

# **Memory, Implication and Moral Injury in the Work of Vasilii Grossman and Heinrich Böll**

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### Short Abstract

Memory, Implication and Moral Injury in the Work of Vasilii Grossman and Heinrich Böll  
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This thesis compares the work of the Soviet-Jewish author Vasilii Grossman and the West German Nobel Laureate Heinrich Böll in the context of memory studies. It particularly analyses these authors' fictional representations of the Stalinist and National Socialist regimes, predominantly in texts written after 1945. In contrast to traditional approaches to the study of post-atrocity fiction that focus on depictions of victimhood and psychoanalytic notions of trauma, this project highlights the need to consider the ways that literature thematizes morally ambiguous experiences of historical violence that do not sit comfortably into categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. To do so, the thesis critically draws on and develops two theoretical prisms through which to compare Grossman's and Böll's works. First, the concept of 'implication', which denotes ambiguous and indirect forms of involvement in structural violence (Rothberg 2019). Second, the notion of 'moral injury', which highlights the psychological consequences of committing, witnessing or failing to prevent an act that transgresses the individual's personal moral code (Litz et al. 2009; Pederson 2021). These lenses provide a transformational means of studying Grossman's and Böll's literary approaches by elucidating their underappreciated focus on reckoning with ambiguous types of association with historical violence. On the one hand, they highlight the authors' shared preference for multi-vocal narratives that emphasize the complexity of individual perspectives on the past. On the other hand, they show the writers' similar broader conceptualizations of memory, which cast remembrance of as an ever-evolving, critical task that begins with the individual. Overall, the analysis reveals not only fresh insights into Grossman's and Böll's works, but also new avenues for broader comparison between post-National Socialist German and post-Stalinist Russian literatures and for the study of memory literature across contexts.

## Long Abstract

This thesis is the first, detailed comparison of the work of the Russian author Vasilii Grossman and the West German writer Heinrich Böll. It compares their literary approaches in the context of memory studies and particularly focuses on their representations of the Stalinist and National Socialist pasts, respectively. The idea to compare these particular authors was sparked by discovering an essay that Böll wrote in 1984 about Grossman's epic novel *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (*Life and Fate*). As I explain in the Introduction, Böll's review of Grossman's text was highly favourable and even implied that the novel could be fundamentally helpful for a German readership to understand the legacies of the Second World War and National Socialism. This admiration was especially embodied in the title of Böll's article — 'Die Fähigkeit zu trauern' ('The Ability to Mourn'), which was a clear play on the title of a prominent, early critique of West German engagement with the Nazi past, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (*The Inability to Mourn*), written by the psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich in 1967. Both the existence and tone of Böll's essay was striking: this major figure of West German literature and standard bearer of the broader societal project of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ('coming to terms' with the past) was looking beyond the realm of German culture to consider the relationship between public memory and literary work. This was particularly intriguing due to the obvious differences between the two authors in terms of background and experience. Where the German author spent six years in the *Wehrmacht* as a private during the war, the Russian-Jewish writer was an intrepid war reporter on the opposite side of the conflict and was notable for his journalistic and literary depictions of the Holocaust, in which his mother was killed in 1941. Moreover, Böll eventually became not only a prominent writer, but also a public intellectual in post-war democratic West Germany; Grossman's subsequent career, however, had a very different fate. While he enjoyed literary success in the 1930s, *Zhizn' i sud'ba* was 'arrested' by the KGB in 1961 and the majority of his later works were repressed in the Soviet Union until the late 1980s.

This thesis assesses to what extent parallels can be identified between Grossman's and Böll's approaches to literature and memory, despite these obvious biographical differences. It also seeks to ascertain what a cross-reading of their works can reveal about the opportunities and challenges of

comparing post-National Socialist German and post-Stalinist Russian literatures more broadly. I argue that there are significant parallels between the authors' literary approaches and broader conceptualizations of memory. I also propose that the comparison raises vital questions for memory studies as a whole: first, how should we treat literature about historical violence that depicts not only experiences of victimhood, but also of inherently morally ambiguous subject positions? Second, how can we compare literature about, and broader memories of, different totalitarian regimes and atrocities without problematically eliding, relativizing or equating the types of suffering that they caused?

I address these overarching questions by drawing on and developing a number of recent theoretical innovations and using them to compare Grossman's and Böll's works. These frameworks are explained in detail in the Introduction. One particularly helpful concept is moral injury, a phenomenon originally observed in psychological research that denotes the potential psychological consequences of perpetrating, witnessing or failing to prevent an act that transgresses an individual's own moral code. Identifying the concept's potential relevance for narrative analysis independently, I noted it had also recently been transferred to literary studies by Joshua Pederson (2020; 2021). He has developed an initial theoretical framework and has outlined some potential narrative features that can be associated with literature that engages moral injury themes. Here, I engage with Pederson's definition of the moral injury paradigm, but I also offer my own interpretation of the concept in order to show its full potential usefulness for studying post-atrocity fiction across contexts. In particular, I suggest that there is a need to develop a more critical stance towards the currently dominant position of psychoanalytic trauma theory within the field and to acknowledge that many of the narrative features commonly associated with this paradigm, such as silence, interruption and hesitancy, may in fact be better understood through alternative frameworks such as moral injury. Furthermore, I propose that it is important to scrutinize the common tendency in trauma studies to view the relationship between narrative and memory in quasi-therapeutic terms. Instead, I ascertain to what extent Grossman and Böll complicate notions of individual or collective psychological 'recovery' from the past, or if in fact they view memory in more active and communal terms that focus on transforming the painful legacies of the past into new kinds of individual behaviour, interpersonal solidarity and collective action.

Thus, moral injury acts as a crucial analytical prism in this thesis. I particularly use the concept to study Grossman's and Böll's representation of individuals whose experiences do not sit comfortably into categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. In this respect, I draw on Michael Rothberg's recent theory of 'implication' (2019), which explores the experiences of individuals who, while not directly complicit in violence, are indirectly or systematically associated with the structures that perpetrate it or that perpetuate its legacy. I argue that reading Grossman's and Böll's depictions of such ambiguous experiences through the moral injury lens transforms our understanding of their works. I show how the consequences of reckoning with implication became a central aspect of the authors' respective approaches to narrativizing historical violence. I also highlight a development in their literary approaches towards the adoption of multi-vocal narrative structures that foreground the importance of individual perspectives on the past. In turn, this subjectivized approach epitomizes the authors' comparable views on memory politics in the very different Soviet and West German societies in which they lived. In contrast to societal narratives that suggest the past can be 'overcome' or 'mastered', both Grossman and Böll advocated for a self-reflective and open-ended form of personal engagement with the legacies of totalitarianism. In this way, they cast remembrance in active and forward-looking terms that emphasize the importance of individually reckoning with implication in order to recuperate and maintain human dignity and freedom in the present.

The fresh approach offered by these frameworks also provides an important opportunity to reconsider the question of how to compare memories of different totalitarian systems such as Nazism and Stalinism. Rothberg's work has once again been influential in this respect, particularly his concept of 'multidirectional' memory (2009), which highlights the potential of dialogue and negotiation emerging between different memory contexts in ways that do not problematically relativize or equate separate histories. I propose that the concept of 'multidirectional' memory can highlight new strategies for comparison between the post-National Socialist and post-Stalinist contexts. Utilizing such frameworks is crucial for understanding the approaches of writers such as Grossman and Böll, who both compared these contexts, albeit in very different ways. Thus, the principle of 'multidirectionality' forms the basis for comparison here, showing how comparing and

contrasting memories of these two, in many ways very different, regimes can lead to underappreciated and productive areas of trans-contextual overlap and dialogue.

The main examples of Grossman's and Böll's works chosen for analysis were written after 1945, though I do refer to some of the authors' shorter texts, notebooks, and letters that were written in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In regard to Böll's work, the novels studied are *Wo warst du, Adam?* (*Where Were You, Adam?* 1951), *Billard um halb zehn* (*Billiards at Half Past Nine*, 1959) and *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (*Group Portrait with Lady*, 1971). These texts highlight the development of Böll's career through the immediate post-war years, the economic reconstruction of the Adenauer era and up until the height of his fame in the post-1968 context. This scope allows the analysis to show the subtle interplay between continuities and changes that mark the German author's career and to highlight the subjectivized and multi-vocal narrative approach that came to characterize both his literary work and broader conceptualization of memory. In regard to Grossman, the thesis mainly studies the two novels that form his so-called 'Stalingrad diology' — *Za pravoe delo* (*For a Just Cause*, first published in censored form in 1952) and *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (*Life and Fate*, repressed in 1961 but published in the USSR in 1988) — and his final major work, the Gulag novel *Vse techet* (*Everything Flows*, written 1955–1964 but only published in the USSR in 1989). As in the case of Böll's works, these novels show Grossman's emerging focus on phenomena akin to implication and moral injury and elucidate the author's increasing use of multi-vocal narrative forms that emphasize the importance both of subjective perspectives on the past and of individuality itself.

A detailed outline of the structure of the thesis is included in the Introduction. In short, the thesis is split into two sections each containing two chapters. The first section — 'War Fiction' — examines Böll's and Grossman's depiction of the war period through the lenses of implication and moral injury. Chapter One analyses Böll's *Wo warst du, Adam?* It highlights a tension in his early post-war fiction between a collectivized understanding of memory that emphasizes the importance of societal Christian revitalization in the aftermath of Nazism, towards a subjectivized approach that promotes a continual form of critical engagement with the moral fissures caused by the fascist era. Chapter Two examines Grossman's *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. It reveals a similar transition in Grossman's work from posing an overarching narrative of Russian national strength and

resilience during the war, towards a more individualized approach to depicting the past that is focused on reckoning with implication.

Having highlighted this emerging subjectivized approach to memory in both authors' works, the second section — 'Totalitarian Afterlives' — compares their representations of the legacies of these totalitarian systems for the different post-totalitarian societies in which they lived and wrote. Chapter Three compares Grossman's *Vse techet* and Böll's *Billard um halb zehn*. It proposes that the multi-vocal and fragmentary structures of these two texts point to a new expanded poetics of moral injury that will likely be applicable to other post-atrocity fiction. Furthermore, it shows how this subjectivized narrative approach epitomizes the authors' critiques of memory politics in the Soviet and West German societies that they depict, with each writer promoting active and critical forms of remembrance that contrasted to the respective projects of ideological reconstruction that characterized both contexts in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Chapter Four examines Böll's *Gruppenbild mit Dame* both in comparison with Grossman's philosophy of 'senseless kindness' — a concept most notably expressed in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* — and within the context of the German author's own extra-literary engagement with dissident intellectuals in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia during the 1960s and 1970s. It shows how the German author emphasized a close link between reckoning with historical implication and fostering transnational solidarity and collective political action in the present.

The Conclusion summarizes how comparison between these authors greatly improves our understanding of their individual approaches, and particularly the trans-contextual significance of their works. It also shows how the comparison makes conceptual contributions to our understanding of memory, implication and moral injury that are relevant to the broader study of memory literature, both in the post-National Socialist and post-Stalinist contexts and beyond.

## Abbreviations

### Archives

ASAH	Andrei Sakharov Archive, Harvard
ASAM	Andrei Sakharov Archive, Moscow
HASK	Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln (Historical Archive of the City of Cologne)
HBA	Heinrich Böll Archive, Cologne
MSA	Memorial Society Archive, Moscow
RGALI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow)

### Archival Classification Terms

f.	<i>fond</i> , first level of organization in a Russian archive
op.	<i>opis'</i> , second level of Russian archival organization
d.	<i>delo</i> , third level of Russian archival organization
l. or ll.	<i>list</i> , page within a Russian archival file

## Note on Translation, Transliteration and Citation Style

Translations are my own unless otherwise stated and are included parenthetically in the main text. Generally, titles of Grossman's and Böll's works are translated when they first appear in the text, but otherwise appear in the original. However, there are some exceptions where a translation is included a second time to ensure clarity. For reference, a table with the translations of the main examples of the authors' works studied here is also included below, arranged in their order of publication. Translations of the names of some Russian periodicals are included for ease of reference; however, major publications are otherwise referred to in the original (e.g. *Die Zeit*, *Le Monde*). Unless otherwise indicated, all emphases included in quotations are in the original text.

Transliteration from Cyrillic conforms to the 'British Standard 2979:1958' system. Some names of major authors have been transliterated differently where another version has become the norm in English (e.g. Dostoevsky rather than Dostoevskii, Tolstoy rather than Tolstoi and Joseph Brodsky rather than Iosif Brodskii).

References conform to Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) style with some minor exceptions: in subsequent references to sources I include a short title as well as the author's name. Furthermore, when referring to Russian archival material I have retained the original Russian classification terms to ensure accuracy (i.e. *fond* [f.], *opis'* [op.], *delo* [d.], *list* [l. or ll.]).

### List of Translated Titles

#### Heinrich Böll:

*Wo warst du, Adam?*

*Where Were You, Adam?*

*Billard um halb zehn*

*Billiards at Half Past Nine*

*Gruppenbild mit Dame*

*Group Portrait with Lady*

#### Vasilii Grossman:

*Za pravoe delo*

*For a Just Cause*

*Zhizn' i sud'ba*

*Life and Fate*

*Vse techet*

*Everything Flows*

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I am grateful to my brother, Hugo, for being a vital source of good humour and for putting me up in London on numerous occasions. Above all, I would like to pay special thanks to my parents, Caroline and Peter, without whose patient and loving support this project would likely not exist.

An article based upon sections of this thesis has been accepted for publication by the journal *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, published by Oxford University Press. It will be published under the title 'Reading Implication: Moral Injury in Heinrich Böll's *Billard um halb zehn* and Vasilii Grossman's *Vse techet*'. This article is based upon adapted sections of the Introduction, Chapter Three and the Conclusion.

## Introduction

### The Ability to Mourn

Reviewing the German translation of the Soviet writer Vasilii Grossman's epic novel *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (*Life and Fate*) for *Die Zeit* newspaper in 1984, the Nobel Prize winning author Heinrich Böll stated his admiration for the text, describing it as a work of 'Analyse' ('analysis'), 'Betrachtung' ('consideration') and 'Philosophie' ('philosophy').<sup>1</sup> Impressed by its epic structure, Böll argues that the text is 'kaum noch ein Buch' ('scarcely still a book', p. 214) but rather a series of interwoven novels, each retaining a focus on human suffering wrought by the Nazi and Stalinist regimes, and the Second World War. Indeed, the historical scope of Grossman's novel is vast. The author combines descriptions of the Battle of Stalingrad in late 1942 and early 1943, which he witnessed as a journalist for the Red Army newspaper *Krasnaya zvezda* (*Red Star*), with harrowing representations of the Holocaust, in which his own mother was killed in occupied Ukraine in 1941.<sup>2</sup> Despite its overtly anti-totalitarian tone — the narrative includes a bold and striking comparison between the Nazi and Stalinist states — Grossman believed that the novel could be published on its completion in 1960, submitting his manuscript to two prominent journals; however, his heretical re-evaluation of the Stalinist system clearly exceeded the boundaries of memory discourse even amidst the 'Thaw' and destalinization of the Khrushchev era.<sup>3</sup> The novel was famously 'arrested' by the KGB in 1961 and suppressed by the authorities until its eventual publication in the Soviet Union in 1988.<sup>4</sup> During the period of its repression, a secret copy of the text was smuggled to the West, leading to its first,

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<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Böll, 'Die Fähigkeit zu trauern', in *Die Fähigkeit zu trauern: Schriften und Reden 1983–1985* (Bornheim-Merten: Lamuv, 1986), pp. 213–28 (p. 217). All further references will be to this edition and can be found in the text. The essay was originally published in *Die Zeit* on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1984. A Russian translation of the review is held with Grossman's papers at RGALI, f. 1710, op. 4, d. 97, ll. 1–4.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandra Popoff, *Vasily Grossman and the Soviet Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 3; p. 144; p. 165–68.

<sup>3</sup> For details of the intrigue around Grossman's attempts to publish the novel and its subsequent 'arrest' see e.g. Yu. G Bit-Yunan and D. M. Fel'dman, *Vasilii Grossman: literaturnaya biografiya v istoriko-politicheskom kontekste* (Moscow: Neolit, 2016). pp. 83–100.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

*tamizdat* (i.e. overseas) publication in Switzerland in 1980 and its subsequent translation into multiple languages, including the German version that Böll came to review.<sup>5</sup>

In the above-cited essay, Böll concedes that only a few scenes ‘aus diesem großartigen Werk’ (‘from this magnificent work’, p. 227) could be hinted at in his relatively brief review. Nevertheless, he shows his strong admiration for Grossman’s novel, and particularly its relevance for addressing broader challenges of cultural and public memory, through the noteworthy title that he gives his review — ‘Die Fähigkeit zu trauern’ (‘The Ability to Mourn’). This name is a play on the title of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s seminal socio-psychological study *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (*The Inability to Mourn*, 1967). The Mitscherlichs maintained that West German society had failed to reckon with its fascist past by systematically repressing its historical support for Hitler’s leadership.<sup>6</sup> This unacknowledged enthusiasm for Hitler, the psychoanalysts claimed, had allowed the German population to cast themselves as the victims of National Socialism in the post-war era in a psychologically infantile manner, obscuring their extensive engagement with the crimes of the Nazi regime and deflecting from the devastation wrought on other nations during the war and the suffering of Jews and other minority groups in the Holocaust. Beyond its troubling moral implications, the Mitscherlichs argued that this attitude also had profound political ramifications for West German society. They suggested that its citizens were more engaged in the economic reconstruction of the country in the post-National Socialist era than in developing genuine enthusiasm for democracy, a perspective that had led to widespread political indifference.<sup>7</sup>

The Mitscherlichs’ influential work was published in the mid-to-late 1960s, a time when public engagement with the legacies of National Socialism is traditionally thought to have become more open and critical in West German society following a dominant focus on economic development

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<sup>5</sup> Yu. G. Bit-Yunan and D. M. Fel’dman, *Vasilii Grossman v zerkale literaturnikh intrig* (Moscow: Neolit, 2015), p. 9; Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 311.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich: Piper, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17–20; p. 38. On the Mitscherlichs’ thesis as criticism of West German consumerism see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. by Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), p. 81.

during the Adenauer era.<sup>8</sup> Yet in his essay on Grossman's novel — written almost twenty years after the Mitscherlichs' study — Böll strikingly implies that their critique remained relevant in West Germany in the 1980s. Reflecting on Grossman's descriptions of Stalingrad, which depict moments of the *Wehrmacht's* military ascendancy in the battle as well as their ultimate defeat, Böll comments 'bis heute haben wohl die meisten Deutschen nicht begriffen, daß sie nicht eingeladen waren, nach Stalingrad zu kommen, daß sie als Sieger unmenschlich waren, als Besiegte menschlich wurden' ('to this day most Germans have probably not grasped that they were not invited to come to Stalingrad, that they were inhuman as victors and became human as losers', pp. 217–18). Böll's inversion of the Mitscherlichs' title and his evident scepticism regarding the state of West German public memory in the mid-1980s epitomize the crucial importance that he ascribed to *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. To Böll, Grossman's text not only reflects a Russian perspective on the Second World War, Nazism and Stalinism; even more interestingly, he also suggests that the text could help West German readers develop a more critical understanding of their own past and thus a better appreciation of the present.

This review is one sign of a broader intersection between Böll's and Grossman's ideas, which forms the main subject of my analysis here. In this thesis, I undertake an in-depth comparison between Grossman's and Böll's post-war fiction in order to establish the precise nature of the similarities and differences between their approaches to narrativizing the legacies of extreme historical violence and totalitarianism. Ultimately, I demonstrate that, despite the very different lived experiences of these authors and the dissimilar contexts in which they wrote, Böll and Grossman came to conceptualize memory in a similar way, challenging many of the tropes and assumptions that have developed in literary memory studies in recent decades. Where the study of post-atrocity fiction has traditionally focused on the position of victimhood when analysing literary texts that depict extreme violence, these authors paid particular attention to characters who are either directly or indirectly associated with the perpetration of the violence that they represent. Furthermore, both writers were also interested in comparison between the German and Russian contexts, albeit in

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<sup>8</sup> For a critique of the Mitscherlichs' thesis within this context see e.g. Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), p. 19.

different ways, encouraging us to consider the opportunities and challenges of juxtaposing memory literature in two seemingly very different societies: post-National Socialist West Germany and post-Stalinist Soviet Russia.

It is the parallels between Grossman's and Böll's ideas in these aforementioned areas, rather than any social or historical connection, that forms the rationale and focus of this comparison. As I will shortly explain, Böll's interest in Grossman's work formed part of his broad and longstanding engagement with Russian and Soviet literature and culture. However, there is otherwise relatively little to connect these writers in terms of biography. Born twelve years before Böll in 1905, the Russian-Jewish Grossman is best known not only for the now internationally renowned *Zhizn' i sud'ba* but also for his intrepid war reporting as a correspondent for *Krasnaya zvezda*, his journalistic depictions of Nazi death camps such as Treblinka, and work as co-editor of the *Chernaya kniga* (*Black Book*), an attempt to collate documentary evidence of the Holocaust that was organized by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC) but was suppressed by the late Stalinist regime during the 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaigns of 1948.<sup>9</sup> While Soviet readers and critics had some appreciation of Grossman's broadly liberal and humanistic views during his lifetime, in the West the author was long thought of as a loyal Soviet war writer.<sup>10</sup> However, the posthumous publication of *Zhizn' i sud'ba* and other politically subversive works in the 1980s led to the reassessment of Grossman's status as a major author and anti-totalitarian thinker.<sup>11</sup>

Böll's reputation, on the other hand, is intrinsically linked to the West German historical and cultural context and especially the challenges of engaging with the legacy of National Socialism. A reluctant conscript to the *Wehrmacht*, he served six years as a private during the war in France, Poland, Hungary, Romania and the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> Although he wrote some unpublishable short

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<sup>9</sup> On Grossman's work on the *Chernaya kniga* see Joshua Rubenstein, 'Vasilij Grossman and "The Black Book"', *Contemporanea*, 15.4 (2012), 750–55. Grossman's famous essay about Treblinka, entitled 'Treblinskii ad' ('The Hell of Treblinka'), was written and published in 1944. It was used as evidence at the Nuremberg trials in 1946. See Vasilii Grossman, 'Treblinskii ad', in *Na evreiskie temy*, ed. by Shimon Markish (Jerusalem: Biblioteka-Aliya, 1985), I, 144–90.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, pp. 1–6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> On Böll's wartime experiences see e.g. Jochen Schubert, *Heinrich Böll* (Darmstadt: Theiss, 2017), pp. 44–54; Elizabeth Krimmer, *The Representation of War in German Literature: From 1800s to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 114–32.

stories and satires under Nazi rule in the late 1930s, Böll only pursued a literary career in earnest after his return to his home city of Cologne in 1945.<sup>13</sup> He came to prominence over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, eventually becoming one of the best-known and most important voices in West German literature, frequently referred to as ‘das Gewissen der Nation’ (‘the conscience of the nation’) not only for his narrative examinations of the Nazi past, but also for his engagement against nuclear weapons and criticism of the state response to the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction) terrorist attacks of the 1970s.<sup>14</sup> The author disliked this imposing title, describing it as ‘furchtbar’ (‘terrible’) when asked about it during an interview with Jean-Louis Rambures for *Le Monde* in 1973.<sup>15</sup> Yet the moral element of his writing was clearly an important reason for his significant fame, with Böll winning the Nobel Prize in 1972 for his contribution to the ‘renewal of German literature’ in the aftermath of Nazism.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the apparent rootedness of Böll’s career in the German context, his interest in Grossman’s work reflects a profound yet often underappreciated knowledge of, and interaction with, Russian and Soviet culture. Böll was an avid reader of nineteenth-century Russian literature, especially Dostoevsky, whom he read in adolescence and later cited as a major influence on his early work.<sup>17</sup> He also admired other classical Russian writers including Tolstoy, Gogol’, Pushkin, Leskov and Chekhov and early-twentieth-century authors such as Yesenin, Blok, Gor’kii, Solokhov, Pasternak and Babel’.<sup>18</sup> This extensive knowledge of the Russian canon provided a firm cultural foundation for the friendships that he forged with authors and intellectuals during his seven visits to

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<sup>13</sup> Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, pp. 57–90.

<sup>14</sup> Robert E. Sackett, ‘Germans, Guilt, and the Second Threshold of Heinrich Böll: A Study of Three Non-Fictional Works’, *The Modern Language Review*, 97.2 (2002), 336–52 (p. 336).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. For the interview see Heinrich Böll, ‘Weil dieses Volk so verachtet wurde, wollte ich dazugehören...’, in *Interviews: 1961–1978*, ed. by Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1980), I, 243–50 (p. 249).

<sup>16</sup> ‘The Nobel Prize in Literature 1972’, *NobelPrize.Org. Nobel Prize Media AB 2021* <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1972/summary/>> [accessed 19 February 2021].

<sup>17</sup> Heinrich Böll, ‘Dostojewskij — heute?’, in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Interviews, 1961–1978*, ed. by Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1980), I, 177–93 (p. 183).

<sup>18</sup> On Böll’s engagement with nineteenth-century Russian literature see e.g. Ulrike Harang, ‘Heinrich Böll und die klassische russische Literatur’ (unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Jena, 1981); Jürgen Lehmann, *Russische Literatur in Deutschland: Ihre Rezeption durch deutschsprachige Schriftsteller und Kritiker vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2015), pp. 325–27. Böll’s friends Lev Kopelev and Raisa Orlova mention in their diaries that the German writer discussed his enjoyment of the cited twentieth-century authors at an event at the Soviet Writers’ Union in Moscow in 1962. See Raisa Orlova and Lev Kopelev, *My zhili v Moskve: 1956–1980* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1988), pp. 144–45. See also Christine Hummel, *Intertextualität im Werk Heinrich Bölls* (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2002), p. 205.

the Soviet Union between 1962 and 1979.<sup>19</sup> As well as a host of prominent Soviet Germanists, Böll met some of the most significant Russian writers of the late Thaw and Brezhnev eras during these visits. Many of these authors were, like Grossman, famous for describing the Stalinist past, be it in unofficial, *samizdat* publications or official literature. These writers included the poets Alexandr Tvardovskii and Anna Akhmatova, the memoirists Nadezhda Mandel'shtam and Lev Kopelev, the prose authors Lidiya Chukhovskaya and Yurii Trifonov, and the Gulag writers Evgeniya Ginzburg and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Böll's reading of Grossman's novel was part of a much broader interest in Russian literature and culture, and particularly in literary works that represented the crimes of Stalinism and their legacy. While there is no evidence to suggest that Böll was personally acquainted with Grossman in the way he was with these other Russian writers, his interest in unofficial Soviet culture renders his review of the German publication of *Zhizn' i sud'ba* historically significant. A number of Böll's closest Soviet friends, including the writer Vladimir Voinovich, the Germanist Efim Etkind and the human rights campaigner Andrei Sakharov, were respectively involved in converting a secret typescript of Grossman's text on to microfilm, smuggling it out of the Soviet Union, and organizing its first publication in the West.<sup>21</sup> Böll's friends Lev Kopelev and Raisa Orlova also played an important role in promoting the novel abroad.<sup>22</sup> In his diaries from the time of his exile to Cologne in 1980, Kopelev suggests that he had formed an intellectual group — named 'Obshchestvo Orient-Oktsident' ('The Orient-Occident Society') — that sought to facilitate the translation and publication of suppressed eastern European literature in West Germany.<sup>23</sup> Not only is Grossman's novel named as one the group's top priorities for publication, but Kopelev also lists Böll as a member of the society alongside fellow West German novelists Siegfried Lenz and Hans Werner Richter and the prominent

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<sup>19</sup> K. M. Azadovskii, 'Genrikh Bell' i sovetskie "dissidenty"', in *Literatura i ideologiya: vek dvadstatyi*, ed. by O. Yu. Panova and V. M. Tolmachev (Moscow: MAKS Press, 2016), III, 160–73.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 162–64.

<sup>21</sup> For the various — and sometimes competing — accounts of these figures' precise roles in the novel's publication, see e.g. Semen Lipkin, *Zhizn' i sud'ba Vasiliya Grossmana* (Moscow: Kniga, 1990), pp. 18–19; Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, *Grossman v zerkale literaturnikh intrig*, pp. 9–15; Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 310.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>23</sup> Lev Kopelev and Raisa Orlova, *My zhili v Kel'ne* (Moscow: Fortuna Limited, 2003), p. 115.

journalist Marion Dönhoff.<sup>24</sup> Beyond his apparent membership of this society, there is little to suggest that Böll was directly involved in the publication of *Zhizn' i sud'ba* or indeed its German translation; however, these multiple connections show that Grossman's late fiction was posthumously associated with the dissident milieu that Böll so admired.

Notwithstanding the underappreciated significance of Böll's interest in unofficial Soviet culture, the urgency and impact of this comparison between his and Grossman's works is predicated upon the significant overlap between their ideas and literary techniques, which emerged independently and in spite of the differences between their lives and the societies in which they wrote. I argue that the comparison significantly improves scholarly understanding of each author, highlighting their similar conceptualizations of memory and the transnational importance of their works. I also suggest that examining the parallels between their writing offers an important opportunity to reassess the relationship between narrative and memory in the post-National Socialist German and post-Stalinist Russian contexts, and post-totalitarian societies more broadly.

In this introduction, I explain how this comparison between Grossman and Böll intervenes in both these specific and broader areas of scholarship. To begin, I undertake a literature review of scholarship on each author to show how my comparative study contributes to understanding of their individual careers. In the subsequent two sections, I examine the key broader debates in memory studies to which this project contributes. First, I explain how my analysis also offers an opportunity to reassess scholarly debates around the representation of extreme violence in post-atrocity fiction, which have been recently dominated by psychoanalytic trauma theory. This discussion allows me to introduce and contextualize two key critical concepts that combine to form the theoretical framework developed in this project. The first is the notion of 'implication', a term that has been recently theorized by Michael Rothberg to elucidate experiences of indirect or passive participation in structural violence.<sup>25</sup> The second is the concept of 'moral injury', which denotes the potential

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<sup>24</sup> The society also aimed to publish the work of the poet Semen Lipkin, who was Grossman's closest friend and later memoirist. Lipkin is mentioned in Böll's and Kopelev's correspondence and appears with Böll in a photograph taken in Moscow in 1979. See *Heinrich Böll, Lew Kopelew: Briefwechsel*, ed. by Elsbeth Zylla (Göttingen: Steidl, 2011), pp. 380–82; pp. 488–89.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victim and Perpetrator* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019).

psychological consequences of committing, witnessing or failing to prevent an act that transgresses the individual's own moral code.<sup>26</sup> Once this multi-faceted theoretical framework is established, I show how my analysis also outlines new strategies for comparing memories of National Socialism and Stalinism, an issue that has caused significant controversy in the study and the practice of European memory politics. In doing so, I highlight the basis for comparison in this thesis, which is framed around another model developed by Michael Rothberg — 'multidirectional' memory.<sup>27</sup> Before exploring the debates in these areas and this project's contribution to them, however, it is important to situate this comparison in the context of Böll and Grossman scholarship, respectively.

### **Literature Review: Scholarship on Böll and Grossman**

This thesis offers the first, detailed comparison of Böll's and Grossman's fiction.<sup>28</sup> Bringing their work together in the context of comparative memory and trauma studies fills lacunae in scholarship on each author. In particular, it highlights the hitherto underappreciated transnational significance of their approaches to narrativizing historical violence. With some notable exceptions which I highlight shortly, the study of both authors has generally remained within the Russian and German national contexts, minimizing their obvious trans-contextual significance. Moreover, focusing particularly on the notion of memory helps to connect their literary approaches and political thought. Each writer is notable for their political ideas, albeit in slightly different ways: where Grossman's writing in texts such as *Zhizn' i sud'ba* is now lauded in the West for its anti-totalitarian thrust and passionate defence of individual freedom, Böll had a significant and sometimes controversial extra-literary reputation as a prominent public intellectual who criticized the West German conservative establishment and the

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<sup>26</sup> Joshua Pederson, 'Moral Injury in Literature', *Narrative*, 28.1 (2020), 43–61; Joshua Pederson, *Sin Sick: Moral Injury in War and Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> To my knowledge, existing scholarly comparisons of Böll's and Grossman's works are limited to some brief comments by the historian Omer Bartov, who negatively contrasts the former's novel *Billard um halb zehn* to *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. Bartov suggests that, while in Böll's work 'little attempt' is 'made to understand the appearance and popularity of Nazism', Grossman's novel succeeds in 'recreating a vast panorama of the war in Russia, where man and fate can interact and grapple with each other in the face of domestic and foreign oppression'. I argue that the relationship between these two authors' ideas is much more considerable and nuanced than this brief assessment implies. See Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 143–44.

excesses of unwarranted political power.<sup>29</sup> Reading these authors together highlights not only parallels between their political ideas — particularly their shared emphasis on the sacrosanct importance of individual liberty — but also a synergy between their respective literary and extra-literary perspectives. In particular, it shows how their comparable critiques of state ideology are made manifest in their fictional narratives about totalitarianism and its legacies. In this section, I give a brief overview of the significant scholarship on each author to show how elucidating these topics makes an important contribution to existing debates.

### *Vasilii Grossman*

Academic research on Grossman began in earnest following the publication of *Zhizn' i sud'ba* in the late 1980s. As I mentioned earlier, in the West this period marked the reassessment of Grossman's earlier reputation as a loyal Soviet war writer.<sup>30</sup> Soviet readers and critics were mostly already aware that Grossman held liberal and humanistic views.<sup>31</sup> Naturally, though, the publication of his magnum opus also revealed the true extent of the author's political heresy more clearly than had been previously appreciable. Indeed, despite these initially different impressions of Grossman's reputation, both anglophone and Russian scholarship has often since focused on the author's biography. This tendency has been motivated by the historical significance of the period that Grossman lived through and described, especially his witnessing of major events of the Second World War, his research into the Holocaust, and his later persecution by the Stalinist state. In the Russian context, Grossman's close friend, the poet Semen Lipkin, laid the basis for much of this biographical work with his memoir about the author, first published in 1986 and re-released with slight revisions in 1990.<sup>32</sup> In

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<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, pp. 221–25.

<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Böll's aforementioned essay about Grossman in *Die Zeit* — 'Die Fähigkeit zu trauern' — provides its own example of the positive western reception of the Russian author's work in the 1980s.

<sup>31</sup> For example, Alexandra Popoff explains that Grossman's play *Esli verit' pifagoreitsa* (*If You Believe the Pythagoreans*), which was commissioned by the Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow in 1941 but only published in 1946, was strongly criticized in the Soviet press for promoting a cyclical view of history. This perspective, which was based upon Grossman's interest in Pythagorean philosophy, clearly contrasted Marxism-Leninism's emphasis on linear historical progress. Popoff also suggests that Grossman's early historical novel *Stepan Kol'chugin* (published in instalments between 1937–1940) was 'unconventional' and contained 'some heretical thoughts'. See Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, pp. 108–09.

<sup>32</sup> Lipkin, *Zhizn' i sud'ba*.

recent years, however, a three-part biography by Yurii Bit-Yunan and David M. Fel'dman has challenged elements of Lipkin's account, particularly in relation to the intrigue surrounding Grossman's first Stalingrad novel *Za pravoe delo* (*For a Just Cause*, first published in highly censored form in 1952) and the smuggling of its sequel *Zhizn' i sud'ba* to the West in the 1970s.<sup>33</sup>

Biography has also formed an important strand of anglophone scholarship. The first such English-language study was carried out by John and Carol Garrard, whose biography of Grossman was originally published in 1996 and re-issued with minor editions in 2012.<sup>34</sup> A comprehensive account of the author's life, the Garrards' study is principally significant for the fact that the authors were able to collect a number of important documents from Grossman's family members in Russia and preserve them for future researchers. These include an annotated typescript of Grossman's final work, the Gulag novel *Vse techet* (*Everything Flows*, written between 1955 and 1964 but published in West Germany in 1970 and then finally in the Soviet Union in 1989) which was passed to them by the author's lover Yekaterina Zabolotskaya and is currently housed at Harvard University.<sup>35</sup> Alexandra Popoff's recent biography also elucidates the details of Grossman's life.<sup>36</sup> Popoff's text provides the most comprehensive account to-date of Grossman's early years, his witnessing of the Stalinist terror famine in Ukraine in the early 1930s and his extensive research into the Holocaust in the late- and post-war periods. It is also particularly helpful for its identification of the details surrounding Grossman's gathering of sources about the Gulag in order to write *Vse techet*, about which there is little remaining documentation in his archive.<sup>37</sup>

The initial phase of Grossman scholarship also included critical companions to the author's work that examined the development of his literary career. This includes the prominent Soviet scholar

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<sup>33</sup> Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, *V zerkale literaturnikh intrig*; Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, *Literaturnaya biografiya*; Yu. G. Bit-Yunan and D. M. Fel'dman, *Perekrestok versii: roman Vasiliya Grossmana Zhizn' i sud'ba v istoriko-politicheskom kontekste 1960-x–2010-x godov* (Moscow: Neolit, 2017). The Russian scholar Dar'ya Kling has also published a 'contextual' biography of Grossman with some helpful reflections on his philosophical ideas. See Dar'ya Kling, *Tvorchestvo Vasiliya Grossmana v kontekste literaturnoi kritiki* (Moscow: Dom-muzei Mariny Tsvetaevoi, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> John Garrard and Carol Garrard, *The Life and Fate of Vasily Grossman* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> ASAH, John and Carol Garrard Collection of Vasili Semenovich Grossman Papers, MS Russ 129, (8) <[https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:53779492\\$1i](https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:53779492$1i)> [accessed: 10 October 2020].

<sup>36</sup> Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 279–97.

Anotalii Bocharov's monograph, first published in 1970 but re-released in 1990 with revisions pertaining to Grossman's previously repressed works.<sup>38</sup> Bocharov's study provides a comprehensive analysis of the author's oeuvre including some of his lesser-known short stories that are often overlooked in subsequent scholarship. It also represents a significant example of the late Soviet reception to Grossman's writing in the *glasnost*' era, a topic which forms an important aspect of Frank Ellis's monograph, the first English-language study of the author's work.<sup>39</sup> Ellis's work relies heavily on critical responses to the author's writing in the Soviet press. He contextualizes Grossman's fiction within the trends of Soviet war literature with references to other writers with frontline experience such as Konstantin Simonov, Viktor Nekrasov, Mikhail Sholokhov, Vasilii Bykov and Aleksandr Fadeev.<sup>40</sup> He also examines examples of Grossman's early pre-war and wartime fiction which continue to be overlooked by scholars due to their apparent conformism.<sup>41</sup> These texts include the historical novel *Stepan Kol'chugin* (*Stepan Kolchugin*, published in multiple volumes between 1937 and 1940), the war novella *Narod bessmertn* (*The People Immortal*, published in 1942) and *Za pravoe delo*, the prequel to *Zhizn' i sud'ba*.<sup>42</sup> Ellis's analysis looks beyond dichotomous consideration of Grossman's career in terms of a shift between 'conformism' and 'non-conformism', challenging the notion that a dramatic change occurred in his perspective on writing *Zhizn' i sud'ba*.

Otherwise, the field of Grossman studies has mainly focused on the author's more overtly subversive later works — chiefly *Zhizn' i sud'ba* — emphasizing his credentials as a major exponent of anti-totalitarian, quasi-liberal political philosophy.<sup>43</sup> In recent years there has been a flourishing of interdisciplinary interest in Grossman as his reputation as a chronicler of Nazism and Stalinism has

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<sup>38</sup> A. G. Bocharov, *Vasilii Grossman: zhizn', tvorchestvo, sud'ba* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990).

<sup>39</sup> Frank Ellis, *Vasilii Grossman: The Genesis and Evolution of a Russian Heretic* (Oxford: Berg, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Ian Roland Garner adopts a similar approach, examining Grossman's war fiction in the context of Soviet mythologization of Stalingrad. See Ian Roland Garner, 'The Myth of Stalingrad in Soviet Literature, 1942–1963' (unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2018), pp. 126–208.

<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the most prominent example of this perspective is provided by the essayist Tsvetan Todorov, who argues that the censorship of Grossman's war novel *Za pravoe delo* in the early 1950s inspired a 'complete metamorphosis' in his attitude toward the regime. See Tsvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), p. 48.

<sup>42</sup> On the publication of *Stepan Kol'chugin*, see e.g. Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 89; pp. 108–09.

<sup>43</sup> This being said, some attention has turned towards *Za pravoe delo*, the long-overlooked prequel to *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, which has been recently translated into English for the first time under its original title of 'Stalingrad'. See Vasily Grossman, *Stalingrad*, trans. by Robert Chandler and Elizabeth Chandler (London: Harvill Secker, 2019).

increased, with notable reflections on the implications of his writing by specialists in political and moral philosophy, international relations and human rights law.<sup>44</sup> This diverse intellectual interest is to be celebrated, as it highlights Grossman's still only recently appreciated status as a major writer and offers exciting avenues for the development of the field, which remains relatively small in comparison with contemporaneous Russian authors such as Alexandr Solzhenitsyn.<sup>45</sup> Yet the risk that accompanies this recent multidisciplinary attention is that it overlooks the essential literariness of Grossman's approach, too easily conflating narratorial and authorial perspectives. Grossman was an important early researcher into the Holocaust and a significant political thinker; yet he was also a major writer of fiction. In this project, I emphasize Grossman's position as a pioneer of the fictional representation of modern atrocity — which, as I explain later in the Introduction, has proven a controversial topic in literary theory — and elucidate the roles that he felt specifically literary narrative could play in the process of remembering extreme violence across contexts. I propose that foregrounding this core element of his approach allows a clearer understanding of the intersection between the historical, philosophical and literary planes of his writing.

Highlighting this line of enquiry is not intended to suggest that there has hitherto been no significant work on the literary dimensions of Grossman's narrative approach. Helpful research has been carried out on the relationship between Grossman's writing and nineteenth-century Russian historical fiction, particularly in relation to Tolstoy and Chekhov.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, there is a large amount of important scholarship on Grossman in the field of Jewish studies, both in Russia and the West, which explores not only the changes in the author's own Jewish identity wrought by the Holocaust and post-war Stalinist antisemitism, but also the role that the writer felt that literary

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<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Patrick Finney, 'Vasily Grossman and the Myths of the Great Patriotic War', *Journal of European Studies*, 43.4 (2013), 312–28; Giovanni Maddalena, 'What is Human in Man: The Levels of Freedom in Vasily Grossman', in *Vasily Grossman: A Writer's Freedom*, ed. by Anna Bonola and Giovanni Maddalena (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), pp. 107–22; Michele Rosboch, 'Vasily Grossman, Human Rights, and Political Institutions', in *Vasily Grossman: A Writer's Freedom*, ed. by Anna Bonola and Giovanni Maddalena (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), pp. 141–64.

<sup>45</sup> On the differences between Grossman's and Solzhenitsyn's ideas see Veljko Vujačić, 'Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Vasily Grossman: Slavophile and Westernizer against the Totalitarian State', in *Totalitarian Societies and Democratic Transition: Essays in Memory of Victor Zaslavsky*, ed. by Tommaso Piffer and Vladislav Zubok (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017), pp. 279–308.

