter der Tür war dunkel. [...] Sie tastete nach einem Lichtschalter. Sie hatte genug Filme gesehen. Sie hatte in ihren fast 80 Jahren fast nichts anderes machen können. Sie wußte, wo es in dieser Dekoration die Lichtschalter gab' (ND p. 66). The cameras which zoom in on the figure heighten the sense of performance, as the cinematic technique, that of the close-up, is transferred into the text: 'Auf dem Gang draußen hatte eine der Kameras begonnen, auf sie zuzuzoomen' (*ibid*.). The protagonist recognizes the artificiality of her surroundings, 'sie hatte es sofort gewußt. Sie hatte die Dekoration sofort erkannt. Es war ein Film von einem Rosseloni. Oder so ähnlich. Und im Titel war "Roma" vorgekommen' (ND p. 69). Here, the text offers the reader an intertextual association with, not Rosseloni, but

Roberto Rossellini's 1945 film *Roma città aperta*, (*Rome, Open City*), depicting life in Italy under the harsh rules of Nazi occupation. Following this intertextual avenue, Rossellini's film is interesting for *Norma Desmond.* because it is shot in neo-realist style, one that demonstrates a faith that art can give an objective representation of truth, a notion the text strives to resist.[176]

Streeruwitz's Dr. Packer employs scenes from the film as an educational resource, while he attempts to eradicate individual memory: 'Es ginge ganz einfach darum, die letzten psychischen Erbschaften zu eliminieren' (ND p. 77). This will be achieved by downloading human consciousness onto computer 'so oft wie möglich' (ND p. 70). In an echo of Ray Kurzweil's prophecy that 'we will be software, not hardware', the finality of death is overcome in Norma's world with individual consciousness being programmed into computers to produce 'heruntergeladen[e] Bewußtseinsformen' (ND p. 77).[177] Kurzweil's treatise concerning the future of humankind, published at the same time as *Norma Desmond.*, envisages a very similar 'post-biological' future to the one outlined in the novel, in which humans can download their individual consciousness into a computer and hence defy the limits of mortality. This is problematized in the text however, as due to this 'Abspeichern' (ND p. 69), Norma herself has no personal memory of either childbirth or death, neither does a collective memory about these human processes exist. They have been expunged from public consciousness. Hence after Donald's death, Norma has no knowledge of the rituals of death, 'was

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[176]   The film uses natural lighting, and includes sites of memorable events and testimonies from survivors, which suggests to Mira Liehm that the film 'provides the viewer with a real memory of something the viewer has not actually experienced'. See Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), p. 65.

[177]   Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 129.

machte man mit einem Toten. Sie hatte nicht viel darüber gehört' (ND p. 4).

Death has indeed come, due to unforeseen technical problems with the 'Bodyfax', and now Norma has little idea what to do with the body, her memories having been downloaded.

This corpse of Donald's which sits in the wheelchair and is never laid to rest fulfils a key function in the text. It provides a metaphor for a past that haunts the present and has not been satisfactorily resolved, and thus provides a commentary on Austria's negotiations with its history. There are textual echoes of the 'undead' which figure prominently in Jelinek's works, and which represent an aspect of the past, 'die nie ganz tot ist und der immer die Hand aus dem Grab wächst'.[178] According to Kecht, '[in] Jelinek's commentary on the ideological atmosphere in Austria, metaphors of the dead and undead figure prominently'.[179] In *Die Kinder der Toten* (1995) for instance, 'Untote' spend their holidays in a picturesque Austrian hotel, and the souls of Holocaust victims emerge from the ground. Illuminating postwar Austrian amnesia about World War II in this way, the work makes visible 'what many Austrians would prefer to keep hidden, buried or suppressed'.[180] By way of Norma's inability to deal with the dead Donald, together with the downloading of collective memory into an impersonal system which effectively cuts off the present from the past, Streeruwitz's text is opened up to a reflection on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, encouraging the reader to ponder the lack of critical discussion of the past.

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[178] See Stefanie Carp, 'Ich bin im Grunde ständig tobsüchtig über die Verharmlosung: Ein Gespräch mit Elfriede Jelinek', *Theater der Zeit*, (May/June, 1996), <http://www.a-e-m-gmbh.com/wessely/fstab.htm>, [accessed 06/03/2011].

[179] Maria-Regina Kecht, 'Reading *Die Kinder der Toten*', in *Elfriede Jelinek: Writing Woman, Nation, and Identity: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Matthias Konzett & Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2007), pp. 189-213 (p. 193).

[180] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

Donald's body is dealt with in an inadequate way: the corpse is left to rot in the sun, 'die Fliegen liefen über die graue Haut' (ND p. 35); it becomes a burden, 'ein grauer Haufen im Rollstuhl' (ND p. 40), although it does have its uses with regards to the surveillance camera. The body is useful only in parts, and Norma is able to pick and choose what is useful and can ignore the rest, finally tipping the corpse into the deep freeze to be dealt with at a later date. Parts of the past, the aspects that are convenient to use in the present, are often preserved, with the rest disregarded, it is implied. The transformative moment occurs when Norma senses that the Mamasan character cradling baby David is in fact a version of Donald, suggesting that only an effective and creative *Aufarbeitung* of the past promises positive transformations in the future.

Within the cultural intertextual mix of *Norma Desmond.* there are moments of anachronistic tension which depict an inability to break with an oppressive past and creatively confront the new. When Norma journeys to a North American 'Reservat', she witnesses actors performing dramatic scenes from Goethe's *Faust*. The protagonist encounters 'der Theaterintendant' Claus Stein (ND p. 54), who implores her to become the Gretchen to his Faust, as she is drawn into an arena of performance. 'Er kniete vor ihr. Suchte nach ihren Händen. Sie hatte die Arme am Rücken verschränkt. Sie trat einen Schritt zurück. Er sprang auf. "Faust. Natürlich", sagte er' (ND p. 56). In this instance, the new Norma is in danger of becoming trapped in an outmoded discourse whereby the female is the subject of a duel, fought over as the prize in a performed spectacle of male power: '"Meine Verehrungswürdigste. Ich bete Sie an. Ich flehe Sie an. Kommen Sie mit mir"' (ND p. 56). The scene can be regarded as part of Streeruwitz's on-going critique of Austrian theatre. In fact

Britta Kallin recognizes in the name given by the text to the 'Theatermann' an ironic reference to Claus Peymann, former director of Vienna's *Burgtheater*, and Peter Stein, founder of the West Berlin *Schaubühne*. Kallin comments that the combination of significant names into one person 'morphs them and thus downplays their achievements because they are trapped in the reservation world, an artificial and isolated place, and have not moved ahead to the science fictional world in which Norma lives'.[181]

Indeed, Streeruwitz declared Vienna's *Burgtheater* to be 'das Theater, das sich zu 95% derart an toten Dichtern und keinen Dichterinnen vergeht', because of its continual staging of classical dramas by Goethe the 'Kriegstreiber', and Shakespeare 'der Langeweiler'.[182] Norma is encouraged by the 'Theatermann' to follow him 'in die Kunst' and to assume the traditional role of icon and object of desire, 'Gretchen und Helena in einem. Er könne jetzt seinen Lebenstraum [...] erfüllen' (ND p. 55). Narratives from the past, which the text suggests are still performed today, intervene in the protagonist's progress and outmoded concepts of gender norms prove literally life-threatening when the theatre director and a young actor show off their fencing prowess by recreating Faust and Valentine's duel over Gretchen. Patterns of

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[181]   Britta Kallin, 'Gender, History and Memory in Marlene Streeruwitz's Recent Prose', *glossen*, 21 (2005),
 <http://www.dickinson.edu/departments/germn/glossen/heft21/streeruwitz.html>,
[accessed 20/12/2005]. The novel draws attention to outdated images of women which are still performed in the 'Reservat', by definition a piece of land owned and occupied by an enclosed group, which Streeruwitz equates to the Austrian theatre and its repertoire, and which offers no new challenges to cultural memory or outdated gender myths. Before *Norma Desmond.* was published, Streeruwitz was scathing in her attack on the repeated performances of classical pieces, suggesting 'denen täte eine Pause von zehn Jahren doch nicht schlecht'. Goethe and Shakespeare are performed consistently, 'weil sie irgendwas allgemein Menschliches repräsentieren, das man aus der Zeit, in der sie schrieben, herauslösen kann. Daran glaube ich nicht. Klassiker sind für mich die Langeweile des Phallus zwischen den Orgasmen. Da denke ich oft: "Mein Gott, Bursche, mach es endlich, dann ist eine Ruh"'. See Doja Hacker & Wolfgang Höbel, 'Daisy Duck hat gesiegt. Interview mit Marlene Streeruwitz', *Der Spiegel* (11/03/1996), <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8892829.html>, [accessed 13/03/2010].
[182]   Streeruwitz, *Können*, p. 111.

female passivity and cultural objectification are promoted in a Faustian outpouring: 'Sie fochten. [...] Der Theatermann zog ein Messer und stürzte auf Norma. Er schrie, keiner soll sie haben, wenn er sie nicht besitzen dürfe' (ND p. 57).[183] Despite being urged by the 'Theatermann' to participate, Streeruwitz's Norma refuses to position herself in the spotlight or participate in the play's rehearsal and remains a critical observer rather than object of the duel or the gaze. When the protagonist wonders, 'war das Ganze ein Theaterstück', (ND p. 58), the lack of a question mark turns the utterance into a statement and the fiction nature of the scene is realized. The theatrical allusions dramatize the performative nature of gender, and shift reader attention from that which is represented, to the very act of representation.

Gothic sci-fi and the decentred subject

The sub-title of Streeruwitz's text, *A Gothic SF-Novel*, escorts the reader into its world with certain expectations conjured by genre indicators. The novel avoids the terms *Schauerroman* or *Zukunftsroman*, using English generic indicators instead. According to Genette, subtitles which indicate genre act as, 'echoes that provide the text with the indirect support of another text, plus the prestige of a cultural filiation'.[184] By giving the subtitle and genre designation of *Norma Desmond* in English, the text has, in Genettian terms, chosen its peers and thus its place in the pantheon. The intertextual allusions and references it incorporates align the text primarily, although not exclusively, with US cultural imports, and the *Fischer Verlag* edition of the novel has a

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[183] The duel scene in *Faust I* depicts Faust and Gretchen's brother clashing over Gretchen's honour, with Gretchen positioned as a speechless onlooker, before being accused by the dying Valentine of being a whore who has dishonoured and thus destroyed him.
[184] Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 91.

pink, gaudy cover familiar from dime novels which brought popular science fiction to a mass market. The reader arrives at the text confronted with the lurid cover of commercially successful 'pulp' fiction, combined with the name of Streeruwitz, and is thus instantly faced with a clash of expectations.

Embracing the fantastical potential of science-fiction with its dislocation of space and time and genetically altered individuals, together with the dark horror of gothic and its tropes of decay, death and isolation, Streeruwitz's text is able to access opportunities that could not arise in fiction driven by the impulse for realism. The generic fusion of gothic horror and science fiction has been a popular one, from the hybrid monster unleashed on the world in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, to Margaret Atwood's feminist text *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), where a futuristic world reveals itself as an horrific version of present cultures in which women are imprisoned in sexual slavery. Fred Botting comments that the merging of the gothic with science fiction is the conjunction of a genre which gazes back to superstition and rejects enlightened reason, and one which peers forward to new worlds and different types of knowledge. He maintains: 'In the crossing of two generic monsters, monstrosity returns from the past and arrives from the future'.[185] Streeruwitz's novel merges the two genres in order to foreground a world in which monsters, both symbolic and physical, emerge from the past and the future. Intertextual generic borrowings permit dissolved boundaries between male and female, young and old, victim and perpetrator, and allow Norma to enact strategies of escape from limiting, gender-specific categories.

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[185]   Fred Botting, *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 14.

The conventions frequently found in the gothic novel are evident in Streeruwitz's text, and include what Ann Tracy has termed a 'fallen world'. Tracy maintains that 'the projection of a post-lapsarian nightmare of fear and alienation', characterizes gothic plots, where 'the preoccupation with death and decay' are experienced once the protagonist has left the safety of Eden.[186] In *Norma Desmond.*, the female protagonist does indeed leave the garden, to journey through a threatening, 'fallen world', a 'Wildnis', where nature is manufactured, individuals monitored and where decay is manifest in Donald's rotting body. However, an inversion of this paradigm takes place within the text so that the '*locus amoenus*, das Paradies, de[r] Garten Eden'[187] as Rudolph termed it, is a destructive space which exposes the prison-like ideology of the domestic sphere, with the chaotic 'Wildnis' providing an alternative. This aligns the text with a gothic tradition which, as Kate Ferguson Ellis explains, perceives the home not so much as an Eden, but as a 'failed home [...] the place from which some (usually "fallen" men) are locked out, and others (usually "innocent" women) are locked in'.[188] Ferguson Ellis contends that in this tradition, 'evil is thus enclosed in the home, and freedom lies in the world beyond it, however dangerous'.[189] When Norma stays in the 'Schrebergartenhütte', she remains bound to the patriarchal categories of male movement and female immobility which are inscribed within it. Her movement out of it, her escape, signals freedom from cultural containment.

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[186]   Ann B. Tracy, *Patterns of Fear in the Gothic Novel, 1790-1830* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), p. 313 & p. 316.
[187]   Rudolph, 'Der Schrebergarten', pp. 365-366.
[188]   Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. ix.
[189]   *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Susanne Becker contends that what she terms 'gothic escape' is a defining trope of gothic fiction, with escape having particular importance for female protagonists. Gothic fictions are concerned with 'dungeons, prisons, houses, but also with the idea of 'Woman' and its cultural containment'.[190] Becker detects moments of gothic 'escape' in the withdrawal from 'the specifically female experience of limited mobility',[191] by which Becker means discursive as well as physical confinements. Methods of female escape frequently seen in gothic fiction include suicide, madness and physical violence, and it is the latter which the new Norma enlists to escape from the house of the malevolent scientist Dr Packer. In a chaotic dream-like sequence, Norma and her clone companion David enter Packer's house in search of food, and in its description of the interior spaces of the house, the text links back to Norma's former period of confinement in the garden:

> Das Badezimmer war pflaumenblau ausgekachelt und hatte eine scharlachrote Zierleiste rundherum. Die Armaturen waren goldene Schwäne, aus deren Mäulern das Wasser sprudelte. [...] Sie mußte an die Toilette im Schrebergartenhäuschen denken. Hinter dem roten Vorhang. Kleine Trachtenpärchen auf Wolken waren auf dem Stoff gestanden. Die Trachtenpärchen hatten einander an den Händen gehalten und waren lächelnd auf ihren Wolken geschwebt. (ND p. 70-71)

Again, the interior space of a house harks back to a golden age of *Heimat*, as suggested by the idealized 'Trachtenpärchen', and threatens to imprison the protagonist as the exterior door is locked: 'Das Aufsperren des Türschlosses der Tapetentür war bis in das Wohnzimmer zu hören' (ND p. 79). The gothic tone of the text intensifies when, in this space Norma calls 'reine Folterungsumgebung' (ND p. 70), she discovers flecks of human blood. The

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[190]   Susanne Becker, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999), p. 34.
[191]   *Ibid.*, p. 35.

door is locked and the only means of escape is to physically defeat the force which keeps her confined, a force which, as if to universalize the experience, is referred to only as 'der Mann' (ND p. 80). Norma employs physical violence to remove the threat:

> Sie faßte den rechten Arm. Drehte ihn nach hinten. Nach oben. Riß den anderen Arm hoch. Schlang die Krawatte um die Handgelenke. Zog die Krawatte fest. Der Mann lachte. Kicherte plötzlich sie solle das nicht machen. Sie solle diese Fesseln aufmachen. Sofort. Seine Stimme wurde scharf und schneidend. Sie zog die Krawatte durch den Metallring an der Wand. […] Es gelang ihr, die Krawattenenden nicht loszulassen. Die Enden noch einmal zu verknoten. Sie sprang zurück. Der Mann tobte. Schrie. (ND p. 82)

With the help of the robot Hugo, the protagonist murders the 'Mann' and makes her escape: 'Norma hob die Schlüssel auf und ging in das Schlafzimmer zurück. [...] Sie schloß die Tür schnell. Hugo war blutüberströmt' (ND p. 83). Mention of the key, together with the image of the hanging corpse and Hugo's bloodied machinery elicits an allusion to Charles Perrault's gothic folk-tale *Bluebeard*, and the murder of seven wives by the eponymous criminal. Bluebeard keeps their bloody bodies hanging from hooks in a small room under his castle, with a key the only means of access to the forbidden chamber. The new Norma retrieves from 'der Mann' the key, the phallic symbol of power. Thus Norma's release is therefore not only physical, but is an escape from the gendered determinants of myths like *Bluebeard* and the idea of woman as propagated by the scientists who, in Norma's world, genetically modify women to be soft and tender: '[d]ie Kraft in den Händen war nur noch ein Fünftel der Kraft einer Männerhand. Zart waren die Frauen gedacht gewesen. Für die Schönheit geschaffen. Luxus' (ND p. 30). As a modern female Bluebeard, Norma overcomes her patriarchal oppressor to create different outcomes to old stories.

The gothic features of the text such as escape, threatening spaces and malevolent forces, are juxtaposed with elements of science fiction, a genre which has, according to one sci-fi author, 'diversified the gothic tale of terror in such a way as to encompass those fears generated by change and technological advances which are the chief status of change'.[192] Writers have challenged the conventions of realism to imagine not only future consequences of technology on the human condition and the environment, but also to cast new perspectives on present-day issues. Friederike Eigler's reading of Christa Wolf's *Selbstversuch*, written in 1972 and set twenty years in the future for instance, posits the text as a feminist intervention in scientific discourse. Wolf's female scientist's sex-change experiment gives her the dimensions of the cyborg, that is 'a hybrid figure that undercuts not only the distinction between the organic and the mechanistic but also other binaries including the sex/gender system; […] a figure for a feminist critique that participates in and seeks to shape scientific discourse'.[193] Postmodern debates have incorporated sci-fi tropes, such as the figure of the cyborg, in order to interrogate the constitution of human identity and, as Brian McHale argues, sci-fi is ideally situated to consciously foreground the construction of alternative worlds: 'SF is openly and avowedly ontological in its orientation, i.e. like mainstream postmodernist writing it is self-consciously "world-building" fiction, laying bare the process of fictional world-making itself'.[194]

A 'process of fictional world-making' is evident in the way physical and sexual uniformity is artificially manufactured. Women are constructed to

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[192]   Brian Aldiss quoted in *A Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. by David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p.112.

[193]   Friederike Eigler, 'Rereading Christa Wolf's "Selbstversuch": Cyborgs and Feminist Critiques of Scientific Discourse', *German Quarterly*, 73/4 (2000), 401-415 (p. 406).

[194]   Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p. 12.

behave and look in certain pre-determined ways, and the new Norma is conscious of the construction, and constructedness, of her identity, '[s]ie war als richtige Frau konzipiert worden' (ND p. 30). In the world of the text, an homogenous femininity has been artificially fashioned, with women genetically manipulated to display exaggerated forms of behaviour which are often represented as innately female. Hence a whole generation of women, Norma included, has been implanted with an 'Altruismusgen' to increase the female propensity towards altruism. The creation of an 'official' version of femininity backfires however when an excess of unselfishness amongst women render them inert: 'Die waren alle in Schwermut verfallen. Und dann nur noch auf dem Bett gelegen. Und dann nicht einmal mehr geweint. Nur noch geschaut. Dann starr' (ND p. 47). This image is exaggerated, yet familiar in its ironic implication that altruism is a quality linked to an essential feminine, and one which in the world of the text can be genetically engineered.

Challenges are offered to normative female behaviour patterns by the pink screen of Norma's so-called 'Beauty Pad': 'Das Menü bot Kosmetik an. Gesundheit. Styling. Der glückliche Mann' (ND p. 41).[195] Deciphering the screen is not always straightforward however: 'Auf dem winzigen Bildschirm schwammen funkelnde rosarote Sternchen auf himmelblauem Grund. [...] Die Sterne schwirrten erst ziellos auf dem kleinen Bildschirm umher. Dann konnte sie lesen' (ND p. 19 & p. 31). The text does not allow the words conveying Norma's socialization to appear coherently on the 'Beauty Pad', and like the fluid, fragmented bodies in the text, the stars swim 'ziellos', before forming coherent words. Norma's initial inability to make sense of the fragmented

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[195]   The name 'Beauty Pad' resonates with contemporary readers, who may access information on their own iPads.

shapes swimming on the screen, together with the name of her 'Gartenroboter' Hugo create an intertextual link to von Hofmannsthal's 'Chandos-Brief', in which a fictional writer outlines his personal crisis with language. 'Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich. [...] Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen'.[196] Language for Lord Chandos ceased to be a vehicle for meaningful communication, and the swimming words on the page exposed the gap between the secure anchor afforded by language and the actual complexity of reality. Reading Norma intertextually offers 'das Beauty Pad' as an instance of linguistic instability which challenges the certainties of gender which it seeks to secure, and opens an avenue of association with the Austrian tradition of 'Sprachkritik'.

The genre devices offered by science fiction are employed by Streeruwitz in her ongoing interrogation of constructed uniformity and 'fictional world-making'. The author insisted that her scientist figure Dr Packer comes 'aus unserer Zeit',[197] rather than a fantastic future, and indeed the character's research into ways in which those elements of human consciousness which hinder pure thought and rationality may be eradicated have powerful resonances for a postwar readership. Packer's aim is to liberate human consciousness from forces outside of its control:

> [Packer] bearbeitete die Angstreste, die in heruntergeladenen Bewußtseinsformen immer noch indirekt wirksam waren. Auf dem Weg in die reine Rationalität müßten solche Einsprengsel beseitigt werden. [...] Dafür bekäme er von Zeit zu Zeit Ausschuß, mit dem er dann machen dürfe, was er wolle. Manchmal erhielte er auch Unregistrierte. (ND p. 77-78)

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[196]   von Hofmannsthal, 'Chandos Brief', p. 14.

[197]   See Heinz-Norbert Jocks, 'Marlene Streeruwitz im Gespräch', in *Dialog: Literatur: Kunst* (Cologne: DuMont, 2001) p. 14.

Packer's goal is to drive out those aspects of human consciousness, such as 'Angst', which are built up over time and are still 'indirekt wirksam', even in those consciousnesses that have been downloaded. Packer's experiments resound with intertextual allusions to expand the semantic space. Packer is partaking in an Enlightenment project of eliminating the irrational and unknown, that which detracts from reasoned thought. This invokes echoes of Arthur Koestler's 'ghosts in the machine', a phrase employed to describe those impulses such as fear which are built up over time and which can supplant more sophisticated functions.[198] Packer's project is to repress those elements of human thought which would resist a pure, rational order, a difficult task which requires Packer himself to be free from all 'Phantasien' (ND p. 78). For Adorno and Horkheimer, the emancipatory aim, 'von den Menschen die Furcht zu nehmen und sie als Herren einzusetzen', led directly to fascism, with extreme instrumental rationality driving the Nazi elimination of those individuals and social groups deemed to be a hindrance to the progress of the fascist plan.[199] Zygmunt Bauman contends that the Nazi 'Final Solution' did not clash at any stage with the rational pursuit of efficient, optimal goal-implementation, but 'arose out of a genuinely rational concern'.[200] Instrumental rationality disregards difference, and hence disposes of those deemed to be the 'other'. The metaphor of trash used for Packer's victims, the 'Ausschuß', constructs a link to the categorization of individuals sent to their deaths in the Nazi camps, so by incorporating the terms 'Ausschuß' and 'Unregistrierte' into Packer's discourse, the text constructs reminders of Nazi atrocities perpetrated

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[198]   Arthur Koestler, *The Ghost in the Machine* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).
[199]   Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 7.
[200]   Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000, first pub. 1989), p. 17.

in the name of science. Bauman uses a similar metaphor in his discussion of the way Jews were regarded, as the 'weeds' that contaminated the Nazi 'garden', who were exterminated by chemical means.[201] The 'Ausschuß' are at Packer's disposal, having been rejected from a society that demands conformity.

Streeruwitz constructs a specific representation of the world in which anything threatening the sanctity of the rationalist project, whether it be the 'Unregistrierte' and 'Ausschuß', or deviations from an essentialist, gendered norm, is to be repressed. As a form of resistance to this, frequent instances of corporeal fragmentation, physical transformations and gender boundary violations are included. To effect these transformations, the text enlists the potentialities of the science fiction genre, in particular 'die Chancen und Potentiale der Grenzverwischung zwischen Mensch und Technik, Subjekt und Objekt',[202] as the boundaries between human and machine dissolve and new social relationships are introduced. Bodies such as Donald/Mamasan's are reconfigured in various forms, identities become ambiguous and characters, like Norma herself, rejuvenate overnight. Machines are able to express their feelings, and Donald's computer resembles a petulant lover when it questions Norma on Donald's whereabouts: 'Der Bildschirm fragte, warum Donald nicht mit ihm sprechen wolle. Ob er etwas falsch gemacht habe. [...] Oder was nicht ausreiche. [...] Es habe Donald sehr vermißt, seufzte das Gerät' (ND pp. 25-26). Even the surveillance cameras and computers are 'dumm' and 'schleimig' and able to display 'Eifersucht' (ND p. 28).

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[201]   Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 92.

[202]   Margot Brink, 'Von Cyborgs, Monstern und der Hochkonjunktur des Hybriden', in *Menschenkonstruktionen. Künstliche Menschen in Literatur, Film, Theater und Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Querelles: Jahrbuch für Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung* (Stuttgart & Weimar: Metzler, 2004), 183-202 (p. 187).

These textual concerns form a link to Donna Haraway's borderless future as expressed in her 'Cyborg' manifesto written more than ten years before *Norma Desmond.*. Haraway outlined the liberating potential of the blurring of boundaries between organism and machine, with the cyborg metaphor employed to explain the complexities of identity and truth within discourse, in particular from a feminist perspective. The cyborg is a mixture of the 'natural' and the 'artificial', and provides for a productive blurring of the borders between culture/nature, human/machine, fantasy/material which have sustained western grand narratives. Furthermore, as 'a creature in a post-gender world', the cyborg disrupts essentialist notions of gender identity. The metaphor of the cyborg is thus appropriated as the site of corporeal reorganization. They are 'creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted', a notion which rejects the idea of an essential origin, as Haraway contends: 'The Cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden'.[203]

The hi-tech, sci-fi world that lies outside of the 'Schrebergarten', is an important factor in the politics of the novel, as it provides a space in which the concept of a unified subject can undergo scrutiny, and categories of identity may be rearranged. Norma's companion, the clone David is presented as the opposite of the Haraway drive to blur boundaries and contest identities. As an example of the scientific urge to copy the apparent imperatives of gender, David's male body is *excessively* male.[204] He has been constructed within the

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[203]   Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto', p. 150 & p. 151.

[204]   When Streeruwitz's text was first published in 2000, debates surrounding cloning and genetic modification would have been fresh in the public mind. The cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1997, widely reported in the German and Austrian press, and the emergence of human genome technology in the same decade, fuelled media- hyped debates about the dangers of

structures of gendered power relations, and is in possession of not one, but three penises, intended to function as 'ein gut ausgebildeter Liebhaber' (ND p. 33). There are echoes here of Ridley Scott's 1982 sci-fi thriller *Blade Runner*, which presents a female replicant as a 'pleasure model', a commodity created for the sexual benefit of men. This is turned on its head by Streeruwitz who has the male figure available to pleasure the female whenever she wants. The new Norma's sexual encounters with David the clone are unsatisfactory however, and they equate to the experiences of her twentieth century counterparts who are often left desolate and unfulfilled by male lovers. Norma reflects: 'David wollte nur ganz einfach ficken. Sie hätte sich auch nicht konzentrieren können. Es war Schwerarbeit, alle 3 zur gleichen Zeit. [...] Sie ließ David tun' (ND p.32). This is a pessimistic reminder that for Streeruwitz's female protagonists, nothing has changed in three centuries.[205]

As a clone, David represents, in Jackie Stacey's terms 'a doubling that reflects back on the body's claims to authenticity and originality'.[206] The clone is the result of the impulse to replicate 'nature', but the clone, by definition, challenges the very concept of originality and is thus a paradoxical creation. 'The clone figure', Stacey continues, 'represents the fantasy of a sense of oneself from the outside in one's entirety, perhaps concretizing the lingering imaginary image of idealized totality described by Lacan'.[207] In the opening

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modern scientific methods. See, for instance in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 'Wie groß ist die Gefahr von Missbildung und Tod für den Klon?' (14/03/2001), <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wissen/menschen-klonen-wie-gross-ist-die-gefahr-von-missbildung-und-tod-fuer-den-klon-1.628545>, [accessed 12/12/2008].

[205] *Partygirl.* for instance presents its protagonist Madeline as experiencing disappointment after the sexual act, in which she remains the passive partner: 'Das Küssen. Der schwere Körper auf ihr. Sie konnte die Leere und die dumpfe Schwäche im Kopf und im Leib nicht spüren. Unter seiner Last. Sie ließ sich küssen'. *Partygirl.* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2002), p. 221.

[206] Jackie Stacey, *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010), p. 111.

[207] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

pages of the novel, Streeruwitz's clone figure David is presented as the perfect male form, and his body is, as his name suggests, a Michelangelo sculpture of classical proportions: 'David stand vor dem kleinen Rasierspiegel. Er hielt die Gewichte in den Fäusten und hob sie. […] Sah zu, wie seine Bizepse anschwollen bei der Bewegung. Wie die Adern außen dicker wurden' (ND p. 15). Linda Mizejewski comments on the propensity of popular culture to depict 'perfect' male bodies in science fiction and fantasy, even in those films which present postmodern decentred concepts of the self. The sci-fi thriller *Total Recall* (1990, dir. Paul Verhoeven), for instance, 'repeatedly valorizes and posits as triumphant a particular male body as an essentially autonomous and unified entity', by way of its star Arnold Schwarzenegger.[208]

Streeruwitz's David initially appears as an iconic superhero figure, flexing his Schwarzenegger-like biceps, and in an ironic gesture to Lacan, the character observes his own reflection in the mirror. What is reflected back at him however is a fantasy of a self appearing unified and in one's entirety, a fantasy because, as the diminutive size of the mirror anticipates, the clone David is transformed from classically proportioned adult male, to thumb sucking infant: 'David war klein. Ein kleines Kind [...]. Das Kind schlief. Ruhig. Hatte einen Daumen im Mund' (ND pp. 39-40). Having imbibed rejuvenating drugs, the now baby David is given the pejorative name 'Duda', is capable of only incoherent and fragmented speech, and is dependent on Norma as mother figure. 'Das Kind richtete sich auf. "Hunger", murmelte das Kind. "Hunger. Nama". "Norma", sagte sie' (ND p. 47). The clone may be as close to human male perfection as possible, however the rupture of this image and the

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[208]   Linda Mizejewski, 'Action Bodies in Futurist Spaces: Bodybuilder Stardom as Special Effect', in *Alien Zone II: the Spaces of Science-Fiction Cinema*, ed. by Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 152-172 (p. 156).

re-construction of his body into that of an infant, interrogates the cultural category of male perfection and its replication.

As a derivative life-form, the clone suggests the existence of an original from which is repeated, and so its disruption forms part of the text's investigation into essentialist representational politics, in particular the idealization of the body. Paralleling Norma's departure from the 'Schrebergarten', the text departs from the myths of a human 'original' to interrogate what Butler has termed 'the foundational illusions of identity'.[209] The material body is also a site of performance rather than the intersection of essential characteristics. Bodies in the text are neither stable nor static entities. David's regression to infant status signals the positioning of the mother-child dyad as the central relationship in the text. Norma's role becomes that of nurturer '"Duda. Hunger. Duda", rief das Kind. "Duda. Duda Hunger. Duda." "Ja. Dann müssen wir etwas zu essen machen. Und anziehen müssen wir dich auch"' (ND p. 47). David's childish demands echo a desire for a return to the pre-linguistic, pre-oedipal fusion with the mother, and his needs are satisfied by Norma who supplies him with milk and food.[210] The nurturing mother is a traditional image, but a pattern of motherhood is presented by the text which simultaneously calls into question any fixed concept of motherhood. Norma undergoes physical transformation into a young girl of twelve or thirteen before assuming the role of mother, which parallels David's transformation into Duda. It is significant that the only other maternal role in the text is

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[209]   Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 46.

[210]   Food is a constant presence in Streeruwitz's prose works, and is generally linked to guilt about over-indulgence and feelings of inadequacy, with the voluntary starvation or binging practices of the female protagonists mirroring dysfunctional relationships and problematic views of the body. There are, for example references to bulimia in *Partygirl.* and acts of atonement for over-indulgence in food in *Jessica. 30..* Only in *Verführungen.* and *Norma Desmond.* are positive images presented of a mother feeding her children.

assumed by the androgynous 'Mamasan' who offers Norma food at the end of her journey. '"Habt ihr etwas Ordentliches gegessen, Norma?" fragte Mamasan' (ND p. 96). Food again takes its place in this relationship which signals a new configuration, one in which the gender-ambiguous character Mamasan, '[d]iese Frau war Donald. Oder?' (*ibid.*) is the nurturing character, who transcends fixed concepts of the 'mother' role.

In contrast to the 'Schrebergarten's' world of certainty, passivity and ignorance, – 'in der Schrebergartenhütte mußte man nicht viel wissen' (ND p. 22) – and Packer's project of ridding consciousness of those elements which prevent 'reine Rationalität', the text revels in a chaotic disruption of unities, whether of the body, time, language or genre. It refutes notions of essence, as characters undergo processes of formation and transformation, as bodies are rejuvenated, gender mutated and flesh and machinery fuse. The text draws attention to the complexities of identity, with adults suddenly taking on the physical and mental characteristics of infants, male and female bodies merging, and gender identities thrown into question.

In the midst of this continual state of flux, the question of how far the text enables female agency to emerge, may appear problematic. Where is the political subject located if the subject is undergoing constant transformation? The importance of female experience is not effaced in *Norma Desmond*. As with *Scheherazade*, it is through the subject's positionality within social relations, as opposed to as a locus of determined sets of values, that the text affects a critique and produces new meanings. The intertextual incorporation of filmic and theatrical references, and the aspects of sci-fi and gothic woven into the fabric of the novel, presents the self as comprised of a multiplicity of

narrative scripts. Streeruwitz's text shares with Wilder's film a play with fixed places and times, which creates a shifting, unstable territory. Both film and text rely upon and acknowledge their reliance on anterior narrative frameworks. *Sunset Boulevard* is a film with an intertextual fabric which includes traces of other texts, primarily earlier films; actors from the silent movies such as Buster Keaton play themselves and the gothic mansion has the hallmarks of a Dracularian castle. As Wolfreys reminded us, *Sunset Boulevard* opens itself up to multiple projections of alterity, which prevent the viewer from settling 'into a cosy, domesticated familiarity'.[211] In Streeruwitz's *Norma Desmond.*, the chaotic copresence and intermingling of genres such as sci-fi and gothic, and the introduction of parody and iconic images from literature and film, ensure that, like the audience of *Sunset Boulevard*, the reader can never settle into a sense of comfortable presumptions. Instead, attention is constantly shifted onto the act of representing.

In the final pages of the text, the new Norma's departure from her namesake is complete. While the old Norma disappeared into the glare of the camera, totally captured by the means of her representation, the new character acknowledges that the space she inhabits is a spectacle, a 'Phantomstadt' populated by 'Schattenpersonen'. 'Auf den Straßen fuhren Autos, alte Modelle. Wie in Filmen' (ND p. 91). The text hereby acknowledges that escape from representation and mediated reality can never completely succeed, but what Streeruwitz's text, like *Scheherazade*, offers, is a space in which representation can become a site of struggle, rather than of certainty.