<sup>46</sup> Lazar I. Lazarev, 'Grossman and the Tradition of Classical Russian Literature', in *Vasily Grossman: A Writer's Freedom*, ed. by Anna Bonola and Giovanni Maddalena (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), pp. 30–40.

narrative could play in memorializing and mourning the victims.<sup>47</sup> Beyond Jewish studies, this focus on Grossman's thematization of totalitarian victimhood has also led to a recent turn towards reading his late narratives through the lens of trauma theory. Jekaterina Shulga and Sarah J. Young independently use this framework to highlight Grossman's adoption of narrative features such as silence, testimony and peripheral narrative perspectives to frame his thematization of the past and to emphasize its painful legacy for post-Stalinist society.<sup>48</sup>

Identifying the dominance of trauma theory in the study of post-atrocity fiction and its limitations for reading Grossman's and Böll's works is a crucial foundation of my argument in this thesis that I explain in detail in the next section of the Introduction. Put briefly here, my contention is that, while Grossman's thematization and memorialization of victimhood is a vital aspect of his literary approach that cannot be overlooked, his work is also striking for its focus on the experiences and legacies of other subject positions, including both the perpetrators of violence and particularly those figures whose experiences sit uneasily between the boundaries of victimhood and perpetration. I argue that foregrounding this emphasis reveals a hitherto underappreciated aspect of Grossman's conceptualization of the connection between memory and narrative. He conceives of the latter as a space for reckoning with one's relationship with the structures of historical violence and for transforming this association as a means of personal and societal improvement. It is this key aspect of Grossman's work that can most fruitfully be compared to Böll's narrative approach.

Overall, then, Grossman scholarship has concentrated on issues of biography, particularly in relation to the author's political outlook and his experience as a Jewish intellectual whose family

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<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Rita Genzeleva, *Puti evreiskogo samosoznaniya: Vasilii Grossman, Izrail' Metter, Boris Yampol'skii, Ruf Zernova* (Moscow: Mosty kul'tury, 1999); Harriet Murav, *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Alice Stone Nakhimovsky, *Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity: Jabotinsky, Babel, Grossman, Galich, Roziner, Markish* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). Polly Zavadiivker's work also investigates Grossman's non-fiction writing on the Holocaust. See Polly Zavadiivker, 'Blood and Ink: Russian and Soviet Jewish Chroniclers of Catastrophe from World War I to World War II' (unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013); Polly Zavadiivker, 'Vasilii Grossman: A Cosmopolitan Writer Depicts the Murder of the Jewish People', *Journal of European Studies*, 43.4 (2013), 283–98.

<sup>48</sup> Jekaterina Shulga, 'Memory, History, Testimony: The Representation of Trauma in Iurii Dombrovskii's and Vasilii Grossman's Writing' (unpublished PhD Dissertation, University College London, 2013); Jekaterina Shulga, 'The Freedom Within: Time, Trauma and Temporality in Vasilii Grossman's For a Just Cause and Life and Fate', *Journal of European Studies*, 43.4 (2013), 299–311; Sarah J. Young, 'Testimony on the Margins: Silence, Innocence and the Other in Vasilii Grossman's Late Fiction', *Journal of European Studies*, 43.4 (2013), 329–43.

members were killed in the Holocaust and who himself faced antisemitic persecution in the context of late Stalinism. There has also been a turn towards interdisciplinary but chiefly political readings of Grossman's work and towards reading his writing within the trauma paradigm, the details of which I outline later in the Introduction. My project builds upon all of these areas of Grossman scholarship. However, its principal innovations lie in considering the transnational and trans-contextual implications of his writing and views on memory, an area that has generally been overlooked in scholarship despite the fundamental importance of the author's comparison between National Socialism and Stalinism in his late fiction. Moreover, comparison with Böll offers an important opportunity to look beyond Grossman's vital representation of victimhood to assess his thematizations of other more morally ambiguous subject positions, which also form a crucial aspect of his approach.

### *Heinrich Böll*

The above-cited interventions are similarly relevant to scholarship on Böll's work, albeit in a different form. In fact, the development of Böll scholarship could almost be described as the inverse of that of Grossman studies. Where the Soviet author drew relatively little scholarly attention until the late 1980s — over twenty years after his death in 1964 — interest in Böll's work was immense during his lifetime with a vast body of scholarship emerging at the height of his fame from the late 1960s due to his significant readership, the international acclaim afforded by his winning of the Nobel Prize, and his prominence in West German society as a public intellectual. However, as I will explain shortly, this scholarly interest has faded significantly since the time of the author's death in the mid-1980s.

What the fields of Grossman and Böll studies both have in common, however, is an emphasis on the author's biography as an integral part of his work. Early research on Böll often investigated the interplay between his status as a literary writer and his public persona. For example, a collection of essays edited by the notable West German literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki, published in 1968, includes contributions from prominent intellectuals such as György Lukács, who praised Böll's focus on the historical perspective of ordinary people and linked his literary style to the traditions of

nineteenth-century realism, and particularly Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.<sup>49</sup> The collection also contains a short essay by the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, who focused on Böll's sometimes polemical public persona, praising the author's critical form of Catholicism, which he suggested allowed him to maintain a sceptical distance from political ideologies and 'break free' from the German literary tradition.<sup>50</sup> The contributions of such major intellectuals to this collection provide an important reminder of Böll's fame in the West German context. Yet the nature of these particular essays also highlights an important duality in Böll's career as a writer notable not only for his fiction but also for his non-fiction writing and his engagement in public discourse. This project aims to further understanding of the relationship between Böll's literary and extra-literary personas by exploring the topic of memory — which was such a central part of his reputation both as a fiction writer and public intellectual — in comparison with Grossman's ideas, in order to establish the transnational significance of the German author's perspective.

In the decades following the publication of Reich-Ranicki's volume there was a consistent output of research on Böll, including critical companions to his major works, writing on the reception of his novels, and studies on the development of his political views.<sup>51</sup> Here, however, I focus on the relative lack of attention that Böll's work has received in the last few decades in comparison with other major post-war authors such as Günter Grass, especially in anglophone scholarship. The identification of a dearth in Böll scholarship in the post-reunification era comes with the caveat that there has, of course, been some important work on the author in both German and English.<sup>52</sup> For example, the release of previously unpublished examples of Böll's early post-war fiction — including

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<sup>49</sup> György Lukács, 'Lob des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts', in *In Sachen Böll: Ansichten und Aussichten*, ed. by Marcel Reich-Ranicki (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1968), pp. 325–32.

<sup>50</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'Keine Würdigung', in *In Sachen Böll: Ansichten und Aussichten*, ed. by Marcel Reich-Ranicki (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1968), pp. 9–10.

<sup>51</sup> While there is insufficient space to note this scholarship comprehensively here, important examples include: on Böll's literary works, Bernd Balzer, *Das literarische Werk Heinrich Bölls: Einführung und Kommentare* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997); on Böll's political engagement, Bernhard Sowinski, *Heinrich Böll* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993); on the reception of Böll's works, Rainer Nägele, *Heinrich Böll: Einführung in das Werk und die Forschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Fischer, 1976); Reinhard K. Zachau, *Heinrich Böll: Forty Years of Criticism* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994).

<sup>52</sup> The lack of recent scholarly attention on Böll may partly be related to the research challenges that have arisen from the destruction of the author's archive due to a construction accident at the HASK in 2009. I am grateful to René Böll and Marion Fey for explaining the condition of the archive; more material should be recovered as the HASK moves into new premises in 2021.

the novella *Der Engel schwieg* (*The Silent Angel*, written between 1949 and 1959 but published in 1992) and the novel *Kreuz ohne Liebe* (*Cross Without Love*, written between 1946 and 1947 but first published in 2002) — has led to a reorientation of scholarship towards the initial development of Böll's career.<sup>53</sup> Frank Finlay has examined both Böll's theoretical writing and his early engagement with the publishing industry in the post-war interregnum and early years of the West German republic.<sup>54</sup> Helena M. Tomko has assessed Böll's wartime correspondence and early post-war fiction to highlight the influence of the German Catholic 'inner emigration' movement on the author's initial development, deconstructing the notion of a 'zero hour' or complete break in German literature after 1945.<sup>55</sup> In German-language scholarship, Lawrence F. Gatz has conducted research on Böll's status as a 'moralist' and Wolfgang Stolz has studied the theme of guilt in the author's work.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, there has been helpful biographical work, including a recent monograph by Jochen Schubert.<sup>57</sup>

Yet there is little doubt that Böll's star has faded somewhat since the height of his fame in the 1970s. Indeed, in the 1990s the reorientation of scholarly focus towards Böll's early career led to some stark criticism and even outright dismissal of his literary approach, particularly in regard to his representation of the Holocaust. Susan E. Ceryak-Spatz criticized Böll's descriptions of the Nazi death camps in the novel *Wo warst du, Adam?* (*Where Were You, Adam?*, published in 1951) as ahistorical, noting that there were no such death camps in Hungary towards the end of the war.<sup>58</sup> Alan Bance echoed this critique, suggesting that Böll's decision to set this novel in 1944, as defeat loomed, cast his German soldier characters as 'demoralised victims' and distracted from their

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<sup>53</sup> Heinrich Böll, *Der Engel schwieg* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1992); Heinrich Böll, *Kreuz ohne Liebe* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2003).

<sup>54</sup> Frank Finlay, *On the Rationality of Poetry: Heinrich Böll's Aesthetic Thinking* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996); Frank Finlay, "Ein Schriftsteller, der Funktioniert, ist keiner mehr": Heinrich Böll and the Gruppe 47, in *The Gruppe 47 Fifty Years on: A Re-appraisal of its Literary and Political Significance*, ed. by Stuart Parkes and John J. White, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 105–26; Frank Finlay, "'Ein krampfhaftes Augenzumachen": Heinrich Böll and the "Literaturbetrieb" of the Early Post-War Years', *Monatshefte*, 95.1 (2003), 97–115.

<sup>55</sup> Helena M. Tomko, 'Böll's War: Catholic Inner Emigration, Apocalyptic Dystopia, and 'Stunde Null'', *German Life and Letters*, 67.3 (2014), 358–77.

<sup>56</sup> Lawrence F. Gatz, *Heinrich Böll als Moralist: Die Funktion von Verbrechen und Gewalt in seinen Prosawerken* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1999); Wolfgang Stolz, *Der Begriff der Schuld im Werk von Heinrich Böll*, ed. by Volker Neuhas (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*.

<sup>58</sup> Susan E. Ceryak-Spatz, *German Holocaust Literature* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1985), p. 56.

complicity in genocide.<sup>59</sup> By far the strongest condemnation, though, came from Ernestine Schlant, who argued that Böll's decision to depict the novel's principal Jewish character, a Holocaust victim named Ilona, as a young, blonde-haired Catholic convert reflected 'deeply ingrained and unconscious' antisemitic prejudices.<sup>60</sup>

These interventions have subsequently been nuanced or even rebuffed. In regard to the novel that received this criticism, *Wo warst du, Adam?*, Roger E. Sackett maintains that the multi-perspectival form of its narrative means that it is difficult to infer a single moral viewpoint from this text, let alone the author's own.<sup>61</sup> Thus, he suggests that Schlant's choice to overlook the formal aspects of the novel in order to condemn the limitations of the author's perspective was 'too easy' because Böll's 'was a complex and ambivalent vision' which was 'mediated by structure and style'.<sup>62</sup> Kristin Rebien rejects Schlant's criticism of Böll even more strongly, noting that it represents a 'highly reductive' conflation of narratorial and authorial perspectives.<sup>63</sup> Focusing on the novella *Der Zug war pünktlich* (*The Train was on Time*, published in 1949), Rebien argues that the mosaic-like nature of Böll's narrative approach shows that the author did in fact recognize the inherent difficulty of describing a 'catastrophic event' like the Second World War in traditional realist narrative.<sup>64</sup> She also asserts that Böll subtly exposes the complicity of the Christian church in antisemitic violence.<sup>65</sup>

The above critiques of Böll's work are partly reflective of the nature of literary studies in the 1990s, a time when a wave of archive-based literature came to prominence in newly reunified Germany and when the emergence of modern psychoanalytic trauma theory first began to dominate analysis of post-atrocity fiction, especially in the Holocaust context.<sup>66</sup> I explain my own perspective on this theoretical paradigm when introducing the moral injury framework in the next section of the

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<sup>59</sup> Alan Bance, 'Heinrich Böll's 'Wo warst du, Adam?': National Identity and German War Writing — Reunification as the Return of the Repressed?', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 29.4 (1993), 311–22 (p. 319).

<sup>60</sup> Ernestine Schlant, *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), p. 32.

<sup>61</sup> Sackett, 'Germans, Guilt', p. 336.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>63</sup> Kristin Rebien, 'Dimensions of Engagement: Politics and Aesthetics in Heinrich Böll's Early Fiction', *The German Quarterly*, 80.3 (2007), 350–67 (pp. 364–65).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 357–58.

<sup>66</sup> On this renewed turn towards archivally-based literature following reunification see Dora Osborne, *What Remains: The Post-Holocaust Archive in Germany Memory Culture* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2020).

Introduction. For the purposes of this literature review, though, it is important to acknowledge the critiques because they point to a prevailing belief about Böll that has limited scholarly interest in his work: that he is writer intrinsically connected to the specific cultural, historical and political context of West Germany — a ‘German for his time’, to invoke the moniker that acts as the title to J.H. Reid’s contextual companion to Böll’s work — whose writing appears no longer relevant, or even highly problematic, in relation to post-reunification memory debates.<sup>67</sup>

In this thesis, I do not seek to absolve problematic elements of Böll’s writing on the Nazi past or dismiss valid criticisms of them where they arise. However, I do propose that it is time to re-examine his approach to memory not only as a means to challenge our own assumptions about the relevance of his writing to contemporary debates, within Germany and beyond, but also to reflect on the limitations of the ways that we as scholars have come to read fiction about extreme historical violence and its legacies. This exercise is not an uncritical rehabilitation of Böll but rather an acknowledgement that the elements of his writing that came to trouble certain scholars after his death actually reflect difficult questions about the representation of violence that remain blind spots for literary studies as a whole. These questions include: how do we approach writing about war, dictatorship and atrocity that is written not from the perspective of victimhood but rather from more morally ambiguous subject positions? How do we examine works when they do not foreground documentary modes of representation but rather strongly defend the importance of the literary imagination — which, as I explain in the next section, forms a key aspect of Böll’s perspective — an approach that can potentially lead to depictions which are ahistorical and pose ethical dilemmas? And, by reading Böll’s work in contrast to Grossman’s writing: how do we compare literary works about atrocity written in different contexts without problematically eliding or equating them?

Before explaining the precise ways in which my comparison aids understanding of these questions, it is important to reflect on one final area of Böll research that is directly relevant to the project as a whole, namely comparative approaches to his work and especially research on his interest in Russian and Soviet culture. This scholarship is split into two main areas. First, research into the

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<sup>67</sup> J. H. Reid, *Heinrich Böll: A German For His Time* (Oxford: Berg, 1988).

Soviet reception of Böll's writing and his own association with prominent figures of the dissident movement, and second, analyses that assess the influence of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian writing on the German author's work. In regard to the Soviet reception of Böll's writing, seminal research has been carried out by Henry Glade and his collaborator Peter Bruhn; they highlight the author's popularity amongst Soviet readers and critics alike in the late 1950s and 1960s.<sup>68</sup> Glade's work suggests that Böll's writing grew rapidly in popularity in the Soviet Union, with his rise to prominence there having occurred simultaneously — or perhaps even slightly before — his emergence as a major writer in West Germany itself, where his fame was accelerated by the publication of his first commercially successful novel, *Billard um halb zehn* (*Billiards at Half Past Nine*), in 1959.<sup>69</sup> Other scholars have elucidated the important role that Böll played in assisting his Soviet acquaintances who were facing state repression in the 1970s and 1980s. Konstantin Azadovskii has uncovered important details about Böll's multiple visits to the Soviet Union and his many contacts there with representatives of important figures in both official and unofficial Soviet culture, arguing that Böll became an important international lynchpin for the Soviet dissident movement.<sup>70</sup>

This reception-focused and more historical research provides important contextual information for my own comparison between his work and Grossman's writing. Indeed, I explore Böll's advocacy for the Soviet dissident movement in the final chapter of this thesis, where I examine the author's major novel *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (*Group Portrait with Lady*, published in 1971) in the context of his political activism across the Iron Curtain. In this way, my project foregrounds Böll's internationalist perspective and especially his interest in the Soviet Union, which has not been sufficiently discussed in anglophone scholarship. However, as Böll and Grossman were not personally acquainted, my comparison is not primarily predicated upon this biographical information. Rather, it seeks to highlight the literary parallels between Böll's and Grossman's approaches to narrativizing the

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<sup>68</sup> Peter Bruhn and Henry Glade, *Heinrich Böll in der Sowjetunion, 1952–1979: Einführung in die sowjetische Böll-Rezeption und Bibliographie der in der UdSSR in russischer Sprache erschienenen Schriften von und über Heinrich Böll* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1980), pp. 10–12. Glade's extensive collection of materials relating to Böll's reception in the Soviet Union are kept at the Heinrich Böll Archive in Cologne. See HBA, Henry Glade Papers.

<sup>69</sup> On the success of *Billard* see e.g. Finlay, 'Heinrich Böll and the Gruppe 47', p. 111.

<sup>70</sup> Azadovskii, 'Genrikh Bell', p. 170.

past in order to make a more theoretical intervention into the way that scholars have approached such writing, both specifically within the German and Russian contexts, and potentially beyond.

Similarly, my cross-reading of Grossman's and Böll's work is not intended to suggest that there was any mutual influence or dialogue between these authors' narratives. This form of comparison has been another major approach in research that has linked Böll's texts to Russian literature.<sup>71</sup> Ulrike Harang has undertaken a detailed analysis of Böll's writing in the context of his interest in nineteenth-century Russian literature, comparing his novels with works by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.<sup>72</sup> Christine Hummel highlights similar parallels between Böll's and Tolstoy's writing, but also considers a potential intertextual connection between the German author's work and that of twentieth-century Russian authors including Solzhenitsyn.<sup>73</sup> In fact, the Russian scholar Svetlana Shindel' presents a detailed comparison between Böll's and Solzhenitsyn's works, arguing that their writing represents a point of intercultural dialogue between Germany and Russia in the post-war period.<sup>74</sup> This area of scholarship again provides valuable contextual information for my project, particularly in relation to Böll's interest in nineteenth-century Russian literature, which, considering Grossman's own engagement with the classical Russian canon, provides evidence for a degree of shared intellectual basis across the two authors' approaches. However, I am primarily interested in the similarities between their writing precisely because they exist without any evidence of mutual influence between the writers themselves, notwithstanding Böll's late review of Grossman's work, which was published just a year before the German author's death in 1985.

Indeed, it is precisely the less obvious and at first sight even counterintuitive nature of the comparison that makes its results so valuable and intriguing. The parallels identified in the analysis are most striking because they arose independently in the works of two seemingly very different authors writing in dissimilar contexts. Establishing exactly what is similar about their works, and

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<sup>71</sup> Reiko Tachibana Nemoto has also compared Böll's work in comparison with post-war Japanese fiction. See Reiko Tachibana Nemoto, 'The Obsession to Destroy Monuments: Mishima and Böll', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 39.2 (1993), 230–49.

<sup>72</sup> Harang, 'Heinrich Böll und die klassische russische Literatur'.

<sup>73</sup> Hummel, *Intertextualität*.

<sup>74</sup> Svetlana Shindel', 'Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn i Genrikh Bell': dialog kul'tur' (unpublished PhD Dissertation, Saratov State Technical University, 2009).

reflecting on why these parallels emerged, offers an opportunity to broaden the scope of such comparative studies of post-atrocity fiction beyond research on reception and influence towards more conceptual work that elucidates the broader significance of these authors' approaches to thematizing and commemorating historical violence. Thus, as in the case of Grossman scholarship, there is a significant space in research on Böll to consider his conceptualization of memory in comparative perspective. Filling these lacunae in research on both authors can make a significant broader intervention into memory studies, reaffirming the importance of literary analysis for the field.

### **Theoretical Framework: Moral Injury and Implication**

The main area of memory studies to which this comparison between Grossman and Böll contributes relates to the representation of extreme violence and particularly how to read works of fiction that thematize historical subject positions aside from victimhood. The importance for both writers of literary representation of totalitarianism can be highlighted by returning to 'Die Fähigkeit zu trauern', Böll's review of Grossman's work. Böll is impressed by the distinctly literary quality of Grossman's historical novel. He recurrently states that the text is 'kein historiographisches Werk' ('not a historiographical work', p. 218) and praises Grossman's approach to depicting the past in fiction:

Sein Werk ist voller Fiktion: Er führt Menschen und Schicksale zusammen, die die Geschichte nicht zusammenführte, die aber zusammengeführt, zusammengebracht werden mußten, um Sinn und Auseinandersetzung, Konflikte darzustellen, die die bloß akribische Geschichtsschreibung nicht bieten kann. (p. 218)

His work is full of fiction: he joins people and fates that history did not, but which must be joined, be brought together, in order to portray meaning and debate and conflicts, which merely meticulous historiography cannot offer.

In fact, the promotion of literature as a key vehicle for historical representation is a major and persistent aspect of Böll's own writing on the Nazi past in the German context. In the much earlier essay 'Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur' ('Commitment to Rubble Literature', written in 1952) Böll argues that 'das Auge des Schriftstellers' ('the eye of the writer') is characterized by its ability to penetrate the surface layer of events and express their unseen psychological causes and

ramifications.<sup>75</sup> As Kristin Rebien notes, he thus delineates a specific role for the literary imagination in contrast to historiographical or political writing, suggesting that narrative can go beyond analyses that claim to offer ‘authoritative’ or ‘objective’ accounts of the past to focus instead on the nuances and ethical dilemmas of lived experiences and subjectivity.<sup>76</sup>

In his review of *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, Böll emphasizes this specific quality of narrative whilst identifying key moments in the novel's plot. He highlights the development of the novel's protagonist, the Russian-Jewish physicist Viktor Shtrum — who is often considered Grossman's literary ‘alter-ego’ — and suggests that this character's experiences represent the ‘Fluch der Angst’ (‘curse of fear’) and the ‘Folgen des Mißtrauens’ (‘consequences of mistrust’, p. 219) that defines life under a totalitarian regime.<sup>77</sup> Shtrum — whose mother, like Grossman's own, is killed by the Nazis in occupied Ukraine — becomes disturbed by the encroaching atmosphere of antisemitism in Stalinist society. His status as a prominent Jewish scientist at a research institute is increasingly insecure, and he is called before a tribunal set up to denounce political opponents. Shtrum initially refuses to attend in a defiant demonstration of personal integrity and freedom. Following a personal call from Stalin praising his work, however, he becomes re-enveloped in the dehumanizing system from which he had briefly broken free, eventually signing an open letter that calls for the harsh punishment of Jewish doctors accused of murdering Maxim Gor'kii.

This moment represents an anachronistic fictionalization of Grossman's own experience, with the author having signed two versions of an ultimately unpublished open letter to the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* amidst the antisemitic climate of the ‘Doctors’ Plot’ of 1953, when Jewish medics were falsely accused of killing prominent members of the Soviet leadership.<sup>78</sup> While he likely had little choice but to sign these letters, which called for the harsh punishment of the doctors and labelled

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<sup>75</sup> Heinrich Böll, ‘Bekanntnis zur Trümmerliteratur’, in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by Árpád Bernáth (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2007), vi, 58–62, (p. 60).

<sup>76</sup> Kristin Rebien, ‘Politics and Aesthetics in Postwar German Literature: Heinrich Böll, Hans Erich Nossack, Paul Celan’ (unpublished PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 2005), pp. 84–85.

<sup>77</sup> On Shtrum as Grossman's ‘alter-ego’ see e.g. Lipkin, *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, p. 29.

<sup>78</sup> See e.g. Jonathan Brent and V. P. Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot against the Jewish Doctors, 1948–1953* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2003). For the letters that Grossman signed see G. V. Kostyrchenko, ed. *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v SSSR 1938–1953: dokumenty* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond ‘demkoratiya’, 2005), pp. 470–77. See also Katerina Clark, ‘Ehrenburg and Grossman: Two Cosmopolitan Writers Reflect on Nazi Germany’, *Kritika*, 20.3 (2009), 607–28 (p. 618).

‘Jewish nationalism’ as inherently ‘anti-Soviet’, Grossman regretted the action for the rest of his life.<sup>79</sup> To Böll, the deeply personal inner turmoil that Grossman depicts in Shtrum’s ‘Roman im Roman’ (‘novel within the novel’, p. 221) encapsulates an unquantifiable element to Stalinist dehumanization. It embodies ‘die leisen Morde’ (‘the quiet murders’, p. 221) that took place not in the camps of the Gulag or the cells of the Lubyanka but in the supposedly ‘free’ institutions of Soviet society at large. Shtrum’s experience is so striking to Böll because it is not only his persecution by the state that proves so damaging, but also his own association with the same structures of power and violence under which he suffers, the realization of which triggers immense feelings of guilt, shame and demoralization.

This focus on characters with ambiguous or complex historical experiences challenges some of the central assumptions of literary memory studies, in which scholars have traditionally focused on experiences of victimhood and psychoanalytic notions of trauma. While this approach has been productive, the potential limitations of sticking too rigidly to a trauma framework are highlighted when applied to Grossman and Böll. These authors had vastly different personal life experiences, but both ultimately had complex relationships with the historical events that they described. Neither was strictly a ‘victim’ of the totalitarian regime under which they lived and in fact each contributed to them at least to some degree, with Böll spending six years in the *Wehrmacht* and Grossman’s early career being characterized by his status as a popular Soviet writer and much feted war correspondent, whose fiction was even considered for the Stalin Prize on multiple occasions.<sup>80</sup> My intention in highlighting these aspects of their lives is not to draw false equivalence between their experiences. Rather, it is simply to show the necessity of ascertaining how, if at all, these ambiguities are made manifest in these authors’ work and to what extent they shape their broader perspectives on remembering the Nazi and Stalinist pasts, respectively.

I propose that studying this crucial aspect of Grossman’s and Böll’s work requires the development of analytical paradigms specifically designed to study the manifestations of these

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<sup>79</sup> Stone Nakhimovsky, *Russian-Jewish Literature*, p. 107.

<sup>80</sup> Alexandra Popoff suggests that three of Grossman’s works were considered for the Stalin Prize: *Stepan Kol’chugin* in 1941, *Narod bessmertn* in 1942 and *Za pravoe delo* in 1952. See Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 110; p. 150; p. 208.

ambiguous experiences within literary texts. In this section, I explain the main such theoretical concepts considered in this study. First, I contextualize the notion of ‘implication’ within broader scholarly writing about experiences that sit between the categories of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’. Then, I situate the concept of ‘moral injury’ within debates over the literary representation of extreme violence and the emergence of modern trauma theory. In doing so, I show how my interpretation and combination of these concepts can have a significant impact not only for understanding Grossman’s and Böll’s works, but also the relationship between literature and memory at large.

### *Perpetrators and Implicated Subjects*

My consideration of how non-victim experiences are thematized in literature comes at an important juncture in memory studies. There has been a turn towards analysing historical experiences aside from victimhood in the field of ‘perpetrator studies’, which brings together expertise from disciplines including law, criminology, moral philosophy and cultural studies.<sup>81</sup> In the literary sphere, Stephanie Bird has argued that, although depictions of perpetrators in literature have often caused anxiety or even scandal due to concerns that they might inspire the mythologization of evil acts, or identification with the perpetrator figure, studying narratives that represent this subject position can ‘complicate and enhance our understanding of perpetration and complicity’.<sup>82</sup> In particular, she suggests that it can lead us to critically consider the ‘role of language’ and ‘modes of representation in constructing and dismantling the figure of the perpetrator’, especially by elucidating the juxtaposition between their violent acts, on the one hand, and their often positive self-perception, on the other.<sup>83</sup>

In line with Bird, I consider Grossman’s and Böll’s representations of non-victim characters in order to show how these authors use fiction to ‘enrich and complicate’ the reader’s understanding of Nazi and Stalinist violence and its legacies.<sup>84</sup> The range of experiences that might be studied in this

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<sup>81</sup> For an introductory overview to this interdisciplinary field see e.g. *The Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies*, ed. by Susanne C. Knittel and Zachary J. Goldberg (London: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>82</sup> Stephanie Bird, ‘Perpetrators and Perpetration in Literature’, in *The Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies*, ed. by Susanne C. Knittel and Zachary J. Goldberg (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 301–02.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

context is wide and complex. It could incorporate not only the actions of individuals who personally commit violence, but also other forms of direct participation, such as say denunciation, or even more indirect associations with terror, including being a ‘bystander’ or benefiting socially and materially from oppressive political hierarchies and structures. While in this study I do examine Grossman’s and Böll’s treatment of characters who directly perpetrate violence themselves — and particularly the latter’s representation of a Nazi death camp commander in *Wo warst du, Adam?* — I am generally interested in their representations of individuals who exhibit those other forms of active or passive participation outlined above. I argue that understanding the authors’ responses to these more ambiguous experiences is of paramount importance to their conceptualizations of the relationship between narrative and memory.

Historians of the Nazi German and Stalinist Soviet contexts have investigated grassroots involvement in broader state structures to interrogate notions of individual agency and social participation in terror. In the German-focused historiography there has been significant debate around the extent to which the concept of the ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ (‘peoples’ community’) can act as a prism not only for analysing the Nazi’s overarching project of societal transformation, but also how individual members of this ‘community’ mediated their private lives with the regime’s aims and expectations.<sup>85</sup> Ian Kershaw questions the analytical usefulness of the concept and the extent to which a regime that employed methods of terror can be described as a ‘Zustimmungsdiktatur’ (‘consensual dictatorship’).<sup>86</sup> Michael Wildt, however, rejects a conflation between the ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ and ‘Zustimmungsdiktatur’ concepts.<sup>87</sup> He argues that it was through the active construction of the ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ in local communities that the racial boundaries of Nazi society were drawn and participation in violence against minorities such as Jews was normalized.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto, ‘Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime’, in *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, ed. by Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1–28.

<sup>86</sup> Ian Kershaw, ‘Volksgemeinschaft: Potential and Limitations of the Concept’, in *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, ed. by Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 29–42 (pp. 36–37). The included translation is Kershaw’s own.

<sup>87</sup> Michael Wildt, ‘Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society’, in *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, ed. by Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 43–59.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

In the Stalinist context, Jochen Hellbeck has studied Soviet diaries to explore the ways that notions of individual subjectivity became entangled with the regime's broader ideological aims.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, scholars have analysed the experiences and motivations of 'rank-and-file' perpetrators of Stalinist violence, with a particular focus on the Ukrainian terror famine of the early 1930s.<sup>90</sup> There have also been attempts to compare questions of ideology and subjectivity under National Socialism and Stalinism, respectively.<sup>91</sup> Thus, there is an array of historical work that interrogates ambiguous forms of participation, agency and identity in the specific contexts described and reckoned with in Grossman's and Böll's works. The challenge for comparative literary and memory studies scholars lies in developing a vocabulary that can highlight the potential legacies of these complex forms of association with broader harms without conflating active and passive forms of participation or failing to differentiate between historical and political contexts.

There are multiple relevant terms from which to choose, each requiring careful consideration. In 1946, the philosopher Karl Jaspers outlined four relevant concepts in the post-National Socialist German context.<sup>92</sup> 'Criminal guilt' follows 'acts capable of objective proof and violate unequivocal laws' and thus has a definite legal connotation.<sup>93</sup> 'Political guilt' denotes how the individual has 'to bear the consequences of the deeds of the state whose power governs' them.<sup>94</sup> 'Moral guilt' explains how the individual is 'morally responsible' for their actions 'including the execution of political orders' and is judged by personal conscience and interpersonal communication.<sup>95</sup> Last, 'metaphysical guilt' denotes the existence of 'a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his

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<sup>89</sup> Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>90</sup> See e.g. Daria Mattingly, 'Idle, Drunk, and Good for Nothing: Cultural Memory of the Rank-and-File Perpetrators of the 1932–1933 Famine in Ukraine', in *The Burden of the Past: History, Memory, and Identity in Contemporary Ukraine* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019), pp. 19–48.

<sup>91</sup> See e.g. Peter Fritzsche and Jochen Hellbeck, 'The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany', in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 302–44.

<sup>92</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2000).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

presence or with his knowledge'.<sup>96</sup> This latter concept has a clearly religious element; Jaspers states that its 'jurisdiction rests with God alone'.<sup>97</sup>

Jaspers' paradigm provides an early, critical attempt to differentiate degrees of culpability in Nazi society beyond only individual, criminal actions that could be tried in a court of law. Yet his uniform use of the term 'guilt' to describe all four of his concepts has inspired suggestions that his framework still fails to sufficiently differentiate between the ramifications of direct and indirect participation.<sup>98</sup> For instance, writing some two decades after Jaspers in the essay 'Collective Responsibility' (1968), Hannah Arendt distinguishes the concept of 'guilt', which she suggests only follows active participation in wrongdoing, from 'responsibility', a political term that denotes how a collective, such as say a nation-state, can be 'held responsible for what is done in its name'.<sup>99</sup> Arendt argues that, while 'there is such a thing as responsibility for things one has not done', 'there is no such thing as being or feeling guilty for things that happened without oneself actively participating in them'.<sup>100</sup> In fact, citing the example of post-war Germany, she suggests that overly broad declarations of guilt — i.e. cries of "We are all guilty" — 'only served to exculpate to a considerable degree those who actually were guilty'.<sup>101</sup> Thus, to Arendt, 'guilt is strictly personal. It refers to an act, not to intentions or possibilities'.<sup>102</sup>

Such meditations on the differences between guilt and responsibility contrast individual participation in violence to more collective forms of association with oppressive political systems. In

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Michael Rothberg draws on Jaspers' framework and this critique of it from thinkers such as Hannah Arendt when drawing on his concept of 'implication', as outlined later. See Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, pp. 41–49.

<sup>99</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgement*, ed. by Jerome Kohn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2003), p. 149.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Another prominent term not explored in detail here is Primo Levi's concept of the 'grey zone'. In *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), Levi explains how National Socialism sought to 'degrade' its victims in the death camps and develop a 'bond of complicity' between certain victims (most notably those coerced into running the gas chambers and crematoria themselves, the *Sonderkommando*) and their captors in order to ensure that they participated in their work. Whilst not seeking to minimize the concept's importance, I agree with Debarati Sanyal that applying the 'grey zone' to quotidian political contexts could lead to its unhelpful universalization and the specificities of the Nazi crimes that Levi described being eroded. Thus, I generally do not draw on the term here. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. by Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 2013), pp. 31–71 (here p. 36; p. 39); Debarati Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), pp. 23–37.

recent decades, however, scholars have looked beyond the specific context of Nazi Germany to nuance this dichotomy. Christopher Kutz, for example, observes that, in a globalized world, people find themselves ‘connected to harms and wrongs’ that ‘fall outside the paradigm of individual, intentional wrongdoing’.<sup>103</sup> It is the recognition of ‘complicity’, i.e. the ways that our social outlook as individual human beings involves us in broader social, economic, or political wrongs, that can reinvigorate the relationship between personal and collective accountability.<sup>104</sup> This can lead to the acknowledgement and development of more positive forms of interconnectedness, or ‘community’, and ultimately ‘a world where individuals shape their lives with others, in love mixed with resentment, and in cooperation mixed with discord’.<sup>105</sup>

This sense that recognizing broad concepts of human involvement or ‘complicity’ can act as a foundation for political change has drawn wider attention.<sup>106</sup> In his work on Apartheid South Africa, Mark Sanders delineates two forms of complicity.<sup>107</sup> ‘Acting-in-complicity’ includes ‘acts subject to a system of accountability’ and thus emphasizes more direct forms of participation.<sup>108</sup> ‘Responsibility-in-complicity’ denotes a more general notion of human association and highlights involvement in broader wrongdoings beyond active, personal contribution.<sup>109</sup> Crucially, Sanders suggests that it is by acknowledging one’s ‘responsibility-in-complicity’ — which he notes is rooted in the social ‘folded-together-ness’ of human beings — that the intellectual is able engage in opposition to injustice.<sup>110</sup> As Debarati Sanyal notes, Sanders thus casts the recognition of this broader complicity as ‘the perquisite for responsibility and engagement’.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Christopher Kutz, *Complicity: Ethics and Law for a Collective Age* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 257–58. See also Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, pp. 13–14.

<sup>105</sup> Kutz., *Complicity*, p. 258.

<sup>106</sup> Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> Mark Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. For a helpful review of Sanders’s work see Stephen Clingman, ‘On Ethical Grounds’, *Law and Literature*, 17.2 (2005), 279–90. See also Juliane Prade-Weiss, ‘Guilt-Tripping the “Implicated Subject”: Widening Rothberg’s Concept of Implication in Reading Müller’s *The Hunger Angel*’, *Journal of Perpetrator Research*, 3.1 (2020), 42–66 (p. 52).

<sup>110</sup> Sanders, *Complicities*, p. 11.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9; Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, p. 13.

Similarly, Thomas Docherty has examined the role of the ‘critic’ in challenging complicity within the more diffuse political structures of twenty-first century, Western societies.<sup>112</sup> He outlines three interrelated forms of complicity prevalent in these systems. ‘Institutional complicity’ denotes how institutions have rules to which the individual must comply or risk expulsion.<sup>113</sup> ‘Political complicity’ represents how seemingly democratic political structures can create laws — he cites British anti-terror legislation — that in fact undermine democracy.<sup>114</sup> In turn, these systems demand complicity from their beneficiaries and cast those who criticize them as disloyal.<sup>115</sup> Last, ‘ethical complicity’ embeds complicity into a reduced language or ‘reality’ that leads to popular acceptance of an unjust status quo.<sup>116</sup> Docherty views the alternative to these complicities in ‘responsibility’ and ‘resistance’, and in speaking out against the ‘incremental’ social, economic and political changes that further injustice.<sup>117</sup> This process of ‘criticism’ changes the individual’s relationship to their social world, from negative ‘collaboration’ with unjust systems towards more positive ‘cooperation’ with those who critique them and act towards responsibility.<sup>118</sup>

These frameworks of complicity provide several means of examining both active and passive participation in structural violence that are potentially relevant for studying Grossman’s and Böll’s representations of totalitarianism and its legacies. The various ways that Kutz, Sanders and Docherty propose that the recognition of complicity can lead to productive forms of civic engagement and political action is somewhat analogous with the emphasis on notions of renewed personal integrity, moral responsibility and interpersonal solidarity that I argue are fundamental to both Böll’s and Grossman’s views on engaging with the past. It is also striking that all three of the aforementioned scholars consider literature (often broadly defined and incorporating fiction, memoir and other forms of writing) as a crucial space for interrogating the ambiguities of complicity and for testing the

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<sup>112</sup> Thomas Docherty, *Complicity: Criticism between Collaboration and Commitment* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–14.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–19.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19–23.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22–24.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71; pp. 89–90.

boundaries of their theoretical assumptions.<sup>119</sup> This suggests that studying Grossman's and Böll's literary works in this context can have dual benefit. It can improve understanding of their respective narrative approaches and the links between them. Moreover, it can also help to nuance such theoretical ideas about ambiguous personal experiences of large-scale harms.

Yet, with the exception of Sanders' study of Apartheid, these scholars are largely interested in human interconnectedness in a contemporary, globalized world rather than the specific legacies of extreme historical violence. While Docherty freely uses writing on twentieth-century totalitarianism to inform his critique of power and coercion in modern liberal democracies, he is sceptical about attempts to link our discussions of complicity to those of historical wrongdoings too intrinsically.<sup>120</sup> He fears that thinking purely in terms of historical apology could obscure our 'bonds with the present' and conflate 'guilt' and 'responsibility', to use Arendt's terms.<sup>121</sup> As Sanyal suggests, such arguments lead us to question how to consider complicity in the context of memory, and thus connect past and present, without resorting to inappropriate transhistorical equation.<sup>122</sup> They also require literary scholars to examine the role of fiction in nuancing this process.<sup>123</sup> These questions inform my examination of Grossman's and Böll's representation of experiences that sit between or beyond traditional definitions of 'victimhood' and 'perpetration'.

To explore these questions, I draw less on the concept of 'complicity' — though that clearly remains vital — than a related term that has received recent attention, 'implication'. Michael Rothberg suggests that 'implicated subjects' are individuals who occupy 'positions aligned with power and privilege without themselves being direct agents of harm'.<sup>124</sup> Thus, they are 'neither a victim nor perpetrator' but they 'contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination'.<sup>125</sup> In this way, he argues that the notion of 'implication' provides a helpful vocabulary to describe indirect or ambiguous associations with structures of injustice that contrasts to concepts such

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<sup>119</sup> See e.g. Kutz, *Complicity*, p. 13; Sanders, *Complicities*, p. 16.

<sup>120</sup> Docherty, *Complicity*, pp. 19–20

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, p. 14.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 1.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

as ‘bystander’, which he deems too passive, and ‘complicity’, which, contra to the debate outlined above, he maintains best describes direct actions that can be legally judged.<sup>126</sup> While Rothberg emphasizes that his theory of implication does not negate the established categories of victimhood and perpetration, which are clearly necessary in both moral and legal terms, he suggests that reconsidering the liminal space between these concepts allows an opportunity to reassess how the violent past informs the present.<sup>127</sup> He proposes that critically recognizing one’s own association with systems of historical oppression and engaging in collective action with others in response, a process he labels ‘transfiguring’ implication, can lead to the development of new forms of transnational solidarity.<sup>128</sup>

Rothberg’s paradigm provides an alternative vocabulary for thinking through modes of ambiguous or structural association with systems of violence, be they historical or contemporary. Naturally, though, certain questions surround the limits of the concept. The suggestion that implicated subjects ‘inhabit, inherit, or benefit from’ oppressive systems opens up a vast array of possible experiences and relations to power with which the framework could be associated.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, defining the whole ‘subject’ as being implicated, rather than focusing on implication in specific acts or events, could lead to the unhelpful conflation between historical and intergenerational experiences, i.e. between first-hand involvement in violence, even if indirect, and being born into systems that replicate oppression.<sup>130</sup> Such uncritically broad approaches could foster problematic narratives of universalization that erase historical specificity and simplify the relationship between past and present in terms of rigid, collective implication.<sup>131</sup> This would fail to account for the complexity of individual experiences and relations with multiple, potentially conflicting vectors of power. Moreover, it would surely struggle to differentiate the ways that independent ‘subjects’ can and should respond to their implication, whatever its form. After all, the process of taking responsibility is unlikely to be uniform in nature; it will depend on individual experience, cultural factors and socio-political context.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 1; p. 13.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 12; pp. 199–203.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>130</sup> I am grateful to Stephanie Bird for this observation.

<sup>131</sup> On the potential universalization of concepts related to implication see e.g. Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, pp. 11–12.

Rothberg at least partly addresses these concerns. He notes that the categories such as the implicated subject ‘do not describe human essences’ and that the concept is ‘not an ontological identity that freezes us forever in proximity to power and privilege’.<sup>132</sup> Rather, he suggests that the implicated subject should be viewed as an analytical tool to examine ‘a position we occupy in particular, dynamic, and at times clashing structures and histories of power’.<sup>133</sup> As this latter quotation suggests, he thus notes the potential fluidity of the subject’s positioning in relation to injustice in different historical and socio-political contexts. He coins the phrase ‘complex implication’ to denote a situation in which an individual simultaneously or sequentially contributes to an oppressive system by which they are also, or have been, victimized, or when they have been implicated in the context of one historical injustice and victimized in another.<sup>134</sup>

Notwithstanding these important points of clarification, I employ a simplified notion of ‘implication’ here in order to elucidate the ambiguous experiences of association with, or benefit from, the totalitarian hierarchies and structures described in Grossman’s and Böll’s works. Thus, while I am interested in the immediate afterlives of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes as described by these authors in the 1950s and 1960s, I largely do not draw on the more intergenerational aspects of Rothberg’s formula.<sup>135</sup> Generally speaking, I use the idea of implication to denote forms of indirect or passive participation in violence that occupy awkward, liminal spaces between ‘victimhood’ and ‘perpetration’. The concept should not be viewed as a static category under which all ambiguous perspectives that test our understanding of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ can be uncritically placed. On the contrary, it serves to add to our analytical vocabulary in order to differentiate between experiences, even when considering systemic forms of oppression. While Rothberg’s understanding of ‘complicity’ as denoting acts that can be legally judged appears somewhat reductive in the context of the complex debates on this topic cited above, the separate terms he provides to distinguish between active and passive forms of participation are analytically helpful.<sup>136</sup> Thus, I use the notion of

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<sup>132</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 8.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8; pp. 87–145.

<sup>135</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 14

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

‘implication’ here to describe more indirect or passive behaviours that might alternatively be described via concepts such as ‘bystander’ or ‘beneficiary’.<sup>137</sup> This term complements the use of the word ‘complicity’ to denote more direct forms of participation, be they recurrent or a singular act. Ultimately, though, these words are not mutually exclusive: when I refer to an individual character as ‘implicated’ it does not preclude them from being simultaneously ‘complicit’ in violence or indeed dismiss any other complexities inherent to their experiences.<sup>138</sup>

Beyond this additional vocabulary, Rothberg’s paradigm is helpful for a comparative study of this kind due to its emphasis on trans-contextual forms of memory work. When outlining the process of ‘transfiguring’ implication into new forms of transnational or ‘long-distance’ solidarity, Rothberg is sensitive to the risks that accompany such dialogic exchange. For instance, he states that its comparative logic comes with dangers such as ‘adventurism, misunderstanding, appropriation, and ideological rigidity’.<sup>139</sup> The self-conscious awareness of these risks is fundamental to my own analysis, in which I emphasize the importance of approaches to comparison that are sensitive to difference and reject historical relativization and equation.<sup>140</sup> Of course, Rothberg is not the only scholar of comparative memory practices to focus on topics related to implication. Debarati Sanyal uses the concept of ‘complicity’ to examine the ways that authors have explored intersections and entanglements between differing histories, with a particular focus on the Holocaust and French colonial violence.<sup>141</sup> Her work strikingly critiques theoretical ‘paradigm-based’ approaches to memory in contrast to the ‘boundary-crossing force of allegory and other literary figures’ that ‘energize ethical and political commitments’.<sup>142</sup> This approach laudably highlights the importance of literature in challenging formulaic assumptions about memory and responsibility.

Here, I adopt a related but slightly different method. I propose that reading Grossman’s and Böll’s works in contrast to Rothberg’s paradigm nuances our understanding of both the fiction and

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 15–16.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>140</sup> In this respect, both my work and Rothberg’s theory of implication build upon another of his concepts, ‘multidirectional’ memory, the definition of which I will explore later in this Introduction. On how implication relates to this earlier concept see e.g. Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 20.

<sup>141</sup> Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, p. 1–2.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., pp. 18–19; pp. 53–54; pp. 267–68.

theory. It does so by considering two related questions. First, how does the reference point of Rothberg's framework improve our understanding of Böll's and Grossman's conceptualizations of memory, and the links between them? Second, and inversely, how do Böll's and Grossman's literary narrativizations of memory inform our understanding of 'implication' and its fictional representation?

Focusing on Rothberg's theory in the context of literary study is an urgent task. While he draws on a wide range of media to elucidate implicated subjectivity, Rothberg is particularly interested in the potential of visual art for exploring its ramifications.<sup>143</sup> As Juliane Prade-Weiss notes, however, literary language also presents a helpful space to examine 'individually responsible participation in a pre-formed communal structure' as it relies 'on readers to lend an eye, a voice, and an ear in reading or listening to a text'.<sup>144</sup> Thus, she considers the ways that literature can illuminate how implication is embedded into language itself as a system of 'pre-established' social practice and interaction.<sup>145</sup> Prade-Weiss's analysis is especially useful here due to its expansion of Rothberg's framework to consider how implication is related to more 'traditional' notions of 'guilt' and 'morality'.<sup>146</sup> She notes that Rothberg is sceptical towards analytical approaches that probe personal, emotional responses to implication in wrongdoing, because such a focus may deflect critical concentration from the structural nature of the subject's relations with power and injustice.<sup>147</sup> Nuancing Arendt's aforementioned dictum that 'there is no such thing as being or feeling guilty for things' one has not done, Rothberg notes that it is in fact 'possible to feel guilty for things in which one has not actively participated'.<sup>148</sup> Yet, as Prade-Weiss observes, he renders the ambiguity of *feeling* guilty when one is not *actually* guilty as a problem that the critic must navigate in order to focus on systematic political responsibility.<sup>149</sup> Rothberg states that 'analysts need to keep in mind the power of such "mistaken" emotions'.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Prade-Weiss, 'Guilt-Tripping', p. 52.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 58-64.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-49.

<sup>148</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 45.

<sup>149</sup> Prade-Weiss, 'Guilt-Tripping', pp. 48-49.

<sup>150</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 45.

Prade-Weiss rightly suggests that this ambivalence about potential emotional responses to implication neglects the possibly productive quality that feelings such as ‘guilt’ can have in inspiring the recognition of complex harms beyond one’s own immediate experience.<sup>151</sup> Clearly, the reification or simplistic indulgence of such emotional or psychological responses would be inappropriate. Surely, though, if scholars seek to probe how the subject should reckon with their implication and transform it into new forms of political solidarity and action, then they should critically examine the ramifications of these ‘ambiguous’ emotions rather than dismiss or avoid them. Doing so would not only ‘enhance the complexity of the implicated subject as an analytical category’, but also allow a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between personal and collective forms of responsibility.<sup>152</sup>

It is here that the realm of literature, and a critical comparison between Grossman and Böll in particular, can have broader significance. In order to show how these authors’ works enrich our consideration of implication, I propose that it is necessary to combine my interpretation of this idea with that of another concept: moral injury. This lens illuminates how these authors reflect the emotional and psychological phenomena that could potentially be linked to reckoning with implication, and indeed other more direct forms of complicity and perpetration, within their fictional narratives. To define and explore the ramifications of this concept for literary and memory studies, I will now briefly situate its development within the broader scholarly debate about the fictional representation of extreme violence.

### *Representability, Trauma Theory and Moral Injury*

Much of the theoretical debate about the representation of historical violence has been derived from the Holocaust context. As Kirstin Gwyer notes in her survey of the leading studies in this area, scholars have essentially wrestled with a paradox, arguing that the Holocaust requires representation in order to preserve its memory, whilst also positing that the genocide caused a historical rupture so

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<sup>151</sup> Prade-Weiss, ‘Guilt-Tripping’, p. 49.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

severe that it complicated the very possibility of any such depiction.<sup>153</sup> This apparent contradiction has been particularly impactful in the study of Holocaust fiction, which is often ‘viewed with suspicion and treated as an at best limited but at worst morally reprehensible mode of reflecting on the past’.<sup>154</sup> As a result, Gwyer notes that scholars have tended to interrogate the very validity of such fictional representations in comparison with historical research rather than examining their literary features, questioning where writers may have sought to sanitize or distort empirical evidence in a way that could diminish the reader’s factual understanding of the Holocaust.<sup>155</sup>

While recognizing these concerns, Gwyer asserts that it remains unclear as to why the ‘incompatibility’ of the fictional and historical has been emphasized so persistently in regard to the Holocaust in comparison with other atrocities.<sup>156</sup> This tendency has had a limiting effect on studies of Holocaust fiction; she argues that, in both the German literary context and beyond, scholars have tended to favour analysis of later Holocaust fiction over writing of the ‘first generation’, which, given that it was written decades before much of the sustained theoretical debates about memory writing had taken place, might challenge critical assumptions.<sup>157</sup> These debates have also tended to get stuck on the meta-question of ‘representability’ over discussion of actual ‘representation’ in and of itself, viewing literature entirely through the prism of its ‘documentary’ or ‘informational value’ rather as an independent medium for depiction distinct from historical writing or testimony.<sup>158</sup> As a result, these debates are not well suited to examine authors such as Grossman and Böll, who both lived through the totalitarian regimes that they describe and emphasize the importance of fictional representation of the past, albeit in different ways.

One of the most influential attempts to reconcile the seemingly competing questions of representability and representation has been provided by trauma theory, which has become a

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<sup>153</sup> Kirstin Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past: The German-Jewish Holocaust Novel of the First Generation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 11–56 (p. 19). This duality was highlighted in studies of the testimony of Holocaust survivors. See e.g. Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 64–66.

<sup>154</sup> Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past*, p. 20.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

dominant analytical framework for studying literature not only about the Holocaust, but also about historical violence and its legacy more broadly.<sup>159</sup> Psychoanalytically inclined theorists such as Cathy Caruth reframe the problem of representability by positing that violent events are often not properly experienced by the victim at the time that they occur, leading to a void in the individual's understanding of these incidences which manifests itself as silence, as well as the belated and repeated reappearance of said trauma through symptoms such as intrusive memories and dreams.<sup>160</sup> Trauma theorists suggest that the pervasive intrusion of the past can be alleviated via a process of therapeutic testimony: by talking through the event, the victim can begin to understand — or reclaim — their experiences and thus create a coherent narrative from their fragmentary memories.<sup>161</sup> The listener also plays a significant role in recovery. Dori Laub outlines the requisites of the 'active' listener, who must be 'unobtrusively present', allowing the victim the space to begin discussing their experiences, whilst simultaneously leading them from silence towards speech.<sup>162</sup> In line with Freudian psychoanalysis, this therapeutic process has often been observed in and defined via literary characters and form, with narrative features such as silence, interruption and fragmentation, and modes such as dreams and eye-witness accounts, becoming strongly associated with a poetics of trauma.<sup>163</sup>

The apparent connection between therapeutic and narrative questions has encouraged the widespread use of trauma theory in literary scholarship; however, this broad application has also revealed the paradigm's limitations. Critics of the framework have singled out its emphasis on the possible transference of trauma from the victim to those individuals who receive their testimony.<sup>164</sup> For instance, Dominick LaCapra suggests that this notion could lead the listener to cast themselves as a 'surrogate victim who has a right to the victim's voice or subject position'.<sup>165</sup> Extending this line of

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., pp. 36–45 for a comprehensive overview of trauma theory's development.

<sup>160</sup> Cathy Caruth, 'Recapturing the Past: Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 151–58.

<sup>161</sup> See e.g. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), pp. 1–9; Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), pp. 57–74. See also Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past*, p. 37.

<sup>162</sup> Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., pp. 93–283. See also e.g. Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

<sup>164</sup> See e.g. Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past*, pp. 40–41 for a survey of such criticism.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. See also Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 78.

argument, other scholars such as Ruth Leys have posited that this ‘transmission’ could cause the universal application of trauma as a means to understand the legacies of fundamentally different lived experiences and, in extreme cases, the troubling analytical conflation of victim and perpetrator.<sup>166</sup>

Such a failure to differentiate between experiences of victimhood and perpetration could have profound moral ramifications. Yet scholars including Rothberg have argued that this particular criticism of the trauma paradigm is based on a faulty premise, itself conflating the framework’s focus on the traumatized individual with one on the ethical category of ‘victim’.<sup>167</sup> LaCapra makes a similar point. He acknowledges that perpetration can cause psychological harm, as has been explored in often controversial debates surrounding concepts such as ‘perpetrator trauma’.<sup>168</sup> However, he argues that scholars should not confuse the ‘psychological category’ of trauma with the ‘social, political and ethical category’ of ‘victim’.<sup>169</sup> As Stephanie Bird suggests, LaCapra thus ‘refuses the alliance of trauma with victimhood’; he states that someone who commits harm can potentially experience ‘trauma’, but that this does not make them a ‘victim’.<sup>170</sup> In summarizing this debate, I seek to highlight the broader scholarly anxiety that has emerged alongside trauma theory’s elevation to prominent critical status, that the paradigm has become unhelpfully totalizing and increasingly offers limited scope to understand texts that thematize complex, morally ambiguous experiences.<sup>171</sup>

Moral injury provides a new, potentially more supple approach. The term was first coined by the psychiatrist Jonathan Shay in the 1990s, who, when viewing his clinical work with Vietnam veterans in the United States in the context of war narratives in ancient Greek literature, observed the psychological damage inflicted upon soldiers when they observed violence that was carried out by an

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<sup>166</sup> On the ‘universalization’ of trauma, see e.g. Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past*, p. 41. On the potential conflation of victim and perpetrator see e.g. Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 266–97 and Pederson, ‘Moral Injury’, p. 44.

<sup>167</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, p. 90. See also Pederson, *Sin Sick*, p. 11.

<sup>168</sup> LaCapra, *Writing History*, p. 79.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. On ‘perpetrator trauma’ see e.g. Saira Mohamed, ‘The Contours and Controversies of Perpetrator Trauma’, in *The Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies*, ed. by Susanne C. Knittel and Zachary J. Goldberg (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 265–75. See also Stephanie Bird, *Comedy and Trauma in Germany and Austria after 1945: The Inner Side of Mourning* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), p. 15.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 10–15; Pederson, *Sin Sick*, p. 5; Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, p. 8; Lucy Bond and Stef Craps, *Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 103–04.

authority figure and that transgressed either their own moral beliefs or their army's ethical code.<sup>172</sup>

More recently, a research team led by Brett T. Litz has established a broader definition of the term that does not rely so heavily on ethical conflicts derived from crises of military leadership, outlining instead a number of 'potentially morally injurious experiences'.<sup>173</sup> These experiences include 'perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations', which 'may entail participating in or witnessing inhumane or cruel actions, failing to prevent the immoral acts of others, as well as engaging in subtle acts or experiencing reactions that, upon reflection, transgress a moral code'.<sup>174</sup> They also consider 'bearing witness to the aftermath of violence and human carnage to be potentially morally injurious'.<sup>175</sup> Potentially cutting across multiple subject positions in relation to a violent event, the principal prerequisite for the emergence of the phenomenon is that the individual must have an 'intact moral system' with which the transgression comes into conflict, i.e. they must have a sense of the wrongdoing inherent to the act in order to experience moral injury.<sup>176</sup>

Unlike post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is traditionally understood to be caused by the suffering or perceived threat of violence, moral injury is not currently categorized as a mental illness, but rather as a psychological or emotional response to a moral transgression.<sup>177</sup> However, the manifestations of moral injury can overlap with those of PTSD.<sup>178</sup> Moral injury can lead to the 'reexperiencing' of past events through intrusive memories, 'avoidance' and 'emotional numbing'.<sup>179</sup> It typically encompasses extreme feelings of guilt, anguish, disgust, shame, and may include experiences of self-harm and self-isolation that cause the individual to view themselves, and the

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<sup>172</sup> Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2003); Jonathan Shay, 'Moral Injury', *Intertexts*, 16.1 (2012), 57–66. For a comprehensive overview of the psychological scholarship on moral injury, including the research cited here, see Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 29–52.

<sup>173</sup> Brett T. Litz, Nathan Stein, Eileen Delaney, Leslie Lebowitz, William P. Nash, Caroline Silva and Shira Maguen, 'Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29 (2009), 695–706 (p. 700). See also Shay, 'Moral Injury', p. 59; Pederson, 'Moral Injury', p. 46.

<sup>174</sup> Litz et al., 'Moral Injury', p. 700.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 700.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 701.

<sup>177</sup> See e.g. Victoria Williamson, Dominic Murphy, Andrea Phelps and David Forbes, 'Moral Injury: The Effect on Mental Health and Implications for Treatment', *The Lancet: Psychiatry*, 8.6 (2021), 453–55.

<sup>178</sup> Litz et al., 'Moral Injury', pp. 700–01.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

society in which they live, to be ‘irredeemable’ and ‘immoral’.<sup>180</sup> Crucially, then, moral injury highlights the potential psychological aftereffects of perpetrating, witnessing or failing to prevent an action that transgresses an individual’s moral beliefs. Though sharing some features of PTSD — and potentially coinciding with it — moral injury is a separate phenomenon.<sup>181</sup>

Moral injury has only recently been introduced into literary research by Joshua Pederson, who suggests that this new framework should be considered in tandem with trauma theory in order to compensate for the latter’s limitations.<sup>182</sup> He essentially proposes that moral injury can allow literary scholars to maintain a connection between trauma and victimhood, whilst using this alternative tool to explore the distinct psychological aftereffects of experiences that do not fit into this category.<sup>183</sup> I put forward a more critical separation between trauma and moral injury, and argue that the latter can be a highly productive lens for studying post-atrocity fiction in its own right. The concept could potentially elucidate texts that thematize a wide range of subject positions and experiences. This may include the study of perpetrator narratives and texts that describe the experiences of victims, who can suffer forms of moral injury when witnessing acts that transgress their personal moral codes.<sup>184</sup> Here, though, I generally focus on the concept’s usefulness for investigating the literary traces of the more ambiguous experiences associated with implication, such as being a bystander or employing passive resistance, where anxieties over having failed to prevent violence are likely to be widespread.

Despite these wide-ranging avenues for literary research, however, moral injury should not be treated as a universalist paradigm. As Pederson notes, just as not every individual who is threatened by violence experiences PTSD, ‘not all who do or experience wrong are morally injured’.<sup>185</sup> Moral injury is a complex concept that is contingent on both external events, i.e. an act of perceived wrongdoing, and pre-existing internal values, i.e. a personal code that this act transgresses.<sup>186</sup> Naturally any such individual moral code will be also shaped by extra-personal influences such as

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 698; p. 701.

<sup>181</sup> Pederson, ‘Moral Injury’, pp. 47–48

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., pp. 44–45; Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp.1–28.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Shay, ‘Moral Injury’, p. 58; Pederson, *Sin Sick*, p. 11.

<sup>185</sup> Pederson, *Sin Sick*, p. 9; Bird, *Comedy and Trauma*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>186</sup> Litz et al., ‘Moral Injury’, p. 701.

cultural factors, religion or social norms.<sup>187</sup> The overlapping interplay between internal and external factors inherent to the phenomenon suggests that scholars should use the tool to focus on personal psychologies rather than declaring overarching, ‘collective’ paradigms of moral injury to describe a society’s relationship with a difficult past.<sup>188</sup> Cultural responses to moral injury are likely to be variable and idiosyncratic rather than uniform. Moreover, a society’s general failure or refusal to recognize large-scale wrongdoing — a systematic lack of ‘moral injury’ — may in fact be more revealing of a collective’s attitude towards its past than attempts to expand descriptions of individual psychology across social structures and groups. Here, I generally focus on characters who do seem to display traits of moral injury in order to show what the concept can reveal about Grossman’s and Böll’s conceptualizations of memory. However, it should be noted that their representations of those implicated individuals who display no such emotional response are also important and perhaps reveal even more about the authors’ respective socio-political and ideological critiques.

In a similar vein to my treatment of Rothberg’s work on implication, then, I use the concept of moral injury here to improve understanding both of Grossman’s and Böll’s narratives and the theory itself. There are two further areas of ongoing discussion about the concept to which the comparison can contribute. The first pertains to literary form and whether it is possible, or desirable, to establish a poetics of moral injury in the same way as has been identified in regard to trauma fiction.<sup>189</sup> Pederson delineates a clear distinction between the literary manifestations of trauma and moral injury in this respect.<sup>190</sup> He argues that the narrative features of trauma are characterized by ‘absence’, i.e. traits that emphasize the unspeakable nature of the past such as ‘silence’ and ‘textual lacunae’.<sup>191</sup> In contrast, he proposes that the manifestations of moral injury are defined by ‘excess’, i.e. hyperbolic representations of emotions such as shame and demoralization.<sup>192</sup> My analysis of Grossman’s and Böll’s novels does highlight some of these features of ‘excess’, including

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 696.

<sup>188</sup> Pederson does explore the concept of ‘collective moral injury’ in his work. See Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 101–24. A failure to recognize the interplay between such internal and external factors has also commonly be cited as a flaw in notions of collective or structural trauma. See e.g. Bird, *Comedy and Trauma*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>189</sup> Pederson, ‘Moral Injury’, p. 59.

<sup>190</sup> Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., pp. 53–77.

representations of extreme experiences of shame, demoralization, anger and social isolation.

However, I critique the polarity that Pederson implies between ‘absence’ and ‘trauma’, on the one hand, and ‘excess’ and ‘moral injury’, on the other. I argue that the potential narrative manifestations of moral injury can in fact overlap with those commonly associated with trauma fiction much more than has hitherto been recognized. Acknowledging this intersection disrupts the intrinsic connection often posited between trauma and narrative aesthetics that foreground silence or absence.<sup>193</sup> Similarly, it highlights an expanded and more dynamic poetics of moral injury that will likely be relevant to the study of other post-atrocity fiction and requires further enquiry.

The second discussion pertains to the employment of psychological concepts in literary studies, and how this affects scholarly conceptualizations of memory. Jonathan Shay drew on ancient Greek literature in order to frame his initial definition of moral injury, so there is some precedent for employing narrative analysis in dialogue with psychological research on the subject.<sup>194</sup> However, there is also a need to think critically about the relationship between the literary manifestations of moral injury and the emphasis on psychoanalytic, therapeutic dialogue that has informed much work on trauma in cultural studies. While not seeking to limit avenues for interdisciplinary research, I resist positing the diagnostic or cathartic potential of narrative here in order to avoid the overemphasis on analogies between literature and therapeutic practice that has come to define modern trauma theory and inspired significant critique.<sup>195</sup> Rather, I consider critically whether Böll and Grossman describe any therapeutic process, as has so often thought to be the case in the study of trauma fiction, or whether they in fact problematize the concept of recovery, complicating our understanding of the connection between psychological and literary mechanisms.

This shift addresses a broader concern in literary memory studies. As Lucy Bond and Stef Craps suggest, psychoanalytic strategies of viewing the traumatic past in terms of the healing of an illness can have a depoliticizing effect in which the individual victim is denied agency and their

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<sup>193</sup> Bond and Craps, *Trauma*, pp. 12–16.

<sup>194</sup> Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, pp. 183–94; Litz et al., ‘Moral Injury’, pp. 702–04.

<sup>195</sup> Pederson suggests that he will prioritise ascertaining the role that literature and testimony could play in healing moral injury, a question which falls far beyond the parameters of this thesis. See Pederson, ‘Moral Injury’, p. 59.

suffering is disassociated from the systemic forms of injustice that caused their pain.<sup>196</sup> By developing new paradigms for reading implication such as moral injury, literary scholars can recast reconciliation as a more active process and explore how self-critical forms of individual reflection about the past can relate to broader critiques of socio-political systems that propagate violence. This explains why the combination of moral injury and implication has merit as a multi-faceted theoretical approach. It gives a differentiated impression of how Grossman and Böll view the relationship between personal, conscience-based forms of engagement with the past, on the one hand, and the underlying, structural factors that characterize association with wrongdoing beyond individual agency, on the other. Thus, while it refutes uncritical conflation between the psychological and the political, it also challenges the polarization of personal and collective forms of responsibility. For these reasons, I use the lens of moral injury — particularly in relation to the broader definition provided by Brett Litz’s team, though I do also draw on Jonathan Shay’s original understanding of the term when studying Grossman’s war writing — to compare Böll’s and Grossman’s representations of implication. Any such transnational comparison demands a nuanced ethical and practical basis, a subject to which I now turn.

### **Basis for Comparison: A ‘Multidirectional’ Memory of Nazism and Stalinism**

A comparison between National Socialism and Stalinism forms a central aspect of Grossman’s novel, *Zhizn’ i sud’ba*. It is most clearly presented via a conversation between an SS commander of a Nazi concentration camp, Liss, and his prisoner, Mostovskoi, a communist ideologue and representative of the Bolshevik revolutionary generation. Liss attempts to persuade his prisoner that, despite the war between them, the two political systems are in fact a mirror image of each other, with victory for either regime guaranteeing their ultimately shared aim: to destroy human freedom. Summarizing the scene in his article ‘Die Fähigkeit zu trauern’, Böll notes Mostovskoi’s initial condemnation of his captor’s suggestion that there are parallels between National Socialism and Stalinism. The German author agrees with Mostovskoi that the ideologies themselves were different, but, like the prisoner, Böll notes parallels in their effects:

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<sup>196</sup> Bond and Craps, *Trauma*, pp. 108–09.

Nein, nicht Ähnlichkeit in der Ideologie, sondern in der Wirkung des nackten, ideologie-entkleideten Macht und des Mißtrauens, das die Menschen zu absoluter Unterwürfigkeit, zu Feigheit, Ängstlichkeit verformt; Ähnlichkeit in der Korruption gerade der Akademiker, der hoch privilegierten Nomenklatura, die sich von Verdächtigen, Denunzierten, von Kollegin jüdischer Herkunft distanzieren, wie es auch an deutschen Universitäten üblich war, und zwar über Nacht, wenn auch nur der Schatten eines Verdachts politischer oder 'rassischer' Art auf jemanden fiel. (p. 219)

No, not a similarity in ideology, but rather in the effect of sheer, ideology-transcending power and of the mistrust that deforms people to become completely obsequious, cowardly and fearful; similarity in the corruption particularly of the academics, the highly privileged *nomenklatura* who distance themselves from those under suspicion, the denounced, and from colleagues of Jewish descent, as also became common at German universities, practically overnight, when even a shadow of political or 'racial' suspicion fell upon someone.

In reading Grossman's novel, Böll constructs his own nuanced cross-cultural comparison between these systems. He proposes that delineating any clear-cut contrast between these regimes is highly complex but suggests that their ideologies had similar corrupting effects on both human behaviour and societal institutions. This likely explains his keen interest in Grossman's work: like Böll's own texts, the Soviet author's late fiction was concerned with examining the lasting moral fissures wrought by totalitarianism, exposing the uneasy relationship between the past and the present.

Developing nuanced forms of comparison between the legacies of Nazism and Stalinism is of crucial importance to European memory studies. Here, I identify two main features of the debate that are particularly relevant to German and Russian studies and the relationship between them. First is the tendency, particularly in German memory studies, to problematize and denounce comparisons between memories of Nazism and Stalinism out of concerns about the relativization of the Holocaust as the greatest atrocity of the twentieth century. Second, and running contrary to the latter argument, is the inclination in Russian memory studies to propose that the German process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (i.e. of 'coming to terms with' the past) is a normative model, which Russian society has failed to replicate. I propose that literary comparison between Grossman and Böll can help scholars in both areas to look beyond these debates and consider more productive and ethically nuanced forms of comparison.

### *A Perilous Comparison?*

The challenges of comparing National Socialism and Stalinism has long caused heated scholarly debate. Similarities between Nazi and Stalinist ideologies, and particularly their foci on terror and dehumanization, were initially posited in political theory in the post-war period, perhaps most famously by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which was first published in 1951.<sup>197</sup> However, the apparent risks of emphasizing empirical parallels between the regimes became evident in the aftermath of the notorious *Historikerstreit* ('historians' dispute') in the 1980s. The controversy was sparked when the German philosopher and historian Ernst Nolte argued that many aspects of National Socialist violence were derived from earlier Bolshevik practices, particularly during the Russian Civil War of the early 1920s, causing concerns that the specific features of the Nazi genocide against Jews and other minority groups were being problematically elided and relativized through comparisons with other twentieth-century forms of terror.<sup>198</sup>

The fraught nature of these debates has had a substantial effect on subsequent memory studies scholarship. Aleida Assmann observes a broader anxiety or even taboo around comparisons between National Socialism and Stalinism in scholarship focusing on German or modern European memory.<sup>199</sup> The historian Dan Diner expresses this unease especially forcefully, arguing that any attempts at such comparisons were ideologically loaded and likely to be intended to suggest that Stalinist atrocities were 'verwerflicher' ('more reprehensible') than those of the Nazis.<sup>200</sup> More broadly, Assmann notes a scholarly tendency to view the memories of these systems as 'incompatible' amidst anxieties that they could be misremembered as two manifestations of a single, ahistorical 'totalitarian' phenomenon

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<sup>197</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2017), pp. 399–630. On the 'master thinkers of totalitarianism' in the post-war period see e.g. Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'After Totalitarianism — Stalinism and Nazism Compared', in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, ed. by Sheila Fitzpatrick and Michael Geyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1–37 (pp. 3–5).

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31. See also e.g. *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*, ed. by Rudolf Augstein, trans. by James Knowlton and Truett Cates (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1993).

<sup>199</sup> Aleida Assmann, 'Europe's Divided Memory', in *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, ed. by Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, and Julie Fedor (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 25–41 (pp. 29–30).

<sup>200</sup> Dan Diner, *Kreisläufe: Nationalsozialismus und Gedächtnis* (Berlin: Berlin, 1995), p. 53. This is Aleida Assmann's translation; see 'Divided Memory', p. 39.

rather than as distinct ideological entities.<sup>201</sup> While recognizing that these concerns require serious attention, Assmann asserts that they should not prevent scholars from acknowledging a ‘manifest asymmetry in European memory’ with victims of the Holocaust having received ‘growing public recognition for their suffering since the 1980s’ and those of Stalinist atrocities having ‘not yet been accorded a rightful place in Europe’s historical memory and moral consciousness’.<sup>202</sup> The dearth of remembrance for the victims of Stalinism appears particularly acute in contemporary Russia itself, whose memory politics remain markedly different from those of many western and other eastern European nations.<sup>203</sup> Assmann describes how victory in the Second World War has become the cornerstone of public memory in post-Soviet Russia with the remembrance of Stalinist repression generally limited to the activities of non-governmental organisations such as the Memorial Society.<sup>204</sup> The focus on the Soviet experience of the war has also overshadowed Holocaust remembrance, with Russia not ‘joining the Holocaust memory community’ established in the West despite the Red Army having liberated many of the Nazi death camps.<sup>205</sup>

Thus, Assmann suggests that there are socio-political and moral disadvantages to an entirely compartmentalized approach to remembering the two regimes. Echoing her, I argue that, on a cultural level, scholarly arguments that the memories of Nazism and Stalinism *cannot* be compared both ignore and severely limit the study of work by writers such as Grossman, who explicitly and strategically draws on this comparison due to his lived experiences of late Stalinist antisemitism and the Soviet suppression of his attempts to preserve Holocaust memory. By including the central

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<sup>201</sup> Assmann, ‘Europe’s Divided Memory’, p. 31; p. 39. See also e.g. Stefan Troebst, ‘Jalta versus Stalingrad, Gulag versus Holocaust: Konfligierende Erinnerungskulturen im größeren Europa’, *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 15.3 (2005), 381–400.

<sup>202</sup> Assmann, ‘Europe’s Divided Memory’, pp. 30–31.

<sup>203</sup> Comparing the memories of Nazism and Stalinism has also had a significant and somewhat different effect on non-Russian eastern European memory politics. Scholars such as Jelena Subotić and Stephen M. Norris have independently argued that central and eastern European nations have foregrounded remembrance of Stalinism and later communist repression over the traditional Holocaust-centred memory of their western European neighbours. They note that these states often emphasize national experiences of victimhood, overlooking complex questions of historical collaboration and complicity. See Jelena Subotić, *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance after Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019); Stephen M. Norris, ‘From Communist Museums to Museums of Communism: An Introduction’, in *Museums of Communism: New Memory Sites in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Stephen M. Norris (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020), pp. 1–17.

<sup>204</sup> Assmann, ‘Europe’s Divided Memory’, pp. 31–35.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

conversation between Liss and Mostovskoi in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, Grossman modelled and justified a comparison between National Socialism and Stalinism specifically within the field of literature. To ascertain the implications of his approach requires developing more sophisticated strategies of comparative literary analysis that recognize the important historical differences between these systems but simultaneously look beyond these empirical dissimilarities to ascertain why the author felt that comparison between the Nazi and Stalinist regimes was nonetheless urgent and beneficial. Such comparative analysis can shed light on instances of intercultural similarities or exchange between processes of memory formation in the German and Russian contexts, which also underlies Böll's interest both in Grossman's work and in broader unofficial Soviet literature about the Stalinist past. Naturally, study of such dialogues should be aware of instances where writers and thinkers may have equated historical experiences in an oversimplistic manner and should critically consider the ramifications of any such elisions. Nevertheless, it is vital for scholars to remain open-minded about such transnational intersections that might challenge modern theoretical assumptions about memory formation and potentially reveal a symbiotic flow of ideas and practices between contexts that have traditionally been considered separate or even entirely siloed from one another, such as post-National Socialist West Germany and post-Stalinist Soviet Russia.

### *Vergangenheitsbewältigung as a Normative Model*

The second part of this section focuses on a separate trend in scholarship on Soviet and post-Soviet Russian memory of Stalinism that is also worthy of note: the adoption of German memory practices as a model for the Russian context. Anthony Kalashnikov observes a tendency in scholarship to mount an essentially normative criticism of the condition of Russian memory.<sup>206</sup> He notes that the relative lack of public discussion of Stalinism and its legacy in Russia has led to suggestions that a 'false', 'distorted' or even 'warped' relationship with the past has emerged in the country, prohibiting

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<sup>206</sup> Antony Kalashnikov, 'Stalinist Crimes and the Ethics of Memory', *Kritika*, 19.3 (2018), 599–626 (p. 600).

its post-Soviet democratization.<sup>207</sup> Kalashnikov observes that the suggestion that Russian society needs to reach a point of closure about its violent past is directly transferred from, and often framed in negative contrast to, the (West) German notion of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the process of ‘coming to terms with’ or even ‘mastering’ the Nazi past.<sup>208</sup> For example, in his influential study of Russian memory, *Warped Mourning*, Alexander Etkind argues that Nazi fascism and Soviet communism have ‘left profoundly different memory cultures in their respective countries’.<sup>209</sup> In post-reunification Germany, he argues, a balance has been achieved between the public crystallization of memory via ‘hardware’ mechanisms — i.e. state-implemented forms of remembrance, such as monuments and museums — and a subsequent ‘software’ discussion of the trajectory and continual reinvigoration of remembrance, which is transmitted via cultural media such as literary texts. Etkind suggests that this equilibrium led to a general ‘consensus’ around the past being established in contemporary German society, allowing the lingering legacy of violence to be ‘exorcised’ and the possibility of its return in the public sphere to be reduced.<sup>210</sup> In post-Soviet Russia, however, he argues that the lack of memory ‘hardware’ means that no such consensus has been reached, allowing the past to be manipulated and relativized in the public sphere and leading to the systematic denial of historical responsibility for the Stalinist crimes.<sup>211</sup> Etkind maintains that this phenomenon has had a profound effect on late and post-Soviet Russian culture, with the ‘ghosts’ of the Stalinist past manifesting themselves via grotesque and gothic imagery in the nation’s late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century literature.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid. On ‘false’ memory see Catherine Merridale, ‘After the Cold War: Haunted by Stalin’s Ghost History Today’, *History Today*, 59.9 (2009), 32–38 (p. 34); on ‘distorted’ memory see Dina Khapaeva, ‘Historical Memory in Post-Soviet Gothic Society’, *Social Research*, 76.1 (2009), 359–94 (p. 370); on ‘warped’ mourning see Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

<sup>208</sup> Kalashnikov, ‘Stalinist Crimes’, p. 601; pp. 615–16. The characteristics of East German memory politics are not explored in detail here due to Böll’s connection to West German society and the fact that contemporary, reunified German memory politics are generally thought to have inherited the main tenets of West German remembrance culture. Put briefly, though, the East German model of memory was based on its state ideology of ‘anti-fascism’, which cast the East German population as figures who had come to critique or had long opposed the Nazi regime. It also placed a particular emphasis on remembering those victims of Nazism persecuted for having communist political beliefs. In contrast, the East German state viewed West German society as dominated by former fascist figures. See Moeller, *War Stories*, pp. 18–19. For a comparison between West and East German memory politics see e.g. Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>209</sup> Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, pp. 245–46.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. pp. 220–42.

As Kalashnikov notes in response to Etkind's argument, this tendency to cast German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as a model for a successful process of 'mastering' the past risks overlooking the complex — and ongoing — nature of debate around remembrance of National Socialism in Germany.<sup>213</sup> Since the emergence of this concept in the 1950s, intellectuals including Theodor W. Adorno have warned that narratives of 'mastery' over and 'coming to terms with' the past could become excuses to play down collective historical responsibility and shut down debate.<sup>214</sup> Indeed, the historical development of post-National Socialist German memory culture requires nuanced appreciation, as it presents a more ambivalent picture. Scholars have increasingly problematized the 'classical' linear narrative of German 'mastery' over the past, which posits a period of 'silence' over the Nazi era in the immediate post-war decades, through a phase of initial discussion of historical responsibility for the Holocaust in West Germany in the late 1960s and 1970s, towards the eventual centring of Jewish suffering in public discourse from around the mid-1980s.<sup>215</sup>

Recent scholarship on the immediate post-war years has shown how historiographical narratives of the initial 'repression' of the Nazi past do little justice to the complexity of West German memory politics in the 1950s. Jeffrey Herf warns that historiographical emphasis on 'silence' in the post-war years has led to the unhelpful assumption that the suffering of Jews and other minority groups was not discussed at all, overlooking the fact that the German population was forced to consider images and testimonies about fascist atrocities presented in the media and at public trials during the Allied denazification process between 1945 and 1949.<sup>216</sup> He notes that in the 1950s the precise role of remembrance and atonement in the formation of West German democracy was a significant point of political debate, with conservative voices such as then Chancellor Konrad Adenauer favouring a narrative of 'integration' of individuals involved in the Nazi state into democratic society and opposition figures such as the Social Democratic Party leader Kurt

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<sup>213</sup> Kalashnikov, 'Stalinist Crimes', pp. 615–16.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. See also Sackett, 'Germans, Guilt', p. 337 and Theodor W. Adorno, 'Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit', in *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II: Eingriffe, Stichworte, Anhang* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 555–72.

<sup>215</sup> For a concise description and critique of this 'classical' position see e.g. Eric Langenbacher, 'Changing Memory Regimes in Contemporary Germany?', *German Politics & Society*, 21.2 (2003), 46–68 (p. 46).

<sup>216</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory*, pp. 201–66.

Schumacher foregrounding the importance of historical justice for political transformation.<sup>217</sup> Robert G. Moeller also critiques historiographical narratives of post-war ‘silence’ by suggesting that individual stories of the past were in fact deeply embedded into the national consciousness at this time.<sup>218</sup> However, in contrast to Herf, Moeller asserts that public debate was focused on German wartime suffering and the experiences of returning prisoners of war and Germans expelled from Eastern Europe after 1945.<sup>219</sup> Thus, he suggests that memory discourse in early West German society led to a privileging of narratives of German victimhood over those killed in the Holocaust.<sup>220</sup>

Scholars have acknowledged the growing focus on the Holocaust in West Germany society in the 1960s and 1970s, following landmark societal events such as the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of 1963–1965 and the significant legacy of the student protests of 1968.<sup>221</sup> However, they have also emphasized that societal discourse around the Nazi past has continued to exhibit moments of conflict and ambiguity in later eras.<sup>222</sup> Shortly before reunification, such moments included the ‘Bitburg Affair’ of 1985 in which the then West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl invited US President Ronald Regan to visit a military cemetery where members of the SS were buried alongside German soldiers.<sup>223</sup> In the post-reunification era, significant public debate was ignited by the *Wehrmachtsausstellung* (‘Wehrmacht Exhibition’), a travelling exhibition in the mid-1990s that focused on the complicity of the German army in the Holocaust, and the prominent dispute in 1998 between the author Martin Walser and the then Chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany Ignatz Bubis over the writer’s suggestion in a public speech that remembrance of Auschwitz should not become a ‘Moralkeule’ (‘moral club’) or ‘Pflichtübung’ (‘compulsory exercise’) for the German population.<sup>224</sup> Eric Langenbacher suggests that such events reflect an era of intense memory debate

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Moeller, *War Stories*, pp. 1–20.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. p. 19. See also Herf, *Divided Memory*, p. 334. For details about the effect of these and other trials see e.g. Caroline Sharples, *West Germans and the Nazi Legacy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>222</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory*, pp. 334–72.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., pp. 351–354. See also Langenbacher, ‘Memory Regimes’, p. 53.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 58. See also Eric Langenbacher, ‘Still the Unmasterable Past? The Impact of History and Memory in the Federal Republic of Germany’, *German Politics*, 19.1 (2010), 24–40 (p. 25); Martin Walser, ‘Erfahrungen beim Verfassen einer Sonntagsrede’, in *Die Walser-Bubis-Debatte: Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Frank Schirmacher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 7–17 (p. 13).

sparked by the reunification, which saw a focus on the East German communist regime and a renewed concentration on German wartime suffering vie with Holocaust memory for attention in the public sphere.<sup>225</sup> He speculates that these memory conflicts may have been coming to an end at his time of writing in 2010, with the democratic institutions of the modern *Bundesrepublik* ('Federal Republic') having become strong enough to repel the societal forces that led to the rise of fascism in the twentieth century.<sup>226</sup>

Yet the recent resurgence of far-right political movements in Germany has led to renewed debates over the country's relationship with its National Socialist past. In 2020, the political scientist Sebastian Salzborn published an extended essay entitled 'Kollektive Unschuld' ('Collective Innocence') in which he argues that little critical self-assessment of the German population's role in the Holocaust had taken place outside of a small, left-liberal cultural and political elite.<sup>227</sup>

Differentiating between an 'öffentlich' ('public') memory — by which he means societal rituals and more collective forms of remembrance — and private memory — which denotes personal reflection by individuals on the role of their own family members in facilitating fascist atrocities — Salzborn argues that there had been a systemic conflation of the historical categories of victim and perpetrator in large parts of German society, once again leading to the pervasive foregrounding of German over Jewish suffering.<sup>228</sup> This polemical thesis — which bears many similarities with the Mitscherlichs' much earlier argument, a parallel which, by extension, would suggest that there has been little development in German memory since the late 1960s — seems once again designed to shock a German readership out of complacency in the midst of rising antisemitism and political extremism. Nevertheless, Salzborn's intervention shows that memory debates in Germany remain active and heated; the past is not 'mastered' but continues to play a palpable role in cultural and political life.

By drawing attention to the continued complexities of German remembrance of Nazism in the context of its adoption as a model for Russian memory of Stalinism, I do not wish to suggest that the

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<sup>225</sup> Langenbacher, 'Unmasterable Past?', pp. 36–37.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Samuel Salzborn, *Kollektive Unschuld: Die Abwehr der Shoah in deutschen Erinnern* (Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2020).

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., e.g. p. 11.

respective state of memory politics in modern Russia and Germany is analogous or even similar. The democratic nature of the modern *Bundesrepublik* clearly breeds very different conditions for remembrance than the Putin regime's growing authoritarianism and military aggression. In line with Kalashnikov, though, I argue that any such comparison between German and Russian memory practices requires a nuanced understanding of both contexts in order to ensure that scholars' theoretical assumptions are sound and that a single framework is not transferred between cultures without acknowledgement of its potential limitations and complexities.<sup>229</sup> Moreover, I suggest that casting the comparison between German and Russian remembrance in this hierarchical light risks implying that ideas around memory formation have only travelled between these contexts in one direction, i.e. from west to east. In fact, as Böll's interest in unofficial Soviet literature about Stalinism shows, there is some evidence of a symbiotic relationship between West German and Soviet Russian cultures in this regard, at least amongst intellectuals of the 'first generation' who lived under the Nazi and Stalinist regimes. Böll's striking inversion of the Mitscherlich's title in his review of Grossman's *Zhizn' i sud'ba* effectively inverts the tendency to view the German context as a model of remembrance for the Russian one: this notable German writer sees something genuinely significant in his Russian counterpart's work that he feels can aid the development of memory in his own national context. It behoves literary scholars to try to understand the nature of the intersection between these authors' approaches and to acknowledge that the development of helpful ideas is unlikely to arise in one context alone.