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[211]   Wolfreys, 'Hollywood Gothic', p. 212.

CHAPTER THREE

CONSTRUCTING/PERFORMING THE FEMALE SELF. LILIAN FASCHINGER'S *MAGDALENA SÜNDERIN* (1995) AND MARLENE STREERUWITZ'S *JESSICA, 30.* (2004)

Written almost a decade apart, the two novels under consideration in this chapter have at their core feminist agendas that rely on the specific textual practices of self-narration by female voices. The focus of this chapter will be the conditions under which female subjectivities are constructed and the subject's reaction to, and internalization of, their social positioning. Performance will be a term used in relation to both texts. The protagonist-narrators perform the predetermined scripts of femininity, with varying degrees of success. Viewed through the prism of intertextuality, both texts can be considered to be engaging in the deliberate appropriation of highly recognizable texts, from popular culture and those discourses surrounding gender familiar to a western readership, to Austrian-specific references. They consider gender as a point of 'convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations'[212] whilst not denying the material implications on individual lives. Both texts play with perceptions of truth and social norms and confront well-defined subject positions, but as this chapter argues, the narrator-protagonists have very different levels of awareness of their performance within discourse.

Following Althusser, Belsey argues that the categories in which we are socially and culturally positioned, 'call us to account, and by doing so bring us

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[212]   Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 14.

into line with the norms and proprieties that culture itself constructs'.[213] Subjects are recruited by societies that, 'incite us to be accountable, responsible citizens, eager, indeed, to give an account of ourselves in terms we have learned from the signifying practice of those societies themselves'.[214] The eponymous protagonists of *Magdalena Sünderin* and *Jessica, 30.* are 'recruited' into the norms of their social positionings, and called to give accounts of themselves which chime with the forms of selfhood on offer. Their socially constructed subjectivities vary with the discursively produced expectations of their given surroundings and socio-cultural situations. *Magdalena* is not set in a definite time frame, but is similar to *Scheherazade* in that it is constructed by the female voice. The confessions of 'die Sünderin' trace her performances of masquerade and her assumption of stereotypical roles, as Magdalena forms relationships with seven men who she murders one by one, 'like a modern-day female Bluebeard'.[215] From submissive housewife and sex slave, to fairy-tale character and nun, Magdalena's appropriation of a multitude of varied identities serves to foreground their construction. It functions to demonstrate the multiple possibilities of gender, whilst reminding us of restrictions embedded in all predefined roles.

Magdalena's power stems from her ability to display and exchange roles and her awareness of their restrictive nature. This freedom eludes Streeruwitz's protagonist in *Jessica*, who is recruited into, and assumes her place in a western consumer-orientated culture of the early 2000s. While

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[213]   Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), p. 53.

[214]   *Ibid.*

[215]   Jonathan Long, 'Austrian Prose fiction, 1945-2000', in *A History of Austrian Literature*, ed. by Katrin Kohl & Ritchie Robertson (New York: Camden House, 2006), pp. 223-245 (p. 240). Long's Bluebeard designation reminds us of Norma Desmond's act of murder.

Magdalena presents the roles she assumes as 'performances', Jessica adheres to the rules of the game with limited degrees of self-perception. As a modern woman in thrall to the demands of twenty-first century codes of appearance and behaviour, Jessica embodies the discourses that produce her sense of self and displays little reflexive self-knowledge or resistance. In the second section of the novel, the character undergoes a partial transformation which spurs her into taking action against her politician lover who is engaged in fraudulent practices. However this chapter will argue that while Jessica reproduces conformist discourses, a resistant discourse is produced through the novel's form.

What is noticeable is the way both texts operate in a field of generic mingling. *Jessica* openly invites comparisons with a mix of genres, from the highly gendered chick-lit genre, to the *Entwicklungsroman.* Most notably, *Jessica* has been placed firmly within the former camp by critics who mention by way of comparison Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, published five years previously. In an unfavourable review, Johanna Adorján maintains Streeruwitz's text is postfeminist, pop literature-inspired 'Spielerei [...] eine Anhäufung von Klischees'.[216] As this chapter will show, such comparisons overlook the intertextual operations of a novel working against, rather than with these generic trends. The intertextual practice of generic coding in *Magdalena* both reproduces the ritualized discourse of confession, whilst

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[216]   Johanna Adorján, 'Sie und ihr Maple Walnut. Mit ihrem neuen Roman *Jessica, 30* tut Marlene Streeruwitz Frauen keinen Gefallen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* (02/05/2005), <http://www.buecher.de/verteiler.asp?site=atikel_faz.asp&wea=1100485&artikelnummer=000 001382937>, [accessed 27/01/2007]. Postfeminism views the achievements of second wave feminism with regards to gender equality as obvious and common sense. Popular culture, for instance Fielding's novel, portrays female characters who lead independent, free lifestyles without associating themselves with the feminist movement.

simultaneously undermining its claims to truth. Magdalena's narrative of confession before a priest produces a host of authorized axioms concerning identity norms that are then submitted to parody and ridicule. Whilst drawing attention to its apparent obedience to the generic conventions of confession, it incorporates extravagant and fanciful stories, extreme national characterizations akin to those in *Scheherazade*, and a metafictional awareness of itself as fiction.

3.1 Confession and masquerade: Faschinger's *Magdalena Sünderin* (1995)

Like its predecessor *Scheherazade*, *Magdalena Sünderin* provides an arena for a woman's act of self-representation, with feminist strategies of resistance brought about from within a framework of narration by a dominant female voice. The protagonist-narrator, Austrian Magdalena Leitner, 'vom Nordufer des Ossiacher Sees',[217] is driven by a desire to tell her story to a Catholic priest who she has abducted at gunpoint from his congregation, bound to a tree and gagged. Magdalena is insistent in her demand to be heard: 'Und jetzt werden Sie mich anhören, Hochwürden. Es wird Zeit, daß Sie auch mir Ihr Ohr leihen' (MS p. 11). A series of self-disclosures in the first-person follows, as the female figure reconstructs her journey through Europe and recounts her encounters with seven male figures whom she ultimately murders. The number seven resonates with meaning and symbolism, particularly in Old Testament religion with the seven days of creation and the seven deadly sins. It also represents completeness and totality, a number which represents the whole.[218] Faschinger's male characters in *Magdalena* are stereotypical figures, representative of a totality, a way of thinking or being, rather than multifaceted 'believable' characters in their own right. Magdalena confesses to the murder of these men and what they represent: 'Ich will eine Beichte ablegen Hochwürden, das ist alles' (MS p. 23). A number of initial expectations are thus provoked, not least the evocation of the act of Christian repentance of sins and consequent absolution by 'Hochwürden'. In addition, a powerful intertext

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[217]   *Magdalena Sünderin* (Munich: dtv, 2002, first pub. 1995), p. 36. Henceforth, the text will be referenced as MS in parenthesis.

[218]   See Jeanne Cooper, *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), p. 117.

arrives in the title with the eponymous heroine conjuring up for the reader associations with the penitent whore, weeping at Christ's feet. What this chapter seeks to argue is that Faschinger's feminist agenda relies on the subversion by the text of the very form and function of the confessional mode, in both its religious and literary incarnations.

Primarily, there is a clear dissolution of the established power structure which traditionally positions a priest as a divine representative, hearing the confession and possessing the power to absolve and impose sanctions. Rita Felski observes that religious confessions valued individual self-analysis 'as a means of exposing the fallibility of humanity and affirming the ultimate authority of a divine knowledge beyond the individual's grasp'.[219] In *Magdalena*, the priest is a bound prisoner forced to listen without casting judgement or acting as divine mediator, so that from the outset Faschinger's text disrupts the ritualized power hierarchy. Instead, it is Magdalena's firm grasp and knowledge of the self, one that has no recourse to divine intervention, which structures the confession. What is more, the confessional act becomes an act of seduction on the part of the female towards the priest, culminating in sex. It is the priest who becomes aware of 'the fallibility of humanity', when, like Scheherazade's sultan, he undergoes a process of transformation from judge, to lover.

In comparison to the religious act of confession, which is usually private and involves the individual's submission under the authority of God and the church, literary confessions celebrate unique individuality whilst entailing some act of catharsis and transformation on the part of the teller. St

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[219]   Rita Felski, 'On Confession', in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), pp. 83-95 (p. 87).

Augustine's autobiographical *Confessions* written in the fifth century AD integrated the act of confession into a literary work and documented a form of self-analysis and progress towards restored wholeness which attempted to 'regain that unity of self which we lost by falling apart in the search for a variety of pleasures'.[220] For Goethe, the effects of literary confession were redemptive. After completing *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* in 1774, he wrote, 'Ich fühlte mich, wie nach einer Generalbeichte, wieder froh und frei, und zu einem neuen Leben berechtigt'.[221] Offering both St. Augustine and Goethe as examples, Barbara Kosta argues that the motives which lie behind male confessional writing, whether religious or secular, are in fact, the same: 'The canonized authors often sought to immortalize themselves in their deliveries of public confessions, as well as to legitimate and validate their lives in the mapping of a career or calling. Autobiography [...] was reserved traditionally for "the universal male"'.[222] Kosta suggests that the confessional format was a justification of the self and defined male notions of selfhood which became universalized.

A third confessional model alongside the religious and literary is that which involves confessional acts in, amongst others, medical, educational and psychoanalytical discourses, and considered by Foucault as 'one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth'.[223] Confessing and recreating oneself in narrative is, following Foucault, a form of truth production, and a study of the confession is thus a study of the mechanisms by

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[220]   St Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 233.

[221]   Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 1, ed. by Hendrik Birus *et al.* (Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-), p. 639.

[222]   Barbara Kosta, *Recasting Autobiography. Women's Counterfictions in Contemporary German Literature and Film* (New York: Cornell UP, 1994), p. 9.

[223]   Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 59.

which truth is produced. Magdalena's confession incorporates and calls upon the reader's knowledge of all three forms. She is the 'Sünderin' confessing seven murders before a priest; she undertakes an autobiographical project of self-narration; and her confession produces socially and culturally authorized truths which are offered to the reader who experiences the pleasure of recognition. Simultaneously the text is granted oppositional value, since whilst continually mobilizing expectations, it subjects its 'truths' to a mocking parody, engaging in a form of intertextual play which resituates in comic fashion pre-existing, highly recognizable texts and discourses. Knowing the 'truth' entails the authority of one discourse over another which, from a feminist perspective, involves the unacceptable privileging of a specifically patriarchal authority. This chapter will argue that Faschinger's text plays with expectations of truth and essence by working against any possibility of certainty, which has led one commentator to remark that *Magdalena* suspends the reader, 'in a moral, theological, and gender-political vacuum'.[224] This chapter will investigate the veracity of this claim, by seeking to expose how far Magdalena is a politically significant figure, or merely a vehicle of playful ambivalences.

The modern Magdalena character moves through discourses and different physical spaces, favouring a 'nomadisierende, vazierende Lebensweise' (MS p. 211). As we have seen in *Scheherazade* and *Norma Desmond.*, movement is a key strategy in the form and content of the authors' texts to convey their political agendas. In *Magdalena*, the protagonist's name and the title 'Sünderin' links Faschinger's character to Mary Magdalene of the

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[224]   Long, 'Austrian Prose Fiction', p. 241.

Christian tradition, a biblical figure who has been simultaneously revered as a saint and abhorred as a prostitute. Throughout cultural history her image has surfaced in a variety of incarnations. Like Scheherazade, the shifting intertextual associations the name is capable of conjuring in the reader make it a suitable vehicle as the bearer and producer of multiple meanings. A contested figure even within the bounds of the Christian tradition, the name Mary Magdalene has been attached to three separate women; the sinner who anoints Christ's feet, Lazarus' sister, and Mary of Bethany. It underwent further transformation in later traditions into the penitent whore. Susan Haskins remarks that the figure has been 'refashioned again and again to suit the needs and aspirations of the times', but that the predominant image we have of the biblical Magdalene 'is of a beautiful woman with long golden hair, weeping for her sins, the very incarnation of the age-old equation between feminine beauty, sexuality and sin'.[225] *Magdalena* foregrounds the popular image Haskins refers to with a modern twist, presenting a female protagonist who is not exactly weeping for her sins, but confessing them, and, with her 'rotblonde Locken' and tight black motorcycle leathers, inviting the gaze. 'Senken Sie nicht den Blick', she urges the captured priest, 'schauen Sie. Schauen Sie nur. Erfassen Sie alles, dessen Ihr Blick habhaft werden kann' (MS p. 20). What is important for Faschinger's text is its association with Mary Magdalene as a composite character who has also been captured by the gaze, the cultural nomad, whose fluctuating identities have been adapted by social and cultural conditions.

Faschinger's Magdalena is a picaresque character who travels through countries of West Europe on a Puch motorbike, taking in London, Paris and

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[225] Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1993), p. ix & p. 1.

Bavaria.[226] In these locations, the protagonist forms relationships with seven male figures who become her victims, seven representative figures whose murder is an annihilation of their power. The male characters are framed by Magdalena in terms of crude stereotyping and extreme categorizations. The protagonist becomes embroiled in their stories and in each case the relationship ends in their murder at the hands of the 'Sünderin'.

The first victim from the Frisian Isles is cold, skeletal and melancholic, and for Magdalena he assumes mythic status: 'ich erkannte ihn als einen männlichen Archetypus wieder, der mir häufig im Traum begegnet war, in Gestalt eines ebenfalls etwa zwei Meter großen Skeletts, das mich verfolgte und dem ich zu entkommen suchte' (MS p. 77). Magdalene fears that the character's frigid melancholy – 'er reagierte auf nichts. […] ich merkte, wie er mir immer mehr zur Last wurde' (MS p. 91) – will render her immobile and ultimately kill her, and so she acts pre-emptively by drowning him in the sea. Her relationship with Pablo, 'Spezialist für spanische und lateinamerikanische Tänze' (MS p. 140), also ends in murder of the male, for as a prolific lover as well as dancer, Pablo is continually unfaithful, and pays with his life when the protagonist slips a fatal amount of poison into his coffee. Five other men are disposed of by various means: jealous Igor from Ukraine is incinerated, a tramp from the Outer Hebrides with vampire tendencies is stabbed, appropriately enough, with a stake through the heart, Michael the homosexual Jehovah's Witness is shot in west London, the sado-masochist Baron Otto from

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[226] For an exposition of Magdalena as a picaresque heroine, see Helmut Pfanner, '*Magdalena Sünderin*: A Contemporary Picaresque Novel by Lilian Faschinger', *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 33/2 (2000), 163-175. The picaresque traditions which Pfanner finds in the text include committing petty thefts, constantly on the move from one relationship to the next, living life as an outsider and posing a persistent challenge to moral values.

Baden-Baden is strangled and finally, serial womanizer Karl is pushed from a cliff in rural Bavaria. 'Als ich ihn erwürgte, tötete ich gleichzeitig all jene, die mich in meinem Leben durch Überredung oder Gewaltanwendung zu Handlungen bewogen hatten, die ich im Grunde nicht hatte ausführen wollen' (MS p. 295). Geoffrey Howes regards Magdalena's murderous acts towards the seven men she encounters as 'therapeutic murder [...] anti-social behaviour in the extreme − homicide'.[227] It is indeed anti-social in that it constitutes a killing-off of the social norms and limiting categorizations of identity that the text itself has invoked through the characters. What is not killed off is the female subject. Magdalena's murderous deeds are a performance, symbolic acts of violence that kill off assumptions pertaining to social roles and discursive norms. The murders can be considered acts of revenge against any threat to the itinerant female.

The confessional model can be a double-edged sword for feminist authors, as it runs the danger of constituting, as Felski remarks, 'a narcissistic soul-searching' that reinstates notions of essentialism and authenticity, 'the ideology of subjectivity-as-truth' which feminism contests.[228] On the other hand, confession can avoid the entrapments of its own genre by uncovering the politics of representation, as Irene Gammel points out: 'Women [...] tell and retell their personal stories by simultaneously enacting and reacting against, confessional modalities that wish to contain them'.[229] *Magdalena* does both by firstly offering the reader preassembled structures of thought which assume the

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[227]   Geoffrey Howes, 'Therapeutic Murder in Elfriede Czurda and Lilian Faschinger', *Modern Austrian Literature*, 32/2 (1999), 79-93 (p. 82).

[228]   Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminism, Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989), p. 86.

[229]   Irene Gammel, *Confessional Politics: Women's Sexual Self-Representations in Life Writing and Popular Media* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1995), p. 6.

status of truth, then granting opposition through 'humor, parody, and satire; through fictionalizing strategies; through outrageous masquerades; through play and subversion'.[230] The multiple sites of resistance will be examined by firstly considering the ways in which thematic concerns are supported by the subversion of the framework of the confessional narrative, and by giving consideration to participation by a sympathetic reader who acts as witness to the confessional act. Secondly it will scrutinize the masquerades of the central character, to show how the protagonist's agency is articulated through her inhabiting multiple possibilities of subjecthood. Magdalena proclaims her 'ungebundene Lebensweise' throughout, (MS p. 17, p. 35 & p. 211), which permits 'Bewegungsfreiheit'. However, the reader becomes aware that although these roles are available to women, they are limited. Hence a tension arises between the acknowledgement that femininity is not bound to only one image, but at the same time the concession that there are restrictions embedded in all of these predefined roles.

Subversion at the confessional

Confession in all of its incarnations has a transactional nature. The act of confessing is, in Foucault's terms, 'a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship', one that demands an authoritative, intervening presence to 'judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile',[231] whether in terms of priest, reader or secular mediator. *Magdalena* inverts the power dynamic of an intervening authority by positioning a listener who is unable to speak directly to Magdalena, the confessant. Instead, the priest's judgements are passed on to

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[230]   *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[231]   Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 61-62.

the reader in short interludes between the female confessions, so that the reader is privy to the priest's responses and judgements of Magdalena. Thus in the relationships between Magdalena and the priest, between the priest and the reader, and between the stories themselves, a space is created which is much more complex than the Foucauldian notion of a one-way power play between confessant and confessor. The narrative is a site of struggle, as the heroine engages in a process not of uncovering a series of fixed truths about herself, but of perpetually producing and creating a self. The priest and by implication the reader, are positioned as collaborators in the meaning-making process whilst being constantly thrown into a state of uncertainty as to the veracity of the confessions before them.

It is interesting to note that Menasse perceived the practice of ritualized confessions to be part of the postwar Austrian national fabric, functioning to reproduce and reaffirm existing power relations: 'Im Beichtverhältnis geht die Macht von dem, der etwas zu sagen hat, auf den Zuhörenden über, der nun die Möglichkeit hat, Befehle auszusprechen und die Absolution zu erteilen, also eine Harmonie herzustellen, die ein Geschenk der Allmacht ist'.[232] Faschinger presents a series of ambivalences that constantly disrupt 'Harmonie' and consensus. A major target of critique is the Catholic Church itself and its support of fixed notions of truth. Catholicism becomes a victim of Magdalena's grossly over-simplified and exaggerated pronouncements. Catholics, it is contended, are 'nicht frei zu denken, was sie wollen. Sie sind vielleicht überzeugt, daß sie denken, was sie wollen, daß ihre Gedankenfreiheit unbegrenzt ist, doch ein Großteil des Materials, aus dem sich ihr Denken

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[232] Robert Menasse, *Die sozialpartnerschaftliche Ästhetik*: *Essays zum österreichischen Geist* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1990), p. 25.

aufbaut, ist ihnen vorgegeben' (MS p. 100). Structures of thought are prescribed and housed in 'katholische Fertigteilhäuschen, [...] standardisierte katholische Denkfertighäuser' (*ibid.*). The metaphorical Catholic 'prefab' restricts movement and excludes alternatives; its bricks and mortar are the patterns of thought and behaviour which are built over time, repeated and entrenched so that they assume the authority of truth. These patterns are internalized by followers who are convinced, 'daß sie denken, was sie wollen' (*ibid.*), with, in Foucault's terms, 'each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself (*sic*)'.[233]

In order to oppose the singularity of meaning fostered by Catholic 'Denkfertighäuser', the text employs its own version of ready-made 'truths', thus displaying the dogmatism it seeks to explode. Faschinger demonstrates her indebtedness to Bernhard in tone and content, when Magdalena's voice expresses exaggerated, trenchant views, in language laced with hyperbole, exaggeration and generalization. Catholic dignitaries are depicted as 'ausgekocht, bauernschlau und hinterhältig' (MS p. 100). They are as narrow-minded, 'ähnlich [...] den Psychologen, Psychiatern, Psychotherapeuten und Psychoanalytikern' (*ibid.*), while the inhabitants of Catholic countries are 'generell um einiges dümmer […] als die Bewohner anderer Länder' (MS p. 99). Magdalena here participates in conveying unequivocal judgements and narrow perspectives, which lump all Catholics and mental health experts together and fix their identities. In a similar burst of ironic hyperbole and *Österreich-Beschimpfung*, remarks are made about the particular make-up of the Austrian brain:

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[233] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. by Colin Gordon (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), p. 155.

> Nur ein österreichischer Pfarrer wird sich uneingeschränkt in die gewundenen Gänge eines österreichischen Gehirns hineinversetzen können, dessen Großhirnwindungen natürlich anders angelegt sind als die Windungen der Bewohner anderer Länder, nur er wird wirklich tief eindringen können in die graue und weiße Substanz eines österreichischen Menschen. (MS p. 36)

Magdalena voices the notion that national character is unchanging and universal due to the particularities of a particular Austrian physiology, pushing notions of essentialism to extremes. By noticing the limitations of the perceptions of its protagonist, the reader is encouraged to read productively and against the grain of the text's superficial meaning. Magdalena's hyperbole thus forms part of the text's critique of absolute truth-claims, as recognizing Magdalena's limited viewpoint, the reader's attention is drawn to the prefabricated 'Denkgebäude' she herself is presenting. This allows us to perceive the limits of her knowledge and in doing so, we question the legitimacy of other ideologies which are represented in the text, whether they are perpetuated by individuals or by powerful institutions of the state.

The protagonist presents her confession to the priest not in the cloistered surroundings of a church, but in the rural setting of an Austrian field. In contrast to Scheherazade, whose physical space is limited to a sofa in a Graz apartment block but who resides in alternative spaces of the imagination, Magdalena performs in a public space. The private act of confession is thus transformed into a public performance, and the protagonist enlists the participation of a wider audience to act as the Foucauldian 'presence' which must witness a confession for that process to have an effect:

> Ich brauche ein Publikum, Hochwürden […]. Das Publikum ist der Augenzeuge, ohne ein Publikum ist jede Handlung von vornherein nichtig, das wahrnehmende Publikum ist der Beweis der handelnden Existenz. Sie müssen zugeben, daß meine Aktion ein bemerkenswertes öffentliches Ereignis war. (MD p. 14)

As a public event, this confession transcends the boundaries of the 'Beichtstuhl' and co-opts the reader into the scene as a witness. There are two ways, according to Leigh Gilmore, that the witness to a confession can respond; either as detective attempting to uncover the truth which lies at the bottom of the confession, 'thus the witness suppresses the "construction" of truth to a conviction that the process of detection will reveal (rather than produce) it', i.e. a non-productive role; or the witness can participate in the confession's mode of production by finding points of identification.[234] As Gilmore argues, the reader of a literary confession can recognize 'the representation of her position in relation to other familiar positions within cultural scripts'.[235] This makes the transactional process of confession a complex and productive process. In *Magdalena*, the reader is encouraged to take the second of Gilmore's responses. Presented with an 'ich' which is not the site of a singular authority, but is coded in a range of discourses, the reader has access to a variety of identification points.

A point of cultural identification and wider association occurs in one of the protagonist's early tales, easily recognizable as having the flavour of a Grimm *Märchen*. Confessing to the priest her encounter with the first of her seven victims, Magdalena details a dream-like sequence in which she meets with 'ein zahnloses kleines Männlein' (MS p. 72), who leads her through a crumbling abbey to a row of coffins. 'Meine Hübsche, kicherte das Männlein und blickte zu mir auf, meine Schöne. Und es hob die rechte Hand, streichelte meine Schulter und zwickte mich in die Wange' (MS p. 72). The

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[234]   Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), p. 122.
[235]   *Ibid.*, p. 23.

witness/reader is drawn into Magdalena's narrative through recognition of fairy-tale tropes, a strategy familiar from *Norma Desmond.* and *Scheherazade*. In the dark surroundings of the abbey, the wizened old man who appears from nowhere, 'mit einem großen klingelnden Schlüsselbund' (MS p. 71-72), displays discerning foresight with his prophecy: 'Ach, meine Kleine, was wirst du noch alles erdulden' (MS p. 73). Rather than *Schneewittchen* in her glass coffin, Magdalena discovers the Frisian sleeping in one of the coffins and dressed in 'Diesel-Jeans' and 'schwarze[m] Denim-Hemd' (MS p. 74). This modern appearance jars with the framing narrative, one disjuncture amongst many which jolt the reader out of the passive consumption of the fairy-tale narrative they may identify with. It is a reminder that whilst speaking within scripts of pre-existing textual conventions, the novel very definitely choreographs its own act.

Faschinger's text continually exhibits its postmodern credentials by drawing attention to itself as fiction, displaying an ironic awareness of its own manufactured nature and in its apparent obedience to established cultural conventions which undercut the 'truth' claims of confession. The protagonist's acts are propelled by dramatic conventions, and her relationship with Pablo the Spanish dancer constitutes, for instance, 'eine Haltung, wie sie sich jeder Inszenierende nur wünschen kann' (MS p. 15). Here, Magdalena is the star performer on the stage of an unfolding tragic drama. The backdrop is an apartment in Paris, when, having observed Pablo in a compromising position with another woman, Magdalena perceives her role in a tragedy which proceeds in accordance with Aristotelian laws of tragedy:

> Und nachdem meine Füße die Conciergewohnung in der Rue St. Jacques betreten hatten, hatte sich in meinem Kopf eine Peripetie

> gemäß der Poetik des Aristoteles vollzogen. [...] [Ich] überlegte, daß diese Peripetie für mich im Augenblick zwar kein angenehmer Umstand war, daß sie jedoch zweifellos eine für die Progression der Tragödie unumgängliche Notwendigkeit darstellte. (MS pp. 153-154)

The peripeteia referred to is a powerful plot device in tragedy whereby the state of things changes to its opposite, and the necessary sequence of events unfolds. Magdalena acknowledges that the Aristotelian conventions of drama serve as a guarantee, 'daß die Tragödie ihren natürlichen Verlauf nehmen und ihren Gesetzen entsprechend zu Ende geführt werden kann' (MS p. 154). Magdalena acts out her role in the tragedy, in thrall to Aristotelian laws of peripeteia, and murders the duplicitous Pablo. In the process the reader is reminded that she is an actor in a drama which they are witnessing. This is not to abrogate the protagonist's responsibility, but to allow the reader access to the very formation process of narrativity, as the devices of tragedy are followed, and then undercut by a narrator who exposes them as convention.

Writing against the 'unity of self' which Augustine strove for in his *Confessions*, a female character is presented whose multiplicity is regarded as a strength. She is a self-professed 'paradoxe Frau' (MS p. 68), whose personae are constructed to facilitate multiple identities. During an encounter with Igor the violent drunk, Magdalena functions within the discourse of victimhood and remains cowering under the bed sheets after he has beaten her half to death: 'ein Teil von mir blieb unter Igor liegen, apathisch, hoffnungslos und völlig gebrochen' (MS pp. 125-126). As in *Scheherazade*, the narrative shifts from first to third person as a different self makes an escape and succeeds in murdering the perpetrator: 'der Teil meines Ichs, der sich vom schweren Körper Igors freigemacht hatte, nahm die fast volle Wodkaflasche und die brennende Kerze vom Tisch und ging mit den abrupten, automatischen

Schritten eines Roboters zu Igor zurück' (MS p. 126). What Magdalena terms her 'Maschinenmenschteil' sets fire not only to Igor, but presumably to that part of her which still lies broken and bruised under Igor. Here, Magdalena can be viewed, in Belsey's terms, as 'the split subject', with the part of her which remains on the bed acting as 'the conscious self, which is conscious in so far as it is able to feature in discourse', and the 'Maschinenmensch' constituting 'the source of possible change'. The 'conscious' self that submits to the practices of gendered power relations, 'is challenged by the existence of another self which is not synonymous with the subject of discourse'.[236] The term 'Maschinenmenschteil' implies a lack of self-awareness, control, consciousness and responsibility, indeed as something created and constructed to fulfil a particular function.[237] In *Magdalena* it functions as an imaginary, extreme figure, one that acts outside of discourse as an agent of change, destroying not only the Igor character but the female self which cooperates with the destructive paradigm of female victimhood.

The split subject which resists the totalizing narrative which constitutes the 'ich' in confession, manifests itself in a visible way on the protagonist's body, when Magdalena begins to suspect she is starting to resemble one of her lovers, the melancholic Frisian. Magdalena acknowledges that she has appropriated his characteristics and mannerisms: 'Die Symptome schwerer Melancholie, an denen der Friese litt, traten nach einiger Zeit auch bei mir auf. Ich hatte Alpträume, [...] begann zu stottern' (MS p. 95). She is startled when

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[236]   Belsey, *Critical Practice*, p. 85.

[237]   The 'Maschinenmensch' appears in Fritz Lang's 1927 movie *Metropolis* as a female robot created by inventor Rotwang, and functions as the opposite of the saintly, aptly named Maria character who preaches purity to the workers. The female *Maschinenmensch* is created with sexualized features and conflates female sexuality with danger. For a discussion of *Maschinenmensch* as woman, see Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), p. 70ff.

gazing back at her from a mirror one day is the face of the Frisian: 'Hochwürden, ich hatte begonnen, dem Friesen auf unheimliche Weise ähnlich zu sehen' (MS p. 96). The mirrored reflection of the Frisian represents Magdalena's Lacanian entry into the patriarchal order, but crucially Magdalena does not recognize the image staring back at her, and she rejects this constitution of the self; it is 'ein Phänomen, das mich erschreckte und in mir erstmals den Gedanken an seine etwaige gewaltsame Beseitigung aufkommen ließ' (*ibid.*). The enunciating, authoritative *ich* shatters the illusion in the mirror by murdering the source, killing the Frisian. The female voice breaks out of its representation through the male and prevents the erasure of the self.

A conspicuous strategy the novel executes with respect to the confessional mode is to make the voice of the priest available to the reader in the spaces between Magdalena's speech acts. Faschinger has remarked that the bound and gagged clergyman who hears the protagonist's act of self-representation, is 'eine hilflose Folie',[238] however this understates his function in the text. For the reader, the effect of the male voice assumes a role in the subversion of the confessional framework. What emerges from the interludes between Magdalena's narrative is a male confession which traces his development from judge to lover. He is encouraged by Magdalena: 'Denken Sie um, Hochwürden, [...] und leiten Sie damit Ihre eigene Transformation und die der Sie umgebenden Welt ein' (MS p. 79). The male gaze projects onto the female different fantasies of womanhood, as he listens to the accounts of her journeys through Europe and her sexual adventures. Initially, Magdalena is assigned the role of archetypal whore who is contrasted unfavourably to the

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[238]   Roethka, 'Lilian Faschinger im Gespräch', p. 93.

priest's sister, the aptly named Maria: 'Ich hatte immer geahnt, daß Frauen, von meiner Schwester Maria abgesehen, mysteriöse und unergründliche, ja dämonische Geschöpfe sind, [...] und nun bestätigte sich mein frühes intuitives Urteil auf das nachdrücklichste' (MS p. 33). Maria the saint/sister and Magdalena the confessor/whore are presented as dichotomies of womanhood and form part of the pantheon of female images the priest has at his disposal.

As the character's perceptions of Magdalena change, so does the iconic and liturgical imagery with which he frames her. Magdalena is 'captured' in culture like her namesake. Frans Van Mieris' eighteenth-century painting of the retreating sinner, a naked shoulder demonstrating both vulnerability and sensuality, is conjured by the priest's imagination, 'ich mußte unwillkürlich an das bezaubernde Gesicht [...] denken, auf dem die Sünderin sich in eine Grotte zurückgezogen hat, um Buße zu tun und das sie in einen herrlichen roten Mantel gehüllt und mit entblößter rechter Schulter zeigt' (MS p. 178). To the doctrinally celibate priest, Magdalena is more beautiful than Donatello's fifteenth century representation of the emaciated, repentant figure, 'die wunderbare Holzstatue [...], auf der sie die Hände gefaltet, den Kopf geneigt und die Augen niedergeschlagen hat', or Titian's sixteenth century *Penitent Mary Magdalene*, 'deren linke Brust kaum von ihrem Haar und ihrer rechten Hand bedeckt ist' (MS p. 178). Narratives of archetypal female figures held in the collective psyche and represented culturally are repeated, as the priest's 'confession' becomes a tool of intertextual interpretation, facilitating the reader's recognition of multiple 'Magdalene' identities, 'refashioned again and again to suit the needs and aspirations of the times'.[239] Rather than a helpless

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[239]   Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, p. ix.

foil then, the priest collaborates in the textual installation of commonly held projections of womanhood, with the iconized depictions pleading for recognition. In the priest's densely packed catalogue of images, the reader is encouraged to recognize culturally verified modes of representation and acknowledge the power and legacy of these archetypes.

The cultural imagery within which Magdalena is framed is not limited to religious representations. The priest likens Magdalena to an artist's muse, her curly red hair reminiscent of a Pre-Raphaelite *femme fatale*, a 'Frauentyp' with classical facial features: 'Das Ganze eingefaßt vom barocken Rahmen der rotblonden Locken, die ihr bis weit über die Schultern fielen' (MS p. 20). Male sexual fantasies are voiced as the priest holds Magdalena in his gaze: 'nun biß sie manierlich in die pralle Tomate, ohne daß der rote Saft in hohem Bogen zwischen der kleinen Lücke in der Mitte der oberen Schneidezähne herausgespritzt [...] wäre' (MS p. 35). The priest notices her 'schönen Mund mit den regelmäßigen Zähnen (MS p. 181), while her hair flows down, 'wie ein hellorangefarbener Wasserfall' (MS p. 37). The female body becomes fragmented and fetishized by male desire, its 'womanliness' produced and given meaning by the male voice. The priest is not only bound, but also gagged with 'ein[em] zusammengedreht[en] schwarz[en] Body von Kashiyama', (M p. 21). He is therefore silenced by clothing which has been close to Magdalena's body, and all he can do is look and fantasize. In his retrospective 'confession', he notes Magdalena's desire and pleasure: 'Was die Eindrücke des Gehörs betrifft, so entsinne ich mich gurrender, murmelnder, glucksender, flüsternder, summender Töne aus Magdalenas Mund, einer an- und abschwellenden süßen

Musik' (MS p. 346). Magdalena connotes a 'to-be-looked-at-ness',[240] frozen in various erotic poses, her appearance coded as a sight and object of desire. What counteracts the controlling male gaze is the mobility and ambiguity which are constitutive factors of Magdalena as a postmodern, picaresque character. The next section will consider the ways masquerade and disguise become ways of confounding the confining presentations of the priest's confessing voice.

Performance and Masquerade

Magdalena is a subject who presents herself as a performer on the stage, with an audience bearing witness to the performances, as she informs the priest: 'Das Publikum ist der Augenzeuge, ohne ein Publikum ist jede Handlung von vornherein nichtig, das wahrnehmende Publikum ist der Beweis der handelnden Existenz' (MS p. 21). The priest's abduction was a spectacle performed in front of a full congregation, as the 'Sünderin' admits: 'Was mich den Pfingstsonntagsgottesdienst zum Schauplatz meiner Aktion ließ, war mein Hang zum Spektakulären' (MS p. 14). Magdalena playfully insists that as a priest used to performing in front of a congregation, her hostage was able to participate in the theatricality: 'Instinktiv haben Sie mitgespielt, haben Sinn für dramatische Spannung bewiesen' (*ibid.*), while the audience/congregation sat captivated by the action: 'Die Gemeinde der Gläubigen verhielt sich vorbildlich: Sie […] verfolgte mit Spannung und Staunen in gebotener Stille die einzelnen Etappen des von mir in Szene Gesetzten, eine Haltung, wie sie sich jeder Inszenierende nur wünschen kann' (MS p. 15). The narrator-

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[240]   Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 27.

protagonist herself sets the scene for a novel in which performance and masquerade dominate.