#### *Towards a 'Multidirectional' Memory of Nazism and Stalinism*

In summary, there are two somewhat contradictory currents in recent scholarship that have come to define comparisons between the memory of National Socialism and Stalinism. On the one hand, there is an anxiety — particularly in German memory scholarship — that any comparison between these two systems risks undermining the singularity of the Holocaust as the most heinous event in modern European history with troubling political and moral implications. On the other hand, there is the

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<sup>229</sup> Kalashnikov, 'Stalinist Crimes', p. 601.

simultaneous tendency, particularly in anglophone scholarship about Russian memory of Stalinism, to emphasize the importance of comparison between remembrance cultures and to view the German memory culture surrounding Nazism as a normative framework for a successful process of ‘coming to terms’ with the past without considering the nuances or desirability of such ‘mastery’ narratives.

Reconciling and moving beyond these competing arguments requires resetting the basis for comparing the memories of these two regimes, which, despite the differences between them, remain interlinked in European political and cultural consciousness due to their temporal and geographical overlap, as well as their confrontation during the Second World War.<sup>230</sup> I argue that this reset requires scholars to become more comfortable with the importance of differences, both between the Nazi and Stalinist systems and between the societies that followed them, and to acknowledge that dissimilarities are not only fundamentally important in and of themselves, but that they also heighten the significance of any parallels between the memories of these regimes that are ultimately observed. This renewed critical appreciation of difference can lead to the development of more nuanced strategies of comparison that account for the specific features of the violence and terror that each system caused, thus avoiding elision and relativization, whilst also drawing attention to unconsidered points of overlap or exchange in the development of separate memory cultures. I suggest that comparative literary approaches to memory studies represent an especially productive avenue for research in this regard, allowing scholars to investigate how writers such as Grossman and Böll have justified points of comparison across cultural boundaries.<sup>231</sup>

A helpful theoretical model for comparison between the legacies of National Socialism and Stalinism can be found in recent reconsiderations of the relationship between Holocaust remembrance and memory of colonialism and transatlantic slavery. Michael Rothberg’s work has again been

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<sup>230</sup> See e.g. Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Vintage, 2011).

<sup>231</sup> There has already been some significant work in this area. Leona Toker has recently undertaken a large-scale comparison of Gulag literature with literature of the Nazi death camps. She suggests that the prominent or specific characteristics of each context can highlight the more obscure features of the other, an approach she labels ‘intercontextual reading’. See Leona Toker, *Gulag Literature and the Literature of the Nazi Camps: An Intercontextual Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019). See also Anja Tippner, ‘Worlds Apart? Cross-Mapping Camp Literature from the Gulag and Nazi Concentration Camps’, in *Narratives of Annihilation, Confinement, and Survival: Camp Literature in a Transnational Perspective*, ed. by Anna Artwińska and Anja Tippner (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 30–47.

influential in this respect. He makes a distinction between ‘competitive’ memory — in which remembrance of particular atrocities jostles for space within a finite public sphere, a ‘zero-sum struggle over limited resources’ — and ‘multidirectional’ memory — which conceives of remembrance ‘as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative’.<sup>232</sup> Switching to ‘multidirectional’ forms of analysis, Rothberg argues, entails challenging the assumption that comparison was the same as ‘equation’, foregrounding points of difference as well as similarity and acknowledging that seemingly separate remembrance cultures had often developed in dialogue with one another.<sup>233</sup> In turn, therefore, he suggests that a ‘multidirectional’ approach can lead both to a better understanding of the memories of the Holocaust and slavery as separate phenomena, whilst also uncovering evidence of past intellectual dialogues that facilitate broader principles for political solidarity and historical justice in the present.<sup>234</sup>

Rothberg has begun to consider how the dichotomy between ‘competitive’ and ‘multidirectional’ memories might be similarly useful in framing the politically charged contrast between remembrance of National Socialism and Stalinism.<sup>235</sup> He suggests that these labels could help scholars to differentiate between comparisons of Nazi and Stalinist violence that are ‘competitive’ and thus attempts to elide the experiences of victims, and those instances that have facilitated genuine meditations on the challenges of memory across different contexts and histories.<sup>236</sup> Indeed, Rothberg notes that developing a more nuanced approach to comparative memory analysis is especially important in a twenty-first century, globalized Europe where differing emphases in public discussions of history are likely to emerge due to the continent’s simultaneously ‘postcolonial, postsocialist, post-National Socialist and postmigrant’ nature.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7; p. 18.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11; pp. 18–19.

<sup>235</sup> Michael Rothberg, ‘Between Paris and Warsaw: Multidirectional Memory, Ethics and Historical Responsibility’, in *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, ed. by Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, and Julie Fedor (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 81–101 (p. 91).

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83. Jessica Ortner also explores how ‘multidirectional’ memory could challenge competitive comparisons between the Nazi and Stalinist pasts. Examining German-Jewish fiction written by migrants from former communist territories, she argues that authors such as Barbara Honnigmann and Vladimir Vertlib create a ‘dialogue’ between memories of National Socialism and Stalinism. See Jessica Ortner, ‘The German-Jewish Migrant Novel after 1990: Politics of Memory and Multidirectional Writing’, in *German Jewish Literature after 1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 83–101 (p. 86).

In a more specific way, I believe that adopting the core principles of Rothberg's approach can be beneficial to both German and Russian memory studies scholarship. In the German context, it might allow scholars to acknowledge problematic examples of 'competitive memory' whilst becoming more comfortable with inter-contextual comparisons that are designed to enhance, rather than minimize, critical understanding of how National Socialism has been remembered. Crucially, it would also create space to acknowledge instances when intellectuals outside of Germany itself — and perhaps who, like Grossman, adopted a comparative approach — could actually help to shape memory of the Nazi past in the German context.<sup>238</sup> In regard to Russian studies, thinking in a 'multidirectional' way might encourage scholars to avoid an overly normative approach and to consider ways in which, despite the genuine difficulty of undertaking memory work in both the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts, certain Russian thinkers have had transnational influence on shaping public and cultural understanding of twentieth-century European history.

Thus, the notion of 'multidirectional' memory underpins the comparative element of this thesis. I argue that a comparison between Böll's and Grossman's works has particular potential for developing more productive and ethical comparisons between the German and Russian contexts, because both authors considered the legacies of both the Nazi and Stalinist regimes, and the links between them. The nature and extent of the writers' considerations of Nazism and Stalinism were of course different: where Grossman makes an explicit comparison between the two systems the central political-philosophical basis of *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, Böll's consideration of Stalinism, both as an individual historical phenomenon and in contrast to National Socialism, appears via his non-fiction essays on twentieth-century Russian literature and interest in the Soviet dissident movement.<sup>239</sup> Nonetheless, comparing the authors' approaches allows us to assess whether there were parallels

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<sup>238</sup> For Rothberg's own considerations of the relevance of 'multidirectional' memory in German studies see e.g. Michael Rothberg, 'Multidirectional Memory in Migratory Settings: The Case of Post-Holocaust Germany', in *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, ed. by Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 123–46.

<sup>239</sup> Beyond Böll's essay on Grossman's work, other examples of his writing about literature that describes the Stalinist past includes articles on the Gulag writing of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Evgeniya Ginzburg. See e.g. Heinrich Böll, 'Die verhaftete Welt: über Alexander Solschenizyns Roman "Erster Kreis der Hölle"', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by J. H. Reid (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008), xvi, 41–54; Heinrich Böll, 'Weine nicht vor Ihnen', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by Jochen Schubert (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006), xxi, 338–46.

between describing the National Socialist and Stalinist pasts in literature in the 1950s and 1960s, despite the very different West German and Soviet contexts in which such writers operated. Any such parallels between the authors' works give a clearer understanding of the distinct features of post-atrocity literature in both contexts, whilst also revealing underappreciated 'multidirectional' moments of memory formation between early German literary *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and attempts to consider the legacies of Stalinism in unofficial late Soviet culture. These cultural dialogues may not have fundamentally changed memory politics in their respective contexts in and of themselves; however, they highlight an underappreciated history of cross-cultural memory work that offers new material for exploring the relationship between literary practice and political activism.

### **Chapter Outline**

The comparison between Böll and Grossman highlights numerous parallels between their approaches. It shows that reflecting on phenomena akin to implication and moral injury is of crucial importance to both of their works. It elucidates their use of multi-vocal narrative forms that emphasize the importance of the subject and encourage open-ended, self-reflective forms of engagement with the totalitarian past. Thus, it shows how both Grossman and Böll view memory not only in terms of commemorating or mourning the victims of violence, though that is an important part of their approach, particularly in the Soviet author's case, but also in terms of reckoning with notions of implication and fostering moral responsibility in the present. This intrinsic connection between past, present and future leads both authors to highlight continuities across historical periods in a way that challenges notions of caesuras between eras. Both authors are also interested in comparison between historical contexts, with Grossman mounting his famous juxtaposition of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes and Böll coming to engage with the Soviet dissident milieu in his later career.

It is important to note, however, that these features of the authors' works did not develop precisely in the same way and so are not equally and consistently present in all of their texts. The progression of each of their careers after 1945 took many different turns, influenced by both the specifics of their own personal experiences and by the dissimilar political contexts in which they

wrote. Perhaps the best example of this lies within their respective representations of the Holocaust, which, though sharing some basic symbolic imagery, were informed by very different authorial perspectives. While in his writing of the late 1940s and 1950s Böll attempted to reconcile his own wartime experiences as a reluctant German soldier with the catastrophic realities of the Holocaust, Grossman's descriptions of the genocide were rooted in the profound sense of personal loss brought about by his mother's murder and his attempts to preserve Holocaust memory in the face of post-war Soviet antisemitism. These differences mean that the focus and structure of my comparison has required careful reflection. There are moments when the engagement with their works is better served by individual rather than comparative analysis. Furthermore, there are also places where it is necessary to consider anachronistic parallels between individual texts that, though not written contemporaneously, highlight ideas that were ultimately shared between the authors.

Regarding Grossman's work, I focus particularly on his major novels written after 1945. These are the two parts of his so-called 'Stalingrad diology' — *Za pravoe delo* (first published in 1952) and *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (completed in 1960 but published in the USSR in 1988) — and his final work, *Vse techet* (written 1955–1964 but published in the USSR in 1989). While this means that certain earlier and later examples of his work that merit further study will not be considered in detail here, the chosen texts represent the author's most significant attempts to narrativize memory of both the Nazi and Stalinist regimes. They most clearly reflect not only Grossman's developing focus on implication and moral injury, but also his broader political-philosophical ideas about history, ideology and responsibility. Regarding Böll's career, I have chosen three novels that highlight the continuities and changes in his approach to narrativizing the Nazi past in the developing context of West German memory politics, from the immediate post-war years, through the economic reconstruction of the Adenauer era and into the shifting cultural and social dynamics of post-1968 society. The main texts for analysis are *Wo warst du, Adam?* (1951), which can be seen as the final text of Böll's 'early' career, *Billard um halb zehn* (1959), which was his first commercially successful novel, and *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1971), which has been labelled the highpoint of his literary career and was

released just a year before the awarding of his Nobel Prize.<sup>240</sup> Much as in the case of Grossman's work, my specific focus on these novels dictates that other Böll texts that merit investigation are not studied in detail. However, the chosen novels provide the most effective means of showing how the lenses of implication and moral injury shed light on his writing in comparison with Grossman's work.

The analysis is split into two main thematic sections, which each contain two chapters. The first section — 'War Fiction' — investigates the authors' representation of the war period itself in their writing from the late 1940s and 1950s. The second section — 'Totalitarian Afterlives' — examines how they came to describe the legacies of the Nazi and Stalinist systems in the very different West German and Soviet societies that followed them.

The chapters in the first section analyse the authors individually. Chapter One examines Böll's initial representation of the war and the Holocaust in *Wo warst du, Adam?* in the context of other shorter texts from both the late 1930s and early post-war period, and his wartime letters. It develops two separate but related frameworks — 'moral renewal' and 'moral injury' — to highlight how Böll's early approach to memory simultaneously posits an overarching, collectivized narrative of societal religious renewal in the face of fascism, and a more subjectivized perspective on the past that sought to foster critical engagement with the catastrophic moral transgressions of the Nazi era. This chapter deepens our understanding of Böll's early work on a number of levels. Building on the work of Helena M. Tomko, it confirms that his early fiction challenges the conceptualization of 1945 as a historical break or 'zero hour' in German culture by highlighting how earlier German and pan-European Catholic intellectuals influenced his literary approach.<sup>241</sup> It also offers a new perspective on the features of Böll's representation of the Holocaust that caused controversy amongst scholars in the 1990s, viewing these aspects of his approach within the complex cultural context in which they were written. Finally, it proposes that Böll's nascent focus on implication and moral injury in this novel explains its unusual fragmented form, which psychologizes characters of various experiences in order to emphasize literature's role in exploring subjective, morally ambiguous perspectives.

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<sup>240</sup> Michael Perraudin, 'Gruppenbild mit Dame: The Humanising of the Narrator', in *The Narrative Fiction of Heinrich Böll*, ed. by Michael Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 176–97, (p. 176).

<sup>241</sup> Tomko, 'Böll's War', p. 360.

Shifting the focus to Grossman, Chapter Two uses the moral injury lens to investigate the development in the Soviet author's approach across the two parts of his Stalingrad dilogy, *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. As in the case of Böll's work, the analysis highlights a transition in Grossman's writing from a collective conceptualization of memory, in his case framed around a narrative of Russian national strength in response to Nazi invasion, towards a more individualized approach that is focused on notions of implication and moral injury. This investigation allows a more nuanced appreciation of the relationship between these two texts, which, though originally conceptualized as two parts of the same epic project, have long been thought to reflect separate or even entirely incompatible political perspectives on the Stalinist regime.<sup>242</sup> The prism of moral injury highlights Grossman's changing perspective on the war and explains his famous comparison between the Nazi and Stalinist states in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. Furthermore, this lens elucidates Grossman's emphasis on the importance of individually reckoning with implication in historical violence and oppression as a basis for recuperating human dignity and freedom. As suggested in the analysis of Böll's early work in the previous chapter, the individualized nature of this developing approach to memory also explains Grossman's gradual shift towards employing multi-vocal narrative forms, a preference that is even more clearly evident in the slightly later Gulag novel, *Vse techet*, which remained unfinished by the author's untimely death in 1964.

While the chapters in the first section resonate with each other through their shared focus on Böll's and Grossman's transition towards subjectivized narrative forms, the chapters in the second section are more directly comparative. Chapter Three compares Grossman's *Vse techet* and Böll's novel *Billard um halb zehn*. Highlighting parallels between the novels' multi-vocal narrative structures, I propose that they exemplify a potential poetics of moral injury, which includes narrative features such as silence, interruption, hesitation and demoralization. Furthermore, I argue that the clear focus on implication and moral injury in these texts highlights the authors' comparable perspectives on memory politics in the very different West German and Soviet societies that they describe. Both writers depict a confrontation between a victim of totalitarian violence and the

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<sup>242</sup> For an overview of this debate see e.g. Finney, 'Vasily Grossman', pp. 316–17.

implicated characters who wronged them in order to highlight the ambivalent and limited nature of memory discourse in their respective contexts in the late 1950s. Moreover, they each highlight the deep roots of totalitarianism in their respective national cultures. Thus, both authors challenge the notion of a complete historical break between different political contexts by highlighting the lingering legacies of violence and the potential for its emergence in extreme form. This perspective leads them to emphasize the importance of continually scrutinizing the legacy of the past for the present, and of behaving with personal integrity in the face of unchecked political force whatever its form.

Chapter Four looks beyond the moral injury lens to specifically consider the concept of the implication, and particularly Rothberg's suggestion that this ambiguous position can be 'transfigured' into new forms of collective action and transnational solidarity in the present.<sup>243</sup> It focuses on Böll's novel *Gruppenbild mit Dame* in the context of his status as a public intellectual and activist at this later stage of his career, not only in West Germany but also behind the Iron Curtain in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. The analysis adopts two separate but related comparative prisms in order to highlight the importance of Böll's interest in, and engagement with, Russian and Soviet culture for forming his literary and political vision during the Cold War. First, it embarks on a retrospective comparison between Böll's novel and the presentation of Grossman's philosophy of 'senseless kindness' in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, which emphasizes the importance of individual acts that go against the grain of rational self-interest and recognize the shared humanity of the political dehumanized other in the face of ideological power. Second, it reads Böll's representation of solidarity and collective action in *Gruppenbild* in the context of the author's own engagement with dissident figures in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. The political nature of this novel has long been viewed in the context of Böll's public criticisms of the West German conservative establishment.<sup>244</sup> However, these comparative lenses provide a fresh reading of the text by elucidating its internationalist and 'anti-ideological' element. They also show how Böll came to view the relationship between memory and politics in a manner which anticipates and nuances Rothberg's framework of implication. While

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<sup>243</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, pp. 199–203.

<sup>244</sup> See e.g. Matthaer Renate, ed., *Die subversive Madonna: Ein Schlüssel zum Werk Heinrich Bölls* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1975) for a relevant early collection of essays about the novel.

Grossman was unable to engage in such political activities due to the repressive nature of the Soviet regime and his death before the flowering of the dissident movement, an emphasis on the active and generative potential of reckoning with implication is also a fundamental aspect of his approach.

Comparison between Grossman and Böll along these lines produces a significant reassessment of their works. Yet I also propose that the ramifications of this comparison, and especially the analytical paradigms around which it is framed, have broader ramifications for the study of post-atrocity fiction in the German and Russian contexts, and beyond. In lieu of a traditional conclusion, I not only summarize my findings, but also outline how the lenses of the moral injury and implication might be helpful for studying post-National Socialist German and post-Stalinist Russian literatures, respectively, and for providing new avenues for comparison between them. I reflect on how the further development and application of these prisms can progress the fields of memory literature and trauma studies at large.

## **Section I: War Fiction**

## Chapter One

### Ambiguous Aftermath: Between ‘Moral Renewal’ and ‘Moral Injury’ in Heinrich Böll’s *Wo warst du, Adam?*

Heinrich Böll has long been associated with *Trümmerliteratur* (‘rubble literature’), a set of texts written by the ‘new’ generation of German writers who emerged after 1945.<sup>1</sup> In line with the characteristics of this movement, Böll’s fiction during the post-war interregnum and the initial years of the *Bundesrepublik* combines representations of *Heimkehrer* (‘returnees’) struggling to reintegrate into German society with recollections of the war period itself. This chapter examines the latter area of Böll’s post-war literary work and especially his representations of the Holocaust. Focusing on the novel *Wo warst du, Adam?* — which the author began to write in 1950 and published in 1951 — it delineates two related but separate prisms, which highlight Böll’s emphasis on fiction’s ability to foster engagement with the Nazi past. The first lens — ‘moral renewal’ — shows the influence of German Catholic inner emigration literature on Böll’s early approach, which casts memory in terms of collective spiritual salvation. The second lens — ‘moral injury’ — foregrounds Böll’s simultaneous focus on the psychological consequences of perpetrating or being implicated in violence. This underappreciated aspect of his early work undermines any suggestion of the potential ‘mastery’ of the past and instead views memory as an open-ended process focused on individual reflection. While the coexistence of these aspects of the text shows that Böll’s approach to narrativizing the Nazi past was embryonic and ambiguous at this stage of his career, I suggest that his writing from this period contains an emphasis on empathetic identification, individual subjectivity and continual scrutiny over the legacies of historical violence, which are constant elements of the author’s work across his oeuvre.

As I explained in my literature review, Böll’s representation of the Holocaust in *Wo warst du, Adam?* has generated heated debate, particularly in regard to his use of Christian imagery and concepts to describe Jewish suffering. Both sides of this discussion often frame their arguments around a central notion that an endemic ‘silence’ about the horrors of Nazism existed across German

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<sup>1</sup> On Böll, *Trümmerliteratur* and memory in the 1950s see e.g. Jennifer M., Kapczynski, ‘1952, Spring. Making History Visible’, in *A New History of German Literature*, ed. by David E. Wellbery (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 851–56 (p. 851).

society in the immediate post-war years. Psychoanalytically inclined critics of Böll such as Ernestine Schlant argue that his decision to choose a Catholic convert as the principal Jewish victim of the genocide deflects from the antisemitic basis of Nazi violence and thus embodies the broader denial of historical responsibility for the Holocaust that she suggests characterizes early West German literature.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Beate Schnepf and Robert C. Conard separately argue that Böll was amongst the first to describe the Holocaust in German literature in this novel, implying that his writing actually punctured a societal climate of silence rather than exacerbated it.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I suggest that assessing the complexities of Böll's early work requires readers to look beyond these debates in order to ascertain the constructive role that the author felt that literary narrative could play in fostering reflective forms of engagement with the Nazi past. I do not seek to overlook the problematic elements of Böll's approach, but I do propose that basing our analysis of his work around such concepts of silence and repression risks anachronistically transplanting a later framework onto literature that was written before such assumptions emerged and that experimented with different modes of representation within the social contexts of its own time.

Significant literary-historical work has suggested that the idea of an early 'silence' over the Nazi past and Holocaust skews our understanding of German literature of the post-war period. Stephen Brockmann argues that the Holocaust was recurrently thematized in German literature from the late 1940s; however, he suggests that these early descriptions have been disregarded by literary historians as they do not conform to later representational models.<sup>4</sup> Outlining these discrepancies, Brockmann observes that in the post-war period the Holocaust was initially conceptualized 'as one particularly horrific part of a general panoply of horrors, not as a unique and incomparable event'.<sup>5</sup> He also notes that post-war German authors often framed their descriptions of the Holocaust in idealistic, universalist terms rooted in Christian rather than Jewish imagery; this approach starkly contrasts with

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<sup>2</sup> Schlant, *Language of Silence*, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Robert C. Conard, *Understanding Heinrich Böll* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), p. 30; Beate Schnepf, 'Die Architektur des Romans: Zur Komposition von Heinrich Bölls *Wo warst du, Adam?*', in *Das Werk Heinrich Bölls: Bibliographie mit Studien zum Frühwerk*, ed. by Werner Bellman (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), pp. 109–26.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Brockmann, *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), pp. 6–13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

the documentary- or testimony-informed norms of literary representation that arose in Germany from the 1960s and the subsequent emphasis on specifically Jewish identity and experience.<sup>6</sup> Brockmann notes the form of ‘Christianization’ evident in such post-war fiction may now cause offense due to fears that the specific suffering of Jewish people in the Holocaust was being diminished.<sup>7</sup> Yet he also convincingly argues that scholars should not simply overlook or dismiss such early representations of the Holocaust that do not conform to later values, or merely label them products of pathological repression or denial about a topic about which society was otherwise silent.<sup>8</sup> As Brockmann suggests, investigating such early representational paradigms in a serious but critical manner can in fact improve current theoretical assumptions and debates.<sup>9</sup>

In particular, I maintain that this reassessment can challenge the tendency in Böll scholarship, and potentially beyond, to cast the formation of German memory as a linear progression from silence towards speech, rather than considering the challenging and lasting tensions between cultural continues and ruptures that characterized literary and societal conceptualizations of the Nazi past over many decades. Thus, while highlighting the clear problems and questions that arise from Böll’s ‘Christianized’ representation of the Holocaust, I propose that we should resist resorting to either sweeping condemnation or reductive justification of his approach. Instead, we should critically consider the specific roles in the memory formation process that Böll ascribes to fictional representation of the past. This demands a nuanced analytical approach that looks across the historical rupture of 1945 and assesses the legacies of Böll’s experiences of passive non-conformism to Nazism during the Third Reich on his subsequent literary work. It also requires looking beyond the traditional victim-centred focus of scholarship on post-atrocity fiction to investigate Böll’s representation of perpetrators and especially of implicated individuals who play a more indirect or passive role in the execution of terror and violence. I argue that reckoning with such morally ambiguous subject positions forms a central but previously overlooked aspect of Böll’s approach to memory across his oeuvre, including in nascent form in his early works.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

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

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

In order to explore how both this transhistorical perspective and this focus on perpetration and implication can help to explain why Böll felt that fictional representation of the Holocaust was so urgent at this stage of his career, this chapter is split into two main sections that offer overlapping readings of *Wo warst du, Adam?* through the prisms of moral renewal and moral injury. Written in the two years following the foundation of the West German *Bundesrepublik* in 1949, this novel reflects many of the ambiguities of Böll's initial post-war writing, before the author moved away from thematizing the war itself towards probing the lingering legacy of the Nazi past amidst the capitalist reconstruction of the Adenauer era. It also includes Böll's most detailed description of the Holocaust across his whole career. Via loosely connected episodic chapters, the text presents the later stages of the war in Hungary from the perspectives of a wide array of characters, from German soldiers and SS officers to the inhabitants of a local town and its Jewish ghetto. Thus, it offers a comprehensive overview of Böll's treatment of figures with very different historical experiences, including positions of victimhood, perpetration and implication.

The first section of the chapter focuses on 'moral renewal'. It builds on Helena M. Tomko's recent study, which highlights the influence on Böll's early writing of two Catholic cultural movements.<sup>10</sup> First, German Catholic inner emigrant writers, i.e. authors who opposed Nazism but remained in Germany under Hitler's rule and either did not publish their work or expressed their critiques of the regime in coded language; and second, the *renouveau catholique* ('Catholic Revival'), a pan-European literary movement that reached its zenith in the inter-war years, promoting a revitalization of Catholic spirituality and sacrament as a response to modernity.<sup>11</sup> Her study challenges the notion of a 'Stunde Null' ('zero hour') or a complete break in German culture before and after 1945.<sup>12</sup> Here, I examine examples of Böll's rarely studied earliest literary works from the late 1930s, which were unpublishable at the time of writing and include a selection of short stories, sketches and satires, and of his wartime correspondence. I explore how these Catholic movements shaped Böll's conceptual understanding of National Socialism as a deeply immoral, pseudo-religious

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<sup>10</sup> Tomko, 'Böll's War', p. 360

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

phenomenon, which demanded the broad Christian revitalization of society in response. I then suggest that Böll's representation of the Holocaust in *Wo warst du, Adam?* bears out this argument. The novel's core chapter, which involves a confrontation between the Catholic Jewish Holocaust victim, Ilona, and her murderer, the SS officer Filskeit, seeks to reverse the dehumanization of the other endemic to Nazi propaganda and violence.<sup>13</sup> In analysing this section of the text, I develop the work of Elizabeth Krimmer, who offers a nuanced critique of Böll's idealistic, universalist approach.<sup>14</sup>

The second section considers an alternative mode of Holocaust representation in the novel. It uses the moral injury lens to assess Böll's descriptions of both perpetrators and other individuals complicit and implicated in violence. This section offers a new reading of SS officer Filskeit's characterization to show how Böll probes the potential psychological ramifications of perpetrating violence in a manner that strongly aligns with the concept of moral injury. The section then examines Böll's representation of the Holocaust in the short story 'Todesursache: Hakennase' ('Cause of Death: Hooked Nose', written in 1947 but only published in 1983) to show how the moral injury prism also elucidates the author's approach to thematizing acts of 'omission', i.e. witnessing or failing to prevent an act that transgresses the individual's moral code rather than perpetrating it, experiences that are especially relevant to assessing the legacy of implication.<sup>15</sup> I draw on Joshua Pederson's recent reframing of Dominick LaCapra's concept of 'empathetic unsettlement' in order to show how Böll's approach is designed to incite a self-reflective form of emotional response to the past, which encourages a reckoning with the horrors of Nazism on an ongoing basis.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship between the modes of representation associated with these two prisms is complex. Both lenses highlight aspects of Böll's work that remain consistent across his career. For example, the foregrounding of individual subjectivity in the face of totalitarian terror and the attempt to foster empathetic identification across boundaries of identity and experience are not only evident in Böll's early work but are also important elements of his more fully developed conceptualization of memory that I will highlight in subsequent chapters. As Tomko suggests, such continuities show the

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<sup>13</sup> Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, p. 125.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 102–24.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 162–64; LaCapra, *Writing History*, pp. 40–41.

lasting influences of his experiences as a Christian non-conformist under Nazism on his later thematizations of post-Nazi German life and his sometimes polemical criticisms of unchecked or unwarranted uses of power in the democratic West German context.<sup>17</sup> These continuities also develop our understanding of the author's evolving narrative approach: I propose that Böll's focus on the ambiguities of individual emotion and psychology helps to explain the unusual structure of *Wo warst du, Adam?* The fragmented, episodic nature of this novel's narrative is directly linked to Böll's overarching emphasis on individuality, with each separate but related chapter foregrounding the subjective experience of a single character in order to deconstruct totalizing perspectives on the past.<sup>18</sup> As such, both parts of the chapter highlight another consistency in Böll's work, where memory is often enacted through multi-vocal narratives. I scrutinize this somewhat 'polyphonic' element of the author's approach both in this chapter and in my later analyses of *Billard um halb zehn* and *Gruppenbild mit Dame*.

At the same time, there are also important differences between the conceptualizations of memory highlighted by the prisms of 'moral renewal' and 'moral injury'. Where the overarching Christian universalist framing of moral renewal posits a potential 'endpoint' in engaging with the past via the fulfilment of spiritual revitalization, the thematization of moral injury strongly resists such notions of closure. I argue that it is this more open-ended view of memory as a process of constant scrutiny over the past comes to underpin Böll's approach as expressed in both his fiction and non-fiction from the late 1950s, which represents the most interesting moment of intersection between his and Vasilii Grossman's ideas. Piecing together this complex interplay of similarities and differences between the two prisms shows that, while Böll's early work is ambiguous and even problematic in places, it cannot be siloed from his later career; it represents a starting point from which his later approach to memory developed.

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<sup>17</sup> Tomko, 'Böll's war', pp. 376–77.

<sup>18</sup> Rebien, 'Dimensions of Engagement', p. 356

### **Cultural Continuity: Moral Renewal as a Universalist Paradigm**

In his history of the *renouveau catholique* or ‘Catholic Revival’, Enrique Sánchez-Costa explains how the writers of this movement, who included French and English authors such as Léon Bloy, Georges Bernanos and G. K. Chesterton, cast their ideas and religious worldview in direct contrast to the ‘political religions’ of fascism and communism.<sup>19</sup> These two political ideologies, Sánchez-Costa argues, aspired to achieve ‘the salvation of the class, nation and humanity solely through the powers of man, led by a totalitarian state’; to do so, they ‘demanded a total adhesion, a faith as demanding as that found in any religion’.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, he suggests that the thinkers of the Catholic Revival saw the potential for redemption of modern society not by creating a new kind of man or community that could replace God, but rather in reconstructing ‘the cultural, aesthetical, intellectual and spiritual edifice of Catholicism on the basis of a new aesthetic, philosophy and spirituality’.<sup>21</sup> This revitalized Catholicism was anti-institutional; it emphasized the potential of spirituality and holiness in everyday life and work in order to erode the boundary between a ‘religious’ and ‘worldly’ existence.<sup>22</sup>

The conceptualization of political ideologies such as fascism and communism in pseudo-religious terms — and in direct contrast to the actual religion of Catholicism — is helpful for understanding Böll’s earliest critique of Nazism, as well as the position of the broader German Catholic inner emigration movement by which I argue here that he was influenced. As Tomko explains, parts of the inner emigration were linked to the transnational *renouveau catholique* and can to some extent be viewed as its German manifestation.<sup>23</sup> Studying Böll’s wartime correspondence, Tomko shows that the German author, who was raised in a devoutly Catholic family that broadly opposed National Socialism, was strongly influenced by both these German and pan-European Catholic movements, which shaped his highly religious, internally but not actively non-conformist attitude towards Nazism.<sup>24</sup> In the 1930s and early 1940s Böll read numerous works by Catholic

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<sup>19</sup> Enrique Sánchez-Costa, *The Catholic Revival in Modern European Literature (1890–1945)*, trans. by Dustin Langen (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2018), pp. 311–12.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>23</sup> Tomko, ‘Böll’s War’, p. 360.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

Revival authors such as Bloy and Chesterton, and by Catholic inner emigration figures such as Theodor Haecker.<sup>25</sup> Along with the Russian writer Dostoevsky, whom the German author first read during adolescence, Böll cited these Catholic writers as major influences on his early work.<sup>26</sup>

The term ‘political religion’ that Sánchez-Costa cites in his study of the *renouveau catholique* — and which I suggest is a crucial concept for highlighting both this movement’s and the German inner emigration’s influence on Böll — is famously associated with the German American philosopher Eric Voegelin. When studying the rise of communism and fascism in the late 1930s, Voegelin argued that these ideologies had essentially manipulated the religious needs of the secularized modern societies in which they had developed, even adapting sacred symbols to strengthen their mass appeal.<sup>27</sup> Having emigrated from Austria to the United States following the *Anschluss* in 1938, Voegelin was not an inner emigrant; however, Tomko suggests that the philosopher’s metaphysical understanding of these ‘political religions’ as not only politically or morally ‘evil’ but also religiously so — i.e. as an actual embodiment of a satanic force — mirrors ‘the central concern of Christian inner emigration literature’.<sup>28</sup> She argues that, like Voegelin, Catholic inner emigrant writers felt that opposition towards Nazism had to be principally religious in nature, enacting a metaphysical expression of good that could counter the evil of National Socialism.<sup>29</sup>

Böll understood non-conformism vis-à-vis Nazi ideology in similar terms when first attempting to write in the late 1930s. His works from this period, none of which could be published at the time of writing but only on the release of his collected works in the early 2000s, are experimental in nature and comprise of short satirical stories and sketches that reflect the author’s devoutly Christian worldview.<sup>30</sup> In ‘NS Credo’ (‘National Socialist Creed’) — a short satirical text written in

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 363

<sup>26</sup> Böll discussed the influence of Dostoevsky, Chesterton and Bloy on his early work in a televised debate about the Russian author recorded in 1971. See Böll, ‘Dostoevskij — heute?’, p. 183.

<sup>27</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Die politischen Religionen* (Vienna: Bermann-Fischer, 1938). See also Hans Maier, ‘Political Religion: A Concept and its Limitations’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 8.1 (2007), 5–16; Helena M. Tomko, *Sacramental Realism: Gertrud von Le Fort and German Catholic Literature in the Weimar Republic and Third Reich (1924–1946)* (Leeds: Maney, 2007), p. 157.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 158. On Voegelin’s biography see e.g. Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, ed. by Ellis Sandoz (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Tomko, *Sacramental Realism*, p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> For the relevant volume of Böll’s collected works see J. H. Reid, ed., *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004), I.

1938 — the young Böll characterizes Nazi ideology as a pseudo-religious phenomenon.<sup>31</sup> Adopting the form of the Christian creed, Böll ridicules the cult of personality around Hitler as a form of quasi-deification and mocks the status of other senior Nazis such as Hermann Göring:

Ich glaube an den einen Führer, den allmächtigen Vater der Deutschen, Schöpfer des Dritten Reiches, welches ewig ist, und aller sichtbaren und unsichtbaren neuen Geilheit. Und an den einen Herrn Hermann Göring, des Führers treuen Folger, wiedergeboren aus dem Führer im Jahr 1923, Arsch vom Arsch, Dummheit von Dummheit, wahrer NS vom wahren NS, nicht gezeugt, nicht geschaffen, sondern berufen, eines Wesens mit dem Führer; durch ihn ist alles neu geschaffen für uns Deutsche, und um unseres Heiles willen ist er Politiker geworden.<sup>32</sup>

I believe in the Führer, the all-mighty father of the Germans, creator of the Third Reich, which is eternal, and of all visible and invisible lechery. And in the one Mr Hermann Göring, loyal follower of the Führer, born again from the Führer in 1923, arse from arse, stupidity to stupidity, true Nazi from true Nazi, not begotten, not created but appointed, of one being with the Führer; through him everything is created anew for we Germans, and for the sake of our salvation he became a politician.

Couched in crude satirical terms, the liturgical form of this text suggests that Böll conceptualized Nazism as an anti-religion that had dislodged Christianity as the driving force of German society. Indeed, towards the end of the satire, Böll turns his attention to another of Hitler's henchman and draws a direct link between the Führer and the figure of Satan, writing 'ich glaube an den Joseph Goebbels, den großen Geist und Kulturspender, der vom Führer und vom Satan ausgeht' ('I believe in Joseph Goebbels, the great spirit and giver of culture, who comes from the Führer and from Satan').<sup>33</sup> In a similar manner to the metaphysical view of the regime that Tomko ascribes to German Catholic inner emigrant writers, Böll here connects Nazi ideology to notions of demonic evil.

Further parallels between Böll's early non-conformist writing and Catholic responses to modernity can be observed via his emphasis on the need for Christian moral renewal as an antidote to the tumultuous political climate of the Hitler era. Tomko cites another short early text written in 1937 — entitled 'Anarchischer Monolog' ('Anarchic Monologue') — in which Böll adopts the narrative perspective of a German anarcho-communist, who is 'contemptuous of modern capitalist trends in late 1930s Germany' and who suggests that a close relationship exists between secularism and anarchy,

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<sup>31</sup> Heinrich Böll, 'NS-Credo', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by J.H. Reid (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004), I, p. 187.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

implicitly promoting Catholicism as its antidote.<sup>34</sup> She notes how in this short narrative Böll identifies multiple opposing ideological forces that imperilled Christian doctrine with potentially catastrophic consequences.<sup>35</sup> This idea connects the young author's text to the calls for the systematic restoration of religious faith as the bedrock of society that were propagated both by pan-European interwar Catholic intellectuals and German inner emigrants under Nazism itself.<sup>36</sup>

A number of scholars have noted how this belief in the necessity of German society's spiritual renewal was similarly reflected in Böll's wartime letters, which describe the author's experience during his six years serving in the *Wehrmacht* in France, Poland, Hungary, Romania and the Soviet Union.<sup>37</sup> Böll's attitude towards German society appears somewhat ambivalent in his correspondence and notebooks from this period, perhaps at least partly shaped by his use of coded language to communicate within the confines of Nazi censorship.<sup>38</sup> Strongly anti-militaristic and scornful towards the extreme nationalism of National Socialism, his letters nevertheless imply a desire for Germany to be victorious over the Allies in order to accelerate the end of the conflict.<sup>39</sup> The author was even attracted by the colonial aspect of the Nazi expansion into Eastern Europe.<sup>40</sup> In his notebooks during his time spent serving in occupied Soviet territory in Ukraine and Transnistria in December 1943, Böll describes an event for *Wehrmacht* soldiers that had been organized by a local German community and suggests that it had made him consider such a lifestyle for the first time:

Zum ersten Male gewinnt in meinem Gehirn der Gedanke Realität, daß ich vielleicht mit Anne-Marie nach dem Krieg vielleicht hier im Osten ein koloniales Dasein führen könnte... beim Anblick und Gesang der deutschen Kinder... Gott lebt, das muß ich wissen.<sup>41</sup>

For the first time the thought is becoming reality in my brain that after the war Anne-Marie and I could perhaps lead a colonial existence here in the East... at the sight and the singing of the German children... God lives, that I have to know.

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<sup>34</sup> Heinrich Böll, 'Anarchischer Monolog', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by J.H. Reid (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004), I, 106–7. See also Tomko, 'Böll's War', pp. 363–64.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, p. 52; Tomko, 'Böll's War', pp. 374–75. For an analysis of these letters in the context of contemporary German memory discourse see Frank Finlay, "'In this Prison of the Guard Room": Heinrich Böll's *Briefe aus dem Krieg 1939–1945* in the Context of Contemporary Debates', in *Germans as Victims in the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Karina Berger (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), pp. 56–69

<sup>38</sup> Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, pp. 119–20.

<sup>39</sup> Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, p. 52; Tomko, 'Böll's War', p. 371.

<sup>40</sup> Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, p. 121.

<sup>41</sup> Heinrich Böll, *Man möchte manchmal wimmern wie ein Kind: Die Kriegstagebücher 1943 bis 1945*, ed. by René Böll (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2017), pp. 73–74.

Six days later on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1943, Böll repeats this sentiment in a letter to his parents, highlighting how it had disrupted his otherwise strong desire to return to Germany as soon as possible. He writes, ‘ich sehne mich sehr nach dem Rhein, nach Deutschland, und doch denke ich oft an die Möglichkeit eines kolonialen Daseins hier im Ostens nach einem gewonnenen Krieg’ (‘I long for the Rhine, for Germany, and yet I often think about the possibility of a colonial existence here in the East after a won war’).<sup>42</sup> Such comments suggest that, despite his general opposition to Nazi ideology, Böll was not entirely immune from parroting certain elements of its rhetoric.<sup>43</sup>

The fact that Böll envisaged that such possibilities would emerge ‘after a won war’ confirm that he did not anticipate a devastating military defeat would inevitably befall Nazi Germany. Instead, his principal concern was the need to fight for a Christian spiritual revitalization of the country.<sup>44</sup> Writing to his wife Anne-Marie following news of the attempted attack on Hitler by Claus von Stauffenberg in July 1944, Böll describes how he had led a heated debate about the events amongst his fellow soldiers before remarking that it was ‘erschütternd’ (‘shocking’) how few Christians there were in the world, adding ‘wir werden nach dem Krieg mit allen unseren Kräften für das Reich Gottes arbeiten müssen’ (‘after the war we’re going to have to work for the kingdom of God with all our strength’).<sup>45</sup> The use of the word ‘Reich’ — here referring to the kingdom of God — was also commonly employed in Nazi propaganda to describe their conception of a fascist German empire; this example of how National Socialism co-opted religious language to frame its rhetoric chimes with Böll’s sense that Nazism represented an ideological anti-religion.<sup>46</sup> In line with the thinkers of the

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<sup>42</sup> Heinrich Böll, *Briefe aus dem Krieg 1939–1945*, ed. by Jochen Schubert (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001), II, p. 972.

<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that Böll claimed not to have known about the true extent of Nazi violence against Jews and other minority groups during the war itself. However, scholars such as Robert E. Sackett have argued that German soldiers like the author must have been aware of the violent reality of antisemitism at home and the catastrophic scale of the genocide at the Eastern Front at least to some extent. Elizabeth Krimmer suggests that in a letter from the Romanian town of Jassy written in June 1944, Böll refers to the massacre of eight thousand Jews in June 1941 via a coded allusion to a smell of blood in the streets. She states that ‘we must assume’ such allusions would offer ‘ample information to readers well-schooled in the circumlocutions of the Nazi dictatorship’. See Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, pp. 119–21; Böll, *Briefe aus dem Krieg*, p. 1069. See also Böll ‘Weil dieses Volk so verachtet wurde’, p. 243–44 for the author’s discussion of his knowledge of the Holocaust during the war; Sackett, ‘Germans, Guilt’, pp. 341–42.

<sup>44</sup> Tomko, ‘Böll’s War’, pp. 374–75.

<sup>45</sup> Böll, *Briefe aus dem Krieg*, p. 1093.

<sup>46</sup> Reid, ed., *Kölner Ausgabe*, I, p. 581.

Catholic inner emigration, his comment implies that Böll's opposition towards National Socialism had a fundamentally religious basis, emphasizing the need for the moral renewal of a society that had catastrophically deviated from Christianity.

This specific type of Christian non-conformism influenced Böll's embryonic approach to memory in the immediate post-war period, as expressed in his fiction. At least to some extent, Böll cast engagement with the immense moral fissures of the then recent past as a collectivized, overarching process akin to revitalizing Christian spirituality in response to the systemic and catastrophic immorality of Nazi society. Understanding this element of Böll's early literary approach — and its relationship with the other, more subjectivized aspects of his evolving views on memory that I identify through the prism of moral injury later in the chapter — demands a flexible analytical perspective. It requires acknowledging the ambiguities and drawbacks of Böll's use of Christian imagery to depict Nazi antisemitic violence in his post-war fiction, whilst noting its importance for studying the development of his engagement with the legacies of National Socialism.

*Political Religion and Moral Renewal in Wo warst du, Adam?*

The aforementioned meta-narrative of collective spiritual salvation is manifest in the post-war novel *Wo warst du, Adam?* The text's religious underpinning is especially embodied in two characters: Ilona, a Hungarian-Jewish schoolteacher and Catholic convert, and Filskeit, the SS officer who murders her. These figures have attracted significant criticism, with the latter being read as a monstrous villain who promotes an unsophisticated understanding of the mechanisms of Holocaust perpetration and the former as an essentially philosemitic representation of a victim who embodies a quasi-redemptive notion of 'good' in the face of evil.<sup>47</sup> By analysing the confrontation between the characters, I do not challenge the presence of this metaphysical framing, nor do I seek to deny its problematic implications from a contemporary perspective. Instead, I show how this approach corresponded to the above-identified emphasis on the need for spiritual renewal in Germany that had

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<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Ceryak-Spatz, *German Holocaust Literature*, p. 55.

developed in Catholic non-conformist culture under the Nazi regime in the 1930s and that subsequently came to influence Böll's own approach to memory in the immediate post-war years.

Outlining Filskeit's life story, the narrator suggests that his growing fascination with Nazi ideology was linked to his rejection of Christianity. Before the war, the character was an amateur choral conductor who, though not devoutly religious, had at one stage led a church choir. In the Nazi era, this religious ambivalence developed into a deeply rooted hatred of the local priest and the Christian practice he represented. Describing Filskeit's growing hatred of the priest, the narrator emphasizes the character's increasing disdain for the religious figure's smile and the feelings of Christian love that it implies:

Filskeit haßte dieses Lächeln: es war das Lächeln der Liebe, einer mitleidigen, schmerzlichen Liebe. Auch wurde manchmal das Gesicht des Pfarrers streng, und Filskeit fühlte, wie sein Widerwille gegen die Liturgie gleichzeitig mit seinem Haß gegen dieses Lächeln stieg. Dies Lächeln des 'Heiligen' schien zu sagen: zwecklos — zwecklos — aber ich liebe dich. Er wollte nicht geliebt werden, und er haßte diese kirchlichen Gesänge und das Lächeln des Pfarrers immer mehr.<sup>48</sup>

Filskeit hated that smile: it was the smile of love, of a compassionate, painful love. Sometimes the priest's expression also became severe, and Filskeit felt how his revulsion towards the liturgy rose at the same time as his hatred towards that smile. That smile of this 'saint' seemed to say: it's futile, futile, but I love you. He didn't want to be loved and he hated these church hymns and the smile of the priest more and more.

Filskeit's visceral hostility toward the religiosity of this priest highlights the stark opposition that Böll casts between Christianity and Nazism in this text. It is important to note that the historical relationship between the Catholic church and the Nazi state was much more ambiguous than Böll's antagonistic conceptualization implies, particularly with the Vatican's signing of the *Reichskonkordat* ('Reich Concordat') in 1933.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the church's institutional inaction over the rise of fascism would become an increasing concern for Böll over the course of the 1950s, leading to the publication of his polemical essay on the subject — 'Brief an einen jungen Katholiken' ('Letter to a Young Catholic') — in 1958.<sup>50</sup> At this stage, however, the Christian aspect of Böll's fiction was conceptual

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<sup>48</sup> Heinrich Böll, *Wo warst du, Adam?* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2007), p. 94. All further references will be to this edition and can be found in the text.

<sup>49</sup> On the public debate in West Germany surrounding the actions of the Catholic church under the Third Reich see e.g. Mark Edward Ruff, *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>50</sup> Heinrich Böll, 'Brief an einen jungen Katholiken', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by Viktor Böll (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2005), x, 441–58. See also Tomko, 'Böll's War', p. 361.

rather than political in nature: he proposes that the void left by Filskeit's irreligiosity is filled by the immoral 'religion' or cult of racist National Socialist doctrine. Following his departure from the church, Filskeit soon develops an interest in racist ideas, combining his admiration for Nazi ideology with his musical ability by publishing an article entitled 'Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Chor und Rasse' ('Interrelationships between Choir and Race', p. 95). He subsequently joins the SS, where he runs another choir made up of prisoners in the concentration camp that he administers. Much like in pre-war texts such as 'NS-Credo', the reframing and appropriation of common church practice — in this case liturgical choral singing — highlights the pseudo-religious nature of the Nazi regime, as well as its grave immorality.

Iлона is the spiritual antidote to Filskeit and the endemic irreligiosity that he represents. Böll emphasizes this character's faith not only via her conversion to Catholicism, but also by noting that she had at one stage taken steps to become a nun. She is even linked to the figure of the Virgin Mary: as Iлона is introduced into the narrative, the young German soldier with whom she forms a brief relationship — Feinhals — notes the 'Muttergottesstatue' ('statue of the Mother of God', p. 60) outside of her classroom and in doing so identifies her with this biblical ideal. The parallel is reinforced when Iлона is captured in the ghetto and transported to the concentration camp, where she takes care of her niece Maria and remains with her until moments before their deaths. Iлона had rejected the opportunity to become a nun due to her strong desire to have a family, so this adoption underscores the tragedy of her murder by showing the erasure of her desired potential future. Yet Iлона's status as a virginal mother also again associates her with Mary, ascribing this character a particular closeness to God. Thus, Iлона is characterized in diametrically opposed terms to Filskeit: she is an embodiment of Christian virtues such as love, charity and kindness. In this way, her characterization corresponds to Voegelin's suggestion that countering the metaphysical evil represented by the 'political religion' of Nazism required an equally strong manifestation of moral 'good' that might reignite the genuinely religious spirit of society at large.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of this aspect of Voegelin's thought and how it relates to the ideas of the German Catholic inner emigration by which Böll was influenced, see Tomko, *Sacramental Realism*, p. 158.

There is also contextual evidence to suggest that Böll drew upon earlier Catholic German culture and thought in Ilona's characterization. Telling parallel exists between this fictional character and the real-life figure of Edith Stein, the canonized German-Jewish philosopher who converted to Catholicism and became a Carmelite nun, before being killed in Auschwitz in 1942.<sup>52</sup> Stein was an influential thinker for German Catholic intellectuals in the 1930s: Tomko notes her particular significance for the inner emigrant writer Gertrud le Fort, with whom the philosopher maintained an extended correspondence.<sup>53</sup> She also suggests that Stein's 'commitment to vicarious sacrifice' — i.e. the notion that, in line with the example of Christ, all suffering was a means of atoning for the sins of humanity as a whole — formed the foundation of 'Le Fort's spirituality of inner emigration'.<sup>54</sup> This metaphysical conception of atonement and sacrifice in Catholic inner emigrant thought is helpful for understanding Böll's post-war novel. I do not necessarily propose that Ilona was directly based upon Stein, though the author would have been well aware of this figure, especially as she was famously associated with his home city of Cologne where she lived in a convent until 1938.<sup>55</sup> However, the link to Stein is at the very least conceptually useful: it reflects the particular meaning ascribed to Ilona's death in this text, which to Böll embodies the potential for humanity's spiritual redemption in the face of Nazism's utter immorality.

The potential connection to Stein highlights the challenges of studying such early German literary representations of the Holocaust. While Böll's melding of Catholic and Jewish identities via the figure of Ilona has come to shock some late-twentieth-century scholars, we should be wary of imposing too stark a differentiation between such identities when studying the literature of the immediate post-war period.<sup>56</sup> Brockmann notes that the notion that literature must clearly demarcate German and Jewish identities and explicitly thematize this difference emerged only gradually, with many post-war German-Jewish writers responding to Nazi antisemitism in universalist terms,

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<sup>52</sup> On Stein's biography see e.g. Joyce Avrech Berkman, 'Edith Stein: A Life Unveiled and Veiled', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 82.1 (2008), 5–29; Tomko, *Sacramental Realism*, pp. 155–56; p. 165.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155–56

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>55</sup> Avrech Berkman, 'Stein', pp. 26–29.

<sup>56</sup> Schlant, *Language of Silence*, p. 32.

sometimes even describing Christian conversion in a manner not dissimilar to Böll's work.<sup>57</sup> Thus, Brockmann argues that scholars should not allow current assumptions about the literary representations of these identities, or even about the very notion of identity itself, to restrict their ability to understand post-war writing that characterizes the interplay of such concepts in inherently different ways.<sup>58</sup> Situating a non-Jewish German author and former *Wehrmacht* soldier such as Böll within the context of these more fluid post-war literary identity paradigms clearly requires sensitive consideration. Crucially, however, this context suggests that identifying the origins and purpose of Böll's literary method can still be productive despite the fact that it drastically differs from later representational paradigms, which would likely foreground documentary or testimonial modes and maintain a more explicit focus on Jewish identity.

In fact, a comparison of Böll's depiction of the genocide with that of Vasilii Grossman reveals that the biblical imagery used in *Wo warst du, Adam?* may have been a more common, transnational strategy of early Holocaust representation than has been appreciated by Böll scholars. In the novel *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, Grossman also describes a female Holocaust victim, Sof'ya Levinton, who adopts a young child, David, shortly before their deaths in the gas chamber. This moment is widely accepted as an invocation of the image of the Madonna and child, which Grossman utilizes to symbolize the enduring individual characteristics of human love and kindness that he suggests counter extreme totalitarian dehumanization and violence.<sup>59</sup> Böll's and Grossman's scenes cannot be equated: the latter author's use of Christian imagery is clearly secularized in nature. Yet their employment of the same basic imagery suggests that Böll's use of Christian concepts when describing the Holocaust is less contentious than his harshest critics suggest; while it certainly differs from the norms of later representational conventions it does not necessarily undermine or fall short of their values.

Thus, there is a need to consider the ramifications of Böll's Christianized descriptions of the Holocaust in a careful and nuanced manner that considers the strengths, ambiguities and weaknesses

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<sup>57</sup> Brockmann, *Zero Hour*, p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. John Garrard, 'Stepsons in the Motherland: The Architectonics of Vasilii Grossman's *Zhizn i sud'ba*', *Slavic Review*, 50.2 (1991), 336–46 (p. 344); Maddalena, 'What is Human in Man', pp. 115–18. On the importance of the maternal love across Grossman's late fiction see e.g. Young, 'Testimony on the Margins', pp. 334–35.

of the author's approach. On the one hand, the broad confrontation posited between Filskeit and Ilona is actively designed to rebuff Nazi racial doctrine. Where Ilona is blonde-haired and blue-eyed, the Nazi ideologue Filskeit was twice rejected from joining the elite *SS-Totenkopfverbände* due to his black hair and small stature, causing him significant distress: 'niemand wußte, daß er oft stundenlang verzweifelt zu Hause vor dem Spiegel stand und sah, was nicht zu übersehen war: er gehörte nicht dieser Rasse an, die er glühend verehrte' ('no one knew that he often stood in despair for hours in front of the mirror at home, and saw what could not be overlooked: that he did not belong to this race, which he so fervently revered', p. 95). Indeed, many of the Hungarian Jews whom Filskeit encounters in the camp are, like Ilona, closer in appearance to the Nazi racist ideal than the SS officer himself. This deepens his loathing towards the inhabitants of the camp: 'es gab viele blonde Juden in Ungarn. Filskeit liebte sie noch weniger als die dunklen, obwohl Exemplare darunter waren, die jedes Bilderbuch der nordischen Rasse hätten schmücken können' ('there were many blond Jews in Hungary. Filskeit liked them even less than the dark-haired ones, although there were specimens among them who could have adorned any picture book of the Nordic race', p. 97). Filskeit's belief in the superiority of a racial 'type' to which he himself does not belong underscores the absurdity of National Socialist racist ideology.<sup>60</sup> He kills Ilona because she defies the racial dichotomy on which his and the Nazi regime's warped sense of superiority rests, yet which he himself also undermines through his own appearance; this exposes the absurdity of fascist doctrine according to which certain races and the traits associated with them are seen as superior to others. Moreover, by ascribing virtuous characteristics to Ilona, the author aims to counter and reverse the extreme dehumanization of the non-Aryan other inherent to Nazi propaganda.<sup>61</sup>

Yet it is ultimately an emphasis on the necessity for humanity's Christian spiritual redemption, not this specific critique of Nazi racial doctrine, that forms the rationale for the Filskeit-Ilona dichotomy presented in *Wo warst du, Adam?* I will return to the moment of Ilona's murder in more detail in the next section of this chapter; here, it is important to consider its fundamental

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<sup>60</sup> Margaret Reimchen, 'Heinrich Böll's Early Prose: A Discourse of War-Damaged Bodies' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of British Columbia, 2000), p. 120.

<sup>61</sup> Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, p. 125.

religious framing. The description of Ilona's death is preceded by her auditioning for Filskeit's camp choir where the SS officer is disturbed by her singing of the All-Saints' Liturgy. As Filskeit listens to her performance — and shortly before he murders her and orders the massacre of the other inmates — the narrator notes: 'hier war es: Schönheit und Größe und rassische Vollendung, verbunden mit etwas, das ihn vollkommen lähmte: Glauben' ('here it was: beauty, greatness and racial perfection, combined with something that completely paralyzed him: faith', p. 102). The specific wording of this quotation is significant. Ilona's physical undermining of the racial hierarchies of Nazi ideology is mentioned but it is clearly secondary to her faith, underlining the overarching importance of the Christian values relative to the description of the horrors of the Nazi crimes. In line with his critique of Nazi Germany depicted in his pre-war and wartime stories, diaries and letters, Böll's approach to engaging with the recent past in his post-war fiction has a clear metaphysical element. It presents National Socialism as deeply immoral and fundamentally anti-Christian, implicitly emphasizing the need for the collective spiritual redemption of German society in its aftermath.

Overall, then, Böll's Christianized approach to describing the Holocaust is, as Elizabeth Krimmer notes, a 'double-edged sword'.<sup>62</sup> Although seeking to 'undo the Othering of Jews' it also 'transfixes Jews into a Christian paradigm and endows their suffering with a redemptive meaning'.<sup>63</sup> Krimmer's critique points to the central risk that characterizes the memory framework of moral renewal that I have outlined in this section; she rightly notes that while the underlying emphasis on spiritual salvation in such texts highlights a potential means to 'stimulate healing and reconciliation', it does so in a manner that 'threatens to diminish the experience of the victim'.<sup>64</sup> Put another way, the paradigm of moral renewal potentially validates the critique that was classically made of fictional representation of the Holocaust: that fiction problematically distorts or sanitizes the historical record, seeking to offer simplistic stories of individual or collective salvation from catastrophic genocidal violence whose magnitude in fact resists narratives of redemption.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> On this scholarly concern over fictional representation see e.g. Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past*, p. 21. See also e.g. LaCapra, *Writing History*, p. 78.

The complex ramifications of Böll's approach raise important questions about how to treat his early work. While I certainly do not suggest that it offers an unproblematic representation of the Holocaust, I maintain that studying this early fiction as a serious if imperfect example of memory work is important in order to understand the development not only of Böll's career, but also of post-war German fiction and literary representations of historical violence more broadly. As Tomko suggests, the clear influence of existing German Catholic ideas on Böll's writing in this period challenges the traditional periodization of his early work simply as *Trümmerliteratur*, or as a sign of a clean break in German literature and culture after the fall of National Socialism.<sup>66</sup> Böll's adaption of Catholic inner emigrant ideas in his post-war fiction suggests that his experiences of this particular kind of religious, internalized non-conformism under Nazism had a profoundly influential effect on him that lasted across the apparent rupture, or 'zero hour', of 1945.<sup>67</sup> While the Christian framing that I have identified in this section becomes less dominant in Böll's later works, it remains a feature of the author's approach. As I explain in Chapter Four, the later novel *Gruppenbild mit Dame*, which was published twenty years after *Wo Warst du, Adam?* in 1971, features another Jewish Catholic convert, the nun Rahel Maria Ginzburg, who dies in the Nazi era due to the deliberate neglect of her fellow sisters and eventual starvation. Ilona and Rahel are not entirely analogous and the Christian element to this later narrative is more politicized than the metaphysical underpinning of *Wo warst du, Adam?* Yet the similar biographies of these characters — and their potential shared model in the historical figure of Edith Stein — highlights key continuities across Böll's lengthy literary career.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Böll's approach in the broader context of memory studies, though, is its psychologization of characters with a wide range of experiences of historical violence, and its consideration of the continuities and tensions between them. As mentioned in the Introduction, Böll felt that this ability to penetrate the surface layer of events to explore the ambiguities and ethical dilemmas of human psychology and emotion was in fact the defining quality of literary narrative in contrast to historical or political writing.<sup>68</sup> This element of Böll's ideas

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<sup>66</sup> Tomko, 'Böll's war', pp. 376–77.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>68</sup> Böll, 'Bekanntnis zur Trümmerliteratur', p. 60. See also Rebien, 'Politics and Aesthetics', pp. 84–85.

sometimes renders the act of reading *Wo warst du, Adam?* uncomfortable, especially as his probing of human flaws includes characters who are victimized by National Socialist violence. When describing Ilona's journey to the Nazi death camp, the narrator describes how a fellow prisoner attempts to rape the female character in the van in which they are travelling. The reader is given little information about this man, yet it is a striking and disturbing authorial decision to include this reference to an act of individual human immorality in the context of a group of people travelling towards their violent deaths. While Ilona is characterized as intrinsically virtuous, even saintly, this detail shows that Böll's commitment to highlighting the flawed, human qualities of the individuals he depicts also extends to descriptions of the victims of genocide. Such scenes challenge the element of simplification that his overarching emphasis on collective spiritual salvation appears to invoke. They encapsulate an observation that Krimmer makes about Böll's early work as a whole: that his texts 'embrace and even court contradictions' by insisting 'that complicity, innocence and guilt are complex categories that resist easy binaries'.<sup>69</sup> Understanding this challenging aspect of Böll's approach is best achieved by focusing specifically on his representation of particularly fraught or ambiguous experiences — those of perpetration, complicity and implication — through an alternative analytical lens: moral injury.

### **Moral Injury: Perpetration, Complicity and Implication**

Böll's representation of perpetration, complicity and implication has proven one of the most contentious aspects of his early work. A common criticism of *Wo warst du, Adam?* is that, beyond highlighting the diabolical behaviour of ideological Nazis such as Filskeit and other high-ranking members of the SS, it does not consider the systematic conformity and antisemitism of Germans outside of positions of power, even casting lower-level soldiers as equal victims of the regime alongside Jews and other minority groups in a largely ahistorical manner.<sup>70</sup> Böll certainly posits a close association between German rank-and-file soldiers and the victims of Nazi violence by depicting romantic relationships that develop rapidly across boundaries of national and ethnic

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<sup>69</sup> Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, p. 131.

<sup>70</sup> Bance, 'Heinrich Böll', p. 319.

identity.<sup>71</sup> In *Wo warst du, Adam?* this is evident in the brief relationship that forms between Ilona and the German private Feinhals. The swift development of their affection reinforces the text's broad metaphysical framing of the past, highlighting an idealistic notion that Christian love could transcend and challenge the racial hierarchies of National Socialism. Furthermore, the author uses the relationship to symbolize the overarching futility of war. Following Ilona's capture and Feinhals's re-joining with his military comrades, the two figures are described going into separate vans — one green and one red — that pass each other as the former travels to the concentration camp and the latter embarks on a military retreat. The crossing of the vans symbolically connects their fates.<sup>72</sup> Ilona is killed at the Nazi camp and Filskeit is later struck down by a shell just metres from his family home, which is adorned with a white flag, emphasizing the pointlessness of this soldier's death. The destruction of this nascent relationship represents the war's erasure of human life in broad terms.

Böll's critics suggest that the relationship between these characters overlooks the issue of the complicity of low-level *Wehrmacht* soldiers in genocidal violence.<sup>73</sup> Given the broad correspondence between Feinhals's perspective and Böll's own wartime position as a disaffected Christian German private, there is also a suggestion in the scholarship that an undertone of authorial self-exoneration exists in the implication that this character's only passive resistance to Nazism is morally justifiable.<sup>74</sup> Feinhals's passivity does indeed jar with his stated feelings of love towards Ilona. When she leaves him to begin her ill-fated journey to the ghetto in order to recover her family, Feinhals recognizes that she might never return and muses, 'es war vielleicht Anmaßung, eine Jüdin zu lieben in diesem Krieg und zu hoffen, daß sie wiederkommen würde' ('perhaps it was presumptuous to love a Jewish woman in this war and to hope that she would return', p. 70). The narrator later denies that Feinhals has any knowledge of the specific mechanisms of the Holocaust, stating 'er wußte nicht, was sie mit den ungarischen Juden machten' ('he didn't know what they did with the Hungarian Jews', p. 72).

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<sup>71</sup> While not discussed here due to constraints of space, another example of this motif in Böll's early oeuvre is the relationship between the disaffected German private Andreas and the Polish prostitute and member of the resistance Olinia in *Der Zug war pünktlich*. See Heinrich Böll, *Der Zug war pünktlich* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997). See also e.g. Conard, *Understanding Heinrich Böll*, p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> Bance, 'Heinrich Böll', p. 320.

<sup>73</sup> See e.g. Bartov, *Murder in our Midst*, pp. 143–44; Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 26–27.

<sup>74</sup> Bance, 'Heinrich Böll', pp. 316–18.

Nevertheless, the character's instinctive understanding of Ilona's fate renders his behaviour highly morally ambiguous: he knows that Ilona's death is likely impending but, despite his apparent love for her, he does little to intervene in it and instead casts himself as a passive agent within the broader chaos of war.

Yet Böll does not entirely shy away from exploring the profound moral ruptures raised by an individual's participation in, or more ambiguous association with, Nazi crimes. In fact, he nods to the issue of reckoning with complicity and implication in the very presentation of his text. Tomko observes that title and epigraph of Böll's novel reference the wartime diary of the inner emigrant thinker Theodor Haecker.<sup>75</sup> She explains that the epigraph — which reads 'Eine Weltkatastrophe kann zu manchem dienen. Auch dazu, ein Alibi zu finden vor Gott. Wo warst du, Adam? "Ich war im Weltkrieg"' ('A global catastrophe can serve many functions. Amongst them is to find an alibi before God. Where were you, Adam? "I was in the World War"', p. 6) — is taken from an entry written on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1940 in which Haecker 'questions the legitimacy of inner emigration when understood as an interior retreat from actual moral responsibility'.<sup>76</sup> She argues that Böll's reference to the text shows that he was 'painfully aware of the existential irony of inner emigration', indicating 'his own difficulty in justifying his position in the Third Reich' as a soldier who passively opposed Nazism.<sup>77</sup>

There are also numerous examples in Böll's early work of narratorial disdain towards lower-level German soldiers enthusiastically or cynically engaging with Nazi ideology and violence. Krimmer acknowledges that such moments are 'easily missed' because Böll's 'empathy with the suffering of average Germans is front and center, while German complicity with the regime is portrayed through subtle allusions and ironic twists'.<sup>78</sup> Yet she cites several such allusions, including when in Böll's earlier war novella *Der Zug war pünktlich* (*The Train was on Time*, 1949), the protagonist Andreas observes the genuine faith in Hitler displayed by his fellow privates and is

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<sup>75</sup> Tomko, 'Böll's War', p. 362.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, p. 123.

disturbed by their parroting of nationalist slogans and songs.<sup>79</sup> Both Krimmer and Robert C. Conard also note how Böll's descriptions of the Nazi concentration camp in *Wo warst du, Adam?* mirror the idea that would later be defined as the 'banality of evil' by the philosopher Hannah Arendt.<sup>80</sup> In her report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, Arendt proposed that many Germans participated in the Holocaust due to an uncritical attitude towards Nazi bureaucracy that normalized the horror of the atrocities in which they were involved, a highly influential hypothesis that nevertheless provoked controversy amidst concerns over its historical accuracy and anxieties that the notion of personal moral responsibility was being eroded.<sup>81</sup> Böll makes a similar point to Arendt in *Wo warst du, Adam?* when Ilona arrives at the camp and is struck by the seemingly ordinary atmosphere of its administration:

Sie war erstaunt, wie gelassen es in dieser Verwaltung des Todes zugeht. Alles ging mechanisch, etwas gereizt, ungeduldig: diese Menschen taten ihre Arbeit mit der gleichen Mißlaune, wie sie jede andere Büroarbeit getan hätten, sie erfüllten lediglich eine Pflicht, eine Pflicht, die ihnen lästig war, die sie aber erfüllten. (p. 101)

She was astonished as to how soberly this administration of death was conducted. Everything was mechanical, somewhat fretful and impatient: these people did their work with the same disgruntled mood as they would have done in any other office job. They simply performed their duties, duties that were annoying to them, but which they fulfilled.

Written a decade before Arendt's argument, this description explores a similar idea, emphasizing how ordinary German life under Nazism and the administration of the Holocaust were linked by the bureaucratic culture underpinning them both. The foreshadowing of Arendt's ideas shows that Böll engages with questions of complicity and implication more than critics of his early work suggest.

In fact, Böll's reflection on these topics within the narrative of *Wo warst du, Adam?* highlights the complexity of his authorial vision even at this early stage of his career. He certainly adopts over-arching or even quasi-metaphysical Christian imagery to frame his representation of the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 122. See also Böll, *Der Zug war pünktlich*, p. 18. In *Wo warst du, Adam?* widespread antisemitism amongst the lower echelons of the German military is also alluded to via the soldier Greck, who refers to a Jewish tailor to whom he sells his trousers to earn extra money via a racial slur (p. 56).

<sup>80</sup> Conard, *Understanding Heinrich Böll*, p. 30; Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, p. 123. See also Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006).

<sup>81</sup> The scholarship on Arendt's thesis is vast. For an early summary of the controversy see e.g. *Die Kontroverse. Hannah Arendt, Eichmann und die Juden*, ed. by F. A. Krummacker (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1964); for a more recent reconsideration of the thesis see e.g. Dan Diner and Rita Bashaw, 'Hannah Arendt Reconsidered: On the Banal and the Evil in Her Holocaust Narrative', *New German Critique*, 71 (1997), 177–90.

Holocaust, but he also simultaneously probes the flaws and contradictions of human behaviour in order to expose the ethical dilemmas and ambiguities that arise when considering the past from an array of subjective perspectives. In the remainder of this section, I explore this aspect of Böll's approach through the prism of moral injury. I utilize this lens in two ways here in order to show how it can transform our understanding of Böll's representation of both perpetration and implication. First, I use the moral injury lens to frame a new reading of Filskeit, who, though partly designed as the embodiment of evil as I have already explained, also reflects subtler details of characterization that reveal how Böll simultaneously undermines absolute categories of good and evil and the associated notion of societal moral renewal that he otherwise invokes. Second, I consider Böll's depiction of an implicated German witness to the Holocaust in the short story 'Todesursache: Hakennase'. I explore how this psychological focus explains both Böll's developing formal approach and his thematic conceptualization of memory, as well as the relationship between them.

### *Moral Injury and Perpetration*

Despite his rejection of Christianity and his enthusiasm for Nazi racial doctrine that I outlined in the previous section, Filskeit's behaviour in *Wo warst du, Adam?* is initially still to some extent dictated by an instinctive understanding of moral norms that cut against his ideological beliefs. This is shown via the fact that, though the character has joined the SS and taken an active part in the administration of the Holocaust, he has been unable to kill another human being himself before encountering Ilona. The narrator states that 'Filskeit tötete nicht gern. Er selbst hatte noch nie getötet, und das war eine seiner Enttäuschungen: er konnte es nicht' ('Filskeit did not like to kill. He had still never killed anyone himself, and that was one of his disappointments: he could not do it', p. 96). Filskeit's inability to kill represents the final surviving aspect of his humanity, something that he knows inhibits him from fulfilling the ideological demands of Nazism and the direct orders of his superiors. He wants to commit murder but is held back by an innate understanding that such an act would represent an extreme moral transgression. Of course, the ethical line between killing someone personally and helping to facilitate a system of mass murder is arbitrary: as a senior SS official, Filskeit has already

committed the transgression that he has instinctively avoided. The belated realization of this fact explains Filskeit's killing of Ilona despite his previous reluctance to perpetrate violence personally.

The concept of moral injury is particularly useful for understanding the psychological element of Filskeit's characterization. Ilona's singing of the Catholic liturgy leads Filskeit to recognize that his involvement in Nazi terror represents a fundamental moral transgression that comes into conflict with the last vestige of his inner morality, his unwillingness to kill. His sudden awareness of this conflict causes an immediate psychosomatic reaction of revulsion and extreme anger, which are common features of moral injury.<sup>82</sup> On listening to Ilona's performance and recognizing her profound religious faith, the narrator describes how 'Filskeit spürte, daß er zuckte, er versuchte zu schreien, aber aus seinem Hals kam nur rein heiseres tonloses Fauchen' ('Filskeit felt that he was spasming. He tried to scream, but only a hoarse, noiseless hiss came out of his throat', p. 103). This psychologically rooted convulsion quickly turns to rage as Filskeit shoots Ilona and orders the liquidation of the entire camp, including his choir, and shouts 'umlegen, verflucht — auch den Chor — raus mit ihm — raus aus der Baracke' ('damn it, kill them! The choir too, get them out, out from the barracks', p. 103). Anger and rage are associated with moral injury as the individual appreciates the way in which their behaviour has come into conflict with their internalized moral code and thus encounters initial feelings of guilt, shame and demoralization.<sup>83</sup> Filskeit's reaction to recognizing his moral transgressions is swift, visceral and extreme; Ilona's singing acts as a moral shock that confronts the SS officer with the extent of his immoral actions, triggering the collapse of the last trace of his humanity. Filskeit's response to the psychological ramifications of this realization — he personally commits violence for the first time — shows how the moral transgression is strongly reinforced after its identification in this case, emphasizing the character's now entirely irredeemable nature.

The individualized psychological aspect of this scene counters the emphasis on redemptive suffering that underpins its overall framing and thus renders the text much more ambiguous than the somewhat didactic Christian imagery otherwise implies. On the one hand, Ilona and Filskeit represent a metaphysical confrontation between good and evil in broad religious terms; on the other, Böll seeks

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<sup>82</sup> Litz et al., 'Moral Injury', p. 699; Pederson, 'Moral Injury', p. 46.

<sup>83</sup> Pederson, *Sin Sick*, p. 54.

to explore the individual psychology of this perpetrator, emphasizing his human aspect and its eventual collapse, and so endowing the scene with a sense of demoralization that undermines the potential for humanity's spiritual redemption that is simultaneously enacted. Given Filskeit's status as a senior Nazi official, the individualized focus on moral injury could simply be read as a part of Böll's general rejection of collective guilt in German society and his emphasis on personal responsibility in confronting the legacy of National Socialist atrocities.<sup>84</sup> Yet there are other areas of his early oeuvre that highlight this same phenomenon by looking not at the actions of senior Nazis but at the more ambiguous experiences of lower-level soldiers. Such scenes suggest that Böll's work emphasizes not only the importance of individual responsibility, but also the more systemic associations with power and violence inherent to implication. It is important to note that the use of this particular term here should not deflect attention from the direct complicity of many lower-level *Wehrmacht* soldiers in Nazi crimes, which has been highlighted by historians such as Omer Bartov.<sup>85</sup> The implication concept is simply analytically helpful for understanding Böll's literary representation of the past, which foregrounds subjective experiences of ambiguity and ethical dilemma. I propose that Böll's focus on such experiences fosters a feeling of shock or revulsion about the past that encourages the reader to scrutinize its legacy and counter the re-emergence of terror in the present.

*Todesursache: Hakennase*

The moral injury lens also elucidates Böll's approach to implication, especially as described in the Holocaust short story 'Todesursache: Hakennase', which was written some four years before *Wo Warst du, Adam?* in 1947. This story encapsulates the underlying ambiguity of the author's early conceptualization of memory. It suggests a clear form of identification between German soldiers and Jewish Holocaust victims in universalist terms; however, it also explores the psychological effect of witnessing or failing to prevent the violence that was perpetrated against the latter group and that thus differentiates their experiences from those of the former. The text describes a young German

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<sup>84</sup> Stolz, *Schuld*, pp. 79–81.

<sup>85</sup> Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Lieutenant, Hegemüller, who witnesses a Nazi massacre on the Eastern Front while attempting to save his non-Jewish Russian landlord, Piotr Stepanowitsch, who has been mistaken for a Jewish man and captured for execution.<sup>86</sup> On approaching the killing fields, Hegemüller sees the victims crowded together shortly before their deaths and experiences a deep sense of identification with them:

Ein dunkles Schweigen lag über der Menge, etwas merkwürdig Schwingendes, fast Flatterndes darin wie vom Wehen schwerer Fahnen, etwas Feierliches, und — Hegemüller fühlte es mit stockendem Herzen — etwas auf eine unheimliche Weise Tröstliches, Freudiges, und er fühlte, wie diese Freude gleichsam auf ihn einströmte, und in diesem Augenblick beneidete er die Todgeweihten und wurde sich mit Schrecken bewußt, daß er die gleiche Uniform trug wie die Mörder.<sup>87</sup>

A dark silence lay over the crowd. It was as if there was something strangely pulsating, almost fluttering in it, like heavy flags blowing in the wind. There was something solemn about it and — Hegemüller felt with a faltering heart — something eerily comforting and joyful. He felt this joy flow through him and in this moment, he envied the doomed and realized with horror that he was wearing the same uniform as the murderers.

This moment has shocking, even scandalous implications. Hegemüller's feelings of 'joy' for the victims are presumably inspired by their impending entry into the afterlife, and thus, by his Christian understanding, into the kingdom of God; however, his apparent envy of their position gives a warped, disturbingly positive impression of their situation, overlooking the reality of their suffering and any real sense of the extreme violence that they face.<sup>88</sup> Once again, Böll comes dangerously close to ascribing a redemptive or even sacrificial meaning to genocide.<sup>89</sup>

Yet the author simultaneously highlights the clear moral questions posed by this character's failure to intervene meaningfully in the racial violence described and explores the psychological effect of this inaction in a manner which anticipates the paradigm of moral injury. Hegemüller recovers Piotr Stepanowitsch moments before his execution and takes him to a field hospital, where the landlord quickly dies from his injuries. At the hospital, the German Lieutenant hears an antisemitic joke between a doctor and nurse that the cause of the landlord's death was his 'hooked nose', i.e. the way in which his physical appearance conformed to racist caricatures of Jewish people in Nazi propaganda. Hearing this crude antisemitic stereotype confronts Hegemüller with his own

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<sup>86</sup> For a summary and analysis of this text see e.g. Reimchen, 'War-Damaged Bodies', pp. 94–95.

<sup>87</sup> Heinrich Böll, 'Todesursache: Hakennase', in *Die Verwundung und andere frühe Erzählungen* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985), pp. 37–44, p. 40.

<sup>88</sup> Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, pp. 126–27.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

implication and especially his failure to intervene in the atrocity that he has witnessed. This realization causes immediate and lasting damage to his psyche. At the story's end, the narrator states how 'die einzigen Worte, die er [Hegemüller] fortan sprach, waren: 'Todesursache: Hakennase' ('the only words, which he spoke from that moment were: "Cause of death: hooked nose").<sup>90</sup> The quasi-pathological repetition of this phrase bares the traits of a profound moral injury. It emphasizes the character's immense feelings of guilt and shame over his failure to prevent the racist violence that transgresses his Christian moral code and particularly his stated belief in universal human affinity and equality before God. Moreover, the life-long nature of Hegemüller's affliction highlights the open-ended nature of these morally injurious feelings. This endows the text with an immense sense of demoralization, a feeling that society is irrevocably damaged by Nazism, which counters the notion of potential spiritual redemption that is otherwise fostered by the narrative's religious elements.

#### *Polyphony and the 'Unfinalizable' Past*

Böll's description (avant la lettre) of moral injury elucidates and unites his approach to memory and literary form. Short stories such as 'Todesursache: Hakennase' provide a condensed literary framework in which the intertwined moral and psychological conflicts of implicated characters like Hegemüller can be explored in detail. However, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, Böll's novels consistently show a strong preference for multi-vocal structures across his oeuvre. In the context of his early career, this preference is evident in the somewhat unusual form of *Wo warst du, Adam?* This text combines the panoramic scope of a novel with the condensed points of plot and characterization in its episodic chapters, which are more reminiscent of the short story.<sup>91</sup> Böll's use of such loosely connected episodes has previously been read as a nod to the inherent challenges of representing extreme violence in literary narrative. Noting that the moral and political dimensions of Böll's early writing are inseparable from his formal approach, Krimmer suggests that the author's employment of various narrative modes to describe antisemitic violence — specifically the adoption

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<sup>90</sup> Böll, 'Todesursache', p. 44.

<sup>91</sup> On the text's technical formation and its reception see Schnepf, 'Die Architektur des Romans'.

of a Christian parable in his description of the murder of a Jewish character in the earlier novel *Kreuz ohne Liebe* (*Cross without Love*, written 1946–1947, published in 2002) — amount to Böll’s ‘discussion of the problematic inherent in an aesthetics of the Holocaust’.<sup>92</sup> Kristin Rebien similarly highlights the fragmented narrative structure in *Der Zug war pünktlich* — a technique she likens to a literary mosaic — to argue that the author consciously reflects the inadequacy of traditional realism to describe the catastrophic scale of the Second World War.<sup>93</sup> In contrast, I argue that Böll’s formal approach is less intrinsically linked to meta-questions about the representability of extreme violence than these studies suggest. In fact, an emphasis on irrepresentability risks failing to recognize that Böll’s framing of both the war and the Holocaust through the prisms of moral renewal and moral injury outlined here are strategies of representation in and of themselves, even if the Christianized aspect of the author’s approach vastly differs from subsequent paradigms.

Thus, I maintain that, rather than in its focus on representability, Rebien’s argument is in fact more helpful in its assertion that Böll’s multi-vocal and fragmentary narrative approach refutes the notion of a singular conceptualization of the past and instead foregrounds the ambiguities of individual perspectives.<sup>94</sup> This link between Böll’s multi-vocal narrative approach and his views on memory can again be considered in relation to the transnational literary influences on the author’s early career, and especially his appreciation for Dostoevsky. In his seminal study of Dostoevsky’s poetics, the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that the nineteenth-century author developed an inherently ‘polyphonic’ narrative approach in which individual voices are presented through internalized or interpersonal dialogues.<sup>95</sup> One crucial effect of this dialogic approach is its emphasis on humanity’s, and therefore literary form’s, ‘unfinalizable’ nature, i.e. the on-going exposition and development of ideas and experiences that resist any totalizing or ‘monologic’ authorial perspective.<sup>96</sup>

The extent to which Böll’s narratives can be labelled ‘polyphonic’ in this sense is debatable. After all, as I explained in the first half of this chapter, Böll’s writing often reflects a strongly

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<sup>92</sup> Krimmer, *War in German Literature*, p. 112; p. 124.

<sup>93</sup> Rebien, ‘Dimensions of Engagement’, p. 356.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

<sup>95</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5–46; p. 63.

expressed Christian worldview. Moreover, given the author's later reputation as a moralist and polemical public figure, readers may be sceptical towards suggestions that he avoids expressing his own authoritative political or historical viewpoint in his fiction. Nonetheless, it is important not to let an established perception about the author's extra-literary views entirely obscure the complexity of their literary work. The adoption of narrative structures that emphasize the independent and ambiguous voice of the subject, and particularly the implicated subject, represents a constant across Böll's career. Even if the author does assert textual authority to some degree, he also seeks to complicate it by enacting a sense of ever-evolving subjective dichotomy and dilemma. Exploring how these more 'polyphonic' elements of his approach interact with its more authoritative or 'monologic' characteristics is crucial for understanding the tensions inherent to Böll's work.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, while Böll's approach may not be fully 'polyphonic' in nature, this concept can act as a helpful reference point against which to consider the specific link between the author's employment of multi-vocal narrative structures and his conceptualization of remembrance as a continuous — or 'unfinalizable' — human task. In the specific context of his early work, Böll's approach in this respect is nascent but striking. His initial descriptions of implicated and complicit characters have a disturbing or even shocking quality that encourages the reader to consider such individuals' human traits in spite of the often extreme immorality of their actions. To understand how this unnerving property forms the genesis of Böll's view on how the individual can and should critically engage with the violent past, it is helpful to consider Joshua Pederson's work on literature that engages moral injury themes. Pederson emphasizes the importance of 'bearing witness' to moral injury, i.e. reading or listening to the testimony of morally injured individuals.<sup>98</sup> He suggests that, while the testifier's moral or legal responsibility for their transgressions clearly cannot be overlooked, the process of 'witnessing' the psychological pain of the morally injured can be an important mechanism 'to learn, to remember, to warn, and to prevent' the immorality of their actions from being repeated in the

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<sup>97</sup> This tension has been considered by Donna K. Reed in relation to the later novel *Billard um halb zehn*, which I analyse in Chapter 3. Reed describes Böll's approach in this text as 'half-open' (or, by extension, 'half-closed'). She argues that the author simultaneously invites critical engagement with ideological or historical questions whilst also expressing a clear narrative position. See Donna K. Reed, *The Novel and the Nazi Past* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1985), p. 121.

<sup>98</sup> Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 156–69.

present.<sup>99</sup> To describe this effect, he draws on Dominick LaCapra's notion of 'empathetic unsettlement' which suggests that the process of bearing witness to descriptions of traumatic violence can lead to a feeling of convulsion that forces the individual to consider the profound implications of the past on an ongoing, emotional level.<sup>100</sup> Pederson suggests that this feeling of 'unsettlement' encourages the subject to recognize the past's 'continuing power to cut, to hurt, and destroy'.<sup>101</sup>

This sense of 'empathetic unsettlement' and its emphasis on fostering continuing feelings of self-reflective scrutiny over the legacies of the past is helpful for understanding the effect of Böll's representation of moral injury and its relationship with the subtly different attributes of his writing that I labelled 'moral renewal'. LaCapra contrasts the open-ended notion of 'empathetic unsettlement' with narratives that seek to soften or sanitize the disturbing realities of extreme violence in order to create 'optimistic' scenarios.<sup>102</sup> In some respects, this opposition maps onto the interplay between the frameworks of moral renewal and moral injury evident in Böll's early work. While the former aspect of Böll's writing relates to the prospect of potential spiritual redemption or reconciliation for society at large — an 'optimistic' endpoint — the emphasis on the morally injured subject's belief in both their own and society's irredeemable nature defies such notions of closure. Considering the violent past leads not to collective renewal in this case, but to an open-ended sense of demoralization that encourages the reader to reckon with its legacies on an ongoing basis. Put another way, the concepts of 'moral renewal' and 'moral injury' arguably relate to the 'monologic' and 'polyphonic' elements of Böll's narrative approach that I outlined above. Where the former concept seems to assert a unifying authorial message, the latter complicates such notions of textual authority by inviting continual engagement, reflection and critique.

The authoritative Christian voice inherent to the prism of moral renewal never entirely fades from Böll's thematizations of the National Socialist era. Its emphasis on innate expressions of religious spirituality remains an important aspect of Böll's later approach, evident in major novels such as *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. However, a promotion of the 'unfinalizable' nature of memory, i.e. of

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 162–64. See also LaCapra, *Writing History*, pp. 40–41.