The term 'masquerade' in connection to gender identity is a useful tool here, and was first employed by Joan Rivière to suggest that femininity, as an *enactment* of patriarchal desires, has the potential to be undermined. Rivière's ideas, which pre-empt those of Butler, worked against essentialist notions of the self existing independently of the social and cultural domain. Importantly for the politics of Faschinger's text, masquerade allows Magdalena to perform within a variety of social terrains and flaunt a multiplicity of selves, for instance nun and beggar, housewife and artist's muse, which permit the text to highlight the identities that individuals, particularly women, assume in order to circulate and function in the world. Rivière suggested that 'womanliness' is a mask which produces the 'effect' of femininity; indeed she argued that 'genuine womanliness and the masquerade [...] are the same thing'.[241] Women manufacture themselves as artefacts through assuming the accoutrements and adornments of 'genuine womanliness' and through the masquerade, the self becomes accessible and legible. In *Magdalena*, the heroine dons various guises in order to give the *appearance* of 'womanliness' as prescribed by social norms, but these guises also possess a liberating potential, as they are disrupted, damaged and ultimately cast off. Magdalena's guises, her 'womanliness', are never quite an exact fit, as the author commented, 'Magdalena ist immer vollkommen falsch angezogen',[242] and these incongruities allow the reader an awareness of the constructed nature of the

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[241]   Joan Rivière, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 10 (1929), 303-313 (p. 306).
[242]   Roethke, 'Lilian Faschinger im Gespräch', p. 95.

personae. The ambiguity which these masquerades lend to the text is crucial in undercutting representations and suggesting the complexities of subjectivity. There is a clear issue of power here. Magdalena displays the power to exchange roles seemingly at will, something not usually experienced by women, but the fantasy of the novel permits readers to participate in her sense of power.

Faschinger's text intervenes in an essentialist discourse of woman's natural role as the object of male attention and desire by means of performances which actively invite the male gaze:

> Hochwürden, sehen Sie mich doch an: Mein Körper ist dazu da, um von dem eines Mannes umfangen zu werden, meine Haut ist dazu da, um von ihm gestreichelt zu werden, mein Mund, um von seinem Mund geküßt, mein Haar, um von seinen Händen zerwühlt zu werden. (MS p. 95)

The character appears to be working to confirm her involvement in the paradigm of the male 'looker', and female as passive recipient of the gaze. Magdalena's performance has the hallmarks of an 'imaginary distortion',[243] that which 'interpellates' her as an object of desire into an imaginary fiction. The pronoun 'ich' is replaced by 'mein Körper', 'meine Haut', 'mein Mund', the active tense displaced by the passive. The protagonist's body provides a surface on which power relations are reproduced, specifically the gendered relations of male domination and female submission. It is there to be kissed and stroked by a man. This body however, has recognized its 'distortion' and is ready for transformation into a 'moveable theater of the self'.[244]

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[243] Althusser recognizes that individuals work by themselves to 'practice the rituals of ideological recognition' to confirm themselves as subjects, and participate in the reproduction of the social formation. See 'Ideology', p. 161.

[244] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), p. 10.

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Magdalena's masquerades involve dressing in such a way as to reveal and disrupt social conventions, so the white cloak of a barefoot Carmelite nun, for instance, is chosen as a camouflage to conceal her pick-pocketing activities, while it bars her from entering a casino in Baden-Baden

> [...] der livrierte Herr an der Tür weigerte sich, mich einzulassen, da ich nicht entsprechend gekleidet sei. [...] [Er] fände es aber im höchsten Maße unpassend, mich in meiner Ordenstracht an einem Roulette-, Baccara- oder Blackjacktisch sitzen zu sehen. (MS p. 257)

At this point, the protagonist is not in possession of the code which would allow access. Only when she dons a more inconspicuous 'graue[s] Flanellkostüm' (*ibid.*) does she gain admittance to the casino, as, through Magdalena's sartorial choices, the text plays with constructions of selfhood which include or exclude from social situations.

One particular piece of clothing favoured by the protagonist, a 'schwarzer Body von Kashiyama' (MS p. 330), proves a successful tool for the seduction of the serial bigamist Karl Danziger, but it is an incongruous item in the swimming pool in Bavaria, where the protagonist notices, 'daß die anderen Schwimmer und Schwimmerinnen mir eigenartige Blicke zuwarfen' (MS p. 320), or in the gymnasium full of housewives: 'Die Hausfrauen aus Garmisch-Partenkirchen, aus denen sich die Kursteilnehmer in der Hauptsache zusammensetzten, empfanden das Kleidungsstück offenbar als nicht besonders passend' (MS p. 330). Erving Gofmann has argued that everyday interactions are comparable to the efforts of actors on a stage presenting to an audience, so that dress is a site of performance, a means of presenting oneself to spectators in whatever situation one happens to be in. Gauging that situation and the potential expectation and reaction of the observers is, therefore, something we do every day, as a form of self-management. Goffman contends: 'when an

individual plays a part he (*sic*) implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess'.[245] By donning the black body stocking in the pool and at the gym, Magdalena displays a profound *lack* of appreciation of the desires and expectation of the 'audience' before her, and her clothed body quite literally becomes a battleground, as the housewives demonstrate their disapproval by deliberately injuring her during their gymnastics session: 'Nachdem mir die Sportartikelgeschäftsbesitzersgattin [...] den Ball nach fünf Minuten mit aller Wucht ins Auge geknallt hatte, worauf dieses sich vorübergehend schloß, begann ich erneut Zweifel an der Gutwilligkeit der Hausfrauen zu hegen' (MS p. 331). The failure to dress appropriately demonstrates the failure to be legible within this social grouping. The protagonist tries on costumes which locate her within or exclude her from social norms, each signifying a different, and always specifically limited, type of femininity. They are not immutable points of identity however, and they can be discarded. The character's borrowing and discarding of various costumes proffers the notion of a subjectivity which is formed through a variety of performances which, the text suggests, can be abandoned as well as accomplished.

It is not only the female body which parades its guises, but linguistically the text incorporates a Bakhtinian 'verbal masquerade',[246] involving the population of another's language with different intentions. Discursive displacements occur in *Magdalena* when certain types of characters

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[245]   Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1973, first pub. 1959), p. 17.
[246]   Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 275.

inhabit speech in unexpected ways. These verbal games interrogate discourses which are normally articulated by specific characters or social groups, and constitute a further violation of boundaries and borders, which is constitutive of Faschinger's text as a whole. Since identities are produced through language, occupying language in unexpected ways allows individuals to 'resist identities [...], produce new identities, and assign alternative meanings to the links between identities and linguistic varieties'.[247] The protagonist encounters tramps living on the streets who are engaged in a dialogue with high culture. They are characters, 'die nicht nur einen, sondern mehrere der großen Shakespearemonologe deklamieren, ganze Seiten aus Bertrand Russells *Religion and Science* zitieren und lange Passagen aus Byrons *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* auswendig hersagen konnten' (MS pp. 193-194). Those populating the social margins 'unter den Themsebrücken' inhabit, through their speech, the territory of the established western literary canon, a movement which violates social and cultural spaces.

The strategy of shifting, in Hutcheon's terms, the 'ex-centrics' to the centre, has the effect of destabilizing that centre and confounding expectation, 'in the light of the implied recognition that our culture is not really the homogeneous monolith [...] we might have assumed'.[248] Furniture removers and labourers speak eloquently about Persian carpets and fine art: 'Der größere der Möbelpacker datierte meine kleine englische Jagdszene recht genau, und anschließend ergab sich ein anregendes kurzes Gespräch über die englische Landschaftsmalerei im neunzehnten Jahrhundert' (MS p. 48). *Magdalena*

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[247] Aneta Pavlenko & Adrian Blackledge, *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts* (Clevendon: Multilingual Matters, 2003), p. 27.

[248] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism, History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 12.

hereby challenges cultural centralism in a text which favours difference and ex-centricity. Alternative social identities are produced which do not correspond to the accepted correlation of knowledge/language and social positioning.

Parodic manoeuvres

As a tool of intertextuality, parody, or in Hutcheon's terms, 'extended repetition with critical difference', requires certain institutionalized norms in order to be legible and open to subversion.[249] *Magdalena* offers a dense fabric of intertextual representations regarding gender, nation and the family for parodic revision. They are made available to a reader familiar with western cultural and social matrices, in an effort to foreground the politics of making meaning. The female protagonist practises what for Barthes are, 'the rituals of ideological recognition'[250] in that she participates in the reproduction of a particular, recognizable social formation. But an ironic distance from the regulatory fictions of gender is installed through language and imagery which dissolves surface meanings and allows the politics of the text to emerge.

Through Magdalena's relationship with Karl Danziger for instance, two qualities of feminine perfection, i.e. gourmet cooking and outstanding sexual performances, are iterated. The female protagonist initially colludes with expectations: 'Am frühen Abend kam Karl aus dem Schwimmbad und nahm unverzüglich das von mir vorbereitete Abendessen [...]. Zu meiner Erleichterung schmeckte es ihm' (MS p. 322). As well as devising new recipes to keep her lover happy, Magdalena takes up swimming and gymnastics in

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[249]   Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 7
[250]   Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes,* trans. by Richard Howard (London: Macmillan, 1977, first pub. 1975), p. 161.

order to maintain her suppleness in the bedroom, although as previously

mentioned, the inappropriate 'schwarze Body' leads to rather disastrous results.

The repetition of the regulatory practices of being the 'good wife' are

understood in the text as culturally produced, with Magdalena playing a role

which has a precedent in the form of Karl's ex-wife Norma Jean:

> Schwerwiegender als seine zusehends kritischer werdende Bewertung meiner Stimme und meiner Kochkunst war jedoch eine Bemerkung, die er eines Abends im Lärchenholzbett machte. Die Körperbeherrschung Norma Jeans, sagte er, habe aufgrund ihrer jahrelangen Ausübung des Turmspringens ans Wunderbare gegrenzt. [...] Man habe sie drehen und wenden und verbiegen können wie eine Gummipuppe, meinte er. Er schätze es, daß ich regelmäßig in seinem Bad schwimme, aber offenbar genüge dies nicht, um mich in sportlicher Form zu erhalten, in einer, die mit der zugegebenermaßen außergewöhnlichen Form Norma Jeans einigermaßen mithalten könne. (MS pp. 329-330)

The text's Norma Jean, is 'eine kalifornische Turmspringerin' (MS p. 320), but

has resonances outside the text as the birth name of the epitome of the female

sex symbol, Marilyn Monroe. Faschinger's Norma Jean is imbued with

quintessentially feminine attributes exhibited by the Hollywood icon, as the

parody is guided by play with the generator intertext. Magdalena, in her efforts

to please her male lover with perfect meals and sexual gymnastics, attempts to

collude with the patterns of female behaviour offered. She attempts to emulate

Norma Jean's attributes, her 'kräftige weiße Zähne, gesunde gebräunte Haut,

strahlendes Lächeln' (MS p. 321) as well as her perfected 'außergewöhnliche

Form' (MS p. 330). But so entrenched is the iconic female in the collective

cultural consciousness that Magdalena's efforts are bound to fail. Her cooking

is harshly criticized, she is injured during gymnastics class and she proves a

less than satisfying lover. Magdalena's failure is necessary and inevitable,

because her actions are replications of a feminine ideal embodied by a cultural

icon, and as such, her behaviour comes across as a stylized caricature of

conventional models of femininity. The protagonist attempts to produce her gender in the performance of pre-scripted roles, but instead becomes a distorted image. The text thus constructs for the reader a character who is, in Butler's terms, a 'failed copy', as opposed to a 'naturalized gender configuration'.[251] Gendered performances are culturally embedded forms of representation, which, the text implies, women will try to fulfil, but which will necessarily defeat them.

Magdalena occupies 'Denkfertighäuser' of her own construction, from which she offers scathing judgments on members of her own sex. Discourses regarding the apparently innate qualities of women are iterated by means of the protagonist's voice: 'Es gibt nichts Gefährlicheres als eine Frau, deren Liebessehnsucht unablässig enttäuscht worden ist, eine solche Frau wird mehr zu fürchten sein als jede gehirngewaschene Terroristin, jede religiöse Fanatikerin' (MS p. 127). Austrian women are bracketed together as a miserable cohort by the protagonist, with particular criticism reserved for 'sogenannte Gesinnungsgenossinnen', specifically 'die österreichischen Gesinnungsgenossinnen' (MS p. 103) who treat with malice and envy the 'Geschlechtsgenossin, der es gelungen ist, aus dem Teufelskreis österreichischen Frauenunglücks auszubrechen' (*ibid.*). The text casts other female figures as imprisoned in damaging and limiting relationships with men which the women themselves work tirelessly to maintain. The previous wives of Magdalena's seventh victim Karl for instance, are steeped in certain discourses of femininity which are taken to extreme. One of the wives, Erika, displays an obsession which

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[251]   Butler claims that, 'practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration and one which appears as derived, phantasmatic, and mimetic − a failed copy as it were'. *Gender Trouble*, p. 186.

soon turns into the behaviour of a stalker. The character tells with pride of how she waited for Karl 'an jeder Straßenecke von Garmisch-Partenkirchen', as 'selbst der treueste Ehemann [...] könne nicht auf die Dauer einem Weibsbild widerstehen' (MS p. 341).When a rival, Susanne, appears on the scene and vies for Karl's affections, Erika vows to get rid of this 'Hysterikerin', 'Trinkerin' and 'Alkoholikerin' (MS p. 342). The text thus frames the female figures in ideologically charged language which marks gender difference and reduces them to types rather than presenting them as individuals. It offers ridiculing imitations which mark distance rather than similarities, that is distance between the social texts being parodied and the parodying text itself.

Ambivalent, paradoxical attitudes continue with the concept of *Heimat* as it appears in the novel, with a powerful denunciation of Austria existing alongside an obsessive preoccupation with the home country. The bond Magdalena has to her sofa encapsulates this tension:

> Dieses breite, schwere Sofa mit den bequemen Lehnen und dem Überzug aus hellgrauem Stoff stellte meinen innersten Lebensbezirk, meinen unmittelbaren Lebensraum dar [...]. Es zurückzulassen, aufzugeben, zu verkaufen bedeutete Unbehaustheit, Heimatlosigkeit im höchsten Grade. Gleichzeitig behinderte dieses Möbelstück meine Bewegungsfreiheit. (MS p. 43)

Like Streeruwitz's 'Schrebergarten', the sofa reproduces the features of *Heimat* as a space which may protect, but also limits movement and thought. This reflects a central principle and tension of the text, that of restriction within discursive confines, which the text constantly seeks to transgress. Magdalena's explanation of what it is that draws her back to Austria is highly ironic: 'Ich bin über dem Golf von Salerno gesessen, eine messerscharfe Mondsichel über mir, habe hinuntergeschaut auf das dunkle Meer und fast geweint, weil ich seit einem halben Jahr keine Rosinenpotize mehr gegessen hatte' (MS p. 34).

Austrian baked goods such as the 'Rosinenpotize' are presented as the *pars pro toto* of the country, and exert a magnetic attraction on the protagonist. When in London, she yearns for a slice of 'Dukatenbuchteln, Ribiselschaumschnitten oder Germgugelhupf' from the motherland (MS p. 34).[252] The Austrian ability to produce excellent cakes is the *only* thing that the country has to recommend it however, as Magdalena confesses: 'Wäre es nicht wegen des Gebäcks, ich hätte seit Jahren keinen Fuß mehr auf österreichischen Boden gesetzt' (MS p. 35). A tension is thus constructed between the 'heimatlos' nomad who is able to observe her country and its inhabitants from a critical vantage point on the margins, and a character who is steeped in the discourse of a national pride in baked goods.

Peripatetic individuals who prefer 'eine ungebundene Lebensweise' are in danger in Austria, especially, the protagonist contends, when that individual is a woman: 'Man ist froh, wenn sie ausreisen, beunruhigt wenn sie wieder einreisen. Eine nomadisierende Existenz ist in Österreich verdächtig, in Österreich ist Seßhaftigkeit erwünscht' (MS p. 35). As a 'nichtseßhafte Frau' (*ibid.*), the protagonist has aroused 'Argwohn' and 'Skepsis' and has been expelled. Magdalena evokes the trope of the metaphorically 'homeless' female subject, whose sense of *not* belonging, in Magdalena's terms her 'Nichtseßhaftigkeit', becomes a powerful tool of resistance. The protagonist is engaged with what Braidotti calls the 'nomadic consciousness', which 'is a form of political resistance to hegemonic and exclusionary views of

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[252]   In Faschinger's *Stadt der Verlierer*, Austrian cakes have a malevolent potential, when a woman is convinced that her daughter-in-law, who happens to work in a *Konditorei*, is lacing portions of 'Ribiselschaumschnitten' with arsenic in an attempt to kill her and inherit her wealth. See Lilian Faschinger, *Stadt der Verlierer* (Munich: Hanser, 2007), p. 196.

subjectivity'.[253] This is familiar from Faschinger's *Scheherazade*, where the heroine displays the characteristics of a nomad, travelling through narratives in her imagination, whilst the protagonist of *Lustspiel* regards herself as 'eine Reisende',[254] a nomad negotiating cultural discourses through her writing. What these texts have in common with *Magdalena*, is that the protagonists are positioned as speaking subjects within specific critical discourses which entail a number of assumptions, but which are made vulnerable to revision.

This becomes clear through Magdalena's speech, which is a slave to the parochial narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy, and xenophobia she herself so despises. The protagonist explains her reaction to hearing Austrian dialects on the streets of foreign cities:

> Hörte ich zufällig auf der Straße einen österreichischen Dialekt, war ich augenblicklich schlecht gelaunt und warf demjenigen, der sich dieses Dialektes bedient hatte, einen wütenden Blick zu, da mich die Plumpheit, ja die Vulgarität des Tonfalls der meisten österreichischen Dialekte irritiert. Ich mied Auslandsösterreicher und österreichische Institutionen im Ausland wie die Pest, da sich sowohl der durchschnittliche Auslandsösterreicher als auch das durchschnittliche österreichische Konsulat oder Kulturinstitut, die durchschnittliche österreichische Botschaft oder Handelsdelegation im allgemeinen durch eine eklatante Ignoranz und Blasiertheit, eine frappierende Indifferenz und Interesselosigkeit auszeichnen. (MS p. 137)

Through its excessive repetition of the words 'österreichisch' and 'durchschnittlich', the text foregrounds the way meaning is produced, repeated and embedded. Meaning is produced from repetition and the iteration of a cliché or stereotype embeds it more deeply and results in its naturalization. By way of this iterative process, the text suggests that what is taken to be the essence, for instance, 'eine frappierende Indifferenz und Interesselosigkeit' of Austrians, is in fact manufactured through sustained repetition. Linguistic

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[253]   Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, p. 23.
[254]   Lilian Faschinger, *Lustspiel* (Munich: List, 1989), p. 12.

hyperbole ensures the text does not acquiesce to a single ideology; rather it contests absolute representations, and invites the reader to disrupt the singular voice of the cliché. While the protagonist repeats entrenched views about national character, the way language is used intervenes to work against any hegemonic notion of Austria or Austrianness.

The experience of Faschinger's protagonist of being 'nicht zu Hause' on the national stage is underlined by her relationships with fellow Austrians:

> Befinde ich mich in meiner Heimat Österreich, fühle ich mich manchmal fremd, manchmal nicht vorhanden. Nirgends betrachten mich die Leute auf der Straße, wenn mich die Leute auf der Straße betrachten, verwunderter als in Österreich. Meist blicken sie durch mich hindurch. (MS p. 68)

When Austrians look into Magdalena's eyes, they do not see a reflection of themselves, rather they observe an unsettling difference, and the character is excluded to such an extent that she doubts her own existence: 'Manchmal, wenn meine Landsleute durch mich hindurchgeblickt haben, schaue ich in den Spiegel und erwarte, nichts darin zu sehen' (MS p. 69). Subject to a judgemental gaze and looking into a Lacanian male mirror, the protagonist does not experience herself as an 'I', and runs the risk of becoming invisible, of losing sight of herself. 'Es ist jedesmal ermutigend, wenn ich mein Spiegelbild darin finde, ein Spiegelbild, mit dem ich einverstanden bin' (MS p. 69). The 'Spiegelbild' which is recognizable to her is a separate subject position, one not created by the narratives of national belonging.

As another, equally powerful disciplining institution in the novel, the presentation of the family is couched in extreme language which is filled with ironic potential. Through the voice of the protagonist, the picture of the 'österreichische Kleinfamilie' (MS p. 290) is a malignant configuration which

provides 'den geeigneten Hintergrund für die fürchterlichsten Untaten' (*ibid.*).[255] The protagonist's resistance to being imprisoned in familial discourses is rendered comical by a car chase that ensues when her sisters hear of her reluctance to become an aunt to their children. They shout out their insistence that she acquiesces, and they appeal to her 'innate' feelings:

> Komm zurück! Stelle dich deinen dir von der Natur übertragenen Aufgaben und drücke dich nicht davon! Deine drei Nichten und vier Neffen, davon zwei Patenkinder, warten auf dich! Enttäusche sie nicht, wie du schon unsere Eltern enttäuscht hast, und bekenne dich zu deiner Tantenschaft! (MS p. 65)

The sisters are acting as agents of recruitment into a certain social formation, and Magdalena is being hailed, in Althusserian terms, with their exhortation, 'Komm zurück', into assuming her 'natural' position within the ideological structure of the family.[256] Ideology is shouting at Magdalena under the guise of what is natural, in this case, compulsory 'Tantenschaft'. The protagonist runs the risk of being caught up in the Althusserian 'imaginary distortion',[257] as Belsey states: 'It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes […] obviousness as obviousness, which we cannot *fail to* recognize. […] At work in this reaction is the ideological *recognition* function'.[258] Magdalena, however, rejects the ideological pull:

> Mit einem Sprung, der einem Motorcrossfahrer alle Ehre gemacht hätte, setzte ich über den die schmale Bergstraße begrenzenden Zaun aus rohen Brettern und begann einen Slalom zwischen den hohen Stämmen

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[255]   Gerald Fetz has noted that the vitriol Magdalena reserves for the Austrian family unit is indebted to Bernhard in style and content. Indeed, he claims that *Magdalena* pays 'homage' to Bernhard in the way it deals with the Austrian mistrust of difference. See Gerald Fetz, 'Post-Bernhardian Austria in Lilian Faschinger's Magdalena Sünderin', in *Austria in Literature*, ed. by Donald D. Daviau (Riverside: Ariadne, 2000), pp. 179-192 (p. 185).

[256]   Althusser maintains that 'ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals by […] *interpellation* or hailing'. Ideology shouts 'hey you there' and induces us personally to become a subject of and subject to that ideology, whilst luring us into believing we are acting according to our own, original beliefs. See 'Ideology', p. 163.

[257]   *Ibid.*, p158.

[258]   Belsey, *Critical Practice*, p. 57.

> des Fichtenwaldes. Bevor ich in das Dunkel des Waldes eintauchte, sah ich, wie meine Schwestern aus dem Audi stiegen und mit ihren engen Röcken den Bretterzaun zu übersteigen versuchten. Es bestand nicht die geringste Aussicht, daß sie mich je einholen würden. (MS p. 67)

The episode parodies the climax of an action movie, with the heroine escaping over the mountains, refusing to answer the sisters' call. The protagonist's interpellation into the disciplining narratives of familial duty remains a fiction, an illusion. The intertextual summoning of the adventure movie narrative forces a confrontation with the imaginary dimensions of family practices which to 'die Schwestern', are a taken-for-granted duty.

Magdalena's physical movement across European national boundaries maps a desire in the female subject for alternative spaces. Geographic relocation is accompanied by the performance of possible subject positions and the textual interventions in discourses provoke resignifications, which create a dialogue between reader and text concerning the production and proliferation of gendered identities. As demonstrated above, as the lover of Bavarian Karl Danziger for example, the Magdalena figure is positioned as a submissive, insecure housewife, who expresses feelings of hurt and shame when her cooking and cleaning skills do not come up to the model promulgated by the iconic Norma Jean. The protagonist becomes co-producer of discursive positions which conform to certain notions of idealized concepts of femininity. The adoption is not seamless, and it is, in Hutcheon's terms, the 'double-coding' of the discursive texts which occurs through techniques of distancing, irony and ambiguity, which 'uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges'.[259] While the protagonist displays different personae through masquerades, on a formal level too, the text inhabits a diverse

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[259] Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 3.

range of structures of knowledge and language in order to subvert them through parody and irony. A Bakhtinian 'double-voiced discourse' permeates the 'official' language of the monologic, confessional mode so that certain sets of values regarding gender, nation, the family and the Catholic Church which are available to a reader familiar with the western cultural and social matrices, can be proffered and renegotiated.

In her discussions of the problems encountered in texts which bring together postmodernist strategies with feminist modes of resistance, Hutcheon has noted that 'exposition may be the first step; but it cannot be the last'.[260] To what extent does *Magdalena* offer opportunities for resisting that which it also inscribes? Returning to Long's characterization of the novel as suspending the reader in 'a moral, theological, and gender-political vacuum', it has become clear that it is *because of* the ambiguous and frequently disorientating nexus of cultural and social doxa, conflicting opinions and contradictory stances, that Faschinger's female protagonist is a politically significant figure. Moral superiority is not conferred on one position, and this in itself is a standpoint. The feminist voice provides a lynchpin of orientation, the needle in the compass of the novel which rotates between different coordinates of gender relations within a wide social spectrum as the action shifts. The novel certainly works to destabilize notions of morality and hierarchy, but the void created by habitual multiplicity and consistent ambiguity is an invitation to the reader to respond productively to the variety of ways female identities are constructed. Discursive disorientation reflects the lack of a homogenized female experience, and instead advocates plurality. Just as the narrator of *Lustspiel* declares as her

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[260]   Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 153.

prime interest '[die] Suche, an dem, was sein kann, was sein wird',[261] the intertextual make-up of *Magdalena* searches for ways of encouraging new perspectives amongst old stories. The text promotes the recognition of their continued potency, whilst subjecting them to parody and ironic disruptions. The superficial form of the confession narrative is filled with a content characterized by discrepancies, conflicts and contradictions, and in this it resembles Magdalena herself as the priest views her: 'schöne Form und teuflischer Inhalt' (MS p. 33).

Following Butler, the female body has a political meaning, being 'a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within the cultural field of gender hierarchy'.[262] Faschinger's protagonist has a wide variety of meanings inscribed upon her bodily surface, which is positioned in a multiplicity of subject positions, according to changing relational circumstances. The masquerades enable the protagonist to 'flaunt her femininity, produce herself as an excess of femininity − foreground the masquerade' and, ultimately, show 'femininity […] as a mask'.[263] Magdalena, as a trickster of identity, allows the reader to be a spectator of female roles because her performances are extreme in their conventionality and therefore highly legible. But, as this chapter has shown, they are repetitions which repeat with *difference* the 'already said'. None of Magdalena's personae are mandatory, for as Braidotti argues, feminine identities are 'an option − a set of available poses, a set of costumes rich in history and social power relations, but not fixed or compulsory any longer.

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[261]   Faschinger, *Lustspiel*, p. 10.

[262]   Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 177.

[263]   Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 25.

They simultaneously assert and deconstruct'.[264] The nomadic female subject not only rides her Puch through the European landscape, but manoeuvres around the complexity of female subjectivity, asserting and deconstructing the heterogeneous structures of identity which allow an individual to function in the world. Finally, and unlike the ice model sculpted in her image by one of her admirers which slowly dissolves into a 'tropfender Stummel' (MS p. 201), Magdalena does not quietly melt away, but evades capture by the 'Osttiroler Gendarmen' (MS p. 351) like the heroine of an adventure story, disguising herself as a nun and dodging a hail of bullets. Faschinger has created a space for a reader in tune with the politics of the text, to accompany Magdalena on this productive, critical and dangerous journey.

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[264] Rosi Braidotti, 'Cyberfeminism with a difference', in *Feminisms*, ed. by Sandra Kemp & Judith Squires (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997, first pub. 1996), pp. 520-529 (p. 528).

3.2 The loneliness of a Viennese runner: Streeruwitz's *Jessica, 30.* (2004)

Jessica, 30. shares with *Magdalena* the attempt to articulate a feminist critique from a base set firmly within the familiar narratives they wish to subvert. Like Faschinger's heroine, Jessica is a character on the move, and is engaged in constructing the female self through narration. This process takes her through various scripts of life available to a young, highly educated woman living in the western world in the latter part of the 1990s and early 2000s. Streeruwitz has commented extensively on the emphasis her texts place on the location and deconstruction of claims of authority by prior, patriarchal scripts, those which determine relationships within society and culture, and inform a woman's 'Schau des Selbst'.[265] The project is inextricably bound to the search for a linguistic 'Entkolonialisierung, [...] eine nicht patriarchale Poetik'[266] which involves depopulating language, emptying it of previous significations, and opening it up to new meanings through specific textual practices. *Jessica* embraces this challenge by presenting the interior monologue of journalist Jessica Somner, as she charts several hours in her life that occur over the course of a few weeks and are represented in three chapters. The location is Vienna, but the exact year in which the novel is set remains vague, although reference in the text to '9/11' and the second Iraq war, together with a mention of negotiations for the 2003 coalition government, place events in the early 2000s. The stream of reflections, thoughts and ideas of the protagonist present a white, middle-class woman inhabiting a postfeminist environment in which

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[265]   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, p. 35.
[266]   Streeruwitz, *Können*, p. 22.

sexual liberation, freedom from domestic enslavement and access to education and a career are taken for granted. Unlike Scheherazade's friend B., Jessica head is not filled with thoughts of domestic duties. But her very behaviour preserves and legitimizes familiar oppressive patterns and relations of power.

The opening section of the novel introduces the thirty-year-old protagonist jogging through Vienna's *Prater*, whilst agonizing about her body shape and her unfulfilled relationship with her lover, ÖVP politician Gerhard Hollitzer. Jessica runs in order to assuage her guilty conscious. If she keeps running, 'dann ist wieder alles gut, dann kann ich das Schokoeis von heute Nacht und das Essen von Weihnachten vergessen, und dass ich nicht geschlafen habe, wegen dem Gerhard.'[267] A failing relationship continues to damage her feelings of self-worth, while a conflicted relationship with food results in alternate moments of binging and guilt-ridden purging through athletic exertion. Paradoxically, while Jessica runs to forget, her stream of consciousness narration details those aspects of her life which define her sense of self, primarily body-image, relationships and work. Her physical movement is counterbalanced by a circumscribed and static sense of self. Although Jessica has her own apartment, she is still financially dependent on her divorced parents, and is unable to gain a promotion at work, being stuck in an ever-lasting apprenticeship with a magazine company, where 'Jugend, jugendliche Schönheit ist der einzige Vorsprung' (J p. 59). The protagonist's circular movement around the *Prater* which takes up much of the first chapter is a clear reflection of her inability to move to a new place in terms of her sense of self. The character is caught up in repetitious concepts of gendered subjectivity that

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[267]   Marlene Streeruwitz, *Jessica, 30.* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2004), p. 5. Henceforth the text will be referenced as J in parenthesis.

hinder forward movement, with the novel repeating textually, through its narrative mode, the dilemmas conveyed by the story. In contrast to *Magdalena* which documented the forward momentum of its protagonist through various physical spaces, the impression in *Jessica*, both in form and content, is one of circularity and constant looping back, a motion repeated by the *Prater*'s iconic 'Riesenrad' which forms the backdrop to the narrator's circular journey.

While *Magdalena*'s intertextual weave assumed the character of fabulation with its archetypal characters and fantastic scenarios, Streeruwitz's novel presents an intertextual archive of popular culture in its construction of Jessica's world, one in which US TV imports in particular exert a huge influence on a whole generation of women. Popular series of the 1990s and early 2000s, such as *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City* (J p. 9), are reference points for Streeruwitz's protagonist, indeed Jessica acknowledges a concept of herself which is indebted to US TV images: '[…] und laufe ich jetzt hier als Ally-McBeal-Klon herum und sehne mich nach dem richtigen Mann' (J p. 21). Jessica possesses an acute awareness of the rules of the game and constructs herself according to a version of femininity, one of thinness and adherence to fashion trends, which shows little sign of transformation through a feminist consciousness. In this context, the text has been affiliated with trends in women's writing of the 1990s which depict young, white, educated women living in a postfeminist world, where the gains made by their mothers in the 1970s are taken for granted and have been displaced by other yearnings, i.e. a fulfilling love-life and a body which conforms to current notions of beauty.

Critic Johanna Adorján, for whom *Jessica* constitutes little more than 'eine bloße Spielerei', positions the novel firmly within the framework of

1990's chick-lit: 'Herausgekommen ist eine Art Neuauflage des Klischeefrauen-Bestsellers "Schokolade zum Frühstück" mit Kunst-Anspruch'.[268] Brenda Bethman has compared sections of *Jessica* with *Bridget Jones's Diary*, commonly regarded as the originator of the chick-lit genre, and has suggested that 'the type of "direct feed" from the protagonist's consciousness', combined with Jessica's preoccupations and neuroses, suggest similarities between *Jessica* and Fielding's 1995 novel.[269] Bethman precedes to take a more nuanced approach than Adorján however, and argues that Streeruwitz's firm allegiance to feminism results in a tension between the title character and those sensibilities which can be defined as belonging to second wave feminism. Bethman assesses the third chapter in terms of Jessica's evolution from an '"Ally-McBeal-Klon" [...] to a revenge-seeking critic of patriarchy', and that the protagonist comes to embody an 'older' feminist anger. This chapter will argue that it is not only the protagonist's changing consciousness which conveys Streeruwitz's feminist agenda, (indeed I argue that Jessica's motivations remain at best ambivalent), but that it is the use and abuse of its generic links and intertextual borrowings that exert its powerful feminist critique.

Moving out of the confines of the narrator-protagonist's inner monologue, Chapter Two of the novel incorporates the voice of married lover Gerhard into what up until now has been a first-person narrative. Gerhard's brutal, sexual activities with Jessica and other female colleagues surface during

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[268]   Adorján, 'Sie und ihr Maple Walnut'. The reference alludes to the German language edition of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* published as *Schokolade zum Frühstück. Das Tagebuch der Bridget Jones*, trans. by Ariane Böckler (Munich: Goldmann, 2001).
[269]   Brenda Bethman, '"Chick-Lit" Revisited: Bridget Jones Meets Jessica, 30.', (2005), <www.womeningerman.org/conference/2005/epanel/bethmanwig2005synopsis.pdf>, [accessed 02/07/2008].

their fraught meeting in her apartment, and this central section acts as a catalyst for the protagonist's realisation of her social responsibility as a journalist, and her movement out of Austria. This has prompted commentators to observe that the novel contains elements of an *Entwicklungsroman* tradition in Jessica's move towards social engagement. Her anguish at Gerhard's treatment of her and her awareness of his fraudulent activities with public money, motivate a shift in her physical space and, to a certain extent, movement in the passive attitude she has displayed thus far. The character not only relocates to a new apartment in Vienna, but journeys to the German offices of *Stern* magazine, in order to reveal Gerhard's corruption. As this chapter argues, while the text may invite comparison with elements of the *Entwicklungsroman* genre, it simultaneously undermines its own project and displays an ambivalence which invites the reader to develop a critical awareness of the issues at stake.