<sup>101</sup> Pederson, *Sin Sick*, p. 163.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 162; LaCapra, *Writing History*, p. 78.

the importance of continually reckoning with the legacies of the past, forms the basis of Böll's subsequent views on historical justice and civic responsibility. Thus, it is the more open-ended notion of moral injury that encapsulates the fundamental trait of Böll's approach to memory. Over the course of the 1950s, Böll came to promote a self-reflective form of memory that emphasizes the importance of individually scrutinizing one's relationship with the past and its legacies in the present, an idea he labels 'aktive Nachdenklichkeit' or 'active reflectiveness' in the essay 'Wo ist dein Bruder?' ('Where Is Your Brother?'), published in 1957).<sup>103</sup> In the earlier texts studied here, this form of 'aktive Nachdenklichkeit' is only presented implicitly, being embodied simply via the 'unsettling' effect of his representations of moral injury. However, this element of Böll's approach becomes an increasingly crucial facet of his later literary works, which explicitly foreground the importance of reckoning with implication. I suggest that in his writing from the 1960s and 1970s, Böll's idea of 'active reflectiveness' eventually comes to explore the importance not only of acknowledging one's association with systems of violence and oppression, but also of transforming this recognition into new forms of socio-political solidarity and action in the present. In this respect, Böll's ambiguous and challenging early works contain the nucleus of his later texts.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The two aspects of Böll early writing identified here — moral renewal and moral injury — ultimately have a nuanced relationship. They are linked by their acceptance of a moral system that guides human behaviour, which in Böll's work is clearly rooted in his Catholic faith. However, where notions of moral renewal have quasi-evangelical implications, expanding the principles of Christian morality across the collective, moral injury reflects an internalized struggle to come to terms with the extreme moral ruptures of the Nazi era. The narrative exposition of these ideas requires different literary approaches, which in turn helps to explain Böll's somewhat contradictory use of form in texts such as *Wo warst du, Adam?* This novel combines sweeping historical panorama with a 'mosaic' of highly

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<sup>103</sup> Heinrich Böll, 'Wo ist dein Bruder?', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by Viktor Böll (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2005), x, 16–28.

individualized psychological portrayal.<sup>104</sup> The at times uneasy coexistence of moral renewal and moral injury in such texts likely also explains the dichotomous nature of scholarly debate about Böll's early writing. It renders narratives such as *Wo warst du, Adam?* ambiguous, providing evidence both for a hopeful depiction of the past that erodes boundaries of identity in the name of human universalism and for an open-ended examination of questions of German guilt, shame and demoralization. This tension renders it difficult to infer a consistent authorial viewpoint from the texts and has frustrated scholars who, considering the immense importance of the subject matter, seek a clearer exposition of a moral standpoint from the work where none is forthcoming.

In highlighting a tension between the agendas of moral renewal and moral injury, I do not suggest that these concepts should be completely disassociated from each other. Böll's representation of moral renewal cannot be siloed from the rest of his work; it is important for understanding the development of his career and the broader interplay of cultural continuities and ruptures that influenced his engagement with the Nazi past in the later West German context. Böll's employment of idealistic Christian imagery and his focus on internalized, spiritual forms of individual non-conformity towards unchecked political authority are recurrent attributes of his writing that reflect the lasting influence of pre-1945 Catholic culture on his later narratives, examples of which I will highlight in subsequent chapters. Yet this chapter has shown that the moral injury prism represents a particularly helpful means of assessing critical elements of Böll's approach. It shows how reckoning with the psychological ramifications of perpetration and especially the morally ambiguous experiences of implication are of crucial importance to Böll's early work. While the extent to which Böll narrativizes phenomena akin to moral injury varies across his subsequent career, reaching its zenith in the descriptions of Adenauer era society presented in the novel *Billard um halb zehn*, the focus on individual reflection regarding structures of historical violence and injustice highlighted by this lens remains a consistently important element of his work throughout the texts studied here. Ultimately, acknowledging this aspect of Böll's approach helps to connect the artistic, moral and political aspects of his literary work and prominent extra-literary engagement.

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<sup>104</sup> Rebien, 'Dimensions of Engagement', p. 355.

Before turning to these later Böll texts, though, it is important to show how the lenses of implication and moral injury offer similarly helpful means of reading Vasilii Grossman's war fiction. There are, of course, many differences between Böll's and Grossman's representation of the Holocaust and the Second World War, not least inspired by their experiences on opposing sides of this conflict. Yet, like Böll's work, Grossman's initial post-1945 writing also wrestles with different strategies of representing the past and gradually includes psychologization of both perpetrators of violence and more ambiguously implicated characters. Furthermore, the Russian author's approach to implication similarly emphasizes the importance of continually reckoning with one's association with structures of power and violence in the present. In order to highlight this aspect of Grossman's writing and its parallels with Böll's work, the next chapter focuses upon by far the most significant example of the Russian author's representation of the war period: his Stalingrad dilogy.

## Chapter Two

### The Just Cause Betrayed: War, Anti-Fascism and Moral Injury in Vasilii Grossman's *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*

Vasilii Grossman's wartime experiences were very different from those of Heinrich Böll. The Soviet author enthusiastically signed up to the war effort in the face of Nazi invasion in 1941, soon becoming an eminent journalist for the Red Army newspaper *Krasnaya zvezda* (*Red Star*).<sup>1</sup> He reported on many of the conflict's major events including the battle of Stalingrad, where he was noted for his bravery during lengthy spells embedded in fierce fighting at the frontline.<sup>2</sup> He also encountered the catastrophic consequences of the Holocaust, witnessing the liberation of the Majdanek and Treblinka extermination camps in 1944.<sup>3</sup> Yet, for all these differences, Grossman's war fiction raises some similar questions to Böll's early work. His writing reflects a tension between the adoption of tropes from pre-existing literature, in his case from nineteenth-century Russian realism, and a sense of narrative rupture caused by describing the extreme violence of the war period. He also comes to psychologize characters with a wide range of experiences of violence and atrocity. These characters include not only the victims of both Nazi and Stalinist violence, but also perpetrators and especially those individuals more ambiguously implicated in systems of terror and oppression.

This chapter investigates these developments in relation to Grossman's Stalingrad novels: *Za pravoe delo* and its more famous sequel, *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, which were written during a roughly fifteen-year period from the mid-1940s to 1960.<sup>4</sup> It shows how in *Za pravoe delo* Grossman largely invokes the established cultural paradigm of the Russian historical novel, and specifically Tolstoy's *Voina i mir* (*War and Peace*), as a means of casting the Russian nation at the vanguard of international anti-fascist resistance. It then offers a novel reading of *Zhizn' i sud'ba* through the prism of moral injury. It suggests that the chauvinism and antisemitism of the post-war late Stalinist system represented a transgression of the humanist ethics that underpinned Grossman's anti-fascism, explaining the more

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<sup>1</sup> Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128–50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170–82.

<sup>4</sup> Popoff notes that Grossman suggested in February 1945 that he had already been working on a Stalingrad novel for a year and a half. This implies that he began initial work on the first novel not long after the Soviet victory at Stalingrad itself. See Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 184.

broadly anti-totalitarian thrust of this sequel and its explicit focus on the psychological damage inflicted upon individuals implicated in the actions of the Stalinist state. This focus on implication represents a still underappreciated aspect of Grossman's late fiction and helps to explain his developing preference for narrative structures that foreground individual experiences and perspectives.<sup>5</sup> While the Soviet author's work clearly does not reflect the Christianized worldview apparent in the examples of Böll's writing discussed in the previous chapter, Grossman's conceptualization of memory across these novels does undergo a similar transition from an overarching emphasis on societal renewal in the aftermath of war, towards an individualized approach that highlights the importance of personally reckoning with the legacies of historical violence.

Despite their sequential plots and shared characters, the two parts of Grossman's 'Stalingrad dilogy' had very different fates. Long overlooked by scholars due to its apparent conformity to the norms of late Stalinist war literature, the first part, *Za pravoe delo*, was published in censored form in *Novyi mir (New World)* in 1952 before being released in various book versions throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Its sequel *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, however, was famously unpublishable in the USSR until the *glasnost'* era of the late 1980s. It is notable for its detailed representation of the Holocaust, its daring comparison of the Nazi and Stalinist states and its criticisms not only of Stalin but also of Lenin. Grossman intended to publish the novel and submitted a manuscript both to *Novyi mir* and the more conservative journal, *Znamya (Banner)* in 1960; however, the text clearly exceeded the reimits of Thaw-era de-Stalinization and was famously 'arrested' by the KGB in 1961.<sup>7</sup> A hidden manuscript was smuggled to the West and published in 1980, only appearing in the Soviet Union in 1988.<sup>8</sup>

My reassessment of these novels comes in the wake of renewed attention to the dilogy as a whole. The relationship between the two texts was long understood in terms of Grossman's apparent political epiphany after Stalin's death. In their introduction to the first published edition of *Zhizn' i*

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<sup>5</sup> In respect to this increasingly 'polyphonic' approach, I develop Ian Roland Garner's study of the dilogy in the context of Soviet mythologization of Stalingrad. See Garner, 'The Myth of Stalingrad', pp. 126–209.

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the text's publication history see Robert Chandler and Yurii Bit-Yunan, 'Afterword' in Vasily Grossman, *Stalingrad*, trans. by Robert Chandler and Elizabeth Chandler (London: Harvill Secker, 2019), pp. 897–926.

<sup>7</sup> Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, *Literaturnaya biografiya*, pp. 71–100.

<sup>8</sup> Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, *Grossman v zerkale literaturnikh intrig*, p. 9; Popoff, *Grossman*, p. 311.

*sud'ba*, Shimon Markish and Efim Etkind suggest that the author of the second novel 'не имеет почти ничего общего' ('has almost nothing in common') with that of its broadly conformist prequel.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Tzvetan Todorov notes that Grossman's political philosophy seemingly underwent a 'complete metamorphosis' between the writing of the two novels.<sup>10</sup> These comments essentially suggest that *Zhizn' i sud'ba* is objectivity 'better' than its prequel, casting the texts as irreconcilable reflections on the Second World War and Stalinism. In recent years, though, scholars have challenged this view by highlighting continuities between the two parts of the diology. Russian scholars such as Yurii Bit-Yunan and D. M. Fel'dman have revealed the multiple versions of the first novel that are held in Grossman's archive, showing the significant censorship that the text underwent and the intrigue that surrounded its drafting and publication amidst the antisemitic climate of late Stalinism.<sup>11</sup> In the anglosphere, interest in *Za pravoe delo* has been sparked by Robert Chandler's new English translation, which appeared under the text's original title — 'Stalingrad' — in 2019.<sup>12</sup> Combining various elements from both the printed versions of the novel and its unpublished drafts, Chandler's translation is an innovative hybrid that attempts to pick through the many layers of censorship to present a version of the novel potentially truer to Grossman's original conceptualization.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding the obvious uncertainties of establishing authorial intention in this way, Chandler's inventive work has led to a critical reassessment of the text in the West and even to it being labelled as 'one of the great novels of the twentieth century' in the anglophone media.<sup>14</sup>

The renewed interest in *Za pravoe delo* is to be celebrated. It represents an acknowledgement that, notwithstanding the impossibility of establishing a 'definitive' version of the text in either Russian or English, this novel demands study in its own right as an important example of Soviet war

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<sup>9</sup> Vasilii Grossman, *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, ed. by S. Markish and E. G. Etkind (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1980), p. III. See also Murav, *Music from a Speeding*, p. 174.

<sup>10</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), p. 48. See also Finney, 'Vasily Grossman', pp. 316–17 for an overview of this debate.

<sup>11</sup> Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, *Grossman v zerkale literaturnikh intrig*, pp. 320–49.

<sup>12</sup> Vasily Grossman, *Stalingrad*, trans. by Robert Chandler and Elizabeth Chandler (London: Harvill Secker, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Chandler and Bit-Yunan, 'Afterword', in Grossman, *Stalingrad*, pp. 907–26.

<sup>14</sup> Luke Harding, 'Stalingrad by Vasily Grossman Review — One of the Great Novels of the 20th Century', *The Guardian* (London, 3 June 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jun/03/stalingrad-by-vasily-grossman-review>> [accessed 14 May 2021].

literature.<sup>15</sup> Yet it remains important to acknowledge that differences do exist between the two parts of Grossman's dilogy which need to be studied critically in order to understand the development of the author's career. This process requires moving beyond debates around the worthiness of studying *Za pravoe delo* and its merits — or lack thereof — in comparison with *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. Instead, scholars should seek to establish the subtle interplay of continuities and changes across Grossman's dilogy, viewing the texts in terms of the author's shifting historical and moral perspective on the war period and political ideology in general.

I propose that the concepts of implication and moral injury provide a transformational means of reading Grossman's dilogy in this respect, highlighting crucial but as yet underappreciated aspects of his developing approach to thematizing the legacies of National Socialism and Stalinism. However, it is important to acknowledge that, given the epic historical scope of the texts discussed here, utilizing these specific tools means that certain other, equally important areas of Grossman's approach to memory are not discussed in detail. First, I do not focus on Grossman's striking psychologization of perpetrators in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, which includes descriptions of senior National Socialist and Stalinist officials and lower-level operators of the Nazi gas chambers. While this aspect of the novel is very significant and still somewhat understudied, I foreground instead the author's specific treatment of 'implicated' characters in order to highlight the importance of reckoning with more morally ambiguous experiences when it comes to understanding the relationship between these two texts.

Second, I also do not focus on Grossman's representation of Holocaust victimhood, which is clearly one of the most important aspects of his work. Grossman's depictions of the genocide are framed around two key scenes in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. He includes a letter from the character of Anna Shtrum, the mother of the text's protagonist and the author's literary 'alter ego' Viktor Shtrum, about her final days in the ghetto of a Nazi occupied town.<sup>16</sup> These experiences mirror those of the author's

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<sup>15</sup> The canonical Russian version is based upon the 1956 edition of the novel. Further editions were published in 1959 and 1964, but they contain only a very small number of minor changes. See Grossman, *Stalingrad*, p. 901. Due to the uncertainties of deriving any definitive version of the text from the multiple unpublished drafts in Grossman's archive, I refer to a publication of the canonical Russian edition here. See Vasilii Grossman, *Za pravoe delo* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1989). All references will be to this edition and can be found in the text.

<sup>16</sup> Lipkin, *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, p. 29.

own mother, who was killed in a massacre of around thirty thousand Jews outside the Ukrainian town of Berdichev in September 1941, and the letter references details from Grossman's research into this massacre as presented in his essay on the subject in the *Chernaya kniga* (*Black Book*), entitled 'Ubiistvo evreev v Berdicheve' ('The Murder of the Jews in Berdichev').<sup>17</sup> As I explained in the Introduction, Grossman was co-editor of this documentary project, an attempt to collect and publish material about the Holocaust, which was organized by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, but suppressed by the Soviet regime in 1948.<sup>18</sup> Grossman's materials for his work on this project contain a copy of an account by a Jewish survivor of the Berdichev ghetto, Lev Mil'mester, which forms an important source for his non-fiction and fiction descriptions of the Nazi-occupied town. For example, Mil'mester describes Nazi forces shouting antisemitic threats in German on arrival in Berdichev, which Grossman includes in his article.<sup>19</sup> He also references this detail again in Anna Shtrum's letter in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, highlighting the close relationship between his journalistic and fictional representations of the Holocaust.

The other scene about the genocide in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* focuses on the deaths of a Russian-Jewish character, Sof'ya Osipovna Levinton, and a child, David, in the Nazi gas chambers. The author once again utilized his journalistic research into Nazi camps such as Treblinka to present detailed descriptions of these characters' experiences from their transportation to the camps, arrival and eventual murders.<sup>20</sup> For example, in the novel Sof'ya sees an orchestra playing music as she arrives at the camp; Grossman's notes from his interviews with survivors at Treblinka reference the presence of an orchestra and he also mentions this detail in his famous journalistic essay about the camp, 'Treblinskii ad' ('The Hell of Treblinka'), which was written and published in 1944.<sup>21</sup> Both this scene and Anna's letter highlight the immense importance that Grossman ascribed to depicting victims of

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<sup>17</sup> Vasilii Grossman, 'Ubiistvo evreev v Berdicheve' in *Chernaya kniga*, ed. by Il'ya Ehrenburg and Vasilii Grossman (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AST CORPUS, 2015), pp. 40–48.

<sup>18</sup> Rubentsein, 'The Black Book', p. 755.

<sup>19</sup> For Grossman's copy of Mil'mester's account see RGALI, f. 1710, op. 1, d. 123, ll. 70–71. For the reference in the *Chernaya kniga* see Grossman, 'Ubiistvo evreev v Berdicheve', p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> There also references to Dachau in Grossman's plans for the trilogy, suggesting that this formed another model for his representation of the Nazi camps. See RGALI, f. 1710, op. 3, d. 10, l. 50; l. 56; l. 70. See also Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 170.

<sup>21</sup> For Grossman's notes from Treblinka see RGALI, f. 1710, op. 1, d. 110, l. 29. See also Grossman, 'Treblinskii ad', p. 138.

the Holocaust in fictional narrative as a means of ensuring that their memory was preserved.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Grossman articulated this crucial tenet of his literary work in two posthumous letters that he wrote to his mother in 1950 and 1960, in which he promised to immortalize her memory in his writing.<sup>23</sup> By not focusing on this aspect of Grossman's work here, I do not intend to suggest that it can be minimized as a fundamental tenet of his approach. My alternative focus on implication is simply designed to acknowledge another aspect of Grossman's narratives that, while having attracted less scholarly attention than his representations of victimhood, is also crucial for ascertaining precisely how the author came to thematize the totalitarian past. I argue that the specific strand of Grossman's writing highlighted by the intertwined concepts of implication and moral injury especially helps to explain the complex relationship between *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*.

This chapter is split into two main sections that highlight the similarities and differences between these two texts. The first focuses upon *Za pravoe delo* in the context of Grossman's wartime notebooks. It shows how the author described Russian national identity in a way that not only contributed to the late Stalinist cultural project of immortalizing the Red Army's victory in epic form, but also emphasized his own belief in the particular role the Russian people played in defeating Nazi Germany. This section argues that Grossman conceived of the war against fascism as an essentially moral struggle for universal freedom, setting up the ethical code that the author would later come to believe that the Stalinist state also transgressed. The second part of the chapter concentrates on this ethical contravention through the lens of moral injury, which emphasizes the extreme feelings of shame, guilt and demoralization that can follow the transgression of a personal moral code.<sup>24</sup> This section shows how Grossman anachronistically thematized post-war Stalinist chauvinism in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* in order to highlight the regime's betrayal of the principles of universal freedom and equality. It suggests that moral injury elucidates Grossman's conceptualization of memory in this novel in three key ways: it shows his underappreciated focus on the psychological ramifications of implication when considering the legacy of historical violence; it explains the transition in his work from

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<sup>22</sup> Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, p. 176–77.

<sup>23</sup> For copies of the letters see Fedor Guber, 'Pamyat' i pis'ma', *Daugava* 11 (1990), 96–118 (pp. 103–06); Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, p. 138.

<sup>24</sup> Litz et al., 'Moral Injury', p. 700–01.

invoking an overarching meta-narrative of societal revitalization towards to the more subjectivized approach characteristic of his late fiction; and it explains the key comparison in the text between National Socialism and Stalinism. The chapter's concluding remarks summarize how the prisms of implication and moral injury transform our understanding of Grossman's war fiction in comparison with Heinrich Böll's early work. This section reflects on the similarities and differences between their writing on this subject matter before their descriptions of post-Nazi West German and post-Stalinist Soviet societies are brought together for comparative analysis in the next part of the thesis.

### ***Za pravoe delo* and the Russian Historical Novel**

In his study of the Russian historical novel, Dan Ungurianu suggests the genre played an important role in defining the nation's self-image.<sup>25</sup> Romantic-era writers such as Mikhail Zagoskin outlined a set of 'unique' Russian characteristics, including positive traits like 'kindness', 'generosity' and the 'extraordinary ability to endure hardship'.<sup>26</sup> These attributes were usually defined in contrast to the characteristics of other nations or ethnicities, be they the minorities of the Russian empire or western European powers.<sup>27</sup> They were also defined by 'extremes' both in terms of the extent to which they manifested themselves and the situations where they were formed, which often included times of intense political tumult such as rebellion or war.<sup>28</sup> Although the style and form of the Russian historical novel changed along with aesthetic developments, Ungurianu observes that this 'extreme' nationality paradigm largely remained consistent in the genre throughout the nineteenth century, culminating in the publication of Tolstoy's *Voyna i mir* in the 1860s.<sup>29</sup>

This longstanding cultural paradigm had renewed relevance during the Second World War. David Brandenberger explains that the war period led to the emergence of Russian nationalism in Soviet culture as propagandists looked to pre-Soviet history to mobilize the population in the face of

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<sup>25</sup> Dan Ungurianu, *Plotting History: The Russian Historical Novel in the Imperial Age* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74–75.

invasion.<sup>30</sup> *Voyna i mir* became a particularly popular cultural touchstone in this context, with parallels recurrently emphasized between Tolstoy's descriptions of the Napoleonic invasion of 1812 and the Nazi offensive of 1941.<sup>31</sup> The novel was commonly reprinted and intensely read throughout the course of the conflict, including at the front and during the siege of Leningrad; it was also serialized on Soviet radio in 1941 and even turned into an opera by Sergei Prokofiev.<sup>32</sup> The promotion of Tolstoy's text continued into the nationalistic climate of the post-war era, when Stalin wished to find a *voennaya epopeya* ('war epic') that could immortalize the Red Army's victory and specifically emphasize the sacrifice of the Russian people in the fight against fascism.<sup>33</sup> In line with this desire, a number of Soviet writers released epic, 'quasi-Tolstoyan' novels during this period, including Il'ya Ehrenburg's *Burya* (*The Storm*) and Mikhail Bubennov's *Belaya bereza* (*The White Birch Tree*), which were both published in 1947.<sup>34</sup>

Grossman embarked upon his Stalingrad dilogy within the context of this cultural project.<sup>35</sup> Both parts bear obvious structural similarities to *Voyna i mir*: where Tolstoy frames the Napoleonic war around the intertwined experiences of the fictional Bolkonskii and Rostov families, Grossman describes the Second World War through the perspectives of the Shaposhnikovs and Shtrums in *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. Furthermore, just as Tolstoy intersperses these fictional experiences with descriptions of major historical figures, Grossman portrays Hitler, Stalin and significant Nazi and Soviet generals. Both writers also include lengthy authorial reflections on philosophy and history in their works.<sup>36</sup> However, while parallels with Tolstoy's epic are evident across both novels, Grossman's invocation of this model has subtly different ramifications in *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, respectively. As I will show in the second section of this chapter, the latter novel emphasizes

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<sup>30</sup> David Brandenberger, 'Stalin's Populism and the Accidental Creation of Russian National Identity', *Nationalities Papers*, 38.5 (2010), 723–39 (p. 727).

<sup>31</sup> Jochen Hellbeck, 'War and Peace for the Twentieth Century', *Raritan*, 26.4 (2007), 24–48 (pp. 24–25).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. See also Clark, 'Ehrenburg and Grossman', p. 619.

<sup>33</sup> Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, *Grossman v zerkale literaturnikh intrig*, p. 329.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Kahn, Mark Lipovetsky, Irina Reyfman, and Stephanie Sandler, *A History of Russian Literature* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2018), p. 725.

<sup>35</sup> Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, pp. 184–212.

<sup>36</sup> The parallels between Grossman's dilogy and Tolstoy's novel have been frequently observed by scholars. For a discussion of the Tolstoyan elements of *Za pravoe delo* see e.g. Anatolii Bocharov, *Vasilii Grossman: kritiko-biograficheskii ocherk*. (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1970), pp. 180–85. For a similar intertextual analysis of *Zhizn' i sud'ba* see e.g. Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, pp. 240–41; Hellbeck, 'War and Peace'.

the shared effort of Soviet citizens in defeating Nazi Germany across boundaries of nationality and ethnicity. In *Za pravoe delo*, however, these allusions to Tolstoy's epic are mirrored by Grossman's invocation of the aforementioned national identity paradigm typical of Russian historical fiction.<sup>37</sup>

This aspect of the first novel is best shown via the characterization of its central hero, Petr Vavilov, a collective-farm worker turned Red Army private. Allusions to this character's positive 'Russian' characteristics are made clear as he joins the Red Army and is contrasted to soldiers of other Soviet nationalities. During his initial training exercises, Vavilov is seen as incompatible with military life and is mocked by his comrades for his incompetence. However, he gains the respect of the battalion by standing up to a military driver from Central Asia, Usurov, and demanding he returns a shawl stolen from an old peasant woman. On backing down from the disagreement, Usurov shows his displeasure at this challenging of his actions by rhetorically asking 'знаешь как шофёра в Средней Азии жили?' ('you know how drivers used to live in Central Asia?', p. 279). This emphasis on Usurov's ethnicity while describing his unjust behaviour implicitly connects Vavilov's moral response to his own identity, suggesting that his courage, kindness and willingness to protect others are inherently Russian characteristics.<sup>38</sup>

This definition of Russianness via inter-ethnic contrast is also highlighted at the moment of Vavilov's heroic death at Stalingrad. During intense fighting near Stalingrad station in which all of his superior officers are killed, Vavilov is left only with Usurov and a young Ukrainian private named Mulyarchuk.<sup>39</sup> Despite his lowly rank, Vavilov shows his capacity for leadership by persuading these soldiers not to commit suicide, stating 'ты не томись, Усуров' ('don't despair, Usurov', p. 650). Given his earlier quarrel with this soldier, Vavilov's specific care for this character emphasizes his ability to transcend the concerns of his immediate condition, put aside his differences with his, pointedly non-Russian, comrades and accept his death for the sake of the nation. As Ian Roland

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<sup>37</sup> Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, pp. 63–75.

<sup>38</sup> Ellis, *Russian Heretic*, p. 73.

<sup>39</sup> Grossman based this scene on the story of a real-life battalion that was completely wiped out at Stalingrad station. See Ellis, *Russian Heretic*, p. 76.

Garner suggests, this sacrifice endows Vavilov's death with a sense of 'Russian messianism' that highlights the martyrdom of the Russian *narod* ('people') in protecting Soviet society as a whole.<sup>40</sup>

*Za pravoe delo and Grossman's Wartime Notebooks*

Grossman's invocation of this national identity framework clearly contributed to the broader Stalinist cultural project of memorializing the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in epic, nationalistic terms. However, as the lengthy process of censorship that *Za pravoe delo* underwent before its initial publication suggests, the novel was not entirely compatible with the ideological demands of late Stalinism; the text's focus on the experiences of Jewish characters was particularly controversial, as was its foregrounding of topics minimized in, or even prohibited from, official culture, such as cases of Soviet citizens' collaboration with the Nazis.<sup>41</sup> Grossman's attempts to keep these aspects of his narrative within the novel suggest that his approach should be considered not only as politically conformist, but also as a reflection of his attempts to tell the 'truth' of the war as he perceived it both during the conflict and in its immediate aftermath. Establishing Grossman's viewpoint in this regard requires analysis of his wartime notebooks. Scholars must consider 'personal' documents from the Stalinist period such as these carefully; Stalinist autobiographical materials were often not entirely 'private' and are unlikely to represent the unhindered reflection of selfhood that would likely be ascribed to similar diary-like documents in the Western context.<sup>42</sup> As Anthony Beevor and Lina Vinogradova note in their abridged translation of the notes, however, their discussion of topics such as desertion by Red Army soldiers would have almost certainly resulted in Grossman's arrest if they were discovered during the war itself.<sup>43</sup> Thus, while this material may not embody an entirely private viewpoint, it is still frank in certain respects and provides an insight into Grossman's developing impressions of the war.

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<sup>40</sup> Garner, 'The Myth of Stalingrad', p. 149.

<sup>41</sup> On this censorship process see e.g. Kling, *Tvorchestvo Vasiliya Grossmana*, pp. 35–36.

<sup>42</sup> On the issue of subjectivity in Stalinist ego-documents, see e.g. Jochen Hellbeck, 'Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts', *The Russian Review*, 60.3 (2001), 340–59.

<sup>43</sup> Antony Beevor and Lina Vinogradova, eds., *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army 1941–1945* (London: Pimlico, 2006), p. 71.

The author's notes from the early stages of the conflict are full of admiration for the Russian people, often describing them in the comparative terms utilized in his later fiction. Writing during the Soviet retreat through Ukraine in August 1941, Grossman describes the differing characteristics of Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians:

Черты сходства трех народов и черты различия, глубокого различия. Крепче, сильнее всех русский мужик; печальное и мягкое, лукавое и чуть-чуть неверное лицо украинцев; спокойная и черная тоска белорусов.<sup>44</sup>

There are some similarities between the three peoples and some differences, profound differences. Sturdiest and strongest of them all is the Russian; the face of the Ukrainians is sad and soft, sly and slightly unfaithful; the melancholy of the Belarusians is quiet and dark.

Just as in *Za pravoe delo*, the author uses a contrast between Soviet nationalities here to attribute a unique strength to the Russians, suggesting that they alone show the necessary attributes to inspire victory. Furthermore, the Russian people's characteristics are forged in the most dangerous fighting at the front, invoking a real-life manifestation of the connection made between times of war and the formation of national identity outlined in nineteenth-century literature.

Grossman was well aware of the specific literary origins of this identity model. Like many Soviet citizens, the author was drawn to *Voina i mir* following the Nazi invasion, reading it twice by 1943.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, on two occasions, once when withdrawing to Moscow in October 1941 and again when retreating to Stalingrad in August 1942, Grossman stopped at Tolstoy's estate at Yasnaya Polyana. During the first of these visits, Grossman links the evacuation of the writer's home in the face of the *Wehrmacht* to the story of the old Prince Bolkonskii in *Voina i mir* as Napoleonic forces approach his home at Lysye Gory ('Bald Hills'):

И с поразительной силой я вдруг почувствовал: вот они, Лысые Горы, вот он выезжает, старый, больной князь, и все слилось в нечто совершенно единое, то, что, было больше ста лет назад, и то, что идет сейчас, сегодня, и то, что описано в книге с такой силой и правдой.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Grossman expanded upon his original hand-written notebooks on his return from the war, which were then transcribed by his wife, Olga Guber. In the late Soviet period, a slightly censored version of these transcribed notes was published with certain passages describing the actions of the Red Army in Germany in the conflict's final stages removed. See RGALI, f. 1710, op. 3, d. 44 to f. 1710, op. 3, d. 48 for the original handwritten notes and RGALI, f. 1710, op. 3, d. 49 to f. 1710, op. 3, d. 51 for the full typed-up version. As I do not deal with the censored sections of the notes here, reference will be made to the 1989 published edition. See Vasilii Grossman, *Gody voiny* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo pravda, 1989), p. 259 for this quotation; p. 457 for details about Grossman's drafting of the notes.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

And with startling force I suddenly felt it was Bald Hills as he leaves, the old, sick prince. Everything somehow merged into one, what was more than one hundred years ago, what is happening today and what was described in the book with such force and truth.<sup>47</sup>

This comment compounds the parallels between Russia's condition in 1812 and 1941, with a foreign force once again posing an existential threat to the nation. The strength of this connection was so apparent to the author that he would later directly transfer this experience into *Za pravoe delo*. In this text, the political commissar Krymov also stops in Yasnaya Polyana on the road to Tula in 1942:

И яснополянский дом показался ему живым, страдающим среди сотен и тысяч живых, страдающих русских домов. Он с поразительной ясностью представил себе: вот они, Лысые Горы, вот выезжает старый больной князь — и все как бы слилось: то, что происходит сейчас, сегодня, и то, что описано Толстом в книге с такой силой и правдой, что стало высшей реальностью прошедшей сто тридцать лет назад войны. (p. 202)

And the house at Yasnaya Polyana seemed alive to him, suffering amongst hundreds and thousands of living, suffering Russian homes. And with startlingly clarity he imagined that it was Bald Hills as the old, sick prince leaves — it was as if everything had merged: what's happening now, today, and what Tolstoy described with such force and truth in his book, which became the higher reality of the war from one hundred and thirty years ago.

The near-identical language between the notebook entry and the novel highlights how much of his own personal experience of war Grossman utilized in his war fiction. The equation of Bolkonskii's fictional estate and the generalized Russian home also emphasizes the extent to which *Voina i mir* was foundational to Grossman's view of the national consciousness during this period.

Most significantly, though, the suggestion that Tolstoy's impression of the Napoleonic war in his novel had come to represent the 'higher reality' of the era shows the special role that Grossman felt literary representation of the past could play in capturing the atmosphere of a historical period and immortalizing it for future generations. It is this specific quality of narrative that Grossman sought to emulate in *Za pravoe delo*. At the early stage of the war described in this novel, Grossman felt that the specific relationship between narrative, history and identity encapsulated in Russian historical fiction, especially in the language and form of Tolstoy's epic, was appropriate for describing the suffering inflicted by the Nazi invasion and the strength of national character required to defeat it.

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<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that both here and in the quotation from *Za pravoe delo* cited later, Grossman actually misquotes Tolstoy's novel. The old prince Bolkonskii does not leave Lysye Gory but in fact dies there.

If we accept that Grossman's invocation of the epic form of *Voyna i mir* was not only an attempt to conform to the demands of late Stalinist culture, but also a reflection of a more personal impression of the war itself, this of course still raises various questions about the extent to which his apparent emphasis on Russian national identity here jars with his broader humanistic views. After all, Grossman's humanistic position is not only evident in his later works from the post-Stalinist era, but has also been highlighted in more subtle form in his pre-war writing.<sup>48</sup> Such observations suggest that, despite the obvious changes in tone between his early and later narratives, the author's career should not be understood in terms of a stark ideological shift from 'nationalism' to 'cosmopolitanism' in a contemporary, Western sense.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, it is important to note that *Za pravoe delo* was drafted after Grossman commenced his journalistic research on the Holocaust, including his visits to the Nazi camps at Majdanek and Treblinka, horrific experiences that already made him acutely sensitive to the terrible dangers of ideological nationalism, whatever its form.

Ascertaining Grossman's developing approach demands a nuanced appreciation of his understanding of concepts such as 'national identity' and 'cosmopolitanism'. Encountering the catastrophic consequences of the Holocaust inevitably had a profound effect on the author's Jewish identity. Scholars such as Shimon Markish and Yuri Slezkine have argued that the author experienced the 'call to blood' felt by many culturally assimilated, secular Soviet Jews who were forced to identify with their Jewishness due to Nazi persecution.<sup>50</sup> As scholars such as Polly Zavadvker have shown, though, Grossman's Jewish roots were always significant to the author.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, he argued that a feeling of ethnic identity did not have to inspire nationalism, particularly in the case of persecuted or oppressed peoples. Grossman's thought in this respect is shown in the later text *Dobro vam!* (generally known in English under the title *An Armenian Sketchbook*), a memoir about his travels in

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<sup>48</sup> See e.g. Ellis, *Russian Heretic*, pp. 21–26; pp. 168–71.

<sup>49</sup> Ellis, *Russian Heretic*, pp. 21–26; pp. 168–71.

<sup>50</sup> Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 284–88. See also Shimon Markish, 'Primer Vasiliya Grossmana', in *Na evreiskie temy*, ed. by Shimon Markish (Jerusalem: Biblioteka-Aliya, 1985), II, 341–489 (pp. 342–44). For a summary and critique of the 'call to blood' thesis outlined here see Zavadvker, 'Vasilii Grossman', p. 285; p. 287–89.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 285–86; pp. 289–92.

Armenia for a translation project in 1961, shortly after the confiscation of *Zhizn' i sud'ba*.<sup>52</sup> This text was written on Grossman's return to Russia in 1962 and, though various extracts and an abridged version of the manuscript did appear in the 1960s, it was not published in its entirety until 1988.<sup>53</sup> In its final scenes, Grossman explains the importance of mutual recognition between marginalized nations such as Jews and Armenians. He describes a speech by an old Armenian man at a wedding who expresses his sorrow for the Jewish people in the aftermath of the Holocaust. On hearing this display of solidarity, Grossman states 'никогда никому я не кланялся до земли. До земли кланяюсь и армянским крестьянам' ('never before have I bowed down to the ground before anyone. I bow down to the ground before the Armenian peasants').<sup>54</sup> This moment encapsulates his consistent belief that every nation, however small, has the right to exist in freedom and dignity.

Clearly, the form of Russian identity that Grossman expresses in *Za pravoe delo* is somewhat different to this emphasis on the rights of small, persecuted nations. Yet this context is helpful for explaining how Grossman's views on the Russian nation in this earlier novel can be understood in relation to his humanistic position. It reveals the particular form of cosmopolitanism that Grossman espoused and its subtle development. Katerina Clark links Grossman's worldview to a long-standing tendency amongst cosmopolitan Soviet intellectuals to cast the Russian nation as being at the forefront first of socialist internationalism and then of European anti-fascist resistance amidst the rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930s.<sup>55</sup> Such narratives were minimized by the Stalinist regime during and after the great terror, when a new generation of functionaries replaced those of the revolutionary era, facilitating a broader shift from internationalism towards Russian nationalism in Soviet society.<sup>56</sup>

They were also delegitimized by the non-aggression agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet

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<sup>52</sup> The Russian title of this memoir is based upon the Armenian greeting *Barez dzez* which literally translates as 'Good to you' or 'All good to you'. See Robert Chandler and Yury Bit-Yunan, 'Introduction', in Vasily Grossman, *An Armenian Sketchbook*, trans. by Robert Chandler and Elizabeth Chandler (London: Maclehose Press, 2013), pp. 9–22 (p. 19). On Grossman's time in Armenia see e.g. Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, pp. 261–67.

<sup>53</sup> The text was in fact accepted for publication in *Novyi mir* during Grossman's lifetime. However, the censor sought to remove the crucial closing comments about the Armenian and Jewish people that I highlight above, a demand that Grossman refused. Certain extracts and an abridged version of the text appeared in 1963 and 1965; however, the full text was not released in the Soviet Union until the glasnost era. See Chandler and Bit-Yunan, 'Introduction', p. 17; Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 267; p. 300; p. 307.

<sup>54</sup> Vasilii Grossman, 'Dobro vam!', in *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh tomakh: povest', rassказы, ocherki* (Moscow: Agraf, 1998), iv, 150–221 (p. 220).

<sup>55</sup> Clark, 'Ehrenburg and Grossman', p. 608.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 613.

Union triggered by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, the significant trauma of the Nazi invasion of 1941 and subsequent Soviet retreat meant that Grossman's innate cosmopolitanism coexisted with his highly patriotic belief in Russia's leading role not only in protecting the Soviet nation, but also at the forefront of the global struggle against fascist tyranny.

Grossman's journalism from the post-war period reflects this somewhat counterintuitive intertwining of his highly patriotic viewpoint and his innate cosmopolitanism. In an article published in *Literaturnaya gazeta* (*The Literary Newspaper*) in June 1946, Grossman outlines the 'задача' ('task') of Soviet literature, emphasizing its role in affirming the right of every human 'жить на земле, мыслить и быть свободным независимо от того, какого цвета кожа человека, какая кровь течет в его жилах' ('to live on earth, to think and to be free, whatever the colour of a person's skin, whatever blood flows through their veins').<sup>58</sup> He also links this fundamentally humanist task to the traditions of Russian literature, stating that 'ей служили самые великие писатели нашей земли — Пушкин и Толстой' ('the world's greatest writers, Pushkin and Tolstoy, were in its service').<sup>59</sup> These comments reflect the co-existence of patriotism and cosmopolitanism that Clark observes in Grossman's war fiction before *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, which in turn explains the apparent tension between his employment of the Russian historical novel's nationalistic identity paradigm in *Za pravoe delo* and his broader universalism. Though Grossman uses this traditional framework to define Russianness favourably in contrast to other nationalities, his viewpoint is not inspired by an inherent hierarchization of cultures. Instead, it casts the Russian nation at the vanguard of the essentially moral mission to protect universal human freedom against its then unifying enemy: Nazi fascism.

The close bond between the formation of Russian identity and the nation's historical fiction explains why Grossman was so drawn to the epic forms of nineteenth-century realism in order to frame this quasi-messianic understanding of the war against National Socialism. It also shows how and why Grossman's formal and stylistic decisions in his novel conformed to the broader demands of late Stalinist propaganda and the regime's campaign to find a *voennaya epopeya*. Both during and in

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Vasilii Grossman, 'Pamyati pavshikh', *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 22 June 1946, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

the immediate aftermath of the conflict, Grossman did not necessarily perceive a great distinction between the struggle of the Soviet, and particularly Russian, people and the broader ramifications of the war effort, which he conceived of as an essential, just defence of human freedom. This moral conceptualization of the war did not later change in and of itself: in the second part of this diology Grossman consistently maintains the necessity of the war and the immense strength of the Soviet people in defeating National Socialism. However, his perspective on the conflict would change in two key ways. First, the author's presentation of the Soviet victory became much more multi-national, looking beyond the comparative identity paradigm of the Russian historical novel to emphasize the immense contribution of all Soviet nations to ensuring victory. Second, the moral and popular struggle for human freedom became entirely disassociated from the actions of the Stalinist state, whose own campaign of dehumanizing violence is even directly compared to that of the fascist enemy. In this way, Grossman suggests that the Stalinist regime betrayed the very moral basis for the war as part of an international struggle against unfreedom and chauvinism. The prism of moral injury sharply elucidates his approach to thematizing the ramifications of this transgression.

### ***Zhizn' i sud'ba* and Moral Injury**

Like its prequel, *Zhizn' i sud'ba* is framed around the family novel structure of Tolstoy's *Voina i mir*. It also remains a very patriotic text with numerous portrayals of Russian bravery amidst the fierce fighting at Stalingrad. Yet in this novel Grossman challenges the traditional identity paradigm of Russian historical fiction that he previously invoked, looking beyond his initial emphasis on a Russian-led form of cosmopolitanism to centre instead his belief in a universalist, humanist ethics that foregrounds the equal rights of all individuals regardless of nationality, ethnicity or race. In this section, I briefly highlight Grossman's universalist perspective in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* by focusing on its representation of Soviet soldiers. I then read the experiences of three characters who are to varying degrees 'implicated' in the actions of the Stalinist state through the moral injury lens. These characters are the political commissar Nikolai Krymov, the Soviet-Jewish scientist Viktor Shtrum and the Bolshevik Revolutionary and prisoner in the Nazi labour camp, Mikhail Mostovskoi. While the

experiences of these figures are different, reading their developments through the prism of moral injury shows how they each enact Grossman's emerging narrative focus on implication and its legacies. In turn, this aspect of the narrative illuminates a defining tenet of his broader approach to memory, which comes to emphasize the importance of personally reckoning with one's relationship with the structures of historical oppression as an expression of individual human integrity.

### *The Red Army and Universal Freedom*

Where in *Za pravoe delo* Russian soldiers are portrayed as inherently positive in comparison to their non-Russian colleagues, in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* Grossman suggests the fighters' abilities are dictated by individual skill and experience rather than national characteristics. In turn, the author directly contrasts this focus on personal human qualities to the increasing nationalism of the Stalinist system. For example, early in the novel the narrative describes a disagreement between the tank army commander Novikov and his political commissar Getmanov, who is characterized in highly negative terms throughout the novel due to his dogmatic and often manipulative enforcement of Stalinist power.<sup>60</sup> Getmanov strongly opposes Novikov proposal to promote a Kalmyk man, Major Basanov, to be his chief of staff. On encountering his opposition, Novikov suggests that it is unimportant whether an individual soldier prays in a church, mosque or synagogue, stating 'я так считаю: самое главное на войне — стрелять' ('I think what's most important at war is whether they can shoot', p. 164).<sup>61</sup> However, Getmanov angrily retorts 'во имя дружбы народов всегда мы жертвуем русскими людьми' ('we're always sacrificing Russian people in the name of the friendship of nations', p. 164), showing his chauvinistic belief in the inherent superiority of Russian soldiers. This moment deconstructs the traditional tendency to define national characteristics via inter-ethnic contrast evident in the first part of the diology. In *Za pravoe delo* Vavilov represents a quasi-messianic behavioural model for his non-Russian comrades to follow; however, in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* Novikov recognizes that

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<sup>60</sup> John Garrard describes Getmanov as 'one of the most insidious characters in Russian literature'. See Garrard, 'Stepsons in the Motherland', p. 339.

<sup>61</sup> Vasili Grossman, *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), p.164. All further references will be to this edition and can be found parenthetically in the text.

each of his soldiers have individual capabilities whatever their nationality and that the utilization of these skills represents the only path to victory.<sup>62</sup> As a political representative of the Stalinist regime, Getmanov's angry opposition to this universalist principle highlights a tension between the actions of the state and the bravery of the rank-and-file Soviet soldiers risking their lives whilst fighting Nazism.