The stream of consciousness narrative employed in *Jessica* contrasts with the narrative forms which constitute Streeruwitz's other prose works. The stunted sentences of *Partygirl.*, the linguistic fragmentations in *Verführungen.*, and the staccato style of *Lisa's Liebe.*, provide formal conduits for the representation of the conflicted and fractured lives of female protagonists. In these novels, forms of absence become a textual strategy in which dismembered sentences and grammatical irregularities create spaces waiting to be supplemented by a collaborative reader. This practice ensures that a critical distance between text and reader is maintained, as Mario Scalla comments with reference to *Verführungen.* and *Nachwelt.*: 'Es gibt also eine stete Veränderung

in der Distanz zu der Hauptfigur; nie ist für längere Zeit die Situation stabil'.[270]

The unsettling of the narrative flow is an invitation to the reader not to privilege the perceptions of the protagonist, rather to unpack and consider the implications of the text in a productive way. Devoid of full-stops in its first and third sections, *Jessica* is ostensibly constructed in a way that would appear to run contrary to the narrative structures promoted by the author's poetics.[271] The outpourings of the female narrator are an unremitting stream, lacking the fragmented narrative that would allow some critical distance. Indeed, *Jessica*'s narrative form has prompted charges that it is less oppositional than previous Streeruwitz texts. According to Alexandra Kedveš, 'der Text ist weniger widerständig'.[272] Searching for a critical, feminist voice, Kedveš compares *Jessica*'s form unfavourably to 'de[m] syntaktisch-feministische[n] Pointillismus' of, for instance, *Partygirl.* which she suggests offers a more convincing critique:

> [*Jessica*] wird schlichter, weniger sperrig [...]. Hier geht Marlene Streeruwitz [...] ohne Rüstung in 'männliches' Territorium. Zum einen nutzt sie 'klassische' Strukturen, die Unmittelbarkeit simulieren [...]. Zum anderen sieht sich ihre Protagonistin selbst nicht als Zerbrochene.[273]

As a more conventional narrative form, *Jessica*, in Kedveš' view, excludes 'die Polyvalenz', the multivocality which opens up meaning and includes other voices. This chapter argues that the novel is far more discerning and nuanced

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[270]   Mario Scalla, 'Formvollendete Fragen. Über das Verhältnis von literarischer Form und gesellschaftlicher Aktualität in den Texten von Marlene Streeruwitz', in *Aber die Erinnerung davon. Materialien zum Werk von Marlene Streeruwitz*, ed. by Jörg Bong, Roland Spahr & Oliver Vogel (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2007), pp. 149-163 (p. 154).

[271]   Streeruwitz maintained that it was by fracturing the narrative flow and employing the 'Punkt als Würgemal' that critical distance could be gained by the reader. See *Sein*, p. 48.

[272]   Alexandra Kedveš, '"Geheimnisvoll. Vorwurfsvoll. Aber zusammenhängend", Marlene Streeruwitz' Romane, Frauengeschichten, Männersprache', in *Marlene Streeruwitz. Text + Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold 164 (2004), 19-36 (pp. 33-34).

[273]   *Ibid.*, p. 25 & p. 35.

than the critical responses by Adorján and Kedveš suggest. The novel does offer a critical feminist response by challenging the very forms it appropriates. Streeruwitz references the cultural texts of postfeminism sceptically, and the textual engagement with the *Entwicklungsroman* and the stream of consciousness mode are self-conscious and ironic.

The intertextual qualities of the text fall into two categories and will be examined as such. Firstly, the evocation of genre and narrative styles, such as the stream of consciousness, references to the postfeminist 'chick-lit' genre, and elements of the *Entwicklungsroman* are not neutral media due to the baggage of genre expectation they carry. Characters are moulded by generic conventions which are gendered and prescriptive. The treatment of genre indicators by the text will thus serve as a fruitful avenue of research. Secondly, a dialogic convergence of multiple discourses from society, politics and popular culture operates in the novel to provide a space for critical engagement. As with previous investigations, the extent to which the text distances or ironizes its repetitions in order not simply to affirm, but to intervene, will be a central focus.

A Stream of Consciousness Narrative

The immediacy of *Jessica*'s narrative has drawn comparisons with other Austrian texts incorporating the stream of consciousness mode, and Evelyne Polt-Heinzl suggests associations to Arthur Schnitzler's 1900 work, *Leutnant Gustl*, the first example of the stream of consciousness novella in German. While Schnitzler's text offers 'unzensierte Einblicke in [Gustl's] Denkmuster und damit in die eines ganzen sozialen Feldes', *Jessica* illuminates 'die

Mentalität eines zeitgenössischen Milieus; der Wiener Lifestyle-Szene – oder doch ihres unteren Randes'.[274] Gustl's inner monologue covers one night in which he agonizes about his self-worth and debates whether suicide is preferable to tainting the honour of the Austro-Hungarian military. Schnitzler's narrative technique becomes a vehicle of social criticism in which outdated military codes of honour are exposed, and the condition of his protagonist is inseparable from the social and cultural milieu within which it is set. Similarly Streeruwitz's novel negotiates the specific historical and cultural conditions that shape the protagonist's world.

The stream of consciousness technique appeals directly to readers in an unmediated way, excludes the exterior judgement of a third person narrator and subordinates action and plot to experience. Streeruwitz explained that *Jessica* presents the 'Gedankenstrom, der in einer Person gedacht ist, also ein Ich, das denkt, das denkt ja ununterbrochen. Da sehe ich keinen Punkt'.[275] Streeruwitz's appropriation of the unpunctuated inner monologue camouflages the text's polyphony with faults appearing in the cohesion of the narrative stream which comment upon the splitting of female identities. It is the narrative voice itself that, although for the most part a monologue, contributes to a textual display of mistrust in any over-arching authority, a strategy the novel shares with

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[274]   Evelyne Polt-Heinzl, 'Frau Leutnant Gustl', in *Marlene Streeruwitz*, ed. by Günther Höfler & Gerhard Melzer (Vienna: Droschl, 2008), pp. 188-191 (p. 188). The term 'stream of consciousness' was coined by psychologist William James, who appropriated the image of flowing water to describe the flux and movements of the mind. Consciousness, James maintained, 'is nothing jointed; it flows. A "river" or a "stream" are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described'. William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1 (New York: Cosimo, 2007, first pub. 1890), p. 239. As a literary strategy, the stream of consciousness mode was favoured by European modernist writers to represent the processes of the inner life and to entwine the text with the character's sense of development.

[275]   Sonia Eismann, '*Jessica, 30.* Im Clinch mit den Supertussen', *intro* (26/05/2004), <http://www.intro.de/magazin/buecher/23014688/jessica-30im-clinch-mit-den-supertussen>, [accessed 25/05/2006].

Magdalena. The protagonist questions her own motives, indeed frequently contradicts herself, often colludes in her own oppression, and ultimately becomes unreliable, with the reader encouraged to take up the task of making sense of the narration.

Even if one takes into account a Jaußian analysis that alternative readings, which occur within specific horizons of expectation, are plausible realizations of textual meaning, it remains clear that Kedveš' assessment that 'die Polyvalenz ist [...] nur noch andeutungsweise auszumachen',[276] is problematic. *Jessica.* is submerged in dominant social and cultural texts and debates, and the text enables the reader to observe them from a critical viewpoint. In this way, the text becomes polyphonic and dialogic. An example occurs when Jessica attempts to adhere to the rules of the 'game', but the text evinces discomfort with her performance:

> und jetzt wird geduscht, und ich esse diesen Apfel nicht auf, ein Stück Melone und ein halber Apfel, das muss reichen, und was wird angezogen, das fashion statement, der Pullover, den habe ich vorgestern angehabt [...] dein Nagellack, meine Liebe, als Handmodel kannst du heute nicht auftreten, aber die Augen sind klar. (J p. 73-74)

The female voice mimics a specific discourse, partly dependent on English formulations such as 'das fashion statement' which act as 'Versatzstücke'. Jessica demonstrates limited self-awareness, and instead she shows the result of a regime of self-management in which the subject attempts to emulate a dominant discourse and in the process, is owned by it. This is highlighted by the use of the second person pronoun 'du', and the passive voice 'und was wird angezogen'. The single authoritative voice of the narrator is thus challenged by

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[276]   Kedveš, 'Geheimnisvoll. Vorwurfsvoll', p. 36.

a critical layer of linguistic manipulations that call the reader to participate in the conversation.

Jessica displays Streeruwitz's interest in both the positioning of the female 'ich' within a network of discursive conditions and the means by which this positioning may be described. The author remarks that her writing is an attempt to describe 'das Leben als exemplarische Schnittstelle aller komplexen Strukturen, die uns bilden, die aber wiederum von uns mitkonstituiert werden'. This involves depicting the trivia of life: 'Jeder Augenblick. Jedes Frühstück etwa'.[277] *Jessica*'s narrative layering presents a woman who examines in often excruciating detail the minutiae of her daily existence. This maps for the reader a subject in flux, a woman who identifies with a certain subject position one minute, only to shift positions the next, thus forcing the reader to reconsider and correct their perceptions. For instance, the character's relationship to food and the body focus attention on the limitations of the authority of the narrating 'ich'. Food is constantly in the protagonist's thoughts, indeed fat is an issue of morality for the narrator, and is conveyed by the religious language of penitence: 'ich laufe ja nicht einmal die ganzen 50 Minuten, ich spaziere nach 43 Minuten wieder herum und fühle mich heilig und bin schon stolz, sehr gequält habe ich mich da nicht, aber das Maple Walnut ist wenigstens ausgeglichen' (J p. 38). These pronouncement are followed by critical remarks about other women's obsessions with food, which are linked in the protagonist's mind to bad mothering skills: 'die Ruth ist nur noch mit ihren Diäten beschäftigt, die kann nur noch über Essen nachdenken, aber dafür muss sie sich nicht mit dem Dominik beschäftigen, für das Kind ist

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[277]   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, p. 60.

das halt nicht gut' (J p. 42). The juxtaposition of these positions enables the reader to exceed any one perception and to view the protagonist as a 'Schnittstelle' of competing voices, whilst finding points of identification.

Jessica's inner-monologue presents its narrator as a conflicted subject trying to deal with the inconsistencies of her identity. On the one hand, she is a highly educated individual with a doctorate who references Schnitzler and Foucault (J p. 84), on the other, she regards her status as an adult with scepticism. Jessica's own diminutive forms of self-address promote an infantilization, 'das brave Issilein' (J p. 70), 'mein liebes Issilein' (J p. 48). As if talking to a child, she orders herself to adhere to her diet, 'du musst ohnehin die Melone aufessen' (*ibid*.), and metes out judgements, 'und 50 Minuten laufen ist ja auch keine große Leistung, meine Liebe' (J p. 36). Registering an awareness of women's infantilization under the patriarchal gaze, Streeruwitz has observed that many women, 'bleiben immer kleine Mädchen. Sie bleiben immer daddy's little girl, das immer noch und immer wieder und nach noch so vielen Studienabschlüssen und Erfolg im Beruf peinliche Sachen macht. Sie bleiben immer ein bißchen peinlich'.[278] Streeruwitz's narrator in *Jessica* dispenses self-admonishments which accentuate the reduction of her status as adult into an infantile position, while on the other hand she desperately tries to assert her adulthood.

The protagonist's conflicted self-image is exhibited when she imagines herself assuming the persona of two comic strip characters, contradictory images of the female in popular culture: an anarchic punk combined with

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[278] See Marlene Streeruwitz, 'Frauen stolpern, Männer schauen. Zum Briefwechsel von Marieluise Fleißer', Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (04/12/2001), <http://www.faz.net/s/RubF3CE08B362D244869BE7984590CB6AC1/Doc~E4CF186FE5986 4AAE94948DDA4524E14B~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html>, [accessed 21/06/2008].

Superman's straight-laced love interest. 'Issi Somner, tank girl Lois Lane zieht in die Welt hinaus und nimmt den Kampf mit den bösen Kräften auf' (J p. 86). This is one of many instances when the text reaches out to popular culture to present the fantasy images Jessica projects onto herself. She imagines a sexual role-play with Gerhard for instance, which involves participating in 'eine kleine Kylie-Minogue-Szene' (J p. 126), with herself as the sex-symbol with the 'Kleinmädchenstimme', and Gerhard as 'der big white hunter' (*ibid*.). Unsurprisingly, the protagonist's internalization of various fragmented identities, from pop-art heroine 'tank girl' to the child-like persona adopted for her lover, results in her experiencing an incomplete sense of self and a disconnection from her own feelings, expressed in language which is incomplete in its syntax: 'ist das nun fehlende Selbstakzeptanz, dass ich nie ganz richtig finden kann, was ich so, es ist immer nur halb richtig, gibt es das, kann es das geben, sich vollkommen richtig zu fühlen, und merkt man dann noch etwas von sich' (J pp. 86-87). The text constructs a tension between the norms of identity discourse readily available within popular culture, and the 'fehlende Selbstakzeptanz' they may lead to. Whereas Faschinger presents the antagonisms in Magdalena's various identity positions as something positive which allows her to assume multiple subject positions within her society, Jessica regards contradiction as a guilt-inducing deficiency. Magdalena is in command of and embraces her 'ungebundene Lebensweise' as providing the opportunity to explore multiple social locations, but Jessica denies the possibility of a contradictory selfhood with the result that she is owned by the dominant discourses of self-management and self-presentation. Streeruwitz advances her critique aesthetically, making available to the reader fragments of

social and cultural 'Zitate', rather than through an empowered narrator/protagonist.

With reference to Streeruwitz's ironic play with the generic conventions, Scalla has commented that *Jessica* provides a feminist 'Kommentar zur Geschichte des inneren Monologs' by lending its narrator a degree of agency which evades other female narrators of the inner monologue. Scalla cites as an example Schnitzler's eponymous narrator Fräulein Else as someone who was unable to leave behind 'den Status des Opfers',[279] the implication being that Jessica succeeds in doing just this. After all, she does not resort to suicide as Else did. However, Jessica has more in common with Schnitzler's character than Scalla's comments indicate. The only way for Fräulein Else to repay her father's debts is to pose naked for his acquaintance, Herr Dorsday, so a central concern of the narrative is the voyeuristic gaze, not only the gaze of those observing Else, but *her* gaze which observes the way others react to her. As Susan Anderson argues, 'the voyeuristic object [Else] is complicit in her own "feminization". Else is also a victim of social forces, locked into an interior monologue. [...] [She] looks at others only to check if her visual effect on them corresponds to that of her internalized, objectifying eye'.[280] Jessica too is aware of the gaze, has internalized its demands, and is complicit with her 'feminization'. There is a reminder here of Goffman's contention mentioned with reference to *Magdalena*, that: 'when an individual plays a part he (*sic*) implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the

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[279]   Scalla, 'Formvollendete Fragen', p. 161.
[280]   Susan C. Anderson, 'The Power of the Gaze: Visual Metaphors in Schnitzler's Prose Works and Dramas', in *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. by Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (New York: Camden House, 2003), pp. 303-324 (p. 314).

character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess'.[281] Jessica shows a heightened awareness of the passers-by who see her jogging. Indeed she demonstrates an internalization of their perceived castigating gaze when tempted to indulge in highly calorific food, 'ich muss mir einfach denken, dass mich einer sieht, dass mich immer einer beobachtet und dann kann das nicht passieren, eine ganze Packung Spaghetti mit Butter und Parmesan' (J pp. 27-28). Jessica's personal regulation and constant chastisement derive from the knowledge that there are harsh consequences for women who indulge themselves, as she ponders, 'der Kurt hat die Catrina verlassen, weil sie ihm zu dick geworden ist' (*ibid.*). Through this continual self-inspection, the narrator, like Fräulein Else, betrays a view of herself which is controlled by an interior disciplining voice which promotes self-management according to adherence to unrealistic standards of female behaviour.

While Magdalena displays a profound lack of appreciation of the desires and expectation of her 'audience', and hence is surprised by the reprimands of the Bavarian housewives at her appearance, Jessica is fully aware of the punishment that awaits any transgressions on her part. Punishment is dealt out more often than not by the narrator herself: 'ich darf den Tag über nichts essen für meine Diätsünden in der Nacht' (J p. 55). The shame women feel at perceived transgressions of the self, even if they are the only ones to witness that transgression, has been described by Sandra Bartky: 'the distressed apprehension of the self as inadequate or diminished, [requires] if not an actual audience before whom my inadequacies are paraded, then an internalized audience with the capacity to judge me, hence internalized standards of

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[281]   Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 17.

judgement'.[282] Magdalena has an audience of Bavarian housewives before whom she parades her inadequacies, and is punished accordingly. Jessica has developed forms of compliance which have become part of her conscience, that conscience being what Butler terms 'the psychic operation of a regulatory norm' which constitutes 'a social working of power'.[283] The self that would exercise self-determination outside of, or against, the mainstream is one which would be involved with the axes of power without being fully owned by them, or having regulations of power sustained by individual conscience. Magdalena exercises this self-determination. Streeruwitz's protagonist meanwhile shows little evidence of the ability to resist the 'psychic operation' of regulatory norms which maintain her sense of struggle and anxiety.

Jessica as postfeminist chick-lit?

In a text which has a feminist agenda at its core, so-called 'postfeminist' elements emerge and are critically negotiated by way of Jessica and her female colleagues. Angela McRobbie explains the particular way the 'postfeminist phenomenon' which first emerged in the mid 1980s, incorporated elements of second wave feminism into political and institutional life, whilst simultaneously emphasizing individual rights:

> Drawing on a vocabulary that includes words like 'empowerment' and 'choice', these elements are then converted into a much more individualistic discourse, and they are deployed in this new guise, particularly in media and popular culture […] as a kind of substitute for feminism. These new and seemingly 'modern' ideas about women and

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[282]   Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 86.
[283]   Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997), p. 5.

especially young women are then disseminated more aggressively, so as to ensure that a new women's movement will not re-emerge.[284]

According to McRobbie, the postfeminist backlash takes the form of a complex contract, a Faustian pact, offered to young women, one that promises them the freedom of economic independence and the attractions of consumer citizenship in return for abandoning feminism. When a woman becomes an empowered consumer, having the power to choose with respect to education, employment, domesticity, parenting, and sex, they have no need for a feminist consciousness. Stephanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon regard the chick lit genre as synonymous with postfeminist positions, and regard chick-lit as offering 'female-oriented fiction that celebrates the pleasures of female adornment and heterosexual romance', with protagonists who are enjoying demanding careers and economic independence, whilst grappling with problematic relationships and unrealistic expectations of the body.[285] The women who work with Jessica at the magazine manifest a vehement denunciatory stance towards the whole idea and necessity of feminism. They are positioned within Streeruwitz's text to supply a critical feminist commentary, which means that the text is far from the 'Neuauflage des Klischeefrauen-Bestsellers "Schokolade zum Frühstück"' that Adorján would have us believe.[286]

A critical position is established within Jessica's voice towards her colleagues at the magazine, who consume the products of popular culture. US TV series *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City*, are cited in *Jessica* as providing popular entertainment for the women who work with the narrator at the

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[284]   Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009), p. 1.
[285]   See Stéphanie Genz & Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009), p. 84.
[286]   Adorján, 'Sie und ihr Maple Walnut'.

magazine: 'die Kathrin schaut "Sex and the City" und deshalb glaubt sie, sie weiß alles' (J p. 9), and later, 'wer Geld verdient, der muss Sex haben, dafür ist "Sex and the City" zuständig und alle sind immer verwundert, dass es nicht funktioniert' (J p. 191). McRobbie remarks that these cultural texts, largely US imports, which are directly targeted at young women 'are vital to the construction of a new "gender regime"', whereby women reclaim their "right" to romance, gossip and endless obsession on appearance'.[287] Jessica's colleagues, 'die frisch von der Wirtschaftsuni kommen und dann überhaupt nur über Mode schreiben wollen' (J p. 21), are depicted as postfeminist clones in power suits who have benefited from the advances in gender equality made by their mothers in the 1970s, but who now reject the label 'feminist'. 'Claudia [will] nicht Feministin genannt werden, sie glaubt immer noch, dass man dann keinen Orgasmus haben kann' (J p. 244). Claudia's disavowal of the label feminist goes hand in hand with her compliance with certain discourses representing femininity: 'verkrampft wie sie dasitzt und sich nur überlegen kann, ob das Botox noch wirkt, weil man ja nicht spürt, ob man etwas spürt' (*ibid*.). The material effects of Claudia's existence within dominant social relations are marked on the botoxed body which can neither move, nor feel, but has been rendered, in Foucauldian terms, docile by disciplinary practices.

Women-oriented mass culture in the form of magazines and TV series define the parameters of female identities and entrench a dichotomy between, on the one hand, equality and power, and on the other, unrealistic images of beauty, sex, and relationships. The contradictory messages offered by the common oeuvre of women-targeted media are elucidated by Naomi Wolf, who

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[287]   McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, p. 21.

argues that the aspirational, individualist, can-do tone that says that you should be your best 'must also include an element that contradicts and then undermines the overall prowoman fare: In diet, skin care, and surgery'.[288] The magazine for which Jessica writes is aimed at high-achieving women, who nevertheless remain in thrall to pre-feminist anxieties to do with appearance. The text formulates the ironic, clichéd tone of a magazine, as filtered through the protagonist's consciousness, 'wir können ja aus jedem Typ etwas machen, you only have to make the effort […] eine Tönung, und eine vollkommene Typveränderung, von Herbst auf Sommer' (J p. 43). Claudia, Jessica's colleague who knows 'den Code' (J p. 188) is established in the text as embodying postfeminist contradictions of a highly educated, independent woman who conforms to the demands of body shape, dress and make-up. The superficiality of her performance is recognized by the protagonist, 'diese Supertussen können sich ja nicht einmal vorstellen, dass es einen wirklich nicht interessiert, wie man aussieht' (J p. 37), although the reader is well aware of Jessica's own anxiety when it comes to the way she looks. The text suggests that Jessica's hostility towards other women is born partly out of viewing them as competitors, and she reminds herself that she is under the gaze of others and must look and act appropriately: 'ich muss mir einfach denken, dass mich einer sieht' (J pp. 27-28). The reader is confronted here with the contradictions that exist in one woman's consciousness, contradictions which remain largely invisible to the protagonist herself.

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[288]   Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (London: Vintage, 1990), p. 69.

Jessica and popular culture

From her inner monologue, the reader gains access to a large number of cultural references which are involved in constructing Jessica as a subject. Streeruwitz insists that the only way to investigate the condition of being 'female' is to interrogate the individual's culturally determined positioning: 'Die Möglichkeit einer Frau, sich selbst zu denken, ist also durch ihre Kultur bestimmt und welche Stellung sie in dieser einnimmt'.[289] As a western woman living in the early years of the twenty-first century, Jessica is placed in an environment where popular culture, advertising, brands, slogans and 'life-style' tips, inform virtually all aspects of daily life, prompting one critic to view Jessica as 'eher eine Schnittmenge als einen Charakter'.[290] Everyday speech, references to TV, film, women's magazines and consumer products form the framework of cultural 'intelligibility', what Butler terms 'the enabling conditions for an assertion of "I"'.[291] The modern-day gurus of Jessica's generation as presented in the text are the inevitably happy and beautiful twenty-somethings of *Friends*, 'in Österreich läuft die Wiederholung aus dem Jahr 95' (J p. 241), or the implicitly celibate characters in *Dawson's Creek*, 'und dann kommen diese[n] langen Überlegungen, ob sie miteinander ficken sollen und natürlich tun sie es nicht' (J p. 190). The index of recognizable cultural references imports expectations of behaviour and practices, and offers a window onto mass sensibility which demands recognition on behalf of the reader.

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[289] Marlene Streeruwitz, 'Wer hat Angst vor dieser Frau?', *Die Presse* (28/12/2007), <http://diepresse.com/home/spectrum/zeichenderzeit/350836/index.do>, [accessed 28/12/2007].

[290] Hartwig, 'Jessicas Lauf gegen die Weiblichkeit', p. 146.

[291] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 148.

Streeruwitz's intertextual appropriation of popular culture contains elements of that cohort of writing which comes under the umbrella term of pop literature, with its roots in Leslie Fiedler's exhortation to 'Cross the Border – Close the Gap' between art and mass culture and step into the postmodern.[292] Heike Bartel has acknowledged the contested nature of the term pop literature, observing that since its early manifestations in the works of Jelinek and Peter Handke, 'das Eindringen von Umgangssprachlichem, Trivialem oder Obszönem in den Bereich der Kunst und Literatur wendete sich in der Kombination von 'high' und 'low' gegen ästhetische und politische Normen und löste heftige Debatten aus'.[293] Moritz Baßler, writing about its manifestation in German writing, frames pop literature in intertextual terms, as 'die Verarbeitung bereits existierender, enzyklopädisch bereits aufgeladener Wörter, Redeweisen, diskursiver Zusammenhänge und Vorstellungskomplexe'.[294] For Baßler, Christian Kracht's novel *Faserland* (1995) serves as the 'Gründungsdokument' of this particularly male canon, with its 'Markenfetischismus' and celebration of individualism and hedonistic life-styles over collective, political engagement. While certainly manifesting characteristics of pop literature, *Jessica*'s incorporations are not gratuitous displays of popular consumer culture, but act as an ironic reply to that very display. The text not only holds up a mirror to a society in thrall to globalized

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[292]   See Leslie A. Fiedler, "Cross the Border – Close the Gap", in *A New Fiedler Reader* (New York: Prometheus, 1999, first pub. 1968), pp. 270-294.

[293]   Heike Bartel, 'Von Jonny Rotten bis Werther. Karen Duves *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* zwischen Popliteratur und Bildungsroman', in Bartel and Boa (eds), *Pushing at Boundaries*, pp. 89-106 (p. 89).

[294]   See Moritz Baßler, *Der deutsche Pop-Roman: Die neuen Archivisten* (Munich: Beck, 2002), p. 186, p. 111 & p. 112. In terms of contemporary women's writing, Bartel cites Karen Duve's *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* (2002) as a text which does not simply archive the products of consumerism 'stumpfsinnig, sondern schreibt ihm in der Geschichte Anne Strelaus [der Protagonistin] neue Bedeutungen zu, die in ihrer ironischen Gebrochenheit auch teilweise subversiv sind, indem sie der Schnellebigkeit und Gedankenlosigkeit der Gesellschaft einen kritischen Spiegel vorhalten'. See Bartel, 'Von Jonny Rotten bis Werther', p. 99.

media output, fashion trends and branding, but investigates the position of a woman who is a member of an Austrian *Generation Golf* and who knows what the game is, but fails in her attempts to understand and master its gendered rules.[295]

Nicole Streitler comments that *Jessica* is constituted by 'eine lose Folge videogameartiger Bewährungsproben, in denen man nur über das jeweils passende (sprachliche) Rüstzeug, den Jargon oder Code, verfügen muss, um bestehen zu können'.[296] The narrator demonstrates she knows the rules and the mandatory language with which to play the game, i.e. English words, slogans and street slang, 'ich schaue gut aus, das styling stimmt total, ich habe mir alles überlegt, es gibt keinen Grund so schlecht gestimmt zu sein, und du wirst super unglaubwürdig, wenn du es nicht richtig easy meinst, keep your cool, darling, es ist alles perfekto' (J p. 89). The language is a mimetic code of jargon and sound-bites, confirmatory language which celebrates perfect grooming and appearance. The protagonist may know how to speak the language, but she fails the 'Bewährungsprobe'. Her relationship to the consumer goods which surround her betrays the gulf which exists between aspiration and reality. 'Viennetta und Cremissimo', 'Mövenpick Maple Walnut' and 'Baccio' are brands of ice cream which the protagonist craves, but they become part of her self-loathing and problematic body image, so that 'Fressorgien', 'Figurängste', 'binge eating' and 'Diätsünden' (J p. 81 & p. 89), follow the naming of these

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[295]   The title of Florian Illies' study *Generation Golf. Eine Inspektion* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2001), became a media slogan to sum up a generation of young people brought up in West Germany in the 1980s on a diet of consumerism, celebrity and brand names, which finds its literary expression in Kracht's *Faserland*. This is problematic, as it ignores those members of the 'Generation' who produced texts which were not 'pop literature' and were ignored by the media.

[296]   Nicole Katja Streitler, *'Jessica, 30', Literaturhaus Rezension*, (2004), <http://www.literaturhaus.at/buch/buch/rez/streeruwitz_jessica30>, [accessed 12/05/2007].

products, and expose the conflicted relationship the protagonist has with food. The disparities in the life of the individual woman, who is, on the one hand, urged to be a consumer, and on the other, is castigated for over-indulgence, are displayed. Women are hailed, in the Althusserian sense, into assuming both subject positions. Faschinger's Magdalena answers the call to become a subject by inhabiting subject positions, then performing acts of disobedience, calling into question the legitimacy of the command. Jessica shows little awareness of the forces which are appealing to her, rather they are displayed by the text for recognition by the reader, as a means to challenge the norms of conformity.

As in Faschinger's text, clothes are regarded by Streeruwitz's protagonist as a veneer which alters one's self-perception and that of others: 'Mode, das verhindert schon, von sich ein klares Bild zu haben, ein klar umrissenes Bild, jede Selbstvorstellung ist von Mode verändert' (J p. 194). Despite, or rather because of this awareness, her appearance becomes a preoccupation. Jessica spends protracted periods of time deliberating which face cream will make her forehead less shiny, 'ich muss doch einmal diese Creme von Oil of Olaz probieren, Clinique ist es ja nicht' (J p. 249). Fashion is a battleground of competing trends, 'dunkelblau, das könnte man heute unter keinen Umständen, grau, schwarz, aber blau, das geht gerade überhaupt nicht, schwarz und weiß, GAP zieht das richtig durch, aber nicht mehr blau' (J p. 195). Clothes are important, as 'da ist schon etwas da, bevor man noch ein Wort gesagt hat, das spricht schon für sich selber, das müsste den richtigen Eindruck machen' (J p. 249). Consumer goods and labels are not simply mentioned in the text as an archive of an historical moment, or in any affirmative way to celebrate consumer culture. Instead, as highly recognizable

names, they become a critical mirror held up to a consumer industry which relies on female insecurity. The text depicts a protagonist who is seduced into relying on products which, if she gets it 'right', will act as a confirmation of self worth, leaving the reader to reflect on the normalized contradictions which reside within the female subject.

It is not only the products of the current generation which are incorporated into *Jessica*, but also outdated cultural products from a previous generation, which it suggests still retain a presence. The narrator frames her co-workers at the magazine in language which imprisons them in categories of femininity prevalent two decades before: 'das Modell ist ja entweder Joan Collins oder diese Blonde aus Dynasty, oder Denver Clan, die Claudia will die Blonde sein, obwohl sie brünett ist und ist passiv aggressiv, da finde ich das Biest dann doch lustiger' (J p. 18). These references are not imported into the text as nostalgic allusions to 1980s TV shows. They make visible certain pre-formed images of women which continue to dominate the media, whilst also probing the protagonist's tendency towards oversimplified generalizations, in this case clichéd groupings of women into blondes and brunettes, bitches and passive-aggressives. These characters from the 1980s are cultural references whose familiarity will encourage a self-reflective reader to participate in the debate, as the intertextual references provide points of recognition and association. The reader is invited to reflect on how she too groups the characters together within certain gendered categories, whether 'blonde' or 'bitch'. As Hutcheon observes, 'we have to feel the seduction in order to question it',[297] and the pleasure of recognition in *Jessica*, whether it is of

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[297]   Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 154.

Dynasty or *Sex and the City*, demonstrates to the reader that they too are steeped in its discourse and that they play a role in the construction and interpretation of meaning.

Jessica as *Entwicklungsroman*?

The textual break in the stream of consciousness narrative which occurs in the second part of the novel signals a change in the female character, both in terms of her moving out of Austria, and with regards to her thought processes. This movement has prompted commentators to observe the text contains elements of the *Entwicklungsroman* genre, with the protagonist undergoing formative experiences which lead to some degree of maturity.[298] First coined in 1926 by Melitta Gerhard, the term *Entwicklungsroman* has been used to describe those works, 'die das Problem der Auseinandersetzung des Einzelnen mit der jeweils geltenden Welt, seines allmählichen Reifens und Hineinwachsens zum Gegenstand haben, wie immer Voraussetzung und Ziel des Weges beschaffen sind'.[299] Mainly regarded as a male genre which reached fruition with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, of which the *Entwicklungsroman* is a part, thus served to legitimize assimilation into the dominant order, culminating in the integration of the individual into established social structures.[300] The conservative, non-critical and male dominated

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[298] Ina Hartwig, for instance, maintains: 'Plötzlich, im zweiten Teil, bekommt der Jessica-Monolog Züge eines psychologischen Entwicklungsromans, wenn die Marge der Entwicklung auch schmal sein mag'. See Ina Hartwig, 'Jessicas Lauf gegen die Weiblichkeit', in Bong, Spahr & Vogel (eds), *Aber die Erinnerung davon*, pp. 136-148 (p. 143).

[299] Melitta Gerhard, *Entwicklungsroman. Der deutsche Entwicklungsroman bis zu Goethes 'Wilhelm Meister'* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1926), p. 1.

[300] As Georg Hegel made clear with regards to the inevitably male hero, 'zuletzt bekömmt er meistens doch sein Mädchen und irgendeine Stellung, heiratet und wird ein Philister so gut wie die anderen'. Georg W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer & Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1970, first pub. 1835), p. 219.

inclination of the genre with its narrative of assimilation faced a challenge by feminist writers eager to highlight examples of female self-realization which had implications far beyond the fictional protagonist. As Felski observes, in examples of female *Entwicklungsromanheldinnen*, 'the heroine's new self-knowledge creates a basis for future negotiation between the subject and society, the outcome of which is projected beyond the bounds of the text'.[301] The form may be used to expose the processes of conditioning and assimilation, and thus to reject the protagonist's accommodation within society.

Jessica's development, such as it is, is sparked when her voice is joined in dialogue with that of Gerhard. The male figure presents such a negative characterization of masculinity that he seems almost a parody, as Kedveš comments, '[er] hat Frau und Kinder, ist ein Windbeutel, ein (rechter) Politiker und entpuppt sich mit der Zeit als krimineller Macho der übelsten Sorte'.[302] The reader learns that Gerhard is using public money to pay for foreign prostitutes, and that furthermore, Jessica suspects him of performing sadistic sexual acts on one of her colleagues. Whilst contemplating the implications of Gerhard's actions before his arrival at her apartment, the protagonist experiences a feeling of listlessness, 'ich möchte nicht wach werden, das ist der ganze Grund, denn dann muss ich mich erinnern, dass ich eine Mission habe (J p. 117). At this point the protagonist lacks the will to effect change, and while Hartwig is right to assume that this encounter acts as the catalyst for movement both out of the relationship with Gerhard and out of Vienna, the episode is far from a clear-cut moment of epiphany. Whatever

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[301]   Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, p. 133.

[302]   Kedveš, 'Geheimnisvoll. Vorwurfsvoll', p. 34.

critique is proffered emerges from within a complex pattern of gendered power relations.

In this central scene, the male character shapes and controls the actions and consciousness of the female character, as she performs oral sex on him while he is on the telephone to his wife. Her inner thoughts conflict with her outward performance, 'nein, ich will nicht, der lässt mich nicht aus [...] und er macht das wirklich, er kommt wirklich, ja, und, Knall, Hilfe [...] Scheißkerl, Gott verdammter Scheiß, Scheiß, Scheißkerl' (J p. 150). When Jessica complains of having to perform the act, she is accused of self-pity by Gerhard: 'Wir können nicht eure Entscheidungen für euch treffen, die müsst ihr dann schon selber aushalten und komm mir jetzt nicht mit so einem Gejammer in Nachhinein. Wenn du wirklich nicht gewollt hättest, dann hätten wir das nicht gemacht' (J p. 162). The use of the first and second person plurals 'wir' and 'ihr', serves to universalize the paradigm of the female victim lacking in responsibility and unable to gain agency. Typically, Jessica falls into collusion with Gerhard's accusations and engages in a series of internal self reprimands: 'Ich hasse ihn, O Gott, ich hasse ihn, und ich hasse mich noch viel mehr' (J p. 153).

Kedveš rightly questions how successful the text is in inviting critical distance, enquiring, '[h]at das System seine Underbitch endgültig assimiliert?'[303] Indeed, the text appears at times to explode its own feminist agenda by inviting in a largely unchallenged male voice. Jessica is humiliated physically by unwillingly performing oral sex, an act which literally silences her, while overworked clichés of women are rehearsed unchallenged by

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[303]   Kedveš, 'Geheimnisvoll. Vorwurfsvoll', p. 35.

Gerhard, 'und manchmal, weißt du, da finde ich Huren interessanter und die würden dir die Augen auskratzen, wenn du ihnen sagen würdest, dass wir sie ausbeuten' (J p. 166). The male voice employs diminutive terms of affection, 'Issi, Mäuschen. Das war eine Notsituation und du hast mich so aufgeregt. Das war alles deine Schuld' (J p. 151), and confirms her self-inflicted victim status, 'doch, doch du möchtest, ich spür es doch. Du traust dich nur nicht. Aber du musst dich nicht trauen, ich mache alles und dann bist du auch ganz schuldlos. Ein unschuldiges Opfer' (J pp. 173-174).

Any opposition performed by the female at this point is illusory, a fantasy, as Jessica day-dreams:

> aber das wäre schön, Jessica, die Retterin, ich stehe auf dem Heldenplatz und schicke alle Demonstranten nach Hause, weg aus dem Unwetter und dem Hagel, weil diese Regierung sowieso zurücktreten muss, wegen ihrem Staatssekretär für Zukunfts- und Entwicklungsfragen und seiner Mädchenhändlerei. (J p. 233)

Only in the imagination is the protagonist a 'Retterin' who moves out of her self-centred world and into the wider political environment, forcing the resignation of the government because of Gerhard's sexual and financial exploits. Mention of the 'Heldenplatz' by Streeruwitz is a powerful intertextual reply to the location within the Austrian psyche which the space occupies.[304] In 2000, the square was the scene of regular 'Donnerstagsdemonstrationen', whereby Viennese citizens expressed their anger at the coalition between ÖVP and Jörg Haider's extreme right-wing party FPÖ. These are the 'Demonstranten' referred to in Jessica's fantasy, as the protagonist interweaves

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[304] Vienna's *Heldenplatz* was the winter palace of the Habsburgs, and the space where Hitler greeted the crowds in 1938. Bernhard used the space in his 1988 drama *Heldenplatz* as the arena from which to criticize his country's handling of the past. For an overview of the importance of the location, see Ernst Hanisch, 'Wien, Heldenplatz', in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte 1*, ed. by Etienne Francois & Hagen Schulze (Munich: Beck, 2001), pp. 105-21.

her personal struggle with the political, in a physical space inhabited by layers of historical, cultural and social memory. Stepping out of the fantasy space, reality offers few alternatives. Even when she arrives at the decision to expose Gerhard, the protagonist is unwilling to assume full responsibility for her actions, 'ich erspare mir den Schuldspruch, ich habe nur recherchiert, das Ganze ist nur eine Recherche und den Richterspruch, den überließe ich gerne jemandem anderen, am besten einem Mann, der nicht durch all diese Beschränkungen gehemmt ist' (J p. 183). The text voices a view of the female protagonist who remains largely detached from political actions. Streeruwitz's remarks on the infantilization of women, whereby they remain 'daddy's little girl',[305] are again relevant. The reader recognizes the wry irony of the contrast between Jessica's actual actions and the image of female empowerment imagined on the 'Heldenplatz'. Indeed, Jessica, also recognizing this schism, is left with little sense of an independent, positive self.

Any *Entwicklung* towards maturity is allusive, and the novel becomes an *anti-Entwicklungsroman*. Unlike Scheherazade who recognized the damaging consequences of sleep, 'ein kurzes Einnicken, und Schahriar würde sich auf mich stürzen' (DnS p. 84), Jessica determines that slumber is the only option left: 'ich schlafe ein und die ganze Welt soll mich gern haben, morgen, morgen kümmere ich mich um alles' (J p. 132).[306] The state of slumber is far removed from the awakening of the *Entwicklungsheldin*; indeed the only 'awakening' is the one always about to happen, in other words a deferred awakening. Even after the female voice has resumed the narrative and Jessica

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[305] Streeruwitz, 'Frauen stolpern, Männer schauen'.

[306] Fiddler notices that Jessica's surname Somner is similar to 'Somnus' meaning 'sleep' in Latin, which, Fiddler correctly argues, is an indicator of the protagonist's general lethargy. See 'Of Political Intentions and Trivial Conventions', p. 140.

has left Gerhard and Vienna, flying to the German offices of *Stern* magazine, wakefulness is delayed. Jessica reflects: 'und ist schlechtes Wetter und ich habe keinen Regenschirm mit, […] die Hausaufgaben, Issi, die Hausaufgaben, mangelhaft [...] und jetzt mache ich die Augen zu' (J p. 255). Jessica is lulled into sleep by the movement of the plane, whilst practising familiar patterns of self-chastisement, and it is left up to the reader to decide whether she will ever emerge from her somnambulant state to engender change. The narrative voice is problematic from a feminist perspective, in that it constantly undermines its own project of 'Entwicklung'.

The subversive potential of the novel clearly lies somewhere other than with the development of its protagonist. I would argue that oppositional value does reside in the text, and that it is located in the relentlessly ambivalent attitude towards the possibilities of progress and change in the status quo. This ambivalence allows the protagonist Jessica to become an instrument in the narrative, as through her character, the text demonstrates a marked unwillingness to ease the tension between the course of self-realisation and patriarchal power structures. This tension is in place throughout the text and is rarely relaxed. The female self is positioned in conflict with itself and with the external other. Hence a discursive diversity is constructed, so that even though Jessica's development may be minimal, the effect is projected beyond the text to the reader who is free to explore its implications. The text makes known its feminist agenda when the narrator confronts her own positioning within contested modes of representation which, the text pessimistically suggests, are inescapable. An awareness of one's situation is the best one can hope for, a sentiment voiced by the protagonist: 'das ist dann schon alles, was

Emanzipation kann, das Eigene der Beschreibung vorziehen [...] ich bin ja nur skeptisch und würde gern selbst etwas herausfinden, aber trau mich nicht' (J p. 23). As a protagonist who lacks faith in her personal ability to facilitate change, Streeruwitz's protagonist stands in marked contrast to Magdalena, the self-conscious and self-directing performer of roles. Jessica remains at the mercy of disciplining practices of female behaviour, while the text, drawing the reader into public debates which go beyond the loneliness of one woman's journey, extends an invitation to the reader to contemplate alternatives.

The final 'und ...' (J p. 255) concluding *Jessica* in place of a resolving full stop, indicates that the story is to be continued by the reader. To return to Felski's remark, the journey of the central character, 'creates a basis for future negotiation between the subject and society, the outcome of which is projected beyond the bounds of the text'.[307] From the viewpoint of intertextuality, the reader is the 'destination' of the text, and Streeruwitz has created, in her own words, 'einen Raum, in dem der Leser und die Leserin den Text über ihr Eigenes vollenden und damit zu ihrem Text machen können'.[308] The language in *Jessica* is not the obviously 'zerrissene Sprache' of *Norma Desmond.* and sentences may lack the 'Würgemal' of the full stop which forcibly interjects into the narrative flow of *Nachwelt.* But the reader is allowed into what at first sight appears, aside from the Gerhard chapter, a single, claustrophobic sentence, through the juxtaposition and intervention of differing and highly recognizable discourses. Fragments of an intricate and intimate conversation, rather than a monologue, are presented, and possibilities for points of identification share the textual space. Foucault exists alongside TV sex

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[307]   Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, p. 133.
[308]   Streeruwitz, *Können*, p. 55.

therapist Gerti Senger for instance, *Dynasty* with *Sex and the City*, and each are afforded room in the dialogic thought processes of the narrator.

A raft of cultural references within the text presents the range of opportunities for mediated experiences, narratives of self-formation and visions of the world on which the individual may draw. Literature satisfies the need to gaze upon the unfamiliar, and offers the chance to gain experience vicariously. Streeruwitz's protagonist remarks on the huge sales figures of Michel Houellebecq's novels for instance, which describe how it is to sleep with a prostitute. By reading one of his novels, the reader would know, 'wie das geht, und was er fühlen muss, wie es sich anfühlen muss, wie es sein muss'(J p. 22). Ironically, *Jessica* displays scepticism towards this kind of reading experience, and a warning is sent to its own reader not to use literature as a deferral of action. This is illuminated when the protagonist ponders Christine Angot's novels which deal with taboo subjects and she arrives at the conclusion that their popularity can be accounted for not by any political message they may convey, but by the fact that they fulfil a voyeuristic need, 'was für Erfolge solche Geschichten immer sind, warum das alle kaufen wollen, warum alle wissen wollen, ganz genau wissen müssen, wie das nun war, wenn der Vater die Tochter, das ist doch interessant und [...] das ist nur voyeuristisch' (J p. 22). In a self-reflexive move, a novel which itself invites a voyeuristic interest in the minutiae of one woman's life, her sexual exploits, shopping habits and body obsessions, exposes that very voyeurism to tension. The reader is alerted to the fact that Streeruwitz has an agenda. She does not wish her readers to be mere voyeurs but intends them to engage with a text which has a feminist agenda at its core, which uses and abuses the elements of post feminist chick lit

and pop literature to offer a different, but no less effective, means of political

engagement than *Magdalena*'s playful fabulation.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICAL REVISIONS

LILIAN FASCHINGER'S, *WIENER PASSION* (1999) AND MARLENE STREERUWITZ'S *NACHWELT. EIN REISEBERICHT.* (1999)

Unlike the texts which precede them in this thesis, there are no eponymous protagonists adorning the title pages of the texts considered in this chapter. Instead, *Wiener Passion* indicates within its title the significance the Austrian capital will play, and it is against this specific cultural and historical backdrop that its protagonists are constructed. In *Nachwelt.*, it is the function of memory in the creation of meanings which are left to posterity, that lies at the centre of its critique. This is not to say that the novels lack powerful female figures. At their centre are female protagonists who, like Norma and Magdalena, are on the move, traversing both spatial borders and travelling across temporal boundaries.

Faschinger's *Wiener Passion* sets two female protagonists out on journeys: Rosa Havelka, a nineteenth-century Czech exile leaves her hometown in Bohemia to seek her fortune in Vienna, and in a parallel story, late twentieth-century New Yorker Magnolia Brown, Rosa's great-granddaughter, also travels to Vienna from the US, on a trip to research Viennese-born psychoanalyst Anna Freud. Rosa and Magnolia are connected not only by family, but also by their destination, which is chosen as the intertextual device through which the text intervenes in, and diffuses the authority of social and cultural practices. Conversely, the protagonist of *Nachwelt.*, thirty-nine-year-old dramaturge Margarethe Doblinger, *leaves* Vienna to embark on a trip to Los Angeles in March 1990, with the aim of

researching material for a biography of the sculptor Anna Mahler. The past emerges through recollections of friends and relatives of Mahler that in turn revive memories of Margarethe's own postwar Austrian childhood. Both texts can be investigated from the point of view of their intertextual summonings across different time frames, and both expose the processes of truth production through which power is exercised. Misplaced national sentiment and social exclusion are interrogated against the backdrop of a heavily demarcated city.

Intertextual triggers in *Wiener Passion* and *Nachwelt.* encourage the reader to refer to their own memory store and that of the wider cultural archive. Faschinger's character Rosa Havelka is anchored to a particular time and version of Vienna, that of the late nineteenth century, where the disparity between rich and poor is a division which is depicted as being evident in spatial form, in the grand buildings within the 'Ringstraße' and the marginal areas outside its boundaries. Franz Schubert, Sigmund Freud and the Empress Sisi are amongst many historical personalities mentioned who inhabit the textual space alongside characters of pure fiction. A century later, Magnolia ponders her great-grandmother's notebooks and the stories of the two generations of women construct a textual *déjà-vu* offering the opportunity to re-examine issues across differing contexts and time frames. The male voice which joins them is that of present-day Viennese resident Josef Horvath, a character steeped in the narratives of the Habsburg *Kaiserstadt*. Indeed, the only way for Josef to understand the unfamiliar and maintain his sense of safety in the present is to refer to historical events. Reading the three narratives is to read versions of Vienna that inform cultural memory. Their accounts exist in a dialectic relationship to the mnemonic space of the city; they both produce the

city and are produced by it. As the chapter unfolds, it will become clear that the feminist agendas which lay at the centre of *Magdalena* and *Scheherazade* have been replaced by general notions of subject construction within hierarchies of power.

Nachwelt., like *Wiener Passion*, posits a dialogue with the past through the intermingling of historical and contemporary characters. Indeed the rigid outline of historical figures in both texts is shifted and blurred in a way which recalls Faschinger's treatment of artists and actors in *Scheherazade*. The text is a repository of cultural memory in the way it conjures intertextual reminders through its summoning of historical characters and events, and also by importing generic indicators that arouse memories of prior texts. Like *Wiener Passion*, *Nachwelt.* is one of Lachmann's *Gedächtnisräume*, a memory space which shapes reader responses. Both texts immerse the reader in familiar historical stories, from European exiles in LA, to the grandiosity of Vienna during the Habsburg era, while specific locations such as the back-streets of Vienna and the boulevards of LA's Santa Monica are mapped. These intertextual hooks provoke expectations before working to defamiliarize them, in order to, in Jenny's terms 'prevent meaning from becoming lethargic'.[309] Jenny shares with Streeruwitz a belief in the power of aesthetic form to rework discourses whose weight has become oppressive: 'Its role is to re-utter definitively discourse whose presence has become tyrannical, tinselly discourse, fossilized discourse. [...] It is a definitive rejection of the full stop which would close the meaning and freeze the form'.[310] Both novels are

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[309]   Jenny, 'The Strategy of Form', p. 59
[310]   *Ibid.*

heteroglossic in their incorporation of multiple voices that overlap, merge and

clash in order to 're-utter' discourse.

4.1 Vienna, the imagined city. The city as (inter)text in Faschinger's
Wiener Passion (1999)

Faschinger's project to give women a voice through acts of self-representation has so far been considered from the perspective of Scheherazade's story-telling which functions as a survival mechanism for the female voice, and Magdalena's confessions of female performance, parody and masquerade. In _Wiener Passion_, the first-person female narrative is constituted by the nineteenth-century memoirs of a young Czech immigrant to Vienna, Rosa Havelka, interspersed with the late twentieth-century narrative of her great-granddaughter, the African American actress Magnolia Brown. Rosa's memoir acts as a means of mapping nineteenth-century Vienna in both concrete terms and as an imagined city with its layers of historical and cultural meaning. In the present-day narrative, Magnolia reads her great-grandmother's notebooks a century later and recounts the story of her own growing attachment to the city, enabling the reader to become privy to points of divergence and convergence in the narratives of the two women. The third, male voice of contemporary Viennese resident and hypochondriac singing teacher Josef Horvath, belongs to a character clearly attached to a version of Vienna which continues to be informed by the narratives of the Habsburg _Kaiserstadt_. Through Josef's interaction with Viennese iconic spaces such as Schubert's _Sterbehaus_, the _Zentralfriedhof_ and the _Kapuzinergruft_, the text creates a relationship between space and subject whereby the city's spaces become part of the protagonist's subject construction.

After a relationship between Magnolia and Josef develops, the outsider, Magnolia, becomes gradually and intimately entwined with the city's scripts,

so that she decides not to return to New York, but stay with Josef in the Austrian capital. Rosa's journey also ends in Vienna, when she is imprisoned for killing her husband and it is from this incarcerated position, that she writes her life story. A feminist agenda emerges by way of Rosa's account of her negotiation of a number of roles available to women in a nineteenth-century, Austro-Hungarian patriarchal empire. After her entry into the city, the character becomes, in turn, a maid to the bourgeoisie, a prostitute working the *Volksgarten* at night, an artist's muse installed above the Café Griensteidl, a beggar residing in the sewers, and even mistress to the prince in the imperial household. Rosa's voice discloses the arrangements of social class and stratification that ensure the perpetuation of power hierarchies, and which are woven into the city.

Faschinger takes advantage of what the Austrian capital's material sites and its metaphorical tropes have to offer, and the city provides not only a geographical referent, but also a concentration of signs and codes, in which versions of the Austrian capital are developed. Burton Pike refers to the 'rich field of operations' the city, as a literary device, has always offered writers, providing, 'collisions and games of power among myriad characters, types, occupations and social classes, all colliding in an architecturally imposing place, whose functioning is determined by complicated and subtle social and political powers and codes'.[311] Vienna in the text is made up of tangible places identifiable on the city map that, as Pike suggests, foster specific social groupings and meanings. The city is constituted by landmarks which Rosa and later Magnolia and Josef move through, from the religious and physical heart

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[311] Burton Pike, 'Images of the city', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. by Graham Bartram (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), pp. 110-122 (p. 112).

of the city, the architecturally imposing central space of the *Stephansdom*, to the private bourgeois dwellings and grand buildings of the *innere Stadt*, and on to the public spaces of the parks. These are buildings and spaces which resonate with historical meaning. The *Zentralfriedhof* is located on the city's outskirts, but the demarcations of social status are as visible there as in the city itself. In Rosa's narrative, marginalization is inscribed into the city in spatial and social terms through, for instance, the beggars who occupy the underground spaces in the viscera of the city, the sewers, and the ostracized 'Engelmacherin' inhabiting the peripheral areas near the river, 'zwischen den Gebieten Natterfleck und Zigeunermais' (WP p. 311), a location whose very name implies danger and social exclusion.

The Vienna of the novel is positioned in a dialectic relationship with the protagonists so that they become mutually defining. For Elizabeth Grosz, cities and bodies are fluid spaces; the city, she remarks, 'is one of the crucial factors in the production of (sexed) corporeality: the built environment provides the context and coordinates for contemporary forms of body'. At the same time, 'humans make cities'.[312] The city and the body in *Wiener Passion* are not closed-off, separate units but are subject to 'a relation of introjections and projections' between the body and its environment, involving 'a complex feed-back relation'.[313] When the character of Magnolia is introduced, she is an observer of a different city, sitting in an aeroplane with a bird's eye view of Manhattan as she leaves, 'die Brooklyn Bridge, über dem Hudson River hängend wie Weihnachtsbeleuchtung, [...] die silbernen und goldenen

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[312]   Elizabeth Grosz, 'Bodies-Cities', in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 507-514 (p. 507 & p. 509).
[313]   *Ibid.*, p. 507.

Straßenzüge, die roten Blinklichter auf den Hochhäusern'.[314] In relation to cities, Michel de Certeau acknowledges the attraction of observation, 'of "seeing the whole", of looking down on, totalizing the most immoderate of human texts'.[315] Viewed in this way, the city is there to be read but not written, that is, not experienced by the individual. In contrast, Magnolia's relationship to Vienna evolves into one in which she becomes part of the city, and the city becomes part of her, with considerable consequences for the subject.

The reader is invited into the text not simply as a Baudelairian *flâneur*, a detached observer of the city, who is able to make connections between apparently disparate elements of the text but does not interact with it.[316] The multitude of intertexts which constitute the novel demand interaction and response and engender different, often conflicting readings. This chapter will examine the layered texts of Vienna that emerge in the novel across temporal and historical differences, and will consider how the novel offers these texts for renegotiation through the narration of the three characters. *Wiener Passion* offers its gestures of critique through a process of underlining and undermining the sites and tropes that constitute the city of Vienna. The overlapping realities presented have prompted Eva Kuttenberg to distinguish in the novel a 'postmodern Vienna', and she suggests that Faschinger's style demands a 'suspension of belief as well as disbelief', which throws the reader into a condition of ontological uncertainty: 'Her mockery and parody of the past

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[314]   Lilian Faschinger, *Wiener Passion* (Munich: dtv, 1999), p. 39. Henceforth, the text will be referenced as WP in parenthesis.

[315]   Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 92.

[316]   Keith Tester remarks that the Baudelairian figure is *of* the city rather than *in* the city, a character who casts their (usually male) gaze at the urban spectacle whilst retaining 'a princely incognito'. See 'Introduction', in *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-21 (p. 4).

leaves the reader in a quandary, not knowing who or what in a text they can believe or rely on'.[317] It is true that the reader is offered a palimpsest, whereby voices, images and stories from the past linger in the background and seep into the present, so that the city, as always, is mapped through simultaneously existing narratives.[318] The atmosphere of narrated reality is a key feature of the text, with an underlying incredulity towards accepted versions of fact and truth that are challenged at every turn through humour, parody and exaggeration. The underlying scepticism towards what is fixed and true is flagged by the text through its biblical epigraph: 'Die Menschen lügen alle'. However what will also become apparent is that Vienna is presented as a legible city through three different narrative voices, each translating the city into a comprehensible space. It is this aspect of the text which enables it to deliver its compelling critique of social hierarchies and regimes of power.

Rosa: the topography of difference

De Certeau clarifies the distinction between the *place* and the *space* of specific practices, with the latter being regarded as an effect, an outcome of intersecting forces, as opposed to place which indicates a more stable environment of power and knowledge hierarchies. A place is 'an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability, [however] space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables.[…] In short, space is *practiced place*'.[319] The three protagonists in

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317   Eva Kuttenberg, 'A Postmodern Viennese Narrative: Lilian Faschinger's *Wiener Passion*', *Monatshefte*, 101/1 (2009), 73-87 (p. 79).
318   The working title of Faschinger's novel was *Wiener Stimmen*, indicating the intention of incorporating a chorus of voices forming layers of stories and texts about the city. See Gisela Roethke, 'Lilian Faschinger im Gespräch', p. 97.
319   De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 117.

Faschinger's novel walk the city streets and participate in gestures of interaction so that Vienna becomes a practice. The stable configuration of place is thus converted into a dynamic space of intersecting elements, so that identifiable Viennese sites are subject to, in de Certeau's terms, 'an emptying out and wearing-away' of their primary role, and become 'liberated spaces that can be occupied'. The newly created spaces assume 'a poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning'.[320] A central strategy of the novel which invites intertextual investigation is the way so-called 'permitted meanings' of Vienna contained in authorized texts of the city, are replaced by a 'poetic geography' of different, shifting maps which overlap to form the topography of the novel.

The memoirs of Rosa narrate her entry to the capital after the death of her mother, in order to seek employment. The protagonist is immersed in this discursive construction of fin-de-siècle Vienna, or versions of the city as they are offered by historians, artists and social commentators, both those writing during Rosa's time, and those who offer analyses of Vienna from a twentieth-century perspective. In this way the text offers a mnemonic space, a site of memory constructed by layers of intertexts.

Rosa joins the ranks of immigrant workers who were drawn to the capital from the far reaches of the empire through rapid advances in industrialization. The tropes of departure and arrival are key experiences, both in literal terms of crossing national borders and arriving somewhere new, or departing the countryside and arriving in the city, and in terms of transformation of the self, leaving the old self behind. The voice of 'der

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[320]   *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Pikkolo',[321] an apprentice waiter who accompanies Rosa on her entry to Vienna, constructs a version of the city which iterates the division between centre and margins, as he warns Rosa about the dangers inherent in city life. Ironically the Pikkolo's words voice, in reported speech, the language and discourse of the ruling class: 'wir befänden uns am Rande der Reichshauptstadt, und wie jeder wisse, triebe sich in solchen Randbezirken viel lichtscheues Gesindel herum, Randbezirke seien gefährliche Bereiche, das sei allgemein bekannt' (WP p. 204). As the couple enters the centre, a different aspect reveals itself: 'Nach einiger Zeit kamen wir in stärker bebautes Gebiet, die Straßen wurden breiter und belebter, die Häuser höher und schöner. [...] Der Pikkolo meinte, das sei die Ringstraße, an welcher der Kaiser einen Palast nach dem anderen erbauen lasse' (WP p. 206). The façades convey the impression of wealth and good-living, and form a physical barrier protecting the centre from the dangerous 'Randbezirke'.

In Faschinger's hands, a picture of the city emerges which aligns itself with the Vienna of the late nineteenth century as described by Le Rider, that is a city of stark social and architectural contrasts. Outside the boundary of the *Ringstraße*, that expression of imperial wealth and strength initiated by Kaiser Franz Josef in 1857, lay the *Vorstadt.* Here, 'an impoverished proletariat [lived] under inhuman conditions. [...] The Pan-German movement, the xenophobia aroused by the growth of the Czech colony, and the spread of anti-Semitism made Vienna an ethnic battlefield rather than a melting pot'.[322] Droves of individuals came from all parts of the empire to seek work in the

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[321]   With the 'Pikkolo', the text introduces the servant figure who caters to the demands of the dominant class, and with him the Hegelian Herr/Knecht configuration, symbolizing the class divisions prevalent in the capital.
[322]   Le Rider, 'Between Modernism and Postmodernism', p. 1.

capital, but the failure of national integration is apparent from Rosa's encounter with a *Hausmeisterin* to a wealthy family of the *innere Stadt*, who comments scathingly on a former maid of Slovenian origin: 'bei Slowenen wisse man ja nie, das Renitente sowie das Hinterhältige sei ihnen angeboren, eine rassische Eigenheit' (WP p. 245). When Rosa finds work as a maid to the highly aspirational family of the 'Oberpostrat' Lindner and later the *nouveau riche* von Schreyvogel family, her memoir presents a picture of an élite inhabiting the centre, alarmed at the thought of the proletariat outside.[323] A fear of otherness is expressed through the ideology of cleanliness as displayed by the Oberpostrat's wife. Frau Lindner insists Rosa scrub every inch of the apartment to banish any traces of dirt which may have been carried in, a repetitive and tedious task recommended by the 'Wiener Hausherrenjournal' (WP p. 221) and 'Goldene[m] Hausfrauenbuch' (WP p. 214).[324] 'Zum Schluß trug ich noch die Bodenwichse aus gelbem Wachs und Terpentin auf, die ich vorher in ein Gefäß mit heißem Wasser gestellt hatte, und nachdem das Wachs getrocknet war, bürstete ich das Parkett so lange mit der Bodenbürste, bis es gleichmäßig glänzte' (WP p. 214). The insistence on cleanliness is indicative of the anxiety that the boundaries between the bourgeois home and the filth of the 'other' could be transgressed. The bourgeois home is sealed behind well-preserved façades, and its cleanliness bars not simply physical but also moral contagion by the lower classes.

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[323] Rosa's job as a maid suggests to Christine Rinne an appropriation of elements of the *Dienstbotenroman*, employed to give a voice to a silenced figure. 'For [Faschinger] this occupation, which is the embodiment of female subservience, becomes a means to critique the consequences of conformity and adhering to convention, especially for women in bourgeois society'. See Christine Rinne, 'Lilian Faschinger's *Wiener Passion*: The Servant Novel Re-visited', (2005),
<http://www.womeningerman.org/conference/2005/epanel/Rinnesynopsis.pdf>,
[accessed 02/12/2006].
[324] This publication was referenced, with footnotes, in *Scheherazade*, as source of knowledge for housewife Scheherazade O.. See Chapter Two of this thesis.

The private domain of the family home is mapped in terms of the wider social terrain, as patriarchal power entrenched in the public sphere is simultaneously reproduced and maintained in domestic spaces. Frau von Schreyvogel and Frau Lindner are positioned in interior spaces, their identities subsumed by the principles of domesticity, while their husbands engage in public life.[325] Elizabeth Wilson notes that, 'with the intensification of the public/private divide in the industrial period, the presence of women on the streets and in public places of entertainment caused enormous anxiety, and was the occasion for any number of moralizing and regulatory discourses'.[326] Women who did walk the streets were from the working class. There was no female equivalent of the flâneur. As far as bourgeois women were concerned, the confines of the domestic space offered protection from the perceived threat of the proletariat, since, as Griselda Pollock explains, going into the city, 'mingling with crowds of mixed social composition was not only frightening because it became increasingly unfamiliar, but because it was morally dangerous. [...] to maintain one's respectability, closely identified with femininity, meant not exposing oneself in public'.[327] Instead of venturing out themselves, Rosa the maid is sent into the public domain for supplies and to entertain the children. Frau von Schreyvogel directs Rosa to take her charges to the *Volksgarten* for exercise and fresh air, but this location proves to be a

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[325] The name chosen for Rosa's employer, von Schreyvogel, has resonances in a Viennese context of author Josef Schreyvogel who was buried in an *Ehrengrab* in the *Zentralfriedhof* in 1832, and of his great-great-nephew, author Friedrich Schreyvogel, described as one of the 'Vorzeigeautoren des Austrofaschismus' for his involvement with the fascist regime in Vienna in the 1930s and '40s. See Karin Gradwohl-Schlacher, 'Ein "ostmärkisches" Sittenbild: Die Causa Max Stebich', in *Macht-Literatur-Krieg. Österreichische Literatur im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. by Uwe Baur, Karin Gradwohl-Schlacher & Sabine Fuchs (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), pp. 124-144 (p. 128).

[326] Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', *New Left Review*, 191 (1992), <http://www.newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=1665>, [accessed 05/11/2008].

[327] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 96-97.

contested space, what Nancy Fraser terms a 'parallel discursive arena' where 'counterpublics contested the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public'.[328] The *Volksgarten* is understood by an anxious Frau von Schreyvogel as a place where individuals from diverse social classes might intermingle, and thus is highly dangerous. As Rosa recalls:

> Sie weise mich allerdings ausdrücklich darauf hin, daß unbekannte Kinder und Erwachsene, denen man ihre Zugehörigkeit zur mittelbürgerlichen und kleinbürgerlichen Schicht, insbesondere jedoch zu der der Arbeiter, ansehe, strikt vom Kinderwagen fernzuhalten seien [...] man wisse nie, es kämen die unglaublichsten Dinge vor, ganz abgesehen davon, daß solche Leute, zum Großteil aus eigener Schuld, in alles andere als hygienischen Verhältnissen lebten und, wo sie gingen und stünden, Bakterien um sich verbreiteten, die zum Ausbruch gefährlicher und gefährlichster Krankheiten führen könnten. (WP p. 272)

Space is organized in terms of relationships between high and low, pure and contaminated. Commenting on Victorian London, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White contend that 'contagion and contamination became the tropes through which city life was apprehended. It was impossible for the bourgeoisie to free themselves from the taint of the Great Unwashed'.[329] Frau Lindner may be able to have the stains washed from the floor of her apartment, but public spaces are not so neatly purged.

Spatial boundaries are transgressed by day when maids bring bourgeois children to the park, and by night when prostitutes move into the centre. Part of the subversion and humour of Faschinger's text lies in Rosa's attitudes to the 'Demimondlerinnen' who take up their nocturnal positions in the park. She regards them as an army of 'Hurengesindel [...] eine ganze Schar der grell

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[328]   Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere. A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. by Simon During (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 518-536 (p. 523).
[329]   Peter Stallybrass & Allon White *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1986), p. 135.

gekleideten Damen' (WP p. 409), as the text appropriates the language and imagery of debates surrounding prostitution at the turn of the century, in Stefan Zweig's exile memoirs for instance. The Viennese-born writer comments on 'diese ungeheure Armee der Prostitution', which was, 'ebenso wie die wirkliche Armee in einzelne Heeresteile, Kavallerie, Artillerie, Infanterie, Festungsartillerie – in einzelne Gattungen aufgeteilt'.[330] Zweig's description of the ranks of 'Geheime', 'Hure' and 'Demimondlerin' who constituted Austria's night-time 'Armee', finds an echo in Rosa's description of the troop of women who are organized into ranks according to their length of service on the streets. The text does not depict the inevitable hardships and abuses faced by these women, instead Faschinger's women have appropriated the public space and made it their own. When Rosa 'enlists' as a prostitute, she starts out as a 'ganz gewöhnliche Praterhure' but after wandering into territory reserved for the more experienced women, soon finds herself under attack. Zweig's military references are pertinent when Rosa finds herself surrounded by a phalanx of women who charge at her 'mit ihren Hutnadeln und den Spitzen ihrer Schirmchen' (WP p. 409). Decorative female items provide the weapons for this army, as the text parodies the threatening nature of prostitution as represented by Zweig amongst others. Mockery and humour relinquish the hold of such images to promote a consideration of the representation of women in culture and the way their material suffering is effaced by such representations.

Through Rosa's voice, the city emerges in terms of locations of power and exclusion, and Faschinger's protagonist is constantly vulnerable to harmful

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[330] Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1982, first pub. 1944), p. 106.

practices. Islands of exclusion are scattered across the urban terrain, forming what Foucault has termed the 'carceral archipelago',[331] enclaves of discipline and power which materialize on the protagonist's body. In the 'Irrenanstalt im neunten Gemeindebezirk' (WP p. 354) where Rosa is sent after a failed suicide attempt, and the 'Anstalt in Wiener Neudorf' (WP p. 395) where she spends time for the theft of a zither, Rosa's body bears the marks of power and control when she is forced to wear a straight-jacket and has her hair shorn. The prison is run by a group of 'fromme Frauen' whose forms of religious control not only act on the physical body, but also operate on the thoughts and the will. At this point, the novel engages with nineteenth-century descriptions of 'Neudorf' as a place of correction run by nuns whose objective was to transform the women spiritually and morally. In the terms of the nineteenth-century commentator Josef Schrank, the women held at 'Neudorf' were 'gefallene Wesen' who were led back into human society through 'die Verweisung auf die Ewigkeit (Furcht zu sündigen) und das Gebet (Ablenkung von unreinen Gedanken)'.[332] Faschinger's protagonist partakes in this daily ritual of instruction and repentance: 'Auch sei der Besuch der täglichen Messe für alle Insassinnen verpflichtend, da nichts der Wandlung und Höherentwicklung der menschlichen Seele förderlicher wäre als Gottes Wort' (WP p. 395). Rosa acquiesces to, and internalizes, the discourses of punishment without resistance. Her body is disciplined and the divisions of healthy/ill, sane/mad, pious/sinful are entrenched through the normalization of disciplinary practices.

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[331] Foucault maintained that power is exercised in spaces of discipline, such as prisons and insane asylums, in which the individual is subject to the 'universal reign of the normative'. See *Discipline & Punish*, p. 296 & p. 310.

[332] Josef Schrank, *Die Prostitution in Wien in Historischer, Administrativer und Hygienischer Beziehung*, Bd. 1 (Vienna: Selbstverlag, 1886), p. 338 & p. 344.

Only at the 'Irrenanstalt' do signs of rebellion against disciplinary practices start to emerge. The inmates of this institution are forced to adhere to a regime of silence, however Faschinger's character engages in 'ein ununterbrochenes Kommentieren' (WP p. 358), which is liberating and therapeutic. Rosa speaks for hours without pause, outlining her actions in minute detail: 'So sagte ich beispielsweise, während ich Weißwäsche mit geschlungenen Knopflöchern versah, ich versähe nun Weißwäsche mit geschlungenen Knopflöchern' (WP p. 357). References to a 'Dr. Sigmund Freud' visiting the 'Anstalt' create an associative springboard for the reader between Rosa's speech act and the 'talking cure' which was placed at the centre of the psychoanalytical process as formulated by Freud in Vienna in the 1890s.[333] The difference here is that Rosa talks only to herself and is not installed in the hierarchy of patient and (male) doctor/interpreter. Neither does she expunge her innermost demons, rather the intricacies of her sock darning and details of recipes are told in a mocking parody of the psychoanalytical process.