This sense of estrangement between the Stalinist regime and the war effort is reinforced by Grossman's description of a group of Soviet soldiers at House 6/1, a position in the centre of Stalingrad that is entirely surrounded by enemy forces.<sup>63</sup> These scenes are particularly significant, both in terms of their position in the novel's plot and their symbolic implications. The events at the house are witnessed by the young soldier Anatolii Shaposhnikov, the son from her first marriage of Lyudmila Shaposhnikova who is the wife of the text's protagonist, Viktor Shtrum. Shaposhnikov's presence in this highly dangerous position highlights how Grossman casts his descriptions of the frontline and broader wartime Soviet society as inherently intertwined: Anatolii is eventually killed in action, causing the near breakdown of Lyudmila's and Viktor's marriage as the former character falls into immense, almost irrevocable grief over her son's death.

The descriptions of the Soviet soldiers at the house are also crucial in and of themselves. Though these characters continue to fight the Germans, they also recurrently defy the authority of the Soviet state and enact a vision of an alternative, freer society. The group's leader, Grekov, soon reveals his deeply rooted resentment toward the Soviet system. He directly asks Nikolai Krymov, the political commissar sent to establish why the soldier has stopped reporting to command, whether the process of collectivization will be stopped after the war, stating 'а вот насчет колхозов, товарищ комиссар. Как бы их ликвидировать после войны' ('and what about the collective farms, comrade

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<sup>62</sup> Scholars have linked Grossman's emphasis on the importance of individual human qualities to his admiration for Anton Chekhov's work. In *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, the Tartar scientist Mad'yarov, whom Viktor Shtrum befriends during his exile in Kazan, argues that Chekhov looked beyond markers of nationality in his works to emphasize human characteristics. He states that Chekhov 'сказал: самое главное то, что люди — это люди а потом уж они архиереи, русские, лавочники, татары, рабочие' ('said that above all else people are people, and only then are they bishops, Russians, shopkeepers, Tartars or workers', p. 213). See e.g. John Garrard, 'A Conflict of Visions: Vasilii Grossman and the Russian Idea', in *The Search for Self-Definition in Russian Literature*, ed. by Ewa M. Thompson (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991), pp. 57–75 (pp. 68–69).

<sup>63</sup> Grossman based House 6/1 on a real-life position at the Stalingrad front known as 'House Pavlov'. See Ellis, *Russian Heretic*, p. 87.

commissar. How about we liquidate them after the war', p. 323). Grekov also dismisses Krymov's notion that the soldiers and the state share the same aim:

- Свободы хочу, за нее и воюю.
- Мы все ее хотим.
- Бросьте! — махнул рукой Греков. — На кой она вам? Вам бы только с немцами справиться. (p. 324)
- "I want freedom, that's what I'm fighting for".
- "We all want freedom".
- "Give over!" Grekov waved his hand, "what's it to you? You just want to deal with the Germans".

This exchange suggests that the soldiers are not only fighting against Hitler's Germany, but, inspired by the paradoxical liberty experienced in their dangerous position at the front line, also perceive themselves as struggling against the lack of freedom in the Stalinist system.<sup>64</sup> This observation highlights the delicate interaction between continuities and changes across Grossman's dilogy. In *Za pravoe delo* the fight for freedom centres on the enemy of National Socialism which binds the actions of the state with the efforts of the Soviet people. The existential threat of fascism remains in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, but the sacrifice of the rank-and-file becomes untethered from the Soviet state, which, as Grekov's references to collectivization show, also imperils the struggle for universal liberty.<sup>65</sup>

#### *Nikolai Krymov and 'Complex Implication'*

Stalinism's betrayal of human freedom is especially embodied via the experiences of the political commissar Krymov. This character's ideological speeches for frontline soldiers are presented as crucial to the Soviet war effort in *Za pravoe delo*, but his fortunes drastically change in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* as his relationship with the troops deteriorates and his favour with the regime is lost.

Eventually, this leads to his incarceration and interrogation by the NKVD in the infamous Lubyanka prison in Moscow. The importance of Krymov's development for understanding the relationship between the two novels has been highlighted by Jekaterina Shulga, who utilizes trauma theory to argue that his experiences represent a 'psychological battle' in which the trauma of Stalinist

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Shulga, 'The Freedom Within', p. 300.

repression causes the ‘disintegration’ of his communist identity.<sup>66</sup> In line with trauma theorists’ emphasis on narrative’s ability to ‘cure’ trauma, she suggests that Krymov’s mental suffering is alleviated by his creation of a linear or ‘quodidian’ temporal narrative that allows him to look beyond the fragmentary ‘eschatological time of the state’ — which is made manifest by the regime’s discombobulating violence — and thus to reconfigure his fractured self.<sup>67</sup>

The psychological element of Krymov’s characterization certainly reveals a great deal about Grossman’s changing approach across the two parts of the dilogy. Yet viewing this character’s psyche only in terms of trauma and victimhood risks overlooking the crucial importance that his reckoning with his own implication in the dehumanizing actions of the state has in triggering his psychological pain, and hence his subsequent identity-altering estrangement from communism. Thus, I argue that the development of Krymov and the several other characters in the dilogy who are struggling to come to terms with their associations with Stalinist violence is better understood through the lens of moral injury, which highlights the damaging psychological ramifications of moral transgression, including but not limited to the experiencing of extreme feelings of shame, guilt and demoralization.<sup>68</sup>

Krymov’s experiences at House 6/1 mark his initial realization of the estrangement between the ideological aims of the state and the efforts of the Soviet people. However, his sense that the Stalinist system had itself transgressed the moral principle of universal freedom, and that as a long-standing Soviet ideologue he is implicated in this contravention, is accelerated by his arrest for suspected Trotskyism. The nature of this charge, which is based upon a compliment that Trotsky paid to Krymov’s ideas decades before the war, highlights the replacement in the Soviet system of the internationally-minded, Bolshevik revolutionary generation with the ‘new’ type of Stalinist functionary more motivated by political cynicism than genuine ideological idealism.<sup>69</sup> As a representative of the revolutionary old-guard, Krymov’s feeling of separation from this new generation is highlighted by his perception of his interrogator at the Lubyanka. Krymov thinks that this man looks ‘как бы состоял из отдельных кубиков, но эти кубики не были соединены в

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 302–03 and p. 309.

<sup>68</sup> See e.g. Litz et al., ‘Moral Injury’, pp. 698–01; Pederson, ‘Moral Injury’, pp. 46–47.

<sup>69</sup> Clark, ‘Ehrenburg and Grossman’, pp. 625–27.

единстве — человеке’ (‘as if he consisted of separate cubes that were not made into unified, human form’, p. 581), showing the deteriorating effect that blind conformity with the structures of totalitarian terror has on an individual’s humanity. Much like Böll’s description of the Nazi death camp in *Wo warst du, Adam?* Grossman also appears to foreshadow Arendt’s thesis of the ‘banality of evil’ in his representations of both Nazi and Stalinist violence.<sup>70</sup> His representations of the Nazi death camps include descriptions of those individuals responsible for the day-to-day administration of the camps and even the operation of the gas chambers. Moreover, in the depiction of the Stalinist Lubyanka, the narrator suggests that Krymov’s investigator returns to the interrogation room ‘как рабочий, заступая смену’ (‘like a worker starting a shift’, p. 589). The investigator’s quotidian attitude to his work highlights the perverse banality of the mechanisms supporting this state-inflicted violence.

Krymov is the victim of physical torture in this scene. However, his mental distress is triggered less by the violence perpetrated against him, as a reading via trauma theory would interpret it, than by his growing realization that he is in fact implicated in the immoral, dehumanizing system by which he is now being victimized. Krymov is presented with a copy of a denunciation made against his former comrade, Fritz Hacken, in 1938.<sup>71</sup> At first, he does not recognize the denunciation, suggesting that there must have been a mistake as Hacken was always a committed communist; however, the investigator reveals Krymov’s own signature on the document, confirming his participation in this character’s demise. Ultimately, this forced reminder of his actions leads Krymov to reassess the status of all those political figures who were, like Hacken, denounced and killed during the purges, stating ‘они виноваты не больше меня!’ (‘they’re no more guilty than me!’ , p. 588). This realization confirms to the character how the Stalinist state, to which he willingly contributed, deliberately manipulated concepts of innocence and guilt to justify its violent aims. Reckoning with this fact forces Krymov to acknowledge that his denunciation of Hacken was a fundamentally immoral act, a self-protective lie that resulted in this innocent figure’s murder. In line with the

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<sup>70</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

<sup>71</sup> The Russian rendering of this name is Фриц Гаккен, which would technically be transliterated as Frits Gakken. However, in line with the majority of anglophone scholarship and translations of Grossman, I refer to the anglicized version here. See e.g. Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate*, trans. by Robert Chandler (London: Vintage, 2006), p. 756.

features of moral injury, Krymov's realization of his involvement in this moral breach causes him to experience extreme feelings of guilt and shame. He suddenly remembers the 'самое подлое' ('vilest') aspect of his behaviour during the denunciation — which lay less in his 'желание всем нравиться' ('desire to please') than his 'желание искренности' ('desire for sincerity') — and recalls the 'жадное, счастливое чувство' ('greedy, happy feeling', p.587) when the investigator allowed him to leave. The intrusive nature of this memory and the belated disgust that he feels for failing to prevent, or even for directly accelerating, this character's death show the damaging ramifications that this moral transgression has on Krymov's psychological state and sense of self.

Such details suggest that, though Krymov suffers terrible violence in the Lubyanka, his experiences of the Stalinist terror are also characterized by implication and complicity, the psychological effects of which Grossman describes in terms akin to moral injury. Krymov's combined experience of multiple subject positions can be linked to Michael Rothberg's concept of 'complex implication'.<sup>72</sup> This notion denotes a situation in which an individual simultaneously or sequentially contributes to an oppressive system by which they also are — or have been — victimized.<sup>73</sup> As I noted in the Introduction, though, Grossman's literary work does not entirely anticipate Rothberg's theoretical model. Where the latter casts reckoning with implication as an essentially political process rooted in solidarity and action, Grossman's also emphasizes more moral and emotional forms of engagement with the past. Indeed, Krymov's reassessment of his relationship with the Stalinist state is ultimately characterized by an internal revitalization of his integrity and belief in human dignity.

The prisoner experiences a process of personal reconciliation following his morally injurious recognition of his past behaviour. Initially, his realization of the widespread scale of denunciations under Stalinism, and thus the systemic nature of implication in Soviet society, leads to his extreme

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<sup>72</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 8; pp. 87–145.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* Krymov's complex experiences of violence has broader relevance for considering questions of memory in the post-Stalinist context. The blurred boundaries between categories of victimhood and perpetration have been observed as a distinct feature of Stalinist violence by historians and are often posited as a crucial reason for Soviet and post-Soviet Russian society's apparent failure to 'mourn' its past. See e.g. Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, pp. 7–8; Assmann, 'Europe's Divided Memory', p. 35; Irina Sherbakova, 'The Gulag in Memory', in *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, trans. by Paul Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 103–16 (p. 108). As I will explain in the Conclusion, the prevalence of this argument in the scholarship suggests that Rothberg's concept of 'complex implication' may prove more broadly helpful for the study of post-Stalinist literature and memory.

demoralization. This is shown by his anxiety that his estranged wife Zhenya, whom he still loves, was the person who denounced him over his encounters with Trotsky. Krymov is so distressed by the idea of Zhenya's betrayal that he even considers confessing to the state's fake charges of treachery in order to establish whether his fears are true. Just as this thought is about to break his spirit, though, the character decides that this degradation of human love would be impossible, with the narrator stating: 'когда, казалось, уж не вынесет душевной муки, когда вот-вот, казалось, мозг его лопнет и тысячи осколков вонзятся в сердце, в горло, в глаза, он понял: Женечка, не могла донести!' ('when it seemed that he already could not bear the anguish in his soul, when it seemed that his brain was about to burst and thousands of shards would pierce his heart, his throat and his eyes, he understood: Zhenya could never have denounced him! p. 593). Krymov's sudden, instinctive conviction in Zhenya's loyalty represents his renewed belief that there are aspects of the human condition that the totalitarian state cannot manipulate or destroy. It reflects his internal defiance; his recognition that, despite the regime's extreme and systematic campaign of dehumanization, the individual retains an indestructible kernel of strength rooted in their capacity for love and kindness.

In fact, the ramifications of this scene are more complex than Krymov supposes and reflect the multi-faceted ways that the moral injury prism can inform our understanding of the text. Zhenya did not denounce her husband, but she did betray him by sharing his secret that Trotsky complimented his ideas to her lover, Novikov. Subsequently, this character drunkenly mentions the story to the Stalinist functionary Getmanov, leading to Krymov's demise. In many ways, Zhenya's realization and response to her complicity in Krymov's arrest represents a form of reckoning with moral injury in and of itself. Her feelings of guilt for her transgression compel her to refuse Novikov, whom she loves, and to stay with Krymov. The female character even struggles for days with the relatives of other prisoners to try and send a parcel to her husband. This display of commitment emphasizes her own renewed sense of integrity and dedication in the face of state power and tremendous threat. Thus, rather than undermine the spirit of personal defiance that characterizes Krymov's narrative, Zhenya's experiences and actions ultimately reinforce how the process of reckoning with their implication allows these characters to demonstrate their true natures.

The awful, albeit clearly different, circumstances in which Krymov and Zhenya show such courage reflects Grossman's broader philosophy of victory and defeat.<sup>74</sup> As I will explain in more detail later, the author proposes that, where moments of success engender the basis for moral degradation, situations of terrible difficulty and danger allow people to recall their humanity. This principle is not simply shown through the experiences of implicated characters. On the contrary, its clearest demonstration lies in the descriptions of Sof'ya Levinton's and David's murders in the Nazi gas chamber. While Sof'ya only meets David during their final journey to the camps, she comes to look after this child and, at the moment of their deaths, holds him in her arms while thinking 'я стала матерью' ('I have become a mother', p. 419). Her support of this child encapsulates Grossman's emphasis on maternal love as the ultimate expression of humanity, as is shown through his frequent references to the image of the Madonna across his fiction.<sup>75</sup> Sof'ya's and Krymov's experiences are of course different and should not be equated. Yet their mutual displays of dignity in the midst of such extreme adversity enact Grossman's belief that totalitarian regimes cannot destroy innately human characteristics such as love and kindness, despite the terrible violence that they perpetrate. This notion is similarly emphasized in the novel's final description of Krymov. Having been subjugated to a further round of interrogation, the prisoner is returned to his cell and asked to sign for a food parcel that Zhenya has long struggled to send to him. His quiet, emotional response to this confirmation of her continued support for him — 'боже, боже, он плакал...' ('oh God, oh God, he cried...', p. 636) — highlights how this gift embodies the undimmed strength of humanity despite the suffering wrought by totalitarian dehumanization.

Such brief yet meaningful examples of interpersonal solidarity are laced throughout the narrative, ultimately representing the foundation of Grossman's staunch defence of the individual in the face of totalitarian power. However, the representation of morally injured, implicated characters

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<sup>74</sup> Both here and in the later analysis of Viktor Shtrum's experiences, I am grateful to Andrei Zorin for drawing my attention to the importance of this aspect of Grossman's philosophy.

<sup>75</sup> See e.g. Young, 'Testimony on the Margins', pp. 334–35; Maddalena, "'What is Human in Man'", pp. 115–18. This also reflects a significant parallel with Böll's work. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in *Wo warst du, Adam?* Böll links the Holocaust victim Ilona to the image of the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, this character also adopts her niece Maria shortly before their deaths. It should be noted, though, that Grossman's and Böll's scenes are not identical. In Grossman's case, the imagery is clearly secularized in nature.

such as Krymov is one of the most significant yet underappreciated vehicles for this aspect of Grossman's thought, because it foregrounds the ability of the individual to reckon with their wrongdoing and to change their worldview and behaviour. Krymov's personal 'recovery' is inspired by his acknowledgement of the moral transgressions of his past actions and, by extension, his own implication in the violence of the Stalinist state. This process of acknowledgement leads this complexly implicated character to recognize that the individual retains the crucial attributes to defy the dehumanizing lies and violence of the state, and to act instead out of human kindness and love. Confronting his own implication in this way does not alleviate Krymov's immediate physical condition in the Lubyanka, where he remains incarcerated and will almost certainly be killed. Yet it does give him a renewed appreciation for the innately human integrity that allows him to reset his relationship with the morally injurious past. This micro-level description of Krymov's personal restoration ultimately epitomizes the macro-level differences between Grossman's approach to memory in *Za pravoe delo* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. Where in the first novel the author outlines an overarching narrative of Russian-led resistance that inspired collective renewal in the face of fascism, the second novel emphasizes the importance of reflectively acknowledging the legacies of the past, and particularly one's own implication in violence, as a means of ensuring individual human dignity.

### *Viktor Shtrum and the Changing Face of War*

Thus far, the discussion has allowed us to garner a more nuanced appreciation of the relationship between the two parts of the diology. Yet questions remain as to *why* Grossman's approach changed between these texts, which after all were long conceived as two parts of the same literary project. One obvious answer lies in the different contexts in which each novel was written: though begun in late 1952, *Zhizn' i sud'ba* was, unlike its prequel, largely drafted after Stalin's death.<sup>76</sup> The subsequent changes in the Soviet leadership affected what Grossman was able to write about the terror. Following Khrushchev's criticism of the cult of personality in the Secret Speech of 1956 and the subsequent process of de-Stalinization in Soviet society during the Thaw era, some discussion of state violence

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<sup>76</sup> Bit-Yunan and Fel'dman, *Literaturnaya biografiya*, p. 19.

under Stalinism was permitted or even encouraged.<sup>77</sup> However, the boundaries of what could be discussed were still restrictive. Indeed, though Grossman always intended to try and publish *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, his criticisms of the Stalinist system drastically exceeded what was permissible to the Khrushchev regime, suggesting that the changes in his writing did not simply reflect his sensitivity to the shifting parameters of censorship in official Soviet culture. On the contrary, Grossman's view that he could publish *Zhizn' i sud'ba* despite its heretical elements implies that he misjudged the extent to which the Thaw had led to the genuine opening of Soviet public discourse about Stalinism.

Thus, though this changing political context is of course very important, the radicalization of Grossman's critique of Stalinism, and by extension his transition towards a more individualized conception of memory focused upon the legacies of implication, should also be understood via another prism: the acceleration of Soviet chauvinistic nationalism in the immediate post-war years. The antisemitism of the Stalinist state in the late 1940s and early 1950s strongly jarred with Grossman's hope that the relative liberalization afforded by the war in Soviet society marked a permanent shift away from the violence of the purges in the late 1930s.<sup>78</sup> The misplaced nature of this hope was made manifest both by the Stalinist regime's suppression of Holocaust memory and its own violence towards Jews and other minority groups. Amidst the anti-cosmopolitan campaigns of 1948, the publication of the *Chernaya kniga* was prohibited, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee that organized this project disbanded, and its chairman, Solomon Mikhoels, killed.<sup>79</sup> Late Stalinist chauvinism was also highlighted by the later Doctors' Plot scandal of early 1953 in which multiple Jewish doctors were falsely accused of murdering senior Soviet figures.<sup>80</sup> During this period, Grossman was the subject of a vitriolic campaign in the Soviet press in regard to the then recently

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<sup>77</sup> On memory discourse during the Thaw see e.g. Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013). On repression during the Khrushchev era see e.g. Robert Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>78</sup> This assertion chimes with the view of Grossman's friend Semen Lipkin, who suggests that the author felt that the war would wash away 'всю сталинскую грязь с лица России' ('all the Stalinist dirt from Russia's face'). See Lipkin, *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> On Grossman's experiences of this period see e.g. Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, pp. 152–82.

<sup>80</sup> On the Doctors' Plot see e.g. Brent and Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime*.

published *Za pravoe delo*.<sup>81</sup> He also signed two ultimately unpublished open letters to the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* that labelled ‘Jewish nationalism’ anti-Soviet in nature, an act which he deeply regretted for the rest of his life.<sup>82</sup>

I argue that it is Grossman’s belated realization that the Soviet war victory had only increased the chauvinism of the Stalinist state, and that he had contributed to its developing confidence, that explains the emerging focus on implication in *Zhizn’ i sud’ba*.<sup>83</sup> The author even anachronistically thematizes this post-war Stalinist chauvinism in his descriptions of the war period in this novel, as is most evident in the storyline of Viktor Shtrum.<sup>84</sup> Shtrum and Krymov are very different characters, with the former having a much more ambivalent relationship with the Stalinist regime than the latter. Yet Grossman strikingly also frames Shtrum’s relationship with Stalinist power in terms of ‘complex implication’ and he narrativizes the consequences of personally reckoning with this subject position in a way that also echoes the basic principles of moral injury.<sup>85</sup> Shtrum’s experiences in this respect show how the author comes to foreground the importance of reckoning with the moral fissures of the past as a way to recuperate and maintain human dignity and freedom in the present. Moreover, they also re-emphasize Grossman’s broader philosophy of victory and defeat and lay the basis for the striking comparison between National Socialism and Stalinism proposed in the novel.

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<sup>81</sup> This backlash against Grossman lasted for a year and was sparked by a review of *Za pravoe delo* by Mikhail Bubennov, which was published in *Pravda* in February 1953. Bubennov’s review had clearly antisemitic undertones: he described the Russian-Jewish Shaposhnikov-Shtrum family as ‘обывательская, серенькая с мелкими страстишками’ (‘a philistine and grey family that has little passion’) and argued more attention should be given to Vavilov, whom he labelled a ‘могучий русский советский человек’ (‘mighty Russian Soviet person’). See Mikhail Bubennov, ‘O romane Vasiliya Grossmana “Za pravoe delo”’, *Pravda*, (13th February 1953), pp. 3–4. Grossman also encountered antisemitic responses to his novel from the Soviet censorship during his struggles to publish the text in the late 1940s. The censors suggested that there was too much focus in the text on the Jewish character Viktor Shtrum and Grossman was ultimately forced to add the non-Jewish Russian character of Chepyzhin to be his mentor in order to stop Shtrum’s presence being completely removed from the text. Such was the stringent nature of this censorship that Grossman kept a diary documenting the process, which he entitled ‘Dnevnik prokhozheniya rukopisi romana “Za pravoe delo” v izdatelstvakh’ (‘Diary of the Passage of the Manuscript “For a Just Cause” at the Publishers’). For this document see RGALI, f. 1710, op. 2, d. 1. See also Bit-Yunan and Fel’dman, *Literaturnaya biografiya*, p. 31; Popoff, *Grossman*, pp. 196–97. On the press campaign against Grossman see also e.g. Bit-Yunan and Fel’dman, *V zerkale literaturnikh intrig*, pp. 338–49.

<sup>82</sup> Stone Nakhimovsky, *Russian-Jewish Literature*, p. 107.

<sup>83</sup> For an historical analysis of how the war period redefined Soviet society and the state see e.g. Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>84</sup> Clark, ‘Ehrenburg and Grossman’, p. 618.

<sup>85</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 8.

In *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, Shtrum becomes disillusioned by the Soviet system's antisemitism when the research institute in which he works refuses to promote or hire two Jewish employees. His resistance to these measures, coupled with his own Jewishness, leads to his summons to a tribunal for a public denunciation by his colleagues. Shtrum refuses to attend this meeting, an act of defiance that places his moral belief in the necessity of freedom above the undeniable threat of state punishment. The narrator describes how 'никогда в жизни не испытывал он такого счастливого и одновременно смиренного чувства. Уже не было силы, способный отнять у него правоту' ('never in his life had he experienced such a happy and at the same time humble feeling. There was no longer any power that could deprive him of the truth', p. 524), showing Shtrum's moral conviction in the importance of living by his conscience rather than the lies of the totalitarian state. However, on receiving a phone call from Stalin praising his scientific research, Shtrum becomes re-enveloped in the structures of oppression from which he had briefly broken free, returning to his work and enjoying the considerable privileges afforded by the dictator's support. The price of this newly found favour becomes clear when he is asked to sign an antisemitic open letter supporting the punishment of two Jewish doctors falsely accused of murdering Maxim Gor'kii, a moment that mirrors Grossman's own signing of the two letters to *Pravda* at the time of the Doctors' Plot. Shtrum recognizes that signing would betray the moral basis of his earlier refusal to attend his denunciation, thinking 'тошно, тошно подписывать это подлое письмо' ('it would be sickening, sickening to sign this vile letter', p. 628). Nevertheless, the character considers the torment and anxiety he would face by acting through truth and refusing the state's demand; unlike his previous show of defiance in face of denunciation, the character signs the document as 'нет у него силы' ('he didn't have the strength', p. 628).

This act has a clear morally injurious effect on Viktor, causing feelings of immense guilt, shame and demoralization. After signing the letter, the narrator describes the intrusive psychosomatic pain afflicting Shtrum, stating 'от боли, сжавшей его сердце, от мучительного чувства пот выступал у него на лбу' ('beads of sweat formed on his forehead from the pain that gripped his heart, from this agonizing feeling', p. 631). Furthermore, in line with the manifestations of moral injury, Viktor experiences profound feelings of shame, considering himself intolerable to those around him and essentially irredeemable; for example, the narrator states 'он презирал себя, он

стыдился себя' ('he despised himself, he was ashamed of himself', p. 631). Just as in Krymov's case, however, the immense demoralization inspired by his moral breach is attenuated by his acceptance of his wrongdoing and his recognition that, despite his moment of weakness, he in fact does retain the strength to act through human kindness and love even in the face of state oppression. The narrative outlines the features of this process of personal reconciliation:

Каждый день, каждый час, из года в год, нужно вести борьбу за свое право быть человеком, быть добром, и чистым. И в этой борьбе не должно быть ни гордости, ни тщеславия, одно лишь смирение. А если в страшное время придет безвыходный час, человек не должен бояться смерти, не должен бояться, если хочет остаться человеком. (p. 631)

Every day, every hour, year after year, he needed to fight for the right to be a human being, to be kind and pure of heart. And there should be neither pride, nor vanity in this struggle, only humility. If a hopeless hour comes at a terrible time, a person should not be afraid of death, they should not be afraid if they want to remain a human being.

This moment marks the alleviation of the guilt and shame wrought by Shtrum's moral breach, which is cast in terms of the restoration of his personal integrity through everyday actions in the future.

Shtrum's thoughts here express Grossman's broader conceptualization of memory in his late fiction: the author foregrounds the importance of continually assessing one's own behaviour in relation to structural or ideological forms of violence and oppression. This open-ended process of reckoning with implication represents the crucial basis for maintaining human dignity and internal freedom even amidst the continuing threat of totalitarian violence and potential death.

The prominence afforded to Shtrum's narrative within the novel suggests that Grossman's anachronistic references to post-war Soviet chauvinism in this wartime novel are centrally important for understanding his transition towards a subjectivized approach to memory focused on the ramifications of implication. At the time of writing *Za pravoe delo* the author felt able or even willing to intertwine his representation of the war with the regime's own mythologizing narrative of Russian-led salvation; however, the moral breaches of the late Stalinist period led Grossman to foreground the fundamental importance of the individual when confronting the past and its legacies. Shtrum's own wrestling with his contributions to the Soviet war effort in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* reflects Grossman's changing viewpoint in this respect. The character's scientific research is of direct relevance to the war due to its ramifications for developing atomic weaponry. While the scientist was never a Bolshevik

ideologue, he initially believed that his contributions to the Soviet state in this regard were morally justified as a means to defeat fascism. This is shown by his thoughts when wavering over whether to sign the open letter. The narrator states, ‘его мысли, его работа, самое дорогое в жизни оказалось нужны, ценны в борьбе с фашизмом. Ведь это счастье!’ (‘his thoughts, his work, everything most precious in life turned out to be necessary and useful for the fight against fascism. And that was bliss!’, p. 627), reflecting the genuine pride Shtrum originally took in assisting the war effort. Shtrum’s horror at the crimes of National Socialism remains consistent and his belief in the importance of its defeat unchanged. Yet his recognition of Stalinist antisemitism heightens his feelings of confusion about his contribution to the Soviet victory as a prominent academician.

On one level, Shtrum’s sudden struggle to reckon with his involvement in the war effort can be seen to enact Jonathan Shay’s original, military-based conceptualization of moral injury, i.e. the consequences of being associated with the actions of an authority figure, in this case the state as a whole, which betrays an individual’s or their army’s ethical code.<sup>86</sup> After all, while Shtrum is not a frontline soldier, the military importance of his scientific work is recognized by Stalin himself.<sup>87</sup> Thus, in line with Shay’s concept, the character’s realization that the ‘ethical code’ of the Soviet war effort had not just been betrayed by the Stalinist authorities but was always an illusion, its ideological language promoting hatred and violence in its own right, can be seen to trigger his ‘moral injury’, i.e. his profound feelings of shame, anger and demoralization. This micro-level description of moral injury arguably embodies Grossman’s macro-level reassessment of the war period.

Yet this psychological perspective must not entirely obscure the broader historical-philosophical thrust of Grossman’s novel. As well as reflecting signs of moral injury, Shtrum’s experiences also once again enact the author’s overall philosophy of victory and defeat. Throughout

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<sup>86</sup> Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, pp. 3–22. See also Robert Emmet Meagher, *Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).

<sup>87</sup> Indeed, Shtrum’s status as a scientist clearly does not diminish his contribution to the war effort in Grossman’s eyes. Across his career, the author recurrently emphasizes the ways that science and technology might collude in systems of political power. This is shown not only via lengthy conversations on this topic between Shtrum and his mentor Chepyzhin in this Stalingrad dilogy, but also in other examples of Grossman’s late work. For example, in the short story ‘Avel’ (Shestoe avgusta) (‘Abel (Sixth of August)’, written in 1953 but published posthumously in 1967), the author reflects on the moral responsibilities of the technically skilled American crew taking part in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945. See e.g. Ellis, *Russian Heretic*, pp. 121–33; 117–21. See also Vasilii Grossman, ‘Avel’ (Shestoe avgusta), in *Dobro vam!* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1967), pp. 29–52.

the text, Grossman implies that individuals are able to display their innate humanity most effectively in circumstances of defeat or peril. Experiences of victory and triumph, however, are shown to form the foundation of moral indignity. This point is enacted on the level of individual characterization. When Shtrum faces denunciation and arrest, he behaves with personal morality and courage; however, on gaining Stalin's personal approval and the social privileges that it provides, the scientist shows human weakness. Many of the other characters that I have mentioned in this analysis, including Sof'ya Levinton, Zhenya and Krymov, also display courage and integrity in terrible and degrading circumstances of various kinds. Moreover, these ideas have crucial, overarching historical significance. While victory at Stalingrad allows Soviet forces to defeat Nazi Germany, Grossman suggests that it also leads the Soviet Union to assume certain features of National Socialism itself.

Thus, Grossman's recurrent references to rising Soviet nationalistic chauvinism not only highlight the author's evolving focus on phenomena akin to implication and moral injury, but also posit a provocative historical argument. They suggest that, in victory, the Stalinist state internalized and replicated elements of Nazi ideology. An example of this comes as Viktor fills out an official Soviet questionnaire amidst his initial struggles with the authorities. When the character reaches the fifth question about nationality, a typical aspect of Soviet bureaucracy, the narrator pointedly suggests that the section had been 'простой' ('simple') before the war, but that now its meaning was 'особенный' ('particular' or 'special', p. 435). This comment implies that a significant change occurred in Soviet society during the war years, implicitly positing that questions of nationality had gained increased salience. The narrator then confirms the heightened vulnerability faced by minorities in the post-war period by suggesting that Shtrum 'не знал, что будет вскоре значить для сотен тысяч людей отвертит на пятый вопрос анкеты: калмык, балкарец, чеченец, крымский татарин, еврей' ('he did not know what it would soon mean for hundreds and thousands of people to answer the form's fifth question: Kalmyk, Balkar, Chechen, Crimean Tartar, Jew', p. 435). This remark shows that Grossman was not only concerned by the suffering of Jews under Stalinism, but also wished to emphasize the experiences of other minority groups that suffered violence, persecution and

enforced deportation in the war and post-war years.<sup>88</sup> Naturally, any direct comparisons between these forms of post-war Stalinist violence and the crimes of the National Socialist regime require careful critical consideration to avoid inappropriate historical elision. Yet it is clear that Grossman felt that such a comparison between the two systems was conceptually urgent. Exploration of the author's treatment of implication and moral injury can also illuminate this aspect of the novel and the comparative logic that underpins his conceptualization of memory.

### *Mikhail Mostovskoi and 'Multidirectional' Memory*

Grossman's comparison between the Nazi and Stalinist systems represents a crucial element of his approach in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. Understanding the novel's discourse on totalitarianism in this respect can be aided via referral to Michael Rothberg's delineation between 'competitive' and 'multidirectional' forms of memory that I outlined in the Introduction.<sup>89</sup> Rothberg suggests that 'competitive' comparisons problematically elide or equate historical phenomena, often as a means to minimize memory of one context over another.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, 'multidirectional' comparisons are more sensitive to the importance of historical specificities and difference; rather than promoting one memory narrative to dominate the public sphere, they emphasize moments of dialogue or overlap between contexts as means of fostering new forms of solidarity between cultures and marginalized groups.<sup>91</sup>

Grossman's comparison between the Nazi and Stalinist states is clearly 'multidirectional' rather than 'competitive' in nature. It does not uncritically equate the suffering of their victims, but utilizes comparison to emphasize the author's belief that all totalizing ideological projects eventually lead to the dehumanizing oppression of the individual and thus extreme violence.<sup>92</sup> In turn, this assertion leads the author to reaffirm the moral potential of the individual subject, who retains the strength to defy such projects, whatever their precise political features, by acting through their

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<sup>88</sup> On forced deportation and exile in the war and post-war periods see e.g. Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004); Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 12–13; pp. 386–87.

<sup>89</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 1–29.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7; pp. 18.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11; pp. 18–19.

irrepressible capacity for kindness. This position is demonstrated in a variety of ways throughout the novel, including in the philosophical-narratorial interjections into the text that form a defining aspect of Grossman's quasi-Tolstoyan approach. However, the clearest moment of comparison in the novel is enacted by the conversation between the *SS-Obersturmbannführer*, Liss, and his prisoner in the Nazi concentration camp, the Bolshevik revolutionary Mostovskoi. This scene posits direct parallels between the National Socialist and Stalinist systems by foreshadowing the latter regime's post-war chauvinism. Liss implies that the outcome of the war between Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia will have little effect as the victor will simply take up the mantle of oppression from the loser, stating 'наша победа — это ваша победа' ('our victory is your victory', p. 301). In particular, Liss argues that while Nazism's antisemitism now disgusts Mostovskoi, this may not always be the case, suggesting 'сегодня вас пугает наша ненависть к иудейству. Может быть, завтра вы возьмете себе наше опыт' ('today our hatred of Jews shocks you. Maybe tomorrow you'll take from our experience yourself', p. 303). This reference to post-war Soviet antisemitism implies that the Stalinist state internalized the nationalistic and racist chauvinism of its Nazi adversary during the war.

Mostovskoi's internal response to this provocation reveals his own growing doubts about Marxist-Leninism and the Soviet system he helped to create. While the character initially thinks that it would be 'легко' ('easy') to refute Liss's arguments, the narrator notes that there was something troubling to the Bolshevik character about his interlocutor's ideas: 'это были гадкие и грязные сомнения, которые Mostovskoi находил не в чужих словах, а в своей душе' ('these were nasty, filthy doubts which Mostovskoi found not in these alien words, but in his own soul', p. 300). These moments of doubt are foregrounded in the text by Mostovskoi's staunch defence of Bolshevism in response to the multinational group prisoners with whom he is incarcerated, whose wide range of political beliefs span from monarchism and Tsarism to support of alternative Leftist movements such as the Mensheviks. It is only Liss who truly challenges Mostovskoi's ideological convictions for the first time, disrupting his belief that Marxism-Leninism is the direct antidote to fascism and thus the only political force capable of defeating Nazi Germany. Such is his reluctance to recognize that Stalinism also imperilled universal freedom that he attempts to quell his existential doubts, arguing to himself that Liss was simply subjecting him to torture. Yet when Liss does not kill Mostovskoi at the

end of their conversation as the prisoner expects, but instead calls him ‘учитель’ (‘teacher’, p. 305), the Bolshevik figure’s convictions are finally undermined. Whatever Liss’s manipulative intentions, the respect that this Nazi shows towards Mostovskoi pushes the old communist over the threshold on which he had been teetering throughout their conversation, forcing him to acknowledge that the fundamental moral principle of human freedom had also been compromised by the very ideological system that he had helped to construct. Recognizing this breach triggers a sudden feeling of anguish and despair akin to moral injury. As Mostovskoi looks at Liss’s face for the last time, the narrator describes how ‘ядовитая иголочка кольнула сердце Михаила Сидоровича’ (‘a needle of poison jabbed Mikhail Sidorovich’s heart’, p. 305), emphasizing the intrusive, painful effect of this realization on the Russian character.

Where figures such as Krymov and Shtrum come to resolve their feelings of moral injury through a process of self-reconciliation, Mostovskoi’s experience is markedly different. In the case of this character, his pre-existing belief in Marxist-Leninism forms such a crucial part of his identity that his sudden deprivation of ideological certainty is directly linked to his death. Indeed, the conclusion to his narrative in the novel reflects the pivotal importance of his interaction with Liss in tying together the psychological, moral and political planes of the text. On leaving their discussion, the SS officer hands Mostovskoi the documents that ostensibly led to his interrogation, a treatise that was written by another prisoner in the camp, Ikonnikov-Morz, a character who rejects all forms of extreme ideological politics. Having been a Tolstoyan and travelled to India, Japan and Sydney in his early life, Ikonnikov returned to Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution to work on a peasant commune, which he initially perceived as a utopian project. However, he became disillusioned with the Soviet system on seeing the devastation wrought by collectivization, retreating to a form of spiritual exile in Belarus, where he later witnessed the mass execution of twenty-thousand Jews after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. His observations first of the suffering of the Soviet peasants during collectivization and then that of the Jews during the early stages of the Holocaust lead him to reject all political, social and religious movement that claim to represent ‘universal Good’. He argues that such projects are easily manipulated to justify hatred and extreme political violence. Instead, he champions individual acts of ‘kindness’, telling Mostovskoi earlier in the novel: ‘я не верю в добро, я верю в

доброту' ('I don't believe in Good, I believe in kindness', p. 23). The shared root of the Russian words *dobro* ('Good') and *dobrota* ('kindness') points to the subtle but crucial distinction between these two concepts, which are dangerously confused by ideological characters such as Mostovskoi. Where the former term presupposes an overarching project of societal benefit enforced 'from above' by a central authority, and in turn views those who are perceived to oppose or endanger such programmes as enemies, the latter foregrounds the moral agency of the subject to engender change 'from below' by acting through a human instinct for interpersonal solidarity.

Ikonnikov presents a fuller definition of this individualized notion of *dobrota* in the written manifesto that Mostovskoi comes to read after his conversation with Liss. In this treatise, Ikonnikov suggests that the form of 'kindness' that counters ideological dehumanization is individual, innate and ultimately irrational in nature: 'это частная доброта отдельного человека к отдельному человеку, доброта без свидетелей, малая, без мысли. Ее можно назвать бессмысленной добротой. Доброта людей вне религиозного и общественного добра' ('it is the private kindness of one individual to another. A kindness without witnesses; small and without thought. It could be called senseless kindness. The kindness of people outside of social or religious Good', p. 309). Thus, Grossman emphasizes the moral imperative of small, instinctive acts of 'senseless' kindness between individuals that defy notions of rational self-interest. Ikonnikov exemplifies this concept to its fullest extent, ultimately being executed by the Nazis for refusing to participate in the construction of a gas chamber. Yet Grossman also laces his epic narrative with other 'parables of senseless kindness', to use Alex Danchev's phrase, which reinforce the importance of this idea to his overall philosophy.<sup>93</sup> These small examples of kindness, such as a description of an old Ukrainian woman Khristya Chunya housing the wounded Red Army driver Semenov when he is left for dead in Nazi occupied Ukraine, highlight Grossman's belief that the individual retains an unshakable ability to show kindness even in the face of extreme forms of ideological dehumanization. Such is the importance of this idea to Grossman's worldview that I will return to this analysis of Ikonnikov and these 'parables'

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<sup>93</sup> Alex Danchev, 'Ethics after Auschwitz: Vasily Grossman and Senseless Kindness', *Journal of European Studies*, 43.4 (2013), 357–72 (p. 361).

of kindness in Chapter Four, where I compare the Soviet author's philosophy with Heinrich Böll's ideas in the later novel *Gruppenbild mit Dame*.

At this stage, though, it is most significant to consider Mostovskoi's final reaction to reading Ikonnikov's essay, which he had previously considered the foolish ravings of an unimportant opponent of Soviet communism. On finishing the treatise, Mostovskoi's feelings of despair are immense; however, they are triggered not by his sudden agreement with Ikonnikov, but rather by his continued disdain for his ideas and by his own previously disavowed hatred for individual freedom, which he now understands he shares with his Nazi interrogator Liss. The narrator states:

Михаил Сидорович вспомнил голубое кресло, разговор с Лиссом, и тяжелое чувство охватило его. Это была не головная тоска, – затосковало сердце, дышать стало трудно. Видимо, он напрасно заподозрил Иконникова. Писания юродивого вызвали презрительное отношение не только у него, но и у его отвратительного ночного собеседника. (p. 311)

Mikhail Sidorovich remembered the blue chair, the conversation with Liss, and a heavy feeling gripped him. It was not a headache, but a pain in his heart, and it became difficult to breathe. Clearly, he had wrongly suspected Ikonnikov. The writings of this fool had aroused a contemptuous attitude not only in him, but also from the disgusting figure with whom he had his night-time discussion.

Mostovskoi's realization that he, like Liss, opposes the principles of human kindness and solidarity that Ikonnikov promotes is deeply morally injurious to the character, triggering feelings of shame and despair. Indeed, the narrator emphasizes the psychopathological nature of Mostovskoi's anguish, stating 'мутная тоска, охватившая его, казалась тяжелей физических страданий' ('the murky melancholy that gripped him seemed harder than physical suffering', p. 311). Unlike in Shtrum's or Krymov's case, though, Grossman does not narrativize a process of recovery here. Mostovskoi is left in the despair wrought by recognizing that his ideological behaviour transgressed the moral code to which he had previously thought he had subscribed, i.e. that human beings should be equal and free, and his role within the narrative shortly ends with a blunt confirmation of his death. His 'implication' is so deeply rooted that the potential for any productive development from his late epiphany is suspended and reconciliation impossible.

Mostovskoi's experience shows the multiple ways that the moral injury lens aids our understanding of Grossman's approach to memory in this novel. In the case of Shtrum and Krymov, this paradigm highlights Grossman's nascent emphasis on the importance of reckoning with

implication as a means of recuperating and maintaining moral integrity. Mostovskoi's psychological pain, on the other hand, is used to emphasize the aim that Grossman sees as shared between National Socialism and Stalinism: their desire to destroy human freedom. This characteristic explains why Grossman felt that these regimes needed to be remembered in 'multidirectional' comparison, not eliding their differences or specificities, but emphasizing this common aim and, by extension, his totemic emphasis on interpersonal kindness, love and solidarity as its antidote.<sup>94</sup> Of course, these principles may not be enough to defeat totalitarian regimes in and of themselves; however, Grossman's *Zhizn' i sud'ba* proposes that retaining one's humanity via these traits has a vital transcendent value.