Alongside the 'Irrenheilanstalt', another area of physical incarceration and power hierarchy is concentrated around the Café Griensteidl. In this case it is limiting cultural practices rather than religious penitence and asylum walls that imprison the protagonist. Café Griensteidl is a powerful intertextual allusion to a location that has entered cultural legend as the home of the 'Jung

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[333]   Foucault remarked on Freud's objective to liberate the 'mad' from their loss of language experienced in the asylum: 'The absence of language, as a fundamental structure of asylum life, has its correlative in the exposure of confession. [...] Freud, in psychoanalysis cautiously reinstitutes exchange, or rather begins once again to listen to this language'. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 2001, first pub. 1961), p. 249. The case study of Josef Breuer's patient 'Anna O' who was cured of her hysteria through the process of 'free-association' led Freud to develop talk therapy as a treatment for mental illness in 1895.

Wien' movement from the mid 1880s, a space in which male writers and artists could pursue intellectual exchange as well as refreshment. In Zweig's memoir, this space is celebrated as a kind of democratic club, 'wo jeder Gast für diesen kleinen Obolus stundenlang sitzen, diskutieren, schreiben, Karten spielen, seine Post empfangen und vor allem eine unbegrenzte Zahl von Zeitungen und Zeitschriften konsumieren kann'.[334] In *Wiener Passion*, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Hermann Bahr are mentioned as recognizable cultural characters who mingle with fictional figures in the café. The location is emptied of its cultural codes however as the text imports an alternative meaning which locates the café as a site of exclusion and domination of the female, indeed as part of the 'carceral archipelago' mapped within the city.

Having been released from the asylum, Rosa is taken a virtual prisoner in an apartment above the Café Griensteidl by a poet, Engelbert Kornhäusel: 'es war ein Verhältnis, das auf sprachlicher Ebener auf seiner Seite als Monolog geführt wurde' (WP p. 416). When the poet is not in the company of other literary men 'am runden Tisch im Großen Lesesaal des *Café Griensteidls*', he uses Rosa's body as 'Beschriftungsobjekt' (WP p. 417), a canvas for his work. The protagonist's body becomes a space of inscription by masculine agency, as the male uses it as a page on which to inscribe his blank verse, as well as his artist's fury at the world: '[...] doch begann er, sich seine Enttäuschung über die mangelnde Wertschätzung seitens seiner Dichterkollegen in Form leidenschaftlicher Pamphlete vom Leib zu schreiben, wobei er seine Schriftzüge mit einer Heftigkeit und Wut in meine Haut kratzte' (WP p. 417). The inscriptions are an attempt to fix meaning on the corporeal

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[334]   Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, p. 83.

canvas, with the suggestion that the female body is devoid of significance until touched by the male pen. In *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, while women were attending university and becoming politically active, their representation at the hands of male artists and writers ranged from their depiction as sacred, sexual beings by Secession artists such as Gustav Klimt, through Arthur Schnitzler's 'süßes Mädel', to Otto Weininger's presentation of the inferior female in *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1903). The protagonist in *Wiener Passion* is understood in these terms, being excluded from the centre of culture, upstairs from, rather than in the salon of the Café, and like Christo's wrapped Scheherazade, positioned as the passive receptacle of cultural forces. Despite her vigorous attempts to remove the script – 'meine einzige Sorge bestand darin, meinen Körper von den Tintenspuren aus der Feder von Engelbert Kornhäusel zu reinigen' (WP p. 415) – a palimpsest of 'verblaßte Verse' remains visible on the female skin. Her body has been inscribed with male fantasies and significations, inscriptions which prove almost impossible to remove.

Through the familiar and visible spaces of the café, the prison and the insane asylum, Rosa's nineteenth-century city is mapped in terms of locations of power and exclusion, spaces in which the protagonist remains vulnerable to harmful social and cultural practices. As a counterbalance to this demarcation above ground, the text maps out underground locations that form a democratic space where a diverse mix of characters mingle, and no dominant group is in control. The trope of the sewer has been employed in cultural texts to convey a physical and discursive space regarded by the city above as a dark and threatening underbelly. Stallybrass and White have commented on the nineteenth-century European conflation of the sewer with social disorder as

involving a fear of 'the lower bodily stratum', the unclean and the contagious, a form of metaphorical mapping encouraged by Freudian interpretations of the dangerous potential of the repressed. [335] However, the sewer was framed in different terms in the nineteenth century by Victor Hugo, who wrote of the democratic, multifarious nature of the Paris sewer in *Les Misérables* (1862), describing it as 'the conscience of the town where all things converge and clash'.[336]

Wiener Passion aligns itself to this concept of the underground space by suggesting that a definitive opposition between clean and contaminated does not adequately contain the multiple associations held in the underground space, and instead makes the sewer the locus of a variety of different activities and outlooks. Rosa takes up residence in the sewer out of desperation and poverty having been sacked from her posts in the bourgeois households. There she encounters Polish immigrants who have made their way to the city looking for employment, 'Strotter' and 'Fettfischer' (WP p. 365) who comb the canal system for usable materials, women freedom fighters pursuing the rights of the working class, young Czech radicals who are on a mission to free the Czech people 'vom Joch der Österreicher' (WP p. 368), and a Tyrolean herdsman from the Ötztal seeking sanctuary from the 'Wienerfremdenhaß' (WP p. 377). These characters are brought together within the bowels of the city, and Rosa finds amongst their diversity a place of safety, removed from the strict segregations of the surface.

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[335]   Stallybrass & White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 3.

[336]   Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. by Norman Denny (London: Penguin, 1982, first pub. 1862), pp. 1065.

In the version of the city mapped by the text's nineteenth-century female protagonist, social divisions and separations mark the terrain as much as physical, geographical boundaries, in a way which recalls Georg Simmel's formulation: 'Die Grenze ist nicht eine räumliche Tatsache mit soziologischen Wirkungen, sondern eine soziologische Tatsache, die sich räumlich formt'.[337] The city spaces manifest different processes that produce spatial borders that in turn reinforce those symbolic differences. This process is paralleled in the twentieth century Vienna of Faschinger's male protagonist, whose attachment to historical stories draws a picture of a city where the narratives of the past continue to dominate public and private domains.

Josef Horvath and 'alt Wien'

In the late 1800s when Faschinger's female protagonist was roaming the streets of the capital, the centennial of Schubert's birth was being celebrated in the city of his birth, the Empress Sisi was accruing fame and acquiring infamy for her fashion sense, and elections were being held which resulted in the installation of the right-wing Catholic mayor Karl Lueger. These figures from the past emerge in the text's contemporary account given by the male voice in the text, and the city map drawn by Josef Horvath resembles the 'malerische, sichere und geordnete Märchenwelt' version of the Habsburg myth.[338] Faschinger's text frames the character in terms of his relationships to authoritative, historical presences, often expressed in terms of a 'mütterliche

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[337]   Georg Simmel, *Soziologie – Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1992, first pub. 1908), p. 697.

[338]   Magris, *Der habsburgische Mythos*, p. 22. The name Faschinger chose to give her protagonist is a conflation of the imperial father figure of the nation, Franz Josef, and the Austro-Hungarian dramatist Ödön von Horvath, whose play *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald* (1931) engaged critically with the 'Habsburg Mythos' in its satirical response to kitsch depictions of petit bourgeois values of old Vienna.

Autorität' (WP p. 25), indeed the city itself assumes the authority of a maternal figure, as expressed by the elderly women at the pharmacy near to Josef's apartment: 'Natürlich liebt man Wien. Man liebt es innig, so wie man seine Mutter liebt' (WP p. 12). The Empress Sisi epitomizes Josef's ideal of womanhood, and Pan-German nationalism shows itself to be alive and well when Schubert is hailed by the caretaker of the composer's house as, 'ein Komponist [...] der doch eine zutiefst deutsche Musik komponiert habe, eine zutiefst deutsche Musik' (WP p. 22). The city is mapped through locations where, the text implies, the power of these authorities continues to be performed, enabling the novel to explore practices and ideologies of racism, antisemitism and elitism.

The sites that appear in Josef's account function not simply as a stage or background, but interact with him physically and mentally, constituting his identity and informing his sense of self. In this way the imagined city becomes, in Deborah Parson's terms, 'related to but distinct from the city of asphalt, brick and stone, one that results from the interconnection of body, mind, and space, one that reveals the interplay of self/city identity'. Through the imaginative interconnection between space and protagonist, the text contributes 'other maps to the city atlas: those of social interaction but also of myth, memory, fantasy and desire'.[339] Josef's local pharmacy, *Zur heiligen Magdalena* becomes, for instance, not simply a place for dispensing medicines, but a locus for the myths, fantasies and desires that have been attached to the imperial city. There gathers in this temple to ill health an assortment of female figures constituting a chorus whose voices create a bridge from the present to

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[339]   Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis. Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), p. 1.

the past, harkening back to a Vienna in which the conventions and activities of the Habsburg household were a dominant authority. The pharmacist eschews modern medicine and instead suggests to Josef that an antidote to his constant chest infections might be a trip to Madeira; after all, 'auf die angegriffene Lunge der Kaiserin Sisi habe das Klima dieser Insel äußerst wohltuend gewirkt' (WP p. 10). 'Die Greisin' gossips about the Empress as if she were still alive, berating her for the extravagant use of taxpayers' money: 'die Kaiserin Sisi sei eine Simulantin gewesen, nichts als eine Simulantin' (WP p. 11). The pharmacy thus becomes a location in which the past still dominates the shared psyche, and where Josef relies on the authority of what Fiddler terms his 'ersatz mothers'.[340] But they form only part of a maternal attachment which is embodied by the city itself.

While the tradition of encoding the city as mother reaches back to those classical and biblical narratives which consider the city as a fertile presence nurturing its inhabitants, in Josef's version, the image is one of restrictive domination and dependence.[341] Vienna is the mother whose children find it difficult to love her but are nevertheless caught in a psychological choke of dependency. Josef's relationship with the location thus assumes the quality of a Kleinian love-hate ambivalence, as the women in the pharmacy make explicit when they remark that one may come to love Vienna as much as one's own mother, 'auch wenn einem zu Bronchialasthma neigenden Menschen eine solche zärtliche Liebe aufgrund der rauhen klimatischen Verhältnisse im

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[340]   Allyson Fiddler, 'Shifting Boundaries. Responses to Multiculturalism', in Kohl & Robertson (eds), *A History of Austrian Literature*, pp. 265-289 (p. 268).
[341]   For a discussion of the personification of the city as benign mother, see *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. by Carol L. Meyers, Toni Craven & Ross S. Kraemer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 532.

Wiener Herbst und Winter nicht leicht gemacht wird' (WP p. 12).[342] The double meaning of the titular *Passion* comes into play here: on one hand Josef has a passionate attachment to the mother/city, but on the other, will suffer if separation from her does not occur. The process of separation from the maternal presence is a pre-requisite for the development of a mature, adult subject, according to Freud. But Josef is unable to relinquish the pre-Oedipal bond with the discourses of the city which exert their authority, neither is he able to cut the apron strings which attach him to his own deceased mother.

A stifling relationship is enacted in Josef's recurring nightmare in which the mother figure, Frau Horvath, appears to him as a grotesque, decomposing giant, ready to engulf her son with massive jaws. The nightmare makes explicit the love-hate relationship experienced by the protagonist: 'Da sie mir als liebevolle und warmherzige Ernährerin in Erinnerung sei, verstöre es mich im höchsten Grade, sie in besagten Alpträumen […] als verschlingendes Schreckgespenst vor Augen haben zu müssen' (WP p. 59). The mother is the nurturer but also the monster who tries to drag the son into the grave with her. The symbol of Josef's bondage to this figure is the white scarf wound tightly around his neck that he himself knitted. Subjugation to the authority figure is thus self-imposed:

> Diese Hände griffen nach meinem schneeweißen Schafwollschal, der dreifach gewunden um meinen Hals lag, und begannen fester und fester an dessen Enden zu ziehen, so lange, bis ich zu ersticken glaubte. Komm, mein Kind, rief die Stimme, hier ist es still, hier ist es schön. [...] dann öffnete sie das gelbe Totengebiß, um mich zu verschlingen. Doch bevor ich von ihren Zähnen zermalmt wurde, wachte ich mit einem Schrei auf. (WP pp. 27-28)

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[342] The Viennese born psychoanalyst Melanie Klein argued that the infant's relationship to the mother was a struggle, with the loved maternal figure also being the object of hate for the infant. See Melanie Klein, 'Love, Guilt and Reparation', in *Love, Hate and Reparation* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1964, first pub. 1937), pp. 57-110, especially p. 63.

The diabolical vision which the text presents resonates with Kristeva's notion of the mother's body becoming abject, so that it may repel the child, a process allowing full subjecthood to develop.[343] Barbara Creed detects in literary representations of the monstrous maternal figure the incarnation of Kristeva's notion of the abject, whereby females are often related to the object of horror. The reader is compelled to view monstrous female/maternal representations as abject rather than subject: 'The abject threatens life, it must be radically excluded from the place of the living subject, propelled away from the body and deposited on the other side of an imaginary border which separates the self from that which threatens the self'.[344] It is Josef's self-knitted scarf which drags him into the nightmare, and, like a woollen umbilical cord, keeps him in infantilized attachment. The protagonist is unable and unwilling to exclude the monstrous, consuming mother, and by implication separate himself from the discourses of the city which keep him confined in outdated modes of being.

Faschinger's text plays with Freudian associations and images such as repression and dreams to throw light on the construction of Vienna as the city of psychoanalysis. Writing in the 1950s, Austrian psychologist Bruno Bettelheim considered nineteenth-century Vienna as constituting the perfect breeding ground for Freud's theories of repression as the root of neurosis. Bettelheim maintains that at the turn of the century, 'things had never been better, but at the same time, they had never been worse; this strange simultaneity […] explains why psychoanalysis, based on the understanding of ambivalence, hysteria and neurosis, originated in Vienna and probably could

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[343]   Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), p. 4.
[344]   Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 65.

have originated nowhere else'.[345] Bettelheim provides yet another text through which to read a version of Vienna, one which promotes its unique position in relation to neurosis and psychoanalysis. In Faschinger's Vienna, the male protagonist lives under the dominance of castrating mother figures, and plays out his fantasies and desires in vivid nightmares. Like Rosa in the sewers, he occupies a subterranean location, a dark space which reflects subconscious urges and sets in motion de Certeau's 'poetic geographies', whereby the proper names of buildings, streets and areas deposit layers of meaning which contribute to the stories constituting a city.

In Josef's account, this space is a basement flat in the Lerchenfelder region of Vienna, and with this location, the text merges layers of time by making the decay which characterized the nineteenth-century Lerchenfelder area an element in the construction of Faschinger's male protagonist. Josef is informed by the Viennese housing authority that the only way he can fulfil his long-held dream of securing an apartment in Schubert's *Sterbehaus*, is to demonstrate that he endures physical suffering in his current accommodation. In an attempt to prove that he is indeed suffering, Josef rents a flat on the Lerchenfelder Gürtel, 'in einer im Souterrain gelegenen Einzimmerwohnung [...], an deren Wänden der Schimmel emporkroch' (WP p. 25). In the nineteenth century, the area in the south of the city outside the *Ring* was characterized by working-class poverty, chronic overcrowding, and geographical exclusion from the centre.[346] This narrative of poverty inscribes

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345   Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud's Vienna and Other Essays* (New York: Knopf, 1990, first pub. 1956), p. 6.
346   Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner comment that 'this belt of hopelessness and social misery [was] an intermediate zone of the urban, a negation of society and a materialization of inhumanity'. Wolfgang Maderthaner & Lutz Musner, *Unruly Masses. The*

itself onto Josef's body, as he succumbs to an unexplained disease which he senses is an effect of his subterranean location: 'zunächst Ermüdbarkeit und Appetitlosigkeit und im weiteren Verlaufe Schwellung der Gelenke und Lymphdrüsen, leichte Verziehungen und Versteifungen an Händen und Füßen sowie Entstehung mehrerer rheumatischer Knoten' (WP p.25).

The descriptions of symptoms of disease add another layer to the city's mapping. The protagonist's corporeal suffering evokes the Viennese legend 'der liebe Augustin', a figure of popular Viennese myth who was, like Faschinger's protagonist, a singer and who was mistakenly cast into a 'Pestengrube' during the great Viennese plague of 1679. The legend tells of the way Augustin survived his ordeal having endured a night with the decomposing corpses of his countrymen, and heroically emerging to tell his tale in the city's taverns. Evolving into an emblem of the city, the figure and surrounding legend contribute to the self-generated representation of the Viennese as survivors. Three years before the publication of *Wiener Passion*, the psychologist Harald Leupold-Löwenthal delivered a lecture in Vienna entitled *Ein Wiener zu sein*, in which he outlined the traits considered to be typically 'wienerisch'. Drawing on various sources, Leupold-Löwenthal identified characteristics displayed in the collective nostalgia for *Alt Wien* and detected aspects of a distinct and enduring Viennese character, cultivated by legend and folk-songs. He comments, 'man könnte meinen, daß ihn [den lieben Augustin] das Wunder des Überlebens zu einer Leitfigur der Wiener machte, die stolz auf ihre Überlebenskunst sind'.[347] Leupold-Löwenthal fails, however,

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Other Side of Fin-de Siècle Vienna, trans. by David Fernbach & Michael Huffmaster (New York: Berghahn, 2008, first pub. 1999), p. 52.

[347] Harald Leupold-Löwenthal, *Ein Wiener zu sein. Geschichte, Geschichten, Analysen* (Vienna: Picus, 1996), p. 22.

to remark upon the grim incongruity of a celebration of 'Überlebenskunst' in a post-Holocaust Vienna. A modern-day Augustin, Faschinger's Josef survives the dark underbelly of the city and like the hero of legend, displays an 'Überlebenskunst' which permits him to move out of the degradation of the Lerchenfelder region. The text thus manipulates layers of cultural myth in order to challenge permitted meanings and symbols of Viennese pride which are based on legend.

In this imagined city whose terrain is marked out on the principle of inclusion and exclusion, the Schubert *Sterbehaus* to which Josef aspires, is presented as a prestigious location, but also one embodying social demarcation, a space of authority saturated with cultural significance, and a locus for the enactment of power relations. Josef undergoes physical suffering to be allowed to live next door to the place of veneration, and the building has become a stop on the Viennese tourist trail. Remarks by the aging *Hausmeisterin* of the *Sterbehaus* confirm its status as contested social site. An apartment in the building remains empty: 'Soviel sie wisse, werde die siebenköpfige türkische Familie, die in der Dreizimmerwohnung direkt neben dem Sterbezimmer hause [...] delogiert' (WP p. 22). The family's expulsion follows opposition voiced by the 'Mietergemeinschaft' to 'die Zumutung der ständigen Anwesenheit einer ethnisch fremden Gruppe im Sterbehaus Schuberts' (*ibid*.). The reader is confronted with a modern-day incarnation of the *Hausmeisterin* in Rosa's story, who complained of the racial characteristics of the sly, unruly Slovenian maid. The continuation of racist attitudes is made legible for the reader by the emptying out of the building's monologic story as centre of high culture, and its installation as one of de Certeau's 'liberated spaces'. It accommodates an

alternative narrative proffering a critique of national sentiment and racial exclusion which, the text suggests, are as 'wienerisch' as the lauded 'Überlebenskunst'.

In his exploration of the city *Eine Reise in das Innere von Wien*, author Gerhard Roth, like Faschinger, depicts subterranean Vienna as part of the city which informs the collective psyche as much as the grand buildings and contested spaces of the surface.[348] Roth details the archaeological discovery of the skeleton of a man buried alive under the *Minoritenkirche*, whose body still assumes the desperate position of attempted escape. The calm exterior of the church belies its gruesome secret, a paradox which for Roth encapsulates the Viennese character: 'außen der scheinbar geordnete Alltag, innen Verzweiflung und Ängste'. Like Bettelheim, Roth goes on to draw an analogy between the hidden Vienna under the city's streets and the unconscious: 'Der Gedanke ist naheliegend, daß Sigmund Freud seine Entdeckungen zwangsläufig in Wien machen mußte, wo die Erkenntnisse zwar nicht auf der Hand, jedoch auf einer unterirdischen, nur scheinbar "verschwundenen" Ebene lagen'.[349] Josef's narrative mapping incorporates subterranean spaces which operate in the text as signifiers of a city's subconscious drives.

A Freudian struggle between conscious and unconscious desires surfaces in the iconic *Kapuzinergruft*, the final resting place of the Habsburg monarchs. The space is transformed from a location of iconic veneration into a terrain of overlapping signification when Josef makes a visit. Layers of time form the strata of the space, with the past rising to the surface and mingling

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[348]   Gerhard Roth, *Eine Reise in das Innere von Wien* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1991).
[349]   *Ibid.*, p. 14.

with a present which is embodied by the figure of his new North American singing student Magnolia:

> Als ich vor dem wie immer mit zahlreichen Blumensträußen und Kränzen geschmückten Sarg der Kaiserin Elisabeth stand, fiel mir Fräulein Brown ein, eine merkwürdige gedankliche Verknüpfung zweier Frauen, die doch nicht das geringste miteinander gemein hatten. Ich versuchte auf einen möglichen Zusammenhang zu kommen und fand heraus, daß es mit dem Augenblick zu tun haben mußte, als Fräulein Brown am Stutzflügel stand, in einer Haltung, wie sie typisch für meine Mutter gewesen war, und 'Die Forelle' sang, mit einer Mezzosopranstimme, welche in ihrem Kolorit an die meiner Mutter erinnerte. Und nicht Fräulein Brown, sondern meine schöne Mutter war es, die Sisi ähnlich sah. (WP p. 126-127)

The text fractures the familiar narrative of the crypt when the modern world, in the shape of Magnolia, intervenes in the protagonist's attachment to the long dead Empress. The only recourse Josef has in order to understand the unfamiliar and maintain his sense of security is to refer to the past. His constant deferral to the Empress Sisi displays enslavement to out-dated ideals of womanhood which still hold currency. Magnolia's contemporary style, her high boots, fitted pullover and skin tight trousers, 'ein Stil' Josef declares, 'der weder fraulich noch elegant ist' (WP p. 127), confirm her status as outsider, far removed from the ideals of womanhood exemplified by the *Kaiserin*. Standing in the underground space of the crypt, surrounded by the icons of a bygone age, the protagonist considers Magnolia's social position in relation to himself and the other women who populate his world, and in this narrative, the black, female character undergoes a double exclusion:

> Zwar wußte ich ihre Zubereitung meines Tees und die Vorbereitung meiner Inhalation zu schätzen, doch hatte ich ihr Verhalten dennoch als etwas anmaßend empfunden, [...], und daß sie sich mit Schlaginstrumenten beschäftigte, war von ihren ethnischen Ursprüngen her vielleicht gerechtfertigt, entsprach jedoch gleichfalls nicht dem feinen femininen Flair, nach dem meiner Mutter zufolge jeder verständige Mann Ausschau halten sollte. (WP p. 127)

The character is accepted when she fulfils her feminine role of serving and caring for the male, but by stepping out of those parameters she contravenes the rules passed down by the maternal authority. Furthermore, white, western cultural norms occupy the centre ground, while Magnolia is positioned on the margins by the protagonist's exclusionary language supporting a white Eurocentric, colonialist construction of the 'other'. The crypt is thus occupied by Josef's subjective responses, which sets in motion de Certeau's 'poetic geography' by shifting from a site of veneration and tradition, to a space lying just below the surface of Vienna's streets, which resounds with race and gender specific conflicts.

Intratextual manoeuvres – Magnolia

Both Rosa's nineteenth-century and Josef's present-day narratives are anchored to a particular time and version of Vienna, that of the late nineteenth century, but the textual space is shared by the contemporary versions of the city given by the outsider, Magnolia. As well as acting intertextually, the novel also behaves *intratextually*, by re-incorporating texts from within itself, repeating places and incidences in a convergence of past and present. Magnolia draws attention to this by voicing her experience of *déjà-vu* whilst visiting the 'Stephansdom' and viewing the 'Dienstbotenmuttergottes'. Magnolia experiences 'das ebenso bestimmte wie unsinnige Gefühl, schon vor dieser Statue gestanden zu sein' (WP p. 197). Elsewhere in the text, Rosa, her great-grandmother, knelt on that exact spot a century before. Through this textual memory, modern Vienna is presented in such a way as to imply social and

cultural discourses of authority which appear in Rosa's historical narrative, continue in the contemporary account.

Magnolia's remarks on arriving in Vienna: 'der Flug von Kennedy Airport nach Wien-Schwechat erschien mir mittlerweile wie eine Art Zeitreise, die mich um hundert Jahre in die Vergangenheit zurückversetzt hatte' (WP p. 29) reflect this historical memory. The character senses that she has been transported to a location where the past dominates the present. Residing with her Aunt Pia, 'diese alte Hexe' in her 'düstere[m] Puppenhaus' (WP p. 39), Magnolia has left the twentieth-century behind and entered a *Märchen*-like world. The Viennese apartment is filled with dolls whose staring eyes follow Magnolia around and Aunt Pia cackles as she prepares a whole pig's head for supper. Her racism rises to the surface as she greets Magnolia: 'Hübsches Kind, hübsches Kind, kicherte sie. Aber schwärzer als sie sich mich vorgestellt habe. Sie hätte gedacht, ich sei hellbraun, hellbraun wie Milchkaffee, [...] aber so dunkel, nein, so dunkel' (WP p. 36). A lack of progress with regard to issues to do primarily with class and social exclusion is clearly suggested. The nineteenth-century Czech immigrant Rosa is located on the margins of Viennese society, below stairs in servitude, in the underground spaces of the sewers, in the asylum and the prison. A century later, her descendant Magnolia occupies a position as outsider, not in the material institutions of social exclusion, but in parts of the city divided along invisible fault lines which exclude groups according to race and origin, class and religion.

Having recently arrived in the city and finding herself lost in the *Wieden* district, Magnolia attempts to orientate herself with the aid of a map: 'Vor einer U-Bahn-Station faltete ich meinen Stadtplan von Wien auseinander,

um mich von neuem zu orientieren' (WP p. 72). However social mapping, which is absent from Magnolia's conventional street map, is indicated by the elderly woman she encounters on the street, who charts the urban terrain in terms of contested social space:

> Da kam eine kleine alte Frau, [...] in Begleitung eines kläffenden Spaniels auf mich zu. Faß, sagte sie zu dem Hund, faß die Negerin, faß. Wo wir hinkämen, wenn diese Kreaturen auch noch unseren schönen vierten Bezirk überschwemmten, [...] ihn bevölkerten mit ihrer abstoßenden schwarzen Brut. (WP p. 72)

Magnolia, alarmed at this show of aggression, drops her map, which in any case has proved redundant as a tool of orientation. This is a space where the ground is staked out by certain groups along the lines of social and racial apartheid, where frontiers exist which are invisible on Magnolia's street plan but remain powerful, exclusionary borders.

A space which offers up themes of social class, power relations and historical memory for critical interrogation in the novel is Vienna's *Zentralfriedhof*, which appears in the narratives of the two present-day characters. In Foucault's terms, the cemetery is 'a second city' in that it exists outside of the urban centre, yet remains a space 'connected with all the sites of the city state, or society, or village etc. since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery'.[350] The name of Vienna's cemetery attests not to its geographical location in the city, being situated in the outer district of *Simmering*, but rather underlines its central position in the social and cultural life of the city. The text employs this space to act as a microcosm of Vienna in terms of the power relations inherent in its organization. Containing three million dead over an area the size of the *innere Stadt*, graves are delineated

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[350] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16/1 (1986), 22-27 (p. 25).

according to religious affiliation and social status. Hierarchies of eminence and power are entrenched in the special areas reserved for Vienna's most honoured, and predominantly male, inhabitants. Josef makes frequent pilgrimages to the graves of artists, musicians and statesmen who are interred in 'Ehrengräber', graves that are themselves subject to a ranking order. It has been noted that when the Viennese cemetery was established in the 1880s, having 'eine schöne Leiche'[351] was something to aspire to: 'Natürlich musste für künftige Ehrengräber auch eine hierarchische Gliederung gefunden werden; es gibt daher Ehrengräber, ehrenhalber gewidmete Gräber und Gräber, die in die Obhut der Gemeinde Wien übernommen werden'.[352] The list of corpses interred in the privileged sections 'liest sich zum größten Teil wie ein Who is Who der Wiener Stadtgeschichte, alle großen Komponisten der Wiener Klassiker und Romantik, die Architekten der Wiener Ringstraße, die Stars von Oper und Bühne'.[353] Josef's persistent attempts to bury his mother, 'eine Klaviervirtuosin von singulärer Begabung' (WP p. 56), in one of the graves of honour, fail, and Frau Horvath is eventually laid to rest in an unremarkable and rather inaccessible part of the cemetery, as the *Zentralfriedhof* retains its hierarchy of power.[354]

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[351] Isabella Ackerl, Robert Bouchal & Ingeborg Schödl, *Der schöne Tod in Wien. Friedhöfe, Grüfte, Gedächtnisstätten* (Vienna: Pichler, 2008), p. 43.

[352] *Ibid.*

[353] *Ibid.*

[354] The link made here between an individual's involvement in cultural life and their social status echoes *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983), as both novels demonstrate a connection between the social class system and a hierarchical musical culture. In Jelinek's text, Erika, who does not have the talent to rise to the status of concert virtuoso, nevertheless judges herself to be different from, 'the despised lower classes, primarily by means of her musical pursuits. Art serves as the pedestal from which she can look down at common people'. See Linda C. De Meritt, 'A "Healthier Marriage": Elfriede Jelinek's Marxist Feminism in *Die Klavierspielerin* and *Lust*', in *Elfriede Jelinek: Framed by Language*, ed. by Jorun B. Johns & Katherine Arens (Riverside: Ariadne, 1994), pp. 107-128 (p. 112). Josef's acknowledgement of his mother as a 'Klaviervirtuosin' should be reason enough, as far as he is concerned, to have her body interred away from 'the despised lower classes'.

Magnolia's Aunt Pia pays regular visits to the cemetery, and through her, the text arrives at the conclusion that this space is far more than a site for the burial of the dead, but is a microcosm of the city. Magnolia is introduced into the practices of the *Friedhof* when, accompanying her aunt to visit her uncle's grave, she learns that graves tell not so much the stories of the dead, but the aspirations of the living. The attitude which assumes that displays of grandiosity and individualized, inscribed memorials are a sign of the importance of the person interred, are mocked through Aunt Pia's revelation that the stone bearing the dedication to her husband 'der Major' is in fact, imitation: 'Eine täuschend echte Alabasterimitation aus dem Alpenvorland, [...] leicht zu pflegen und frostbeständig' (WP p. 67). Aunt Pia takes pride in her thrifty purchase, while the text pokes fun at the hollowness of ostentatious displays of wealth, status and social class.

The Pia character is fixed in a discourse of the authority of a German, Catholic culture and regards the Jewish graves clustered in a separate section of the cemetery as a national disgrace, '[e]ine Schande für national und katholisch empfindende Österreicher deutscher Muttersprache, habe der Major bei ihren Spaziergängen auf dem Friedhof immer gesagt' (WP p. 67). These remarks confront an attitude which reverts to national and linguistic superiority and suggests a collective forgetting in the way the figure glosses over the reasons which lie behind the neglected state of the Jewish graves, the fact that no relatives survive in Vienna to tend them: 'man frage sich, was die jüdischen Toten hier verloren hätten, wie ordentlich und gepflegt der christliche Teil wäre und wie vernachlässigt der jüdische, ein unvorstellbares Durcheinander' (WP p. 67). The character calls on a well-known Viennese authority figure in

order to legitimize her racist claims, as her gaze falls on the imposing 'Doktor-Karl-Lueger-Gedächtniskirche' erected at the centre of the graveyard. In this location, named after, according to Pia, 'einem außerordentlichen Bürgermeister, einem aufrechten und patriotischen Wiener Menschen'(WP p. 67), and dedicated to his memory, the past is embedded in the present and still exerts power over it. *Wiener Passion* mentions Lueger but stops short of explicit remarks about the implications of this historical figure. As mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910, Lueger encouraged a combative stance towards political opponents and an antisemitism which earned him praise from Hitler. His policies became integral to the fibre of Viennese society.[355] Aunt Pia's representation of Lueger in terms of patriotism and decency presents the reader with an incomplete narrative whose implications are not fully disclosed, but which invite the reader, in a post-Holocaust world, to bridge the gap and realize the unwritten potential with their own repertoire of knowledge.[356]

The textual references to past events and personalities, and the feelings of *déjà-vu* associated with the Magnolia character as she moves around the city, evoke the sensation that contemporary experiences of the city are not

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[355] Richard Geehr highlights the far-reaching impact of Lueger's opinions and policies on Austrian society: 'His massive influence on Austrian politics has to do with [...] the entrance of anti-Semitism into the political culture of Austrian life. It becomes a permanent institution embodied in parties, propaganda societies, its own press'. Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger, Mayor of Fin-de Siècle Vienna* (Great Lakes: Wayne State UP, 1990), p. 179. In April 2012, the authorities in Vienna elected to rename *Dr-Karl-Lueger-Ring*, *Universitätsring*, a decision *Kulturstadtrat* Andreas Mailath-Pokorny regarded as 'ein Zeichen für ein differenziertes Lueger-Bild'. Mailath-Pokorny insisted that the renaming would remain an exception however, arguing, 'man soll nicht so tun, als ob es keine dunklen Seiten gegeben hätte', and that the cemetery's *Dr.-Karl-Lueger-Gedächtniskirche* would retain its name. See Gerhard Krause, 'Lueger-Ring wird Vergangenheit', *Kurier* (19/04/2012),
<http://kurier.at/nachrichten/wien/4492926-lueger-ring-wird-vergangenheit.php>,
[accessed 20/04/2012].

[356] Iser describes this process as one which empowers the reader to create a potential text out of the lacunae, deliberate or otherwise. 'The unwritten aspect of apparently trivial scenes, and the unspoken dialogue within the 'turns and twists', not only draw the reader into action, but also lead him to share in the many outlines suggested by the given situations, so that these take on a reality of their own. [...] Thus begins a whole dynamic process'. Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 276.

unique, but are a continuation of prior occurrences. Visiting Viennese locations which, unbeknownst to her were occupied by Rosa a century before, Magnolia experiences an acute sensation of having already occupied that space: 'plötzlich überkam mich das beklemmende Gefühl, daß ich mich nicht zum ersten Mal in diesem Raum befand' (WP p. 142). Although Rosa and Magnolia give first-person narratives, textual doubling links the individual biographies of the two female characters, so that they cease to be read independently of one another, rather interdependently.

After an impromptu act of shop-lifting from Doblinger's music shop in Dorotheergasse, Magnolia admits feeling compelled to act, 'einem plötzlichen Impuls gehorchend' (WP p. 141), while the reader recognizes the incident as an echo of Rosa's theft of a zither from the same music merchant. For Kuttenberg, the function of repetition within the text is straight-forward; it 'lessens the time gap of one hundred years, as if to underscore continuity without necessarily obscuring subtle changes'.[357] But repetitions and their recognition also perform an important function in the creation of meaning on behalf of the reader, an aspect not explored by Kuttenberg. The effect of repetition and doubling back disturbs expectations of sequential reading patterns, and the reader is encouraged to retrace steps and follow a circular, rather than a linear path through the text. The reader doubles back and stumbles over the already read, and is thus forced out of a passive position. So while on the surface, the text underscores the continuity of experience through the narratives of two generations from the same family, repetitions and reminders of the 'already read' impede linearity and the generational continuum, and prevent

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[357]   Kuttenberg, 'A Postmodern Viennese Narrative', p. 79.

chronologic time from being the overriding organizing principle of the text. The city, Faschinger suggests, remains in many ways entrenched in the past, following a circular, rather than a progressive route.

The moments of *déjà-vu* also function to disturb the momentum of Magnolia's development as a character and to intervene in the *Bildungsroman* pattern which, it has been suggested, characterizes her narrative. Fiddler for instance regards Magnolia's development as largely affirmative, in contrast to Rosa who ends up in jail awaiting her death. It is Fiddler's view that, 'if Rosa's development is a negative one, then Magnolia's is positive, making Faschinger's novel both Bildungsroman and anti-Bildungsroman'. Furthermore, Magnolia's positive *Bildung* does not only occur on an individual level, since 'ultimately, Magnolia's accommodation with Vienna, her forthcoming mixed-race marriage to Joseph (*sic*), and the child they are looking forward to together might be read as symbols of a more optimistic, multicultural Austrian future'.[358] Whilst a mixed-race marriage may herald a positive change in social attitudes, a different reading of Magnolia and Rosa at the end of the novel would suggest a reversal of Fiddler's Bildung/anti-Bildung equation.

Throughout the text, Rosa tells of her once unshakable belief in following a predetermined destiny, and she frames her life in terms of fate, whether 'ein gnädiges Schicksal' (WP p. 414) or 'ein mißgünstiges Schicksal' (WP p. 462), repeating her mother's conviction, 'daß man sich gegen das einem bestimmte Los nicht auflehnen dürfe' (WP p. 115). However at the end of the novel, the character makes a conscious decision to shake off the victim

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[358]   Fiddler, 'Shifting Boundaries', p. 268.

status and to rebel against her lot in life. The character appeals directly to the response of the female reader: 'Geschätzte Leserin, versetze dich in meine Lage, die Lage einer Frau, deren Leben unaufhaltsam und wie von verhängnisvollen Kräften gelenkt der ausweglosen Situation zugestrebt war, in der sie sich schließlich befand' (WP p. 540). The hopeless situation into which fate had cast her entailed life with a man she did not love, which was sanctioned by 'Staat und Kirche'. Furthermore marriage meant imprisonment in a version of womanhood propagated by Rosa's husband who, like Josef a century later, was obsessed with the Empress Sisi. While Josef sees the Empress and the ideal of womanhood she embodied reflected in his mother, Rosa's husband demands that his wife wear expensive Sisi-like wigs and undergo a rigorous training regime to attain a figure like that of the Empress. Like Scheherazade and Magdalena trapped in relationships which signal the death of their subjective well-being, Rosa realizes that inaction on her part will result in her own death and the deaths of other women at the hands of a husband who regularly rapes and murders young women on the streets of Vienna at night. Joining the ranks of Faschinger's other protagonists who resort to murder, at least in their imagination, Rosa commits an act of violence, thrusting a knife into her husband's chest in order to put an end to the acts of gradual murder enacted upon her, which she hitherto accepted in the name of fate.

By contrast, Magnolia undergoes an Althusserian interpellation, as she is hailed by and is embedded within Josef's version of Vienna. Barely a month has passed since her arrival, but the red high heels which snapped on Vienna's cobbles upon her arrival from the US, and the short skirt regarded by Josef and

Aunt Pia as highly improper, have vanished. David Frisby has characterized what he terms the Vienna 'imaginary' as being populated by 'a natural community of city-dwellers, able to develop their individuality in the context of a traditional, embedded culture that has not been threatened by the street culture of the modern metropolis, nor the Americanism of a superficial (surface) culture'.[359] The American Magnolia is absorbed into that traditional, embedded culture. When John her producer from New York arrives on the doorstep, he is horrified by the gloomy apartment and the elderly Aunt Pia with whom Magnolia lives: '[er] fragte, ob dieses Gespenst meine Verwandte sei, wie könne ich in einer so sinistren Umgebung leben' (WP p. 552). Magnolia rejects the American's entreaty to return to New York and indicates her plans for the future in terms which harks back to the past, on a number of levels:

> An diesem Punkt entschloß ich mich, Johns Wortschwall mit der Bemerkung zu unterbrechen, ich hätte nicht die Absicht, nach New York City zurückzukehren, da ich ein Kind von meinem Gesangslehrer erwartete und ihn zu Weihnachten in der sich in Wiens Zentrum befindlichen Kirche *Zu den neuen Chören der Engel* zu ehelichen vorhätte. Auf dieses hin entfernte John eine Stoffpuppe von Norah Wellings sowie eine sehr schöne japanische Porzellanpuppe in einem meergrünen Seidenkomono von der mit weinrotem Samt gepolsterten Sitzfläche eines Sessels aus dem Haus Thonet und ließ sich auf diesem nieder [...] worauf [John] mich lange ansah und dann den Kopf auf die mit einem Rankenmuster im Zweigstich bestickte Tischdecke aus weißem Halbleinen legte. (WP p. 552-3)

The character's voice assumes the eloquent, measured tones characteristic of Josef's speech, with the detailed descriptions of the doll's clothing and household furnishings mimicking his often elaborate and grandiose descriptions. Magnolia has become steeped in the version of Vienna as propagated by Josef, and seems at home with Aunt Pia in what she had

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[359] David Frisby, 'Streets, Imaginaries and Modernity. Vienna is not Berlin', in *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*, ed. by Gyan Prakash & Kevin Michael Kruse (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008), pp. 21-57 (p. 37).

previously termed the old lady's 'düstere[s] Puppenhaus' (WP p. 39). Initially,

Magnolia had voiced the desire to escape the old lady's apartment with its

porcelain figures and staring dolls' eyes, and find a room at the *König von*

Ungarn Hotel (WP p. 39). Now when it is suggested to her by John that they

book into that very hotel, she is dismissive of the idea. The repetition of images

and names suggests circularity rather than forward momentum and the idea that

time is not progressing. Indeed, Magnolia, like the dolls which surround her,

appears to be manipulated by exterior forces, as if succumbing to a preordained

fate. This is reinforced by her mention of the *Zu den neuen Chören der Engel*

church intended for the forthcoming nuptials. The reader is reminded of

Magnolia's initial journey to Vienna, and the fellow passenger on the plane

from New York who intended to wed his fiancée in the same church.

Furthermore, after Magnolia has said her farewells to John, she encounters by

chance the woman she met on the bus from the airport: 'Was für ein Zufall, wir

seien doch auf dem Flug von New York nach Wien vor etwas über einem

Monat nebeneinander gesessen' (WP p. 554). The two women carry on their

conversation from before:

> [ich] erkannte die dünne Brünette wieder, die mir von sechs sich in
> einem Pariser Museum befindlichen berühmten Wandteppichen erzählt
> hatte [...] ihre Mutter habe mit dem Nachsticken des zweiten die Dame
> mit dem Einhorn darstellenden Gobelins begonnen, eine
> übermenschliche Aufgabe. (WP p. 554)

The 'Einhorn' is a mythical, non-existent creature which is woven into the

tapestry, which is itself a story told with layer upon layer of different coloured

threads to make a whole. It is an appropriate framing image for a text

constructed out of strands woven together to produce imagined versions of

reality. The closing image of the unicorn also suggests that Magnolia will take

her place within the Viennese tapestry and become a character in the 'Märchen'.

In his reconstruction of Vienna, Leupold-Löwenthal identifies characteristics displayed in the collective nostalgia for 'Alt Wien' which is mercilessly exploited by the city's tourist industry, so that guests to Vienna are exposed to and submerged in the discourses of the imperial city. He comments on the apparent readiness of the city's inhabitants to comply with clichés:

> Ich habe ein Mosaik gängiger Klischees und Austrostereotypen der Wiener dargestellt, die noch immer liebevoll gepflegt werden, im Lied, auch im Austropop, im Feuilleton, das es gar nicht mehr gibt, und in offiziellen Reden. [...] Sind und waren die Wiener wirklich Wiener oder waren und sind sie 'Wiener Darsteller'?[360]

While this reconstruction and celebration itself contributes to the 'Mosaik' of clichés, it is useful in drawing attention to the way Vienna constructs itself through texts, a process carried out in Faschinger's novel. If, as this chapter has suggested, the protagonists are caught in discursive webs, woven into predetermined patterns like the unicorn in the tapestry, then the question arises of how the text can avoid the inertia of perpetual repetition. Faschinger's novel contributes alternative maps to the atlas, different imagined, contingent versions of Vienna which are offered for negotiation and interpretation to readers with varying degrees of knowledge and experience of the locations and discourses presented. It is the reader who breaks the cycle of repetition. The textual duplications implicate and install the reader in the text through a process of recognition, encouraging responses which change throughout the course of the novel. Like de Certeau's wanderer in the city, the reader is a not merely a reader, but also a writer of the text.

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[360] Leupold-Löwenthal, *Ein Wiener zu sein*, p. 46

At the end of the novel, Magnolia is overwhelmed by and subsumed under the dominant discourse of the city, so that the outcome for her is an affirmation of what is already in place. The reader avoids such immersion by engaging with strategies which draw attention to the text's status as fiction, to the fact that Vienna itself is in many ways a work of fiction. It offers the familiar locations and recognisable historical figures and cultural practices, and works to defamiliarize them, or, to iterate Jenny's terms 'to prevent meaning from becoming lethargic'.[361] The text actively fights against reducing Vienna to a homogenous form, and what emerges is a 'heteroglossic' city. Values characterizing the 'sealed-off interest group, caste or class' which emerge in metaphorical and physical tropes surrounding the city are 'riddled with decay'.[362] The texts of the city are made vulnerable to the intervention of irony, mockery and parody to avoid any sense of nostalgic veneration for old Vienna.

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[361]   Jenny, 'The Strategy of Form', p. 59.
[362]   Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 368.

4.2 From fact to fiction: Streeruwitz's *Nachwelt. Ein Reisebericht.* (1999)

Streeruwitz's *Nachwelt. Ein Reisebericht.* (1999), stages an intervention into the genres of (auto) biography and travelogue, using both as a backdrop for its interrogation of the narratives of identity and memory. The protagonist Margarethe embarks on a research trip to LA, in order to research the life of sculptor Anna Mahler. As an Austrian-born artist and daughter of the composer Gustav Mahler and socialite Alma, Anna Mahler was one of numerous German and Austrian Jewish exiles who fled to California in the 1930s and early 1940s. The text documents the would-be biographer Margarethe's attempt to fashion a coherent life-story out of interviews with Anna's surviving relatives and friends. Like *Wiener Passion*, *Nachwelt.* opens up a mnemonic space by creating a conversation between present and past, and both novels intertwine the life-stories of women from previous generations with present-day narratives, to interrogate concepts of biography and subject representation. A third person narrated monologue documents the thoughts and emotions of Margarethe during her stay in LA.[363] Intimate reflections about her current partner Helmut and ex-husband Gerhard, and her feelings for daughter Friedericke who she has left behind in Vienna, weave in and out of the story. Through Margarethe's voice, the text intertwines moments from her past and her present, ensuring that female self-representation has a dominant position within the text.

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[363]   Dorrit Cohn defines narrated monologue as 'the technique for rendering a character's thoughts in his (*sic*) own idiom while maintaining the third-person reference and basic tense of narration'. Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), p. 100.

A key textual strategy in both *Wiener Passion* and *Nachwelt.* is the blending of distinctions between fact and fiction that occurs when recognizable historical figures and documented events are positioned alongside purely fictitious characters and imagined scenarios. By way of Margarethe's interviews with family and friends of Anna Mahler, who died in 1988, the reader is confronted with historical personalities such as Mahler's second husband, composer Ernst Krenek, and her fifth, Albrecht Joseph, a Hollywood screenwriter, as well as her fictitious friends such as Christine Hershey and Manon. Their memories of Anna Mahler are given as transcripts in the novel, without the intervention of the biographer's questions. They are provided with titles such as 'Albrecht Josephs Geschichte'[364] and present an understanding of Mahler from highly subjective positions. The biographer attempts to sift through the abundance of material furnished by her 'witnesses' in an effort to fashion a coherent, readable narrative of Anna Mahler, but these attempts prove futile. What the reader is left with is a novel which displays the conflicting stories surrounding the lives of individual subjects, not only Mahler herself, but the other fictional and non-fictional characters in the text, as well as the central female protagonist. Margarethe leaves LA having failed in her initial project, but having gained the understanding that diverse, creative lives cannot be told as single stories.

The decision to write a novel about the *process* of biography rather than a biography itself, was arrived at by way of the author's own experiences. Streeruwitz, like her protagonist Margarethe, undertook a research trip to California shortly after Anna Mahler's death in which she interviewed those

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[364]   Marlene Streeruwitz, *Nachwelt. Ein Reisebericht. Roman* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1999), p. 79. Henceforth, the text will be referenced as N in parenthesis.

family members such as Joseph and Krenek, who make an appearance in the novel. Streeruwitz explained the growing mistrust of the biographical genre which emerged out of her interviews with them:

> Das Gespräch mit Krenek war bezaubernd. Ich plauderte mit einem alten, sehr kultivierten Herrn, nur: Die Unterhaltung hat nicht viel gebracht. Ernst Krenek mußte zugeben, daß er mit einer Person verheiratet gewesen war, von der er nicht wußte, was sie den ganzen Tag über getrieben hatte. [...] Es erschien mir unangebracht, ein Urteil über ein ganzes Leben zu fällen. [...] Wer Biographien schreibt, behauptet ja unausgesprochen, die Wahrheit über ein bestimmtes Leben zu erzählen. Das ist eine Fiktion.[365]

Streeruwitz's intention to bring Anna Mahler out of the shadows of her accomplished parents faltered, due to what Streeruwitz perceived to be the problems inherent in presenting a coherent picture, 'ein ganzes Leben'. Elsewhere she argues, 'Biografien schreiben hat überhaupt was mit Lüge zu tun, weil es ja immer Auswahl von Fakten bedeutet, Weglassen von Dingen, die für die beschriebene Person wichtig sind. Es kann immer nur eine Form von Annäherung sein'.[366] The mistrust of biographical integrity means that *Nachwelt.* does not attempt to rehabilitate female historical subjects and accord them a voice, a trend particularly prevalent in women's writing of the 1970s and 1980s, and indeed Anna Mahler's voice is rarely heard in the novel.[367]

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[365] Günter Kaindlstorfer, 'Isabel Allende produziert politischen Stillstand: Interview mit Marlene Streeruwitz', *Der Standard* (25/09/1999),
<http://www.kaindlstorfer.at/interviews/streeruwitz.html>, [accessed 26/01/2008].
Streeruwitz has indicated elsewhere that the statements included in *Nachwelt.* by Krenek and Joseph are authentic and taken from her own taped interviews. However, the author omits to mention if these are altered in any way in the novel. See Dagmar Lorenz & Helga Kraft, 'Schriftsteller in der Zweiten Republik Österreichs: Interview mit Marlene Streeruwitz', *The German Quarterly*, 75/3 (2002), 227-234 (p. 228).

[366] Marlene Streeruwitz, 'Die Wolke Alma Mahler. Autorin Marlene Streeruwitz über Biografie und Identität', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, (31/03/01), p. 17.

[367] For a discussion of how women writers have used reconstructions of the lives of historical women as a critical tool, see Stephanie Bird, *Recasting Historical Women. Female Identity in German Biographical Fiction* (Oxford: Berg, 1998). Bird discusses novels such as Christa Wolf's treatment of Karoline von Günderode in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979), and Karin Reschke's 1982 novel *Verfolgte des Glücks. Findebuch der Henriette Vogel,* which considers from an imaginative point of view the life of the woman with whom Heinrich von Kleist committed suicide.

Instead the collection of narratives and memories which are articulated through the voices of Mahler's friends and relations, both fictional and historical, make up the 'Nachwelt' referred to in the title. This approach continues the attempt to problematize identities and present them as complex narratives, a project that has become central to the intertextual examinations undertaken in this thesis. *Nachwelt.* documents monologues directly from the mouths of the interviewees with the immediacy and authenticity this conveys, whilst the text works simultaneously to resist claims of authenticity or authority on the part of the narratives.[368]

Returning to Lachmann's thesis that 'das Gedächtnis des Textes ist seine Intertextualität', *Nachwelt.* is an archive of textual memory on multiple levels.[369] It is filled with names of characters such as Manon and Krenek that conjure intertextual associations and links to prior cultural texts. Generic markers of biography and travelogue trigger readers' memories and condition expectation. On a thematic level, the past is present through the memories of the characters, with events in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century in attendance in contemporary LA, filtered through the voices of European immigrants. The resistance the elderly exile Manon displays to speaking German and her discomfort exhibited when she hears the dialect of her childhood home, expresses a problematic relationship to events that occurred in the past and still make their presence felt: 'Manon, die nicht nach

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[368]   The assumptions which inform this approach are visible in other texts which display a self-reflexive irony towards representing a life. See, for instance, Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie* (1972), an attempted biography of the Spanish anarchist Buenaventura Durruti, which thematizes and problematizes historical and representational narratives. Wolfgang Hildesheimer's *Marbot* (1981) meanwhile presents the life of a purely fictional character but with supposedly documentary evidence and eyewitness accounts of his meeting with real historical figures such as Goethe.
[369]   Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*, p. 35.

Wien wollte aus Angst, diese Sprache wieder hören zu müssen' (N p. 382). Manon's choice to use English not German functions as a sign of her attempts to distance herself from, and evade, her past. Her conflicted relationship with her mother tongue becomes a strategy for the novel to unsettle assumptions of the relationship between language and memory. The reader is challenged to consider how historical events are represented by language, and what the dangers are in trying to formulate authoritative historical narratives. The text does not engage in a postmodern project of denying the possibility of historical referentiality, rather it provides possible modes of representation that more precisely access the real.

For readers who recognize the mixing of historically documented figures and purely fictitious ones, epistemological uncertainty is generated within the first few pages of the novel through the interaction of the fictional Margarethe and Manon, with the historical figure of Anna's husband Albrecht Joseph. This is the beginning of an habitual interaction of the real and the fictitious, which continues as Margarethe collects biographical material from both fictitious characters and historical documented figures, for instance Dr Hansen who accompanied Anna Mahler on trips to China. The memories communicated by the text, whether given in the accounts of historically documented figures or characters invented by the author, are continually juxtaposed. At times, they overlap and concur, at others, they contradict one another. Indeed Manon and Christine Hershey disagree on so many points that Margarethe concludes, 'die Anna Mahler von Manon [war] eine ganz andere Person als die Anna Mahler von Christine Hershey' (N p. 200). The accounts given of Mahler are presented as versions which exist amongst many and the

scene is set for a novel which continually and deliberately creates an atmosphere of ambiguity.

The question arises as to how important it is that the reader recognizes the historically documented characters and can differentiate them from the characters which emerge from Streeruwitz's imagination. The reader is not guided into knowing who the purely fictional characters are, and who the historical. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the text, if it is only, as Iser maintains, 'the convergence of the text and reader [that] brings the literary work into existence'.[370] What is the impact on the text of readers with varying degrees of intertextual knowledge, and are the intertexts rendered redundant by a reader unable to differentiate between fictional and historical characters for example? Responses to this question will emerge as the chapter unfolds. Firstly, the manner in which the text thematizes biography as a way of probing the limits of representation and the process of truth production will be explored. Metaphors of movement and stasis will be shown as working within the framework of the 'Reisebericht' to plot the discursive positioning of the individual self. The key role intertextuality plays in the recreation of the past and memory, both in terms of the memory will be interrogated.

Intervention in genre – biography

The challenge to feminist writers involved in auto/biographical writing is to successfully tread the line between posing a challenge to notions of a fixed, unified category of 'woman' on the one hand, and acknowledging the role of gendered power relations in female experience on the other. Sharon O'Brien

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[370]   Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 275.

suggests that female writers approaching biography should take into account 'the possibility that the female subject may occupy many "subject positions" in a life – positions that vary according to class, race, sexual preference, family status, age – the biographer can challenge the notion of the unified self without discarding a focus on gender'.[371] *Nachwelt.* takes up the challenge by drawing attention to the fact that it is *not* offering a biography but is making transparent the biographical process and intervening in the genre on the levels of both form and content. Indeed, the novel becomes a kind of *anti*-biography which displays an increasing scepticism towards depictions of unified subjectivity, and by refusing to gloss over differing social and cultural assumptions concerning gender and identity.

For Pierre Bourdieu, the 'biographical illusion' is the misconception that a life can be 'organized as a history', and unfolded 'according to a chronological order, [...] with a beginning, an origin'. This is an illusion because coherence is imposed on a life by larger cultural and social structures which must be examined in all their disparate glory.[372] *Nachwelt.* plays with the notion of biography as illusion by juxtaposing within the imaginative space of the novel, figures who are historically documented as having known or being related to Anna Mahler, and characters who are purely products of the novelist's imagination. The fictional figure Manon plays a central role as one of Margarethe's main contacts in LA, who introduces the protagonist to Mahler's husbands and friends. The character speaks at length, and with

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[371]   Sharon O'Brien, 'Feminist Theory and Literary Biography', in *Contesting the Subject. Essays in the Postmodern Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Criticism*, ed. by William Epstein (West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 1991), pp. 123-166 (pp. 129-130).
[372]   Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Biographical Illusion', in *Identity: A Reader*, trans. by Yves Winkin & Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, ed. by Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans & Peter Redman, (London: Sage, 2000, first pub. 1986), pp. 299-305 (p. 300).

authority, about the artist's personal relationships: 'Sie hatte Fistoulari geliebt. Das war der Unterschied. Zsolnay hat sie gehaßt. Sie hat ihn ja nur geheiratet, um von der Mutter wegzukommen' (N p. 245). The character is a textual invention, but Manon's imagined statements carry equal weight in the representational field to those provided by the non-fictional characters. Anna's husband Albrecht Joseph tells Margarethe '[Anna] sagte ihrer eigenen Tochter, daß sie einen Sohn haben hätte wollen' (N p. 81), and Manon has similar memories: 'Sie hatte nicht diese bestimmten Eigenschaften, die einen zu einer guten Mutter machen' (N p. 245). The text does not deny the material realities of an individual's life, but it does foreground the way history and stories are made up of narrative constructions which attempt to make meaning out of an individual's experiences.

From Dr Hansen, the reader learns that Anna was political, 'eher links in ihren Vorstellungen' (N p. 46), a view corroborated by husband Albrecht Joseph: 'Ihre politischen Ansichten waren immer extrem links' (N p. 82), and Manon: 'Ja, Anna war wirklich links. Sie lebte Kommunismus' (N p. 249). The iteration of aspects of Anna Mahler's political leanings and abilities as a mother by historical figures and fictional characters alike, offers, in Naomi Jacobs' words, a 'marvellous independence of the categories by which we structure experience and attempt to separate fact from fiction, reason from imagination, and reality from art'.[373] The juxtaposition of versions of Mahler invites the reader to consider how history is narrated, and who its authors are. It positions the subject, Anna Mahler, in such a way that she is accessible to the reader as a composite of knowledge made available through anecdote,

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[373]   Jacobs, *The Character of Truth*, p. 106.

assumption and imagination. Authority is handed to the reader, who henceforth is not bound by an authoritative, definitive biographical narrative.

The violation of the boundaries between fact and fiction provides the reader with autonomy from what Jacobs terms, 'the fictions we hold in our heads', and makes the reader admit that 'the process of reading is the process of telling [oneself] lies, and believing them'.[374] These fictions are illuminated by the text's inclusion of Anna Mahler's mother Alma, a figure subject to fantasy and social myth. Fictitious character Christine Hershey admits that her opinion of Alma is informed by writer Elias Canetti's less than flattering memoir: 'Ich kann mir die Frau gut vorstellen, wie er das beschreibt. – Ich glaube, sehr wenige Leute haben sie gern gehabt' (N p. 187).[375] Alma Mahler's life is available to Hershey only through the perception of someone else. Canetti, if recognized by the reader as an historical figure, carries authority, and the question must be raised as to whether the reiteration of Canetti's viewpoint by the Hershey figure merely restates the image, or manages to deliver a critique of uncontested representations. The fact that Hershey is a fictional character voicing the words of an historical figure problematizes the divide between fiction and historical truth, subjective positions and fact, and questions *whose* notion of truth gains power. This textual strategy naturally relies on the reader being aware of Hershey's status as a fictional figure. But the very confusions generated by the uncertainty as to whether a character has

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[374] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

[375] Elias Canetti portrays Alma Mahler in his memoirs as 'die glasige, zerflossene Alte auf dem Sofa' who did not live up to her reputation: 'Man sprach überall von ihrer Schönheit, als das schönste Mädchen Wiens, [...] jetzt aber stand sie da und ließ sich schwer nieder, eine angeheiterte Person, die viel älter aussah, als sie war, und alle ihre Trophäen um sich versammelt hatte'. Elias Canetti, *Das Augenspiel. Lebensgeschichte 1931-1937* (Munich & Vienna: Carl Hanser, 1985), p. 60. Julian Preece has drawn attention to Canetti's propensity in his autobiography to invent legends, elaborate on the truth and omit key details, creating out of his memoirs 'a work of poetic truth'. See Julian Preece, *The Rediscovered Writings of Veza Canetti. Out of the Shadows of a Husband* (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), p. 13.

factual or fictional status engenders a questioning response that is very different to that prompted by an account which purports to be historically accurate.

Anna Mahler's identity as presented in the text continually shifts its shape. Conversations between Manon and Hershey exhibit a discordant representation of Mahler as they construct their accounts by adding snippets of information in German and English, so that the picture of the artist which emerges remains fragmented and opaque:

> Haben Sie nicht auch den Eindruck, daß Anna Kalifornien am wenigsten geliebt hat? – Manon: No. She was tired of being here. She was here a long time und she needed a change like always. Anna always needed a change. – Christine: Ja, aber. Ich habe immer das Gefühl gehabt, und es hat mir weh getan insidig, daß sie hier am wenigsten gern ist. – Manon: No. That was not true. – Christine: Nein? Ja das war mein Gefühl. Manon: No. (N p. 185)

Mahler's identity is presented through a collage of memories which are coloured by subjective experience and fluctuating perspective. Manon's apology encapsulates the problem: 'Sorry. I cannot answer this question because the story keeps changing. I am very confused of what has happened' (N p. 193), and Christine Hershey repeatedly prefigures what she is about to say with the phrase 'ich glaube', as if to underscore its inconclusiveness. Similarly, during Albrecht Joseph's interview, fragmented language and hesitations intervene in narrative coherency:

> Am Abend ging ich ins Theater. – Ich war 21 Jahre und war. – Alfred Kerr war berühmt. – Ich war durch diese Tragödie gezwungen, aus dem Stück. – Es war dann kein Erfolg, weil die Kritiker. – Emil Ludwig – Er kannte Goethe wie. – Besetzungsprobe, und ich hatte nicht genug Schauspieler. – 'Klotzige schwere.' – Ich war so wütend. (N p. 80)

The text illuminates the way the remembered past, far from existing in a pristine, unsullied condition, emerges amidst a struggle of competing voices and memories.

When former husband Ernst Krenek shows his reticence to talk about his split from Mahler, Margarethe is left to speculate and fill in the gaps. She wonders about her biographical subject, 'war sie nicht bereit gewesen, die Rolle der Muse zu spielen. Oder hatte sie ihn einfach nicht mehr geliebt' (N p. 273). Margarethe acknowledges the biographer's participation in the construction of a coherent, readable life-story out of fragments of information. Her task is to supplement and intervene in the statements of her interviewees: 'Man fährt an einen Ort. Spricht mit Leuten. Sammelt Unterlagen. Entscheidet was glaubhaft, was nicht. Und dann faßt man alle Informationen zusammen' (N p. 273). The text brings to the fore the role of the biographer as one of organizing and supplementing material, in constructing a narrative with implicit or explicit judgements. There is a clear comment here about the reading process itself. Through its form, the novel hands over the task of selecting and organizing the material, and ascribing priority and authority to what is contained in the text, to the reader. The reader, like Margarethe, participates in the act of creating a life-story.

The would-be biographer's involvement in the material she is gathering is brought home by Margarethe's encounter with the fictional character Pete, who is presented as a close friend of Anna Mahler. Before his statement is given in the text, the reader has access to Margarethe's reflections:

> Margarethe saß da. [...] Der Mann tobend. Der Hund aufmerksam. Sie musternd. Sie hatte Angst. Konnte sich vor Erstaunen nicht bewegen. Nichts sagen. Dann wurde ihr ihre Situation bewußt. Das Haus. Allein

> und abgeschieden. Der Hund. Der Mann. [...] Die Bücher über Waffen.
> Ihr war kalt. (N p. 134)

The reader has been manoeuvred into assuming a negative impression of Pete that will colour the reading of his statement, and after he has given his recollections of Mahler, the biographer's judgement of him is clear: 'Dieser Mann war so widerlich. Und seine Behauptung, es sei eine Liebe gewesen. Und dieser Satz. "Wenn sie jünger gewesen wäre und ich älter. Dann!" [...] Was für ein Wichser' (N p. 144). The text implies that the negative impressions gained by the biographer would inevitably make their way into any biography of Mahler, even if that bias is through the *omission* of Pete's memories.

The subjective involvement of the biographer which arises when one is researching a life story is voiced by Margarethe, reflecting, as Faschinger's Magdalena did, on her own project: 'Wie sollte sie einen Bericht anfertigen über eine Person? Wenn sie keinen objektiven Standpunkt einnahm und sich von einer Sympathie in eine nächste Antipathie fallen ließ. Sie war dem Gegenstand der Beschreibung immer viel zu nah' (N p. 212). Margarethe is privy to the accounts given by Mahler's family and acquaintances that are coloured by their own subjective perspectives, but the biographer's own bias towards the material she handles is also in evidence. Margarethe oscillates between experiencing alienation from, and identification with her subject. Struggling to understand the motives which lay behind Anna Mahler's actions, Margarethe resorts to conjecture to supplement the gaps, which is informed by her own subjective experiences. As a mother herself, Margarethe cannot comprehend why the artist never visited her daughter at boarding school in England, and she is left to imagine the reasons behind Mahler's distance: 'War es das Privatleben? Die Liebesgeschichte? Die neue Liebesgeschichte, die

diese Entfernung verlangte. Oder einfach eine Unliebe? Ganz allgemein kein

Platz für Kinder'. (N p. 33) Here, the text makes visible what Sigrid Weigel

pinpoints as the dangers of women identifying with their biographical subjects

and the detrimental effect on perspective in their work. Weigel argued that a

'subjektive Annäherung wird dann problematisch, wenn die Faszination für

eine weibliche Gestalt letztlich zum Anlaß gerät für eine Selbstthematisierung

der Autorin'.[376] Margarethe's self-confessed 'Annäherung' makes impossible a

purely objective account. She is balanced on a tightrope, trying not to fall into

her own subjective motives whereby the biography would become in part 'eine

Selbstthematisierung'.

Intervention in genre – 'ein Reisebericht'

Opposing notions of fixed identities is the ambiguity which is inscribed into the

text through the novel's 'generic markers' which, in Alastair Fowler's terms,

'help to establish, as soon as possible, an appropriate mental "set" that allows

the work's generic codes to be read'.[377] *Nachwelt. Ein Reisebericht. Roman.*

engages in a critical dialogue with the 'mental "set"' and codes it evokes. The

full title of the text flags its operation in a field of generic mingling, which

establishes and destabilizes recognizable frames of knowledge. The sub-title

Ein Reisebericht, is a paratext in Genette's terms, in that it evokes 'echoes that

provide the text with the indirect support of another text'.[378] The paratextual

marking 'Reisebericht' sustains the expectation that the text will be based on

an actual physical journey, that it will focus on the details of place and will

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[376]   Sigrid Weigel, *Die Stimme der Medusa* (Leck: tende, 1995, first pub.1987), p. 320.
[377]   Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature. An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 88.
[378]   Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 91.

highlight the protagonist's sequential movement through space and time. This expectation is initially fulfilled by Margarethe's research trip to the US and her frequent journeys around the city. But descriptions of physical journeys come face to face with metaphors of confinement which reflect the protagonist's sense of herself as trapped within certain discursive positions. The 'Reisebericht' paratext that suggests space and movement is thus placed in an ironic confrontation with a pervasive sense of physical and psychological confinement, linked to the would-be biographer's personal position as a woman in a floundering relationship.

The novel obeys conventions of the travelogue genre by equipping sections of the text with date headings which plot the protagonist's movements through the city chronologically, 'Sonntag, 4. März 1990' (N p. 114), 'Freitag, 9. März 1990' (N p. 345) for instance. Multiple car journeys are undertaken by Margarethe and the city is mapped in terms of streets, highways, billboards and street signs: 'Santa Monica Boulevard. Ocean Boulevard Links. Palisades Beach Road State Highway 1 rechts. [...] Parkplätze, Hot-dog-Stände. Fahrradverleihe' (N p. 318). Colluding with the genre of the travelogue, as well as gesturing towards biographical texts, photographs are included at the end of the 2001 Fischer *Taschenbuch* edition of *Nachwelt.*.[379] These additions take the form of blurred images of locations from the text such as Santa Monica Boulevard, Ocean Drive and Palm Beach, as well as Mahler's residence. A paratextual marker before the novel begins states: 'Erweitert um einen kurzen Fotobericht der Rechercereise 1997', leading the reader into the text with an expectation of further elucidation through photographs. *Nachwelt.*'s

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[379] As a later addition by the author, these photographs do not appear in the 1999 hardback edition, nor in the 2010 *Sonderausgabe* , due to its smaller format.

photographs are indistinct, grainy and taken from odd angles. They show views of fences through a car window, a stop sign in a street, different views of car licence plates and a construction site, in fact little that either contributes to an understanding of the biographical subject, or to the 'Reisebericht'. Indeed, they actively exclude the reader and prevent judgements or assumptions from being made. The images intervene in the function of photographs as suggested by Annette Kuhn: 'photos are commonly regarded as evidence that this or that event happened, this or that person was actually present at a particular time and place: they seem, in other words, to stand as guarantors of the past actuality of some person or event'.[380] Accompanied by barely legible handwritten notes and dates, the blurred images fail to provide any meaningful addition to the travelogue or the biography of Mahler. They function instead as an additional strategy which deliberately jettisons the illusion of clarity and coherence.