### *Implication and Polyphony*

The subtle differences between the experiences of these three characters, with Shtrum surviving, Krymov's murder being implied, and Mostovskoi's death simply stated in the narrative, epitomize the increased importance that Grossman ascribes to subjectivized perspectives on the past in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* compared with its prequel. In his study of the Stalingrad myth in Soviet literature, Ian Roland Garner views the two parts of Grossman's diology in terms of an Bakhtinian distinction between the 'epic' and 'novel' in which the former genre gives a closed perspective on history structured around an overarching central narrative and the latter emphasizes a more open-ended perspective on the past that resists such notions of completeness.<sup>95</sup> Garner suggests that *Za pravoe delo* is an 'epic' that presents an essentially monologic historical narrative, which centres Stalingrad as the unifying tenet of the 'collective' Soviet experience of the war.<sup>96</sup> *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, on the other hand, employs the more polyphonic form of the 'novel' to present an inherently individualized perspective on the past that focuses on the importance of human subjectivity.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>95</sup> Garner, 'The Myth of Stalingrad', pp. 8–9. On Bakhtin's distinction between 'epic' and 'novel' see Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 3–40. On the significance of Bakhtin's paradigm for reading socialist realist literature see e.g. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 38–39.

<sup>96</sup> Garner, 'The Myth of Stalingrad', pp. 126–58.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158–209.

As in the case of Böll's early work studied in the previous chapter, the extent to which *Zhizn' i sud'ba* can be described as fully 'polyphonic' is open to debate. Grossman's insertion of numerous historical and philosophical meditations into the narrative suggest that the novel does not fully deconstruct notions of textual authority or entirely avoid asserting a unifying message. Nevertheless, Garner's analysis helpfully shows how, despite their sequential structural relationship, the two parts of this Stalingrad diology embody fundamentally different approaches to narrativizing the past, with the latter text reflecting the author's increasingly subjectivized conceptualization of memory. By stepping back from Garner's specific focus on Stalingrad to consider the broader manifestations of Grossman's changing method in this respect, it is clear that a focus on the psychologization of characters with wide-ranging experiences, notably including implicated individuals, increasingly comes to form a crucial element of his approach to narrativizing and reckoning with the violent past.

This conclusion effects our overall understanding of Grossman's career. The emphasis on narrative's ability to highlight the importance of human subjectivity is similarly, or perhaps even more, evident in the author's final novel, *Vse techet*. This text was technically begun whilst Grossman was drafting *Zhizn' i sud'ba* in 1955; however, the author would radically alter it following the suppression the epic novel in 1961 and continue to work on the narrative until his death in 1964.<sup>98</sup> As I will show in Chapter Three, this later novel has a complex multi-vocal and multi-modal narrative structure that also appears to emphasize individual viewpoints and experiences. *Vse techet* is likely unfinished, so it is difficult to determine whether the novel's fragmentary structure reflects the author's conscious artistic decision or if it should simply be considered the result of his attempts to complete the work before his death. Nevertheless, the emphasis on subjective and implicated perspectives that is evident in this later novel implies that, despite its unfinished status, the text is crucial for analysing Grossman's views on the relationship between literature and memory. While *Zhizn' i sud'ba* is lauded as Grossman's *magnus opus*, *Vse techet* is at the very least no less important for understanding the author's worldview and literary approach.

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<sup>98</sup> Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, pp. 279–97.

Grossman's transition towards more multi-vocal narrative forms also highlights a parallel between his and Böll's developing approaches to memory. As I outlined in the previous chapter, Böll's post-war work reflects a similar tension or shift from an overarching supra-personal narrative of renewal in the aftermath of war, National Socialism and the Holocaust, towards a more individualized approach that emphasized the ethical dilemmas of subjectivity across a wide range of historical experiences. Naturally, there are important differences between the authors' work in this respect. Where Böll's emphasis on the potential societal renewal reflects his deeply Christian worldview, Grossman's is intertwined with his sense of patriotic pride in the Soviet, and especially Russian, nation's response to the existential threat of fascist invasion. Furthermore, notwithstanding the shared emphasis on individual subjectivity apparent in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* and texts such as *Wo warst du, Adam?*, the quasi-Tolstoyan structure of the former novel is clearly different from the already fragmentary, episodic nature of the latter. Yet these authors' works clearly come to stylistically intersect in the late 1950s. In the next chapter I highlight this overlap in the context of Grossman's *Vse techet* and Böll's most significant novel from this period, *Billard um halb zehn*. Before introducing this comparison, however, the concluding remarks to this section summarize the most important parallels between Grossman's and Böll's works identified so far.

### **Concluding Remarks: Section I**

The prism of moral injury radically changes our impression of both Heinrich Böll's and Vasilii Grossman's post-1945 war fiction and highlights unexpected parallels between their approaches to memory. In both cases, their narratives reflect a transition from positing an overarching, collective narrative of societal renewal in response to war and totalitarianism towards focusing upon the fraught psychological legacies of moral transgression in a more inherently individualized manner. Their similar conceptualization of narrative as a space to thematize the moral fissures wrought by historical violence provides a significant and underappreciated aspect of their work. Both authors do describe victims and perpetrators of violence; these subject positions remain significant for studying their texts. Yet it is their representations of more ambiguous experiences of implication that reveal the most

about their similar approaches to reckoning with the past. Focusing on the psychological pain of being associated with moral transgression, the writers highlight the need to reckon with the systemic forms of implication that were caused by these regimes and to reflect on their traces in the present in an active manner. In this way, they conceive of narrative as a constructive space to meditate on the possibilities of reinvigorating human dignity and freedom, and thus of developing a basis for interpersonal solidarity between people with differing historical experiences.

In the spirit of facilitating the more productive forms of ‘multidirectional’ comparison between the post-National Socialist and post-Stalinist contexts that I seek to encourage in this thesis, it is important to note that there are some important differences between the authors’ approaches to narrativizing extreme violence and the Holocaust in particular.<sup>99</sup> The main area of discrepancy concerns their attitudes towards the relationship between documentary and literary fiction. While Grossman’s journalistic research into the Holocaust directly informs his descriptions of the genocide in *Zhizn’ i sud’ba*, Böll more assertively favours exclusively fictionalized modes of representation, an aspect of his approach that partly explains why his early fiction has proven so controversial.

Notwithstanding these different approaches towards using historical sources, however, both writers come to promote the importance of fiction in fostering the forms of self-reflective engagement with the past that I highlight above. As I have already noted, their representations of the Holocaust even both employ the imagery of the Madonna and child to emphasize the human spirit of love that they suggest National Socialism cannot destroy despite the catastrophic genocidal violence that it perpetrates. The Christian underpinning of the Madonna imagery is intrinsic to Böll’s work while Grossman’s employment of this symbol is secularized, reflecting his humanistic worldview. Yet in both cases this imagery suggests that, far from avoiding any attempt at literary representation, these authors instinctively draw on an established iconography in order to emphasize the necessity of human opposition against dehumanization. This sense of reaching across temporal divides to challenge the siloing of the past, present and future is a consistent aspect of Grossman’s and Böll’s writing, belying literary periodizations which emphasize caesuras between historical eras.

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<sup>99</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 1–29.

It is this link between reckoning with the past and facilitating personal and collective change in the present that represents the most fundamental tenet of the authors' approaches to memory. In the texts analysed thus far, the manifestations of this self-reflective form of engagement with the past are nascent in form and somewhat clearer in Grossman's work than Böll's. Where the former writer describes characters such as Shtrum clearly confronting his own implication in Stalinism and trying to recuperate his moral integrity, the latter employs more ambiguous and ultimately quite schematic forms of characterization when describing figures such as Feinhals in *Wo warst du, Adam?* In the early stages of his career, Böll's commitment to fostering individual critical enquiry is implicitly reflected in the 'unsettling' effect of his descriptions of moral injury.<sup>100</sup> His representations of this phenomenon enact the disturbing, shocking and even scandalous ramifications of considering the individual psychological states of those implicated or complicit in extreme violence.

However, this discrepancy between the authors can be largely attributed to their respective thematic preoccupations at the stages of their careers examined so far in this thesis. Where Grossman focused on the war period as the main subject matter of his fiction until the completion of *Zhizn' i sud'ba* in 1960, Böll transitioned towards thematizing post-war German society after the publication of *Wo warst du, Adam?* in 1951. This means that his developing focus on implication — which actually occurred, like Grossman, throughout the 1950s — has not yet been fully considered in this analysis. In order to highlight the parallel progression of their ideas in this respect, the next section of the thesis focuses on their respective representations of post-National Socialist West German and post-Stalinist Soviet societies. Comparing Böll's novel *Billard um halb zehn* and Grossman's final narrative *Vse techet* through the moral injury lens, it shows the significant similarities between the ways that they characterize the legacies of the Nazi and Stalinist systems for these post-totalitarian societies, despite the obvious socio-political differences between them. Furthermore, it also highlights some clear formal parallels between their works that have been overlooked by scholars to date. Both authors employ multi-vocal and somewhat fragmented narrative structures that bear many of the stylistic features of silence and hesitancy commonly associated with later trauma fiction. In the case

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<sup>100</sup> LaCapra, *Writing History*, pp. 40–41; p. 78. See also Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 162–64.

of these texts, though, these features are rooted not in ‘trauma’ but rather in the writers’ shared focus on the transgression of personal morality and individualized approach to reckoning with implication. Thus, their works outline an alternative stylistic paradigm — a poetics of moral injury — that may be more broadly applicable to other texts and thus merits further consideration in its own right.

## **Section II: Totalitarian Afterlives**

### Chapter Three

#### Traces of Implication: From Trauma to Moral Injury in Heinrich Böll's *Billard um halb zehn* and Vasilii Grossman's *Vse techet*

In the late 1950s, Vasilii Grossman and Heinrich Böll each came to look beyond the subject matter of the war period to thematize the legacies of totalitarianism in later Soviet and West German societies. This chapter compares the ways in which Grossman and Böll narrativize the traces of Stalinism and National Socialism in the former author's final novel *Vse techet* and the latter's *Billard um halb zehn*. It does so through the lens of moral injury, which I argue sharply elucidates the texts' central focus on experiences of implication. By foregrounding the authors' similar approaches to describing characters struggling to reckon with their own associations with the structures of Stalinist and Nazi violence, I argue that the comparable narrative features of these novels outline a poetics of moral injury that has the potential to be extended to the analysis of other post-atrocity fiction. I suggest that the similarities between the texts also illuminate Grossman's and Böll's comparable views on memory politics, which emphasize a continuous, self-reflective form of engagement with the past that foregrounds the sacrosanct importance of individual subjectivity and freedom.

*Vse techet* and *Billard um halb zehn* have markedly different publication histories. Böll's novel was his first major commercial success and greatly enhanced his public profile in West Germany on its publication in 1959.<sup>1</sup> Its plot ostensibly takes place over a single day in 1958, but actually explores the traces of National Socialism via the perspectives and memories of various members of a bourgeois family, the Fähmels, in a small West German town. Grossman's text has a more unusual publication history. He began writing *Vse techet* in 1955 as he first encountered former and interviewed Gulag prisoners who were returning to Moscow on release from the camps; he then set aside the work in order to complete *Zhizn' i sud'ba* and only returned to it after this novel's 'arrest' in 1961.<sup>2</sup> *Vse techet*'s main narrative focuses on the experiences of a former Gulag victim,

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Finlay, 'Heinrich Böll and the Gruppe 47', p. 111; Kirsten Rebien, 'Politics and Aesthetics', p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, pp. 290–97. On Gulag returnee narratives in Thaw-era literature see e.g. Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, pp. 129–72. On the experiences of Gulag returnees see Nancy Adler, *Beyond the Soviet System: The Gulag Survivor* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012); Stephen F. Cohen, *The Victims Return: Survivors of the Gulag after Stalin* (London: Tauris, 2011).

Ivan Grigor'evich, returning to Moscow after three decades of incarceration, a plot that was relatively common in Thaw-era Soviet literature.<sup>3</sup> However, during the redrafting of the text, Grossman added more politically controversial sections, including detailed representations of the Gulag, Soviet collectivization and the Ukrainian terror famine of the early 1930s, which are presented via the memories of the main characters or in short, episodic narratives separate from the novel's central plot.<sup>4</sup> Generally considered unfinished, the final version of the text was far too subversive for publication in the Soviet Union during Grossman's lifetime. The Russian text was first released in West Germany in 1970 by the émigré publisher *Posev*; while circulated domestically in *samizdat* (i.e. unofficial publication), it was not officially published in the Soviet Union until 1989.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the differences between the fates of these texts, their narratives provide a particularly interesting point of transcultural comparison as they explore the legacies of the Nazi and Stalinist pasts from the perspectives of a wide variety of individuals from different backgrounds and experiences. This range of individual viewpoints includes victims of historical violence. Grossman's text combines its central focus on Ivan Grigor'evich's struggle to reintegrate into post-Stalinist Soviet society with descriptions of characters killed in the camps or amidst collectivization and famine. The author's narrativizations of these Soviet atrocities were based on multiple sources, including from his

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<sup>3</sup> Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 291–92. A handwritten version of the novel that includes the central character Ivan Grigor'evich returning from the Gulag is held at RGALI. The annotated typescript of the novel held at Harvard, which was given to John and Carol Garrard by Grossman's lover Ekaterina Zabolotskaya in 1992, is double the length of the handwritten manuscript and corresponds to the version published in *Oktyabr'* in 1989. Both of these versions are dated 1955–1963, so it is not possible to confirm precisely when each was written. Nonetheless, the proximity of the annotated typescript to the published text and the fact that, unlike the handwritten manuscript, the longer version includes the novel's most controversial sections, suggests that these scenes were added at a later stage. For the hand-written manuscript see RGALI, f. 1710, op. 3, d. 11. For the typescript see ASAH, MS Russ 129, (8). Giuseppe Ghini briefly alludes to some of the changes Grossman made to the Zabolotskaya manuscript in order to highlight the author's references to the nineteenth century Russian poet Nikolay Nekrasov in this text. See Giuseppe Ghini, 'Everything Flows but Ivan Grigorevich Stands Still: Grossman, Heraclitus, and the Prodigal Son', in *Vasily Grossman: A Writer's Freedom*, ed. by Anna Bonola and Giovanni Maddalena (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), pp. 79–94 (pp. 88–89). See also John Garrard, 'The Original Manuscript of Forever Flowing: Grossman's Autopsy of the New Soviet Man', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 38.2 (1994), 271–89.

<sup>5</sup> Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, p. 315. Little is known about how the novel was smuggled abroad. There are, however, two *samizdat* copies of *Vse techet* from the 1970s held at Memorial in Moscow, confirming that the text was read in dissident circles. See MSA, B. Belenkin Papers, f. 175, op. 77; MSA K. Lyubarskii Papers, f., 265, op. 2, d. 6.

witnessing of the consequences of the terror famine when travelling in Ukraine in 1931 and 1933.<sup>6</sup> He also drew on his own interviews with Gulag survivors on their return to Moscow from the mid-1950s.<sup>7</sup> Böll's novel does not include detailed descriptions of Nazi atrocities and, in contrast to his earlier war fiction, does not attempt to represent Jewish experience in detail. However, the text does explore the experience of victimhood: for example, its plot is triggered by the homecoming of Schrella, an anti-fascist character violently persecuted and later exiled by the Nazi regime.

Notwithstanding the importance of these victim characters, I investigate a central strand of the novels that has yet to be sufficiently identified and understood in scholarship: their focus on implication and its potential psychological consequences, which I analyse through the moral injury lens. I argue that both novels especially focus on the troubled psychologies of individuals who were not victimized by the Nazi or Stalinist states, but who were in fact wrestling — or failing to wrestle — with their varying degrees of implication in the extreme moral transgressions wrought by totalitarian terror. By drawing on and developing these frameworks to understand this still underappreciated aspect of these novels, I highlight a number of parallels between the evolution of Grossman's and Böll's careers that manifest themselves on both a stylistic and thematic level. In regard to the former area, these novels suggest that both authors came to adopt multi-vocal narrative structures that emphasize the importance of subjective and potentially irreconcilable perspectives on the violent past. As I noted in the previous chapter, the unfinished nature of Grossman's novel means it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which its fragmented structure represents a fully conscious artistic choice. Nonetheless, certain features of the narrative, most notably the inclusion of several abstract digressions from the novel's main plot, highlight an element of formal experimentation in this text,

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<sup>6</sup> John and Carol Garrard suggest that Grossman sent a letter to his father on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1931 that includes a 'coded' description of the famine. Popoff also notes that Grossman spent three days in Kyiv at the height of the famine in June 1933, an experience that he transfers to the character of Anna Sergeevna in *Vse techet*, who also spends a few days in the city and remembers seeing victims dying on the street. See Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, p. 93; RGALI f. 1710, op. 3, d. 66, l. 6. On Grossman's experiences in Kyiv in 1933 see Popoff, *Grossman*, p. 70; RGALI f. 1710, op. 3, d. 3, l. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Popoff suggests that Grossman interviewed 'scores of inmates' in the apartment of his cousin and Gulag survivor Victor Sherentsis from 1956. The notes from these interviews are not held in Grossman's archives; however, at least some of the details of these conversations were transferred into *Vse techet*. According to Popoff, one of Grossman's interviewees, the former prisoner Lev Konson, provided the model for the character Borya Romashkin in the text, a young inmate who has received a lengthy sentence for distributing leaflets that accused the Stalinist state of murder. See Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 232.

even if the extent of any such stylistic development should not be overestimated. Indeed, while both Böll's and Grossman's evolving preferences for narrative forms that emphasize notions of subjectivity were evident in the texts studied earlier such as *Wo warst du, Adam?* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, the novels examined here reflect even clearer examples of the authors' similar approaches in this respect.

Second, the comparison between these texts also shows how the authors came to adopt similar conceptualizations of memory. Both Grossman and Böll locate the deep roots of totalitarian violence in their respective national cultures in order to highlight consistencies across historical eras which challenge notions of radical societal breaks in the aftermath of Stalinism or Nazism. The novels studied here reflect a more overtly critical attitude towards this siloing of different historical periods than the texts examined in previous chapters, implying a development or, in Grossman's case, even a radicalization, of their political views. Furthermore, *Vse techet* and *Billard* also foreground an even more individualized understanding of memory that casts reconciliation over the past in terms of personal self-reflection, of acknowledging one's wrongdoing and of scrutinizing the legacies of violence in the present. Grossman and Böll view remembrance as an instigator of forward-looking and ongoing action that can foster the revitalization of human dignity and freedom.

In order to show how the moral injury prism aids our understanding of the texts in both these aesthetic and thematic areas, the chapter is split into two main sections. The first focuses on the authors' similar representations of testimony and dialogue in order to exemplify how a hermeneutic shift from trauma theory towards the moral injury lens elucidates Grossman's and Böll's shared focus on the psychological consequences of implication. Highlighting the usefulness of this change from a theoretical perspective is important not only because Grossman's *Vse techet* has recently been predominantly read through the trauma prism, but also because the analytical lens of moral injury has initially been developed in literary studies as an addition to trauma theory.<sup>8</sup> The novels compared here provide an especially helpful case study to demonstrate the importance of reassessing the relationship between these two theoretical paradigms, a process which not only improves understanding of

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<sup>8</sup> On readings of Grossman's narrative through the trauma framework see e.g. Shulga, 'Memory, History, Testimony', pp. 55–91; Young, 'Testimony on the Margins', pp. 329–37. On Moral Injury as an addition to trauma theory see Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 1–28.

Grossman's and Böll's novels but which, as outlined in the Introduction, can also have broader ramifications for research into memory literature across contexts.

The second section of the chapter shows how the texts critique the ambiguous condition of memory politics in West German and Soviet societies of the late 1950s. It compares the authors' similar representations of an interaction between a victim of totalitarian violence and the complicit and implicated individuals who wronged them and shows how these scenes expose the limited nature of memory discourse in each of the very different contexts that the authors describe. It also highlights how both writers emphasize the importance of recognizing continuities across German and Russian history which they propose led to the development of National Socialism and Stalinism, respectively. Overall, this section elucidates how the authors cast remembrance as an ever-evolving task that requires the individual to continually and critically reassess their relationship with the legacies of historical violence and oppression. In this respect, their approach to memory ultimately resists notions of finality, foregrounding instead the ongoing nature of critical engagement with the past.

### **From Trauma Theory to Moral Injury**

Grossman's *Vse techet* and Böll's *Billard um halb zehn* are formally complex. Both novels are multi-vocal, switching between moments of third-person narration and the subjective perspectives of individual characters, presented via monologues or moments of *erlebte Rede*. Notwithstanding its unfinished status, Grossman's novel is also strikingly multi-modal, employing dreams, meta-narrative reflections and more traditional interventions such as the 'discovered manuscript' device that frames Ivan Grigor'evich's polemic on Russian history.<sup>9</sup> Böll's text is less multi-modal in nature, but the narrative also employs unusual forms, presenting characters' memories via 'one-sided' dialogues in which conversations between two figures are represented through a single voice.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, p. 292. See also Maurizia Calusio, 'Vasilii Grossman i pervyi opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovaniya Gulaga (o povesti *Vse techet...*)', *L'analisi Linguistica e Letteraria*, 25.2 (2017), 175–86.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Butler, 'Billard um halb zehn: "Aktive Nachdenklichkeit" and the Problem of Resistance', in *The Narrative Fiction of Heinrich Böll*, ed. by Michael Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 111–31 (p. 112).

In this analysis, I focus on the authors' similar representations of testimony — i.e. first-person accounts of the past — and dialogue. These traits have become strongly associated with the trauma framework, which emphasizes the quasi-therapeutic potential of narrative as a means of reordering fragmentary memories and highlights the importance of not only the testifier — i.e. the individual recollecting their experiences — but also the person listening to their account.<sup>11</sup> Here, however, I argue that it is necessary to critique and deconstruct the intrinsic connection that is often posited between such narrative features and the trauma paradigm in order to exemplify the usefulness of the moral injury lens for studying texts that depict experiences of implication. As outlined in the Introduction, assessing the relationship between trauma theory and moral injury is particularly urgent for the study of post-atrocity fiction. Joshua Pederson has delineated a binary opposition between the respective literary manifestations of the two paradigms; he associates trauma with the narrative features of 'absence' — such as 'silence' and 'textual lacunae' — and moral injury with characteristics of 'excess' — such as hyperbolic depictions of shame, guilt, demoralization and social isolation.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, I argue that the narrative manifestations of moral injury can in fact intersect with those commonly associated with trauma fiction. In doing so, I suggest that a broader set of narrative features can be linked to moral injury than has hitherto been appreciated, including not only the heightened representation of guilt, shame and demoralization that Pederson outlines, but also traits such as silence, intrusive memories, interruption, hesitation and fragmentation.

Recognizing the nature of this overlap, and thus deconstructing the polarity that Pederson outlines, is crucial for understanding texts that reckon with implication such as *Vse techet* and *Billard um halb zehn*. To illustrate this argument, I adopt a dualistic method in this section. First, I analyse why these texts either have been — or in the case of Böll's novel, could have been — read through the trauma paradigm. For clarity, I do not advocate for these trauma-focused readings of the novels. On the contrary, by critically exploring how and why trauma theory either has or could have been utilized to read these narratives, I hope to expose the limitations of a trauma-based approach and the

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<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Caruth, 'Recapturing the Past', pp. 151–58, Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, pp. 1–9; Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, pp. 57–74.

<sup>12</sup> Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 21–22.

need for an alternative analytical strategy to account for the texts' complexities. In the second part of the section, I argue that moral injury reflects such a new approach.

### *Sharing the Unspeakable Past?*

Scholars have recurrently read Grossman's *Vse techet* through the trauma framework. Jekaterina Shulga utilizes this psychoanalytic paradigm to highlight the author's emphasis on the importance of coherent discussion of the past as a means to alleviate past personal suffering.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Sarah J. Young observes that the protagonist Ivan Grigor'evich's 'testimony' is largely defined by silence, emphasizing the inherent difficulty of speaking about the traumatic past.<sup>14</sup> Young argues that Ivan's speech is facilitated by the presence of maternal love, the epitome of the timeless capacity for human kindness and solidarity that is ubiquitous across Grossman's late writing.<sup>15</sup> Ivan's initial silence is connected to the absence of his deceased mother, whose image appears to him in dreams during and after his time in the Gulag. As the narrative progresses, Ivan forms a relationship with his landlady Anna Sergeevna, who, by seemingly switching between the identities of mother and lover, creates an environment in which both of their testimonies can be shared.<sup>16</sup> Ivan receives Anna's account of her experiences working as a party activist and *kolkhoz* administrator in Ukraine during collectivization and the terror famine. Anna dies by the time that Ivan vocalizes his experiences in the Gulag; however, he expresses his thoughts 'словно вел разговор с Анной Сергеевной' ('as if he were having a conversation with Anna Sergeevna'), highlighting her presence in spirit.<sup>17</sup>

While Böll's approach has not been directly associated with trauma theory in this way, similar ideas have been observed in relation to *Billard*. Diane Stevenson highlights the 'temporal-moral matrix' of Böll's novel, showing how the characters' simultaneous experiences of past, present and future time influence the text's structure, with description of memories often interrupting the

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<sup>13</sup> Shulga, 'Memory, History, Testimony', pp. 58–61.

<sup>14</sup> Young, 'Testimony on the Margins', pp. 330–32.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 334–35.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Vasilii Grossman, 'Vse techet', *Oktyabr*, 6 (1989), 30–108 (p. 105). All further references will be to this edition and can be found parenthetically in the text after the translation.

narrative, slowing down the exposition of the plot and fragmenting its composition.<sup>18</sup> Such narrative features could hypothetically be studied in relation to trauma, as they enact the forms of silence and textual lacunae that have so often been connected to this concept. Once again, it should be emphasized here that I would critique rather than support any such reading, as I will explain shortly. However, exploring its hypothetic tenets is a helpful exercise in order to show why the broader intrinsic association often assumed in literary studies between trauma and reflections of silence or ‘absence’, to use Pederson’s phrase, is overly rigid and potentially misleading.

On a superficial level, Böll seems to emphasize the unspeakable nature of the violent past and the potential therapeutic importance of dialogue and testimony. The protagonist Robert Fähmel suffers intrusive memories about his experiences under National Socialism when he was a victim of a violent attack by local Nazi loyalists and was forced into exile in Amsterdam for aiding an anti-fascist bombing plot. He becomes able to discuss his experiences in a more coherent fashion thanks to the figure of Hugo, a hotel lobby boy whose guidance somewhat embodies the ‘active’ role that the trauma theorist Dori Laub suggests the receiver of traumatic testimony plays in the therapeutic process.<sup>19</sup> On serving Robert a drink, Hugo asks ‘Sie erzählen mir heute nichts, Herr Doktor?’ (you’re not telling me anything today, Doctor?), encouraging the character to discuss his memories.<sup>20</sup> When Robert reveals his doubts over his listener’s interest in his story by asking ‘Hugo, Hugo, hörst du, was ich erzähle?’ (‘Hugo, Hugo, do you hear what I’m saying?’), Hugo replies ‘ich, Herr Doktor, ich höre jedes Wort’ (‘me, I hear every word, Doctor’, p. 55), showing his active participation in the exchange.

There are basic discrepancies between Böll’s and Grossman’s characterization of the relationship between listener and testifier here. Whereas in Grossman’s novel Anna and Ivan form a consensual, albeit brief romantic relationship, Hugo is a paid employee of the hotel that Robert attends for his daily game of billiards. Thus, the listener arguably has little choice but to indulge the testifier’s account in this case, disrupting the power dynamics of the exchange. Yet there are also

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<sup>18</sup> Diane Stevenson, ‘The Temporal-Moral Matrix of Heinrich Böll’s Billiards at Half-Past Nine’, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 36.1 (1990), 95–114 (pp. 97–98).

<sup>19</sup> Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, p. 71.

<sup>20</sup> Heinrich Böll, *Billard um halb zehn* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2018), p. 41. All further references will be to this edition and can be found parenthetically in the text after the translation.

certain parallels between the two pairs of characters. Böll similarly appears to cast a bond between listener and testifier akin to parental love, as Robert ultimately makes the decision to adopt Hugo as his son.<sup>21</sup> Like Grossman, Böll also suggests that such a connection is not derived from ties of blood, but from a sense of innate kindness. As the ‘adopted’ figure who completes the parent-child paradigm, Hugo is described as the ‘*Lamm Gottes*’ (‘Lamb of God’, p. 75), highlighting his compassion. Once again, ambiguities remain as to whether Hugo retains agency in this process; it is, after all, essentially a reward being a ‘good’ (or indeed ‘active’) listener and there is seemingly little confirmation of his explicit desire or consent for the adoption within the narrative. Nonetheless, each quasi-parental relationship does seem to have at least some reciprocal benefit. Where Ivan and Anna are bonded by his experiences in the Gulag and her witnessing of famine, Hugo is also the subject of a violent attack in the post-war period and shares his own experiences in response to Robert’s recollections, as I will explain in more detail later in the chapter. Thus, there is arguably some hypothetical evidence to support a trauma-based reading of these texts. Both writers could be seen to posit the importance of dialogue for alleviating the intrusive, painful legacy of the past, a process that is facilitated by the virtue of human kindness, and especially a bond akin to parental love.

However, utilizing this framework risks overlooking the novels’ shared focus of reckoning with implication. To take Grossman’s text as an example, the Gulag survivor Ivan does largely remain silent in the narrative, but his unwillingness to speak seems rooted less in terms of trauma than in his developing understanding that he is in fact *unchanged* despite all that he has suffered. This is shown via the closing image of the text in which Ivan returns to the site of his dilapidated childhood home in southern Russia, a scene that has been linked to the biblical story of the Prodigal Son.<sup>22</sup> As Ivan approaches the remnants of this building, the narrator emphasizes the character’s enduring identity in the final line: ‘он стоял здесь — седой, сутулый и все же тот же, неизменный’ (‘he stood here — grey, stooped, but still the same, unchanged’, p. 108). Such quiet defiance emphasizes Ivan’s

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<sup>21</sup> While Grossman mainly emphasizes the importance of maternal love in his work, he also describes a sudden parent-child bond forming between an old man and a young girl at the end of the Holocaust story ‘*Staryi uchitel*’ (‘The Old Teacher’). See Young, ‘Testimony on the Margins’, p. 334; Vasilii Grossman, ‘*Staryi uchitel*’, in *Na evreiskie temy*, ed. by Shimon Markish (Jerusalem: Biblioteka-Aliya, 1985), I, 111–43.

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. Ghini, ‘Everything Flows’, p. 79.

resilience and wisdom; rather than failing to comprehend his experiences, he exactly appreciates the wrong that has been perpetrated against him through the violence of others. Thus, his silence reflects less his own need for psychological healing than his dignity in the face of the society that wronged him. This observation suggests that any psychological problem to be reckoned with in the text lies not with this victim, but with the implicated and the complicit individuals around him.

Indeed, in Grossman's novel the intrusive or painful nature of memory is predominantly expressed through characters who are not themselves victims of Stalinist atrocities but who are in fact wrestling with their implication in such crimes. These perspectives include Ivan's cousin Nikolai, who, in a link to the representation of post-war Soviet antisemitism in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, built a career as a research scientist by engaging in the antisemitic condemnation of his Jewish colleagues in the late Stalinist era, and Pinegin, the successful academician who denounced the protagonist. Crucially, they also include Ivan's interlocutor Anna Sergeevna, who, as a former party activist, witnessed the atrocities of early Stalinism from a position of strong association with the perpetrators. In Böll's text too, Robert's difficult relationship with the National Socialist past is similarly linked to a sense of his own implication. While this character is a victim of an historical attack by Nazi loyalists, his broader experiences of the Nazi era are characterized by his conscription into the *Wehrmacht* and use of strategies of passive resistance. In both cases, then, any apparent stylistic parallels between the texts and later 'trauma fiction' are somewhat artificial. In fact, the critical employment of this paradigm risks mischaracterizing the narratives as expressions of the inherent unknowability of traumatic experiences, when this notion does not actually represent the main thrust of the authors' conceptualizations of memory. There is a clear need for an alternative approach to connect the stylistic and psychological planes of these novels. Moral injury provides this new perspective.

### *A Poetics of Moral Injury*

In *Vse techet*, Anna's testimony is endowed with pervasive feelings of guilt and shame that can be illuminated by the moral injury lens. She describes the intrusive nature of her memories and likens them to 'железо в сердце, словно осколок' ('iron in the heart like a splinter', p. 74). While clearly very painful for the character, these intrusions are rooted not in her personal suffering of violence but

rather in her realization that she is implicated in the horrors she describes.<sup>23</sup> Anna acknowledges the immorality of her past behaviour, stating: ‘я красивая была, а все же плохая, недобрая’ (‘I was beautiful, and yet bad, unkind’, p. 74). Considering that human kindness is the basis both for Anna’s bond with Ivan and Grossman’s broader ethics, her awareness of her previously ‘unkind’ nature highlights how her historical actions transgressed the moral code to which she is now committed, directly associating her testimony with the concept of moral injury. The confessional language with which she addresses Ivan emphasizes the specifically moral dynamics of her pain: she looks on him ‘как на Христа’ (‘like Christ’) and states ‘все хочется перед тобой, как перед богом, каяться’ (‘I want to repent before you, like before God’, p. 74). By comparing Ivan to Christ, Anna emphasizes the differences between their subject positions and appeals to him for forgiveness for her past transgressions. This confessional tone fundamentally changes the dynamics of their relationship. Rather than a manifestation of shared unspeakable trauma, the connection between Ivan and Anna represents a process of reconciliation, of fostering solidarity by reaching across uneasy boundaries of experience via self-reflection and remorse. This feeling of identification between the characters is also strongly reinforced by Anna’s commitment to act with more integrity in the future.

As in the case of characters from *Zhizn' i sud'ba* such as Viktor Shtrum, Anna’s characterization suggests that Grossman’s approach to narrativizing the legacies of Stalinism appears centred less on the victims’ trauma than on the troubled psychology of the implicated. In a parable-like excursus, Grossman describes an abstract court room scene in which four denouncers, labelled ‘Judases’, are tried for their involvement in the Stalinist terror. Given the legal imagery of this scene and the fact that these figures are guilty of denunciations, their behaviour seems to embody the notion of complicity, which denotes direct participation in criminal activity, rather than the structural relationship to power and atrocity associated with implication.<sup>24</sup> However, Grossman characterizes the informers’ behaviour in systemic terms, problematizing the validity of judging their actions.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup> Shulga acknowledges that Anna is aware of her implication in the events she describes but nevertheless views this character’s testimony in terms of trauma. See Shulga, ‘Memory, History, Testimony’, p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Shulga notes that the blurring of boundaries between victim and perpetrator in the novel is a crucial aspect of Grossman’s problematization of judgement. See Shulga, ‘Memory, History, Testimony’, p. 61.

narrator explains the conditions that motivated these individuals' behaviour at length, interspersing these descriptions with statements such as 'не будем спешить, подумаем всерьез об этом доносчике' ('we will not judge, we will think seriously about this denouncer', p. 53). Furthermore, as the narrative switches from prose into a drama script, one Judas suggests that no moral authority exists to judge the informers, arguing that all of those present — and by extension, all of those who survived the Stalin era — participated in the activities of the state in some form:

А в нашем государстве новая формула — все, миром, виноваты. И нет в мире ни одного невинного. Речь идет о мере, о степени вины. Пристало ли вам, товарищ прокурор, обвинять нас? Один лишь мертвые, те, что не выжили, вправе судить нас. Но мертвые не задают вопросов, мертвые молчат. (pp. 56–57)

But in our state, there is a new formula — everyone, the whole world, is to blame. And there is no one on earth who is innocent. The discussion is only about the level, the degree of guilt. Is it right for you, comrade prosecutor, to accuse us? Only the dead, those who did not survive, have the right to judge us. But the dead do not ask questions; the dead are silent.

The informer's defence counsel goes further still by noting that 'государство людей не рождает. Стукачи проросли из человека' ('the state does not give birth to people; the informants sprouted from man', p. 57). This statement implies that the moral weaknesses of the defendants reflect the regrettable aspects of human nature, which are apparent in every individual at least to some degree.

The theorist Tzvetan Todorov has criticized this element of Grossman's thought, asserting that the author confuses legal judgement and moral responsibility and thus potentially absolves perpetrators of violence from having to face justice.<sup>26</sup> As Laura Guillaume and Patrick Finney note, however, Grossman's argument is not that those guilty of criminality should be spared legal judgement.<sup>27</sup> He simply exposes the 'ethical dilemma' posed by a society that cannot be delineated into easy categories of total innocence or guilt.<sup>28</sup> The intertwined relationship that Grossman implies between the individual and state power is similar to the notion of implicated subjectivity, while the ramifications of this concept are described in terms akin to moral injury. The defence counsel closes his monologue with the rhetorical question 'почему так больно, так стыдно за наше человеческое

<sup>26</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*, trans. by A Denner and A Pollack (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), pp. 232–33.

<sup>27</sup> Laura Guillaume and Patrick Finney, "It is a Terrible Thing to Condemn Even a Terrible Man": Vasily Grossman on Judging Perpetrators', *Journal of European Studies*, 43.4 (2013), 344–56 (p. 348).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

непотребство?’ (‘why is our human obscenity so painful, so shameful?’, p. 57), highlighting the pervasive, quasi-pathological demoralization caused by endemic ethical transgression. The prominent place afforded to this passage suggests that this phenomenon is of central importance to Grossman’s view of the shadow that Stalinism cast over the whole of society in the novel.

Thus, even if we remain cautious about whether the highly fragmentary structure of Grossman’s novel is the result of authorial decision or the text’s unfinished status, the narrative still clearly reflects a stylistic overlap between the poetics of ‘absence’ and ‘excess’.<sup>29</sup> The novel combines explicit representations of shame, solitude and demoralization with traits such as silence, perspectival lacunae and intrusive memories. However, where Pederson suggests that these narrative features are reflective of trauma and moral injury narratives respectively, in this case all of these stylistic traits are connected to Grossman’s central thematization of the latter phenomenon, i.e. his clear focus on reckoning with systemic moral transgression. This destabilizes the distinction made in Pederson’s formula, suggesting that the literary manifestations of moral injury are more wide-ranging than he proposes and in fact bear many of the features traditionally associated with trauma.

Böll’s thematization of memory also reflects notions of moral injury. As I explained earlier, Robert’s reluctance to discuss the past is predominantly underpinned by his experiences of implication under National Socialism, and particularly his wartime membership of the *Wehrmacht* and his generally passive, internalized forms of resistance against the fascist regime. The character acknowledges the moral ambiguities of his subject position by focusing upon his wartime activity as an army demolitions expert in his discussions with Hugo. Robert explains how, at the end of the conflict, he destroyed the Sankt Anton Abbey, stating ‘die Mönche verfluchten mich, aber ich war nicht aufzuhalten, die ganze Abtei Sankt Anton im Kissatal sprengte ich, drei Tage vor Kriegsschluß (‘the monks cursed me, but I was not to be stopped. Three days before the end of the war, I demolished the whole Sankt Anton Abbey in Kissatal’, p. 78). Elsewhere in the text, the abbey’s monks are described as having partaken in Nazi rituals, a nod to the institutional implication of the Catholic church in fascism.<sup>30</sup> This detail, coupled with the fact that the abbey was designed by

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<sup>29</sup> Pederson, *Sin Sick*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>30</sup> Nemoto, ‘Mishima and Böll’, p. 233.

Robert's father, Heinrich, suggests that the building's demolition symbolizes the systematic moral collapse of German society under Nazism, the structures of which Robert now seeks to destroy.

Yet Robert took this action just three days before the end of the war, suggesting that his act of protest was futile as the Nazi defeat was already guaranteed.<sup>31</sup> The inherent ambiguity of Robert's behaviour is emphasized by his position in the text's overarching moral framework, which, like Grossman's description of the Judases, exposes the dilemma posed by judging those who sit uneasily between the categories of victim and perpetrator. Böll splits many of the text's characters into two broad groups. Those who broadly support fascist, militaristic and nationalistic ideas are described as having drunk from the '*Sakrament des Büffels*' ('buffalo sacrament'), while those who embody innate and timeless forms of compassion are labelled '*Lämmer*' ('lambs'). Critics suggest that this paradigm presents a dichotomous opposition between eternal forces of good and evil that cannot sufficiently account for the nuanced mechanisms of complicity under the Nazi regime.<sup>32</sup> As Kristin Rebien and Bernd Balzer separately observe, though, the behaviours of the figures within each category are diverse: there is no specific set of actions that link the lambs or buffalos respectively, suggesting that Böll also resists definitive classifications of innocence and guilt.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Robert is not given a place within either grouping, instead being labelled a '*Hirte*' ('shepherd'), a term which denotes those individuals '*die die Herde nicht verlassen*' ('who don't leave the flock', p.53).

This enigmatic description suggests that the 'shepherds' have a moral responsibility to protect the individuals most threatened by deadly violence.<sup>34</sup> Of course, this label also has religious connotations, especially in relation to Jesus Christ's image as 'the good shepherd'. Such a clear biblical association could be seen to reduce the ambiguity of Robert's position, potentially ascribing him with an inherently moral and dignified perspective. In fact, though, the ironic point of contrast to Christ only appears to reinforce the ambiguous ramifications of Robert's general passivity. The gap between Christ's teachings and Robert's behaviour emphasizes how this character has failed to live up to his calling to protect the vulnerable from harm. Within an already complex ethical framework,

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<sup>31</sup> Butler, 'Billard um halb zehn', pp. 120–21.

<sup>32</sup> Reed, *Novel and the Nazi Past*, p. 129.

<sup>33</sup> Rebien, 'Politics and Aesthetics', pp. 93–94; Balzer, *Das literarische Werk Heinrich Böll*, p. 235.

<sup>34</sup> Butler, 'Billard um halb zehn', p. 123.

Robert is ascribed an inherently liminal position between the poles of victimhood and perpetration. His internal rejection of fascism associates him with the lambs, but his experiences as a former soldier also implicate him in the catastrophic moral transgressions of the Nazi era. It is his sense of being implicated in these contraventions and his concern that he has not lived up to his responsibility to prevent the violence wrought upon others that underpin his troubled relationship with the past.

In line with the features of moral injury, Robert's failure to intervene meaningfully in the ethical breakdown of German society leads to his severe sense of demoralization in the post-Nazi present. Even after National Socialism, Robert clings to the view that society is irredeemable, leading to his extreme self-isolation. Lawrence F. Gatz observes that Robert's separation from mainstream West German life is foregrounded from the text's first scene in which the character's secretary, Leonora, reads a short list of family members, which also includes Schrella, a former member of the anti-Nazi resistance, with whom he is willing to communicate.<sup>35</sup> Robert's social disengagement is further emphasized by the routine he forms around his daily game of billiards, which he plays in solitude, as well as his love of mathematical formulae.<sup>36</sup> He finds solace in this abstract solipsism; however, his internal retreat towards rationality acts only as a distraction from the external reality of irrational human violence. Through his dialogue with Hugo, Robert learns that his future adopted son has been violently beaten, a fact which suggests that this societal immorality has continued into the post-Nazi era. Indeed, Hugo suffers his own severe crisis of faith in response to these attacks, querying the redemptive meaning of Christ's death by asking 'was soll das alles, wenn sie mir jeden Tag auflauern und mich verprügeln?' ('what was it all for if they ambush me every day and beat me up?', p. 73). Hugo's anger highlights the hypocrisy he perceives within the post-war German population's claims of an affinity with Christianity while continuing to transgress its moral code.

Clearly, there is an imbalance between Robert's and Hugo's lived experiences. Where the former character is implicated in the Nazi war effort, the latter has come of age after the National Socialist era and suffered later violence. Moreover, Hugo's status as a 'lamb' — and the personal qualities of compassion and kindness associated with this position — suggests that his character

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<sup>35</sup