Juxtaposed with motifs of travel and movement are suggestions of confinement and stasis. This juxtaposition is a strategy in the content and form of both Streeruwitz and Faschinger's writing. Protagonists like Scheherazade and Magdalena move freely between diverse subject positions and national boundaries, while Norma Desmond's confinement within the straightjacket of gendered norms finds its expression in the closed world of the 'Schrebergartenhütte'. The 'Reisebericht' charts the protagonist's quest for self-understanding, a quest Margarethe finds as frustrating as navigating the physical terrain of LA, with its dead ends and slow-moving traffic. The LA drawn by the text is not a sprawling city, but, like Joseph Horvath's Vienna, assumes the quality of a much smaller, enclosed space of repetitious movement

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[380]   Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets. Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002, first pub. 1995), p. 153.

and habit, as Manon, a long-time resident suggests: 'Die Leute hier. Die führen immer nur ihre gewohnten Wege. Dieses Los Angeles sei auch nur ein großes Dorf' (N p. 317). The city is described in terms which indicate confinement and narrowness, its 'schmale Fußwege' (N p. 131), grid-locked highways and diversions hindering the protagonist's way through the city and functioning as material manifestations of Margarethe's personal experience. Jennifer M. William comments on the number of times the words 'schmal' and 'eng' are used in the text with regard to the physical spaces of the city, with implications for the psychological state of the protagonist who feels restricted within everyday life.[381]

Lacking clarity and oversight about her own life as well as Anna Mahler's, the protagonist wonders: 'Wie sollte sie Höhe gewinnen. Überblick' (N p. 212). The absence of lucidity translates itself into physical inactivity, as waking up in her apartment in LA, Margarethe, like Jessica, experiences a sensation of dull torpor: 'Sie lag. Konnte sich nicht auf den Rücken drehen. Bekam kaum Luft. Ein totes Gefühl vorne auf der Brust. [...] Der Arm gefühllos' (N p. 95). This experience of inertia is directly linked by the protagonist to her relationships with men. She cannot move because she is rendered immobile by her overwhelming desire for Helmut: 'Warum war er nicht da. Warum war es aus. Warum war alles aus. Sie liebte ihn doch. Warum war sie dann allein. Warum war sie immer allein' (N p. 95). When out shopping, Margarethe finds herself lost, 'sie hatte jede Orientierung verloren' (N p. 220), and while at the cinema, a sensation of 'Ortlosigkeit' overcomes her (N p. 149). Her implication in a range of subject positions is fraught with

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[381]   Jennifer M. William, *Zeiträume: Time, Space, and Metaphor in German-Language Novels of the Twentieth Century* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2002), p. 131.

difficulties, and the halting, fragmentary nature of subject development finds an echo in the faltering flow of traffic which hinders the protagonist's physical movement: 'Sie konnte nur mehr langsam fahren. Vor den Auffahrten kroch der Verkehr im Schrittempo dahin. Wurde etwas schneller [...]. Sie verlor sich in Einbahnstraßen' (N p. 284). She is often unable to find her way through to her final goal: 'Sie wußte nicht, wo sie nun war. [...] Sie saß da, Ortlosigkeit anbrandete. Vom Bauch in die Brust. Eine Ahnung von Elend' (N p. 149). This physical disorientation and the protagonist's inability to find her bearings emotionally are enacted by linguistic strategies of random punctuation, broken sentences, and missing verbs.

The halting syntax communicating the protagonist's thought processes suggests to William a general sense of inertia and confusion: 'Margarethe's "Gefangensein", her overall sense of constriction, is reflected in her unfinished thoughts. The labyrinths in her personal and professional spheres lead to dead ends in her thought processes'.[382] When Margarethe remembers the attitude of her lover towards having children after she has suffered a miscarriage for instance, the language becomes hesitant and uncertain: 'Es war aus gewesen. Und dann. Es war wahrscheinlich besser, keines mit ihm. Krisenfest war er nicht. [...] Und. In Zukunft. Lieben, nur noch lieben' (N p. 301). The narrative here is constructed out of short, clipped phrases and single words suggesting instability and uncertainty with regards to her sense of self.

As well as the protagonist, Streeruwitz's 'Reisebericht' takes the reader on a journey, on visits to the social and cultural framings which structure the female self. Margarethe, like her predecessors in this thesis, serves as a vantage

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[382] William, *Zeiträume*, p. 133.

point from which to critically survey the position of a female subject in the capitalist west at the end of the twentieth century. Shopping lists, food choices, TV programmes and underwear are detailed by the text, as Margarethe demonstrates an awareness of the gendered social roles she is fulfilling. At times the protagonist manages to sustain the practices she perceives are demanded of her as a woman: 'Wieviel Arbeit es war, bis sie guten Gewissens hinausgehen konnte. Wieviel Überprüfung. Sie mußte kontrollieren, ob ihr nicht ein Haar am Kinn gewachsen war. Über Nacht' (N p. 23). In a broader sense, the meaning of 'woman' remains elusive to Margarethe: 'Aber das Frau-Sein. Nicht finden hatte können. Nicht zu finden war. Nicht vorhanden' (N p. 180). Trying on dresses in a boutique, Margarethe marvels at the transformation of her body brought about by the clothes, but recognizes too that the person she sees reflected back at her, and the person she feels herself to be, remain two separate entities: 'Sie kannte sich nicht. Sie starrte in den Spiegel des Ständers. Eine ernst zu nehmende Person, stand sie da. Attraktiv' (N p. 220). Like Magdalena, the vision Margarethe confronts in the mirror does not correspond to her own view of herself, and, like Faschinger's heroine, her status as fully functioning 'woman' does not quite fit. Instead her divided self-perception is foregrounded. The image in the mirror is herself as others see her, and the disorientation engulfing Margarethe when she leaves the mall − 'sie hatte jede Orientierung verloren' (N p. 220) − is symptomatic of her continued self-disorientation.

Margarethe's extensive periods of introspection and self-analysis that equip the text with much of its gender critique are accompanied by depictions of Anna Mahler's positioning as a woman. The two women's personal histories

are interwoven so that the 'facts' of Mahler's biography merge with the fictional Margarethe's autobiography. Mahler is placed by the interviewees in the shadow of her composer father, her life is characterized by troubled romantic attachments, and her efforts to become a successful artist in her own right are described as difficult, if not futile. As in *Wiener Passion*, a link between the gendered expectations of the present and those of the past is constructed, with Anna Mahler representing a generation which was subject to specific codes of behaviour:

> Als Frau. Welche Verurteilung. Faszinierend sein. [...] Aber die Anna Mahlers durften sich nicht wundern, daß die Selbsteinordnung in die Frauenrolle nicht nur die Künstlerin kostete. Wie sollte sie anders gesehen werden von außen, wenn sie das doch war. Und bleiben hatte wollen. Die schöne Frau. Das exquisite Wesen. Die Vitrinenexistenz eines vergangenen Jahrhunderts. (N p. 336)

Anna Mahler learned to operate within certain subject positions available at the time, and these may have cost her the artistic recognition she desired. By considering her biographical subject in this way, Margarethe is able to gain a deeper understanding of her own positioning and 'Selbsteinordnung in die Frauenrolle'. 'Wie hieß dieser Zustand? Doomed? Verstoßen ins Anderssein, das sich nichts nehmen konnte. Durfte. Keinen Raum. Das sich im Falle, eine Frau zu sein, zwischen den Beinen verbarg' (N p. 57). Forging the link between the two subjects, the text interrogates a range of competing voices that position them, and the reader is invited to view identity as a contested and moving ground of multiple relations rather than a single, 'truthful' representation of a rounded subject. While tracing the pluralities of the self, the text does not lose sight of the importance of gender relations, and it is the protagonist's self-reflexive, meandering journey which articulates the female experience.

The novel ends on a positive note when Margarethe is encouraged to continue on her 'Reise' by three elderly women in a supermarket. They appear like the *Moirae*, the three fates of Greek mythology who were responsible for the fate of every human being:

> Woher sie käme, fragte eine der Frauen. [...] Sie hatte einen glänzenden weißen Jogginganzug an. Sie käme aus Wien. Österreich. Europa, sagte Margarethe. Ach nein, rief die Frau neben ihr. Sie hatte weißes Haar und einen grünglänzenden Jogginganzug an. Das wäre sehr interessant, sagte die dritte Frau. Ihre Haare waren strohblond gefärbt. Ihr Hosenanzug dunkelrosarot. (N p. 398)[383]

The mythical *Moirae* are not allowed to act independently but must submit to a higher authority, while they weave a predetermined path for individuals. Streeruwitz's *Moirae* have been unable to alter their fate, 'sie wären so alt geworden und hätten alle drei keine Ahnung, wohin ihr Leben verronnen wäre. [...] Für sie sei es zu spät, sagte die Frau. Sie wären hierhergekommen und dann immer hiergeblieben' (N pp. 398-399), and now they have an ominous warning for the protagonist: 'Sie solle wegfahren. Margarethe solle flüchten, solange sie das noch könne' (N p. 398). The final image of the waving woman, 'sie winkte. Margarethe winkte zurück' (*ibid*.), is a reminder that when Margarethe departs LA, she is still the travelling subject able to fashion her own future.

Intertext and Memory

Nachwelt. can be read productively as a 'Gedächtnisraum' due to the associations, allusions and reworkings which allow memories of other texts to surface in the reader. The character of Manon, in whom layers of time merge,

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[383] The *Moirae* are depicted in the sixteenth century Flemish tapestry 'The Triumph of Death' dressed in white, green and red dresses, which are replaced in *Nachwelt.* by leisure wear of the same colours.

serves as a particularly loaded intertextual locus. Although a fictional character, the name draws a line to Anna Mahler's actual half-sister Manon Gropius, indeed Kallin has pointed out that the lung disease that afflicts the fictional Manon in the novel and requires her to carry around an oxygen tank, is similar to the descriptions of respiratory paralysis suffered by Gropius.[384] Kallin omits to mention the link the name may make in the reader's mind to other purely fictional characters, such as the eponymous, tragic character in the operas by Jules Massenet (*Manon*, 1884) and Giacomo Puccini (*Manon Lescaut*, 1893), which position it as an already culturally loaded name. Similarly, the name of the central protagonist, Margarethe, is heavy with associations, particularly in the framework of a novel which deals with Jewish exile memory. Nele Hempel demonstrates the intertextual link between the character's name and that of Paul Celan's Margarete in *Todesfuge*, with its haunting images of the death camps.[385] Celan's Margarete, with her 'goldenes Haar' references Faust's Gretchen, the virginal embodiment of the 'Aryan' ideal of womanhood. Jewish exile Manon shortens Margarethe to its diminutive form Margaux, as Kallin argues, 'to avoid the German name Margarethe with its literary and cultural allusions'.[386] For the reader, Streeruwitz's naming of her protagonist, together with the mention of the noxious fumes which hang over LA and make breathing even more difficult for

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[384]   Britta Kallin, 'Marlene Streeruwitz's Novel *Nachwelt* as Postmodern Feminist Biography', *The German Quarterly*, 78/3 (2005), 337-356 (p. 346). Kallin points out that the name Manon links *Nachwelt.* to other Streeruwitz works in an *intra*textual manoeuvre, as it is the name of a character in Streeruwitz's drama *Tolmezzo* (1994), who, as Kallin argues, bears a resemblance to *Nachwelt.*'s Manon in that she is a Viennese, Jewish exile living in the US with an alcoholic ex-husband and a daughter. In *Nachwelt.* the daughter is Lynne, and in *Tolmezzo*, Linda. See Kallin, 'Marlene Streeruwitz's Novel *Nachwelt*, p. 353.

[385]   See Nele Hempel, 'Die Vergangenheit als Gegenwart als Zukunft', in Arnold (ed.), *Marlene Streeruwitz*, 48-54 (p. 49). See Paul Celan, 'Todesfuge', in *Gedichte 1* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1981, first pub. 1947), p. 39.

[386]   Kallin, 'Marlene Streeruwitz's Novel *Nachwelt*', p. 353.

Manon, open an intertextual avenue of meaning which links into Celan's imagery. With the 'schwarze Milch der Frühe', the insistent image which begins every stanza of *Todesfuge*, something as life-giving as milk bears the connotation of a sinister substance, the ash of the crematorium. Through the intertextual nature of Margarethe's name which Manon refuses to voice but which is open to interpretation by the reader, the text adds another layer to its 'Gedächtnisraum'.

As well as illuminating the way cultural memory can inform a reading of the text, the novel illustrates the way the characters read the present through the past, what is conveyed to the 'Nachwelt' and how memory serves the needs of the present. Direct references and oblique allusions to the Second World War and the Holocaust are present throughout the novel, and are shown to occupy a place in the contemporary experiences of the characters. Memory unfolds through the characters' recollections. In the fictional world of the novel, Manon befriended Anna Mahler after escaping Austria in the late 1930s. Frail and suffering constant breathing difficulties, an oxygen bottle accompanies her everywhere she goes: '[Margarethe] hörte Manons flaches Atmen. Manon setzte sich ins Auto. Sie nestelte sofort die von der Sauerstoffflasche wegführenden farblosen, dünnen Schläuche über ihre Ohren. Schob die Auslässe in die Nase. [...] Sog den Sauerstoff tief ein' (N p. 11). Manon complains about the noxious pesticides the authorities are spraying over Los Angeles, and her comments trigger painful memories: 'Es sei nicht sicher, ob dieses Gift auch für Menschen giftig wäre. Und nicht nur für diese Fliege. Manon war an Albrechts Bett stehengeblieben. "We didn't live that long in California to be gassed in the end"' (N p. 11). The character's use of English

reflects that she is physically removed from the stage on which the horrors of the war took place. However her remarks are a reminder that the past, the gassing of the Jews during the war, is a constant presence in contemporary consciousness.

As an exile from Austria, Manon continues to link back to her home country through childhood memories, and indeed she wishes to pass on aspects of the cultural memory by exposing her granddaughter to the nineteenth-century tales of 'Max and Moritz' in their original language: 'Das Kind sollte diese Geschichten auch kennen' (N p. 90). Manon is able to narrate fictional stories effortlessly in German, quoting passages from Wilhelm Busch's stories, 'fehlerlos' (N p. 89). It is the telling of 'truthful' history which causes problems, when language becomes a site of interruption and forgetting, thus exposing the difficulties inherent in the articulation of personal memory: 'Manon sprach mit Christine in einer Mischung aus Deutsch und Englisch. Manon sprach Deutsch umständlich aus. Zögernd. Sie bildete erst die amerikanischen Laute und fügte sie dann zu deutschen Worten zusammen' (N p. 199). Manon's reluctance to revisit Vienna is bound up with her fear of hearing the tainted language of her youth: 'Manon, die nicht nach Wien wollte aus Angst, diese Sprache wieder hören zu müssen. Deutsch hören zu müssen. Wienerisch. Die nicht einmal die Sprache ertragen konnte' (N p. 382). The character's difficulty in articulating in her mother tongue on one hand, and her affection for the German of Busch's tales on the other, reflects a split in the exiled self which is torn between the homeland of the past and its association with horror, and that of the present.

A layer is added to the textual 'Gedächtnisraum' through Margarethe's recollections of childhood in Austria in the years immediately following the Second World War. By way of her voice, the text participates in a trend understood by Leopold Decloedt as one which characterizes much Austrian writing of the 1990s, that is the attempt, 'den historischen Ballast aufzuarbeiten und den Platz des Ichs in der (österreichischen) Gesellschaft und somit die eigene, auch historisch bedingte Identität bestimmen zu können'.[387] Margarethe's 'historisch bedingte Identität' is foregrounded, and the present of the novel is placed firmly in a dialogue with the past. Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory' is useful when considering Margarethe's complex relationship to her childhood after the war and her parents' war-time experiences. In Hirsch's terms, postmemory expresses the bonds with the past of a second generation who do not remember directly, but whose experience is shaped by events which occurred before their birth. Postmemory, 'characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated'.[388] This 'second-degree' memory is powerful because its connection to its source is mediated not through direct recollection

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[387]   Leopold Decloedt, 'Die Suche nach dem Authentischen. Marlene Streeruwitz' Roman *Nachwelt*', *Studia austriaca*, XII (2004), 135-143 (p. 136).

[388]   Although Hirsch initially employed the term 'postmemory' to describe the memories of the children of Holocaust survivors, she acknowledges that the application of the term can be widened to encompass other positions of remembrance occupied by second generations, that is those who did not live through events themselves, but whose lives are shaped by prior, collective experiences. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photograph, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997), p. 22.

but through an 'imaginative investment and creation', that binds the memory to the subject's very sense of identity.[389]

Margarethe's flashbacks to her childhood in the immediate post-war period can be understood through a post-memorial position. The text underscores the way Margarethe's sense of self, and her subjective responses in the present, are shaped by prior events, explicitly her parents' perception of Jews and their blatant antisemitism: 'Aber die Eltern. Denen war die Geschichte mit den Juden. Die war ihnen peinlich. Irgendwie. Und sie hätten es schon lieber gehabt, es wäre nicht geschehen. Aber nicht wegen der Menschen. Sondern weil es schiefgegangen war' (N p. 170). Margarethe's thoughts at this point slide directly away from her parents and into the painful, personal guilt which she experienced when she was unable to protect her brother who died as a child: 'Warum war sie nicht bei dem Werner geblieben. Oder hatte ihn mitgenommen. [...] Warum hatte sie ihn nicht beschützt. Damals. Sie hätte ihn bewahren müssen' (N p. 171). The guilt of a previous generation is felt by the present one. Reflecting on her upbringing in Austria in the years immediately after the war, Margarethe demonstrates that her understanding of the present is premised on her memories of this time. The loss of honour experienced by Margarethe's father at the end of the war transferred itself into the family realm, to damaging effect: 'Die Schuld an der Niederlage. [...] Und der Vater. Der hatte sich an den Frauen gerächt. An der Mutter. An ihr. In der Kleinfamilie. Da konnte ein Vater seine politische Wut austoben. Der Wut freien Lauf. Dafür gab es die Kleinfamilie ja' (N p. 292). The protagonist plots a continuum between her Austrian father's humiliation and the difficulties she

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[389] *Ibid.*

experiences with men and relationships. 'Und weil ihr Vater gegen die Russen verloren hatte, saß sie jetzt in Los Angeles und heulte, weil ein Wiener Internist nicht mitgekommen war' (N p. 292). Margarethe's despair when the 'Wiener Internist' Helmut did not accompany her to LA is embedded within the context of the past. In this way the text presents historical events not as original, unique experiences, but as leaving to posterity an enduring legacy that is lived differently by successive generations.

The text widens its scope from the particular experiences of one woman, when Margarethe's thoughts lead back to those female victims who were burnt in previous centuries at witch trials, and it appears as if the female position as victim is inescapable: 'Sie hatte dann gedacht, wenn diese vielen Frauen es überstanden. Dann würde sie es auch schaffen. Aber das war es, was Geschichte herstellt. Für die Frauen war es ja nicht zu überstehen gewesen' (N p. 117). Margarethe defines her sense of self not only through her own personal past, but through the collective experience of previous generations of women. The history of female suffering offers no consolation, rather the realisation that it is a continuing legacy to be born by the next generation: 'Es gab keinen Trost. Und der Friedericke dieses Scheißleben aufgebürdet' (*ibid.*). The pessimism voiced by Scheherazade, 'Doch für eine Änderung des bestehenden Zustandes ist es längst zu spät' (DnS p. 102), is repeated by Margarethe and leads the reader to wonder what chance there is of change, but what the character of Margarethe does succeed in doing, is to draw attention to the way the individual is still able to contribute to an ongoing historical narrative through constant reflection on and examination of the past.

Those aspects of the text which deal with Margarethe's childhood place certain sections of Streeruwitz's novel in the arena of the *Familiengeschichte*, and Margarethe 'als Opfer der patriarchal strukturierten Kleinfamilie und autoritären Verhaltensweisen der Vätergeneration'.[390] Margarethe contemplates her own status as victim of her father's wrath, a rage which had its origins in the post-war Austrian political sphere. But she also voices the general victim status of women within the domestic realm. As a child, Margarethe was positioned under the male gaze, a condition that lingered in adulthood: 'Dieser Blick. [...] Sie war von Anfang unter diesem Blick begraben gewesen. Begraben darin. Weil sie kein Bub geworden. [...] Und sie konnte nicht mehr. Was machte sie hier' (N p. 96). Like Jessica, Margarethe questions her own abilities and risks being rendered a passive subject, who is unable to emerge from under the stifling layers of restrictive expectation and gender conditioning. Legacies from the past constitute the 'Nachwelt', and the text exerts its gender specific critique by focussing on the protagonist's experiences in childhood. The sense of being buried under the patriarchal gaze and the guilt associated with being female, continue into the present.

Postmemorial positions in the novel are mediated through personal experience, but elsewhere, documentary film appears in the text, ostensibly offering an unmediated window onto history as a source of first-hand knowledge. Margarethe remembers propaganda films she was shown as a child whilst at church: '[der Paster] hatte ihnen die Filme vorgeführt, die die Nazis gemacht hatten. Hatte ihnen den Blick der Nazis aufgezwungen und sie doppelt dazu verdammt' (N p. 172). Embedded within this visual documentation is a

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[390] Friederike Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005), p. 25.

gendered dimension, which highlights the particular violation of women's bodies by the camera and the male gaze: 'die nackten Leiber fielen ihr ein. Die nackten Leiber der Frauen in den KZ-Filmen in den Jungscharstunden und wie sie sich für die Frauen geniert hatte. Für ihr Nacktsein. Und besonders für die, die in die Kamera geschaut hatten. Deren Blick aufgenommen worden war' (N p. 382). As Susanne Kappeler makes clear, representations such as those created on film, 'are not just snapshots or texts, disembodied and innocuous. [...] what has a continuous existence and practice in society, is the structure of production and consumption'.[391] Margarethe is aware of her own position as consumer and the way the camera itself has become a weapon against the women and part of the violation. A secondary humiliation for the photographed women takes place every time they are gazed upon by an audience. What sticks in Margarethe's mind are the words of the priest: '[der Paster] hatte ihnen gesagt, daß das Böse. Das in den Filmen. Daß das auch in ihnen wohne. […] Und Verdrängung der einzige Ausweg' (N p. 172). Evil, 'das Böse' is personalized, ripped from its historical coordinates and made universal, and the children viewing the film are forced, 'mit dem Blick des SS-Mannes zu sehen' (*ibid.*). The viewer sees events from the perspective of the Nazi perpetrators, what Hirsch has termed 'perpetrator images', and the reader is encouraged to reflect on how far we are able to escape 'the monocular seeing that conflates the camera with a weapon'.[392] Hirsch argues, 'the viewer is positioned in the

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[391] Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 15.

[392] Marianne Hirsch, 'Nazi Photographs in Post-Holocaust Art: Gender as an Idiom of Memorilization', in *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, ed. by Alex Hughes & Andrea Noble (Albuquerque*:* University of New Mexico Press, 2003), pp. 19-40 (p. 25).

place identical with that of the weapon of destruction: our look, like the photographer's, is in the place of the executioner'.[393]

Recognizing her participation, Margarethe asks herself: 'Wie sollte man es auch ertragen' (N p. 172), and comes to the conclusion that only now is she ready to confront the images, 'hatten die Verbote so lange gewirkt'(*ibid.*). To combat Hirsch's 'monocular seeing', *Nachwelt.* encourages interaction between the protagonist, the reader, and the image captured on film, in the present. The documentary of Nazi atrocities is no longer only framed by the perpetrator's gaze. In contrast to the suppression of war-time events exhibited by her parents, who were 'wie betäubt [...] in diesem Punkt' (N p. 172), the film becomes intricately bound up in Margarethe's personal history. Rather than passively storing it away as the priest recommended – 'und Verdrängung der einzige Ausweg' – Margarethe's memory of the images are still present in her own, personal 'Nachwelt'. The text may be read ultimately as a hopeful expression of further steps towards *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, both personal and in the public sphere.

To return to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter, how effective is the text if the multiple intertextual borrowings are not recognized by the reader, if it is only 'the convergence of the text and reader [that] brings the literary work into existence'?[394] Heinrich Plett regards it as the task of any author to make the nature of intertextual allusions clear to the reader, or else risk losing the impact of the intertextual strategy in the text. Indeed, Plett argues that when a reader misses an intertextual reference, 'the text misses its

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[393]   Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photograph and the Work of Post-Memory', in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. by Barbie Zelizer (London: Athlone Press, 2001), pp. 215-246 (p. 232).
[394]   Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 275.

purpose'.[395] *Nachwelt.* invites a host of historical personalities and fictional characters into its text, their interaction commenting on the inevitable failure of the biographical project as Margarethe sees it. Recognizing the clash of intertexts opens up the space of meaning and contributes to the textual project of biographical destabilization.

However, it is also the text's project, indeed it is in the *interest* of the text, to be evasive and indirect, indeed not to flag up the historical or fictional origins of the intertexts, and to keep the reader wondering if the characters existed or not. In the process of problematizing historical meaning, *Nachwelt.* disrupts the very reading process itself. The uncertainties and ambivalences in the text compromise both the ability to construct meanings on behalf of the would-be biographer, *and* the reader. By not clarifying the distinctions between the historical and the fictional, *Nachwelt.* fulfils its purpose of challenging the knowledge and assumptions a reader may bring to historical personalities. A selection process is necessarily carried out by a biographer with regards to characters and action. The novelist has chosen to include both Manon and Albrecht Joseph and exclude other characters, and has selected and filtered certain events and scenarios. In a similar way, the reader is encouraged to recognize that the accounts given by Margarethe's 'witnesses' are selections of stories according to personal interest.

Intertextual memories evoked in *Nachwelt.* arrive in the text both thematically and formally. The novel makes visible, indeed enacts, the way memory works by incorporating a variety of generic and discursive intertexts which have the effect of permitting associations with past texts and events, in

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[395]   Heinrich Plett (ed.), 'Intertextualities', in *Intertextuality, Research in Text Theory*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), pp. 3-29 (p. 15).

the same way that memories are evoked in Margarethe. *Nachwelt.* presents the past through the competing memories of a variety of characters in a shifting palimpsest of narratives and back stories. Demands are made on the reader's memories as much as on Margarethe's to co-create the story by drawing on other texts and arenas of knowledge, whether it is Manon's name, the multi-coloured *Moirae*, or the noxious fumes in the LA air, which, combined with Margarethe's name, evokes associations with Celan's poetry. In a variety of ways, avenues of commentary and meaning are opened up for the reader to explore, so reading *Nachwelt.* intertextually leads to a comment by the text *on* intertextuality. The intertextual reading process depends on the reader's knowledge and ability to recognize exterior texts. If these texts are mixed, merged and deliberately confused in terms of their historical realities or fictionalities, then the ability to impose a coherent order is undermined. In *Nachwelt.*, the 'failed' biographer realizes, 'sie mußte nicht mehr diese vielen Wirklichkeiten in Sätze zwängen. Urteile. Diese Leben anderer ausdeuten' (N p. 371). Rather than asserting power and control over the meaning of what she has heard and read, she is left with ambiguity, which Margarethe accepts: 'Sie fühlte sich befreit' (N p. 371). In the same way, the text's narrative strategy involves the creation of an intertextual space that is frustrating and ambiguous, but also liberating in its resistance to closed meanings.

Margarethe demonstrates a palpable sense of relief at the end of the novel, which is born out of the realisation that the multiple realities of Mahler's life cannot be forced into a monologic narrative, and neither can hers. When Mahler's voice enters the text through a letter, it acknowledges this state of flux: '"I wonder if I was born with the knowledge that everything changes all

the time, every meeting, every feeling." Hatte Anna Mahler geschrieben. Margarethe verstand das mit einem Mal. Sie hätte laut lachen können' (N p. 370). The realisation on behalf of the biographer leads to a greater understanding of the way her own sense of self is constructed. As Margit Moisl observes about the ending of the novel:

> Die Undarstellbarkeit eines anderen Lebens ist gekoppelt an die Erfahrung, dass jeder Lebenssinn Konstruktion und nicht 'Seiendes' ist. Diese Erkenntnis führt zum Eingeständnis eines notwendigen Scheiterns des Versuchs, eine innere Wahrheit einer fremden aber auch der eigenen Existenz, zu finden.[396]

Rather than displaying a thoroughly postmodern scepticism towards the very notion of objective representation, the text makes visible the inaccuracies and contradictions which occur when attempts at representation take place. The two female subjects retain a strong presence in the text, whilst being, in Foucauldian terms, dispersed into a number of subject positions. They provide points of reference and identification for readers through their presentation as mothers, friends, exiles and writers. Multiple voices and stories in the novel document the shifts and developments of their subject construction. The atmosphere of ambiguity and complexity created by the text posits subject construction as indeterminate and politically invested, always existing in a field of power relations.

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[396] Margit Moisl, 'Sprache, Genre und Gender in Marlene Streeruwitz' "Nachwelt: ein Reisebericht"' (unpublished Diplomarbeit, University of Vienna, 2002), p. 106.

CONCLUSION

Mobility has assumed a privileged position within the novels considered here, not only in terms of the journeys of the female protagonists, but also the movements of the reader, who, through intertextual incorporations, is accorded a central position in the process of making meaning. To read intertextually is 'aggressive participation',[397] a process of selecting and engaging with themes and issues that are already 'entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents'.[398] It is a process that enhances the pre-text and enriches the new text. The premise that the intertextual investigations undertaken would be an enabling practice that expanded the semantic space of the six novels under consideration, has underpinned this thesis from the outset. What has become apparent is that an intertextual study also sheds light on the reading process itself, and the extent to which reading intertextually prevents the reader from becoming a passive register of predetermined, author-led codes.

Chapter One considered Kristevan intertextuality as rooted in Bakhtin's idea of dialogism, which dissolved the notion that texts arrive equipped with self-contained, original meanings. Theories of intertextuality determine that a text cannot exist independently of the world of texts, and that a relationship between the new text and discourses borrowed from other texts destabilize the stability of the signified. According to Jenny, 'since it is impossible to forget or neutralize the discourse, one might as well subvert its ideological poles. [...] Then the possibility of a new *parole* will open up, growing out of the cracks of

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[397]   Worton & Still, 'Introduction', p. 11.
[398]   Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 276.

the old discourse, rooted in them'.[399] As we have seen, the subversive potential of Faschinger's and Streeruwitz's novels is embedded within the play of 'old discourses' that 'drive all the force they have gained as stereotypes into the *parole*'. Intertextuality forces old discourses 'to finance their own subversion'.[400]

Chapter Two's study of cultural rewritings in *Scheherazade* and *Norma Desmond.* investigated the seduction of the reader into familiar tales and genres. These were seen to be 'riddled with decay'[401] in order to provide methods of escape for the female protagonists/narrators from the clutches of their ideological import, and also routes out of fixed meanings for readers. Kristeva's acknowledgement that a woman 'is trapped within the frontiers of her body and even of her species, and consequently feels *exiled* both by the general clichés that make up a common consensus and by the very powers of generalisation intrinsic to language',[402] had particular implications for the way *Norma Desmond.* was read. The sci-fi, gothic and fantasy elements of the novel allowed those signifying practices which imbue the subject with a degree of stability to be questioned. It was shown that the ambiguities and fluidity which occurred multiple times in the text, when for instance bodies were returned to childhood, and the boundaries between flesh and machine were blurred, did not lead to infinite multiplicities of meaning, but that they afforded the latitude to consider *how* representations arise and become embedded. Both *Norma Desmond.* and *Scheherazade* were seen to offer feminist critiques of representation by foregrounding the struggle highlighted by Arac, that 'the

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[399]   Jenny, 'The Strategy of Form', p. 59.

[400]   *Ibid.*

[401]   Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 368.

[402]   Kristeva, 'A new type of intellectual', p. 296.

power of representation is something sought, indeed passionately struggled for, by groups that consider themselves dominated by alien and alienating representations'.[403] By engaging with specific, powerful modes of representation, notably film, popular music and art, together with generic tropes from sci-fi and medieval Arabic story-telling traditions, the texts bring to the fore the way individuals are defined and constituted through representation. The fusion of these modes with familiar narratives of nation and *Heimat*, gender and aging, defamiliarize the latter for the reader. Authorial custodianship was seen to be overturned in *Scheherazade* when, on close inspection, a text which sought to challenge that which it inscribed exposed a conventional, unified and fixed depiction of the Orient which at times undermined its own intertextual project. Moreover, Faschinger could not have foreseen the resonances a character named Frau Christa T. receiving the secret police in her apartment could have had for readers in a post-*Wende* world. Chapter Two in particular demonstrated the way reading intertextually empowers the reader to 'talk back' at the text.

Generic mingling was on display in Chapter Three, which considered the way Faschinger and Streeruwitz write against the grain of the confessional mode, interior monologue and postfeminist chic-lit. Performance was seen to hold a privileged position in both texts, with different consequences for the protagonists. As shown, intertextuality is characterized by performances of repetition and transformation. As a nomadic character, Magdalena's assumption of different, available roles, it was argued, confirmed that femininity is not bound to only one image, but simultaneously concedes that

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[403]   Arac, 'Introduction', p. xxi.

there are restrictions embedded in all of these predefined roles. Far from suspending the reader in a gender-political vacuum, the analysis of *Magdalena* exposed the enactment of the way gendered modes of being and processes of social power gain authority through repetition, with the protagonist's agency 'located within the possibility of variation on that repetition'.[404] Magdalena was considered as a character endowed with the ability to discard masquerades which were shown to be a less than perfect fit, an ability not accorded to Streeruwitz's narrator.

Jessica was presented as a character who acts in the service of existing power structures, who struggles with the versions of femininity she feels compelled to assume, and whose awareness provides insufficient impetus to cast those versions aside if they fit imperfectly. Further confirming intertextuality's use as a critical tool to investigate the resistance in a text, the chapter challenged certain assessments of the novel as 'weniger widerständig'[405] than those works by Streeruwitz which foreground linguistic fragmentation. It was demonstrated how the novel references the cultural texts of postfeminism and the stream of consciousness mode ironically. Furthermore, the way material products are placed within the text and proffered to the reader for recognition, was shown to invite the reader to recognize her own positioning within the discourses in which she is steeped. The novel was read in the light of the author's claim that her writing is an attempt, by way of stylistic methods, 'dem Unsagbaren zur Erscheinung zu verhelfen'.[406] Rather than Jessica herself, it was intertextual strategies of form, those Barthesian

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[404]   Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 185.

[405]   Kedveš, 'Geheimnisvoll. Vorwurfsvoll', p. 34.

[406]   Streeruwitz, *Sein*, p. 48.

quotations 'given without the quotation marks'[407] that displayed the subversive edge of the text and provided an exit route from the effects of discourse.

The illusion of a harmonious union of past and present was rejected by my readings of *Wiener Passion* and *Nachwelt.* in Chapter Four. The novels were read as mnemonic spaces where meanings can be coaxed from the inscription of the cultural store of memory. A study of the palimpsest of texts that constitute Vienna presented an idealized image of the city shaped by Habsburg traditions as embodied by Josef Horvath, whilst providing an opposition to this mythologized past through the life story immigrant Rosa Havelka. The 'outsider' Magnolia, although suggesting a more positive, multicultural future for the city through her marriage to Josef, displayed a reconciliatory attitude towards the city and its narratives of the past. Magnolia's language and her moments of *déjà-vu* at the close of the novel revealed her character to be in the service of existing conditions. In this way, the text was seen to critique the non-problematical way the past is embedded in the Austrian national consciousness, its conciliatory nature and lack of impetus for change.

Nachwelt., it was argued, resists the promotion of a harmonious relationship to the past, instead presenting a protagonist whose sense of self merges with the history and the guilt of the *Vätergeneration.* As the protagonist finally came to contemplate aspects of her life, such as her brother's death, that she had hitherto repressed, the text was read as a hopeful view of a country taking further steps along a path of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Demands are made on the reader to co-create the story by drawing on social and historical

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[407]   Barthes, 'Theory of the Text', p. 39.

texts and arenas of knowledge. Reading *Nachwelt.* intertextually, it was contended, is a comment on intertextuality itself. Streeruwitz's would-be biographer is liberated by the realisation that the multiple realities, conflicting stories and fractured memories of Anna Mahler's life cannot be forced into a monologic narrative. Likewise the text can be viewed as a caution against viewing intertextuality as a tool to produce stability or authority over the text. Like the biographical project, reading intertextually involves selecting and investigating certain avenues, amplifying and augmenting allusions, associations and sources, whilst ignoring others. In this way there is no ending to the text, but the reader is left with the pleasure experienced by Margarethe: 'Sie fühlte sich befreit' (N p. 371).

Throughout this study, intertextuality has been understood as a productive means of approaching novels written by female authors who enact resistance within their texts. Intertextuality has shed light on narrative structures, thematic concerns and subject positions by way of an approach that does not lose sight of political issues. Returning to Alcoff's concept of positionality, being a woman 'is to take up a position within a moving historical context and to be able to choose what we make of this position and how we alter this context'. From this mutable position, 'women can themselves articulate a set of interests and ground a feminist politics'.[408] Intertextuality sets up a dialogue between the individual identities of female narrators and protagonists and their fluid, but identifiable politically significant social and historical contexts, and invites the reader along to share the journey.

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[408]   Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, p. 149.

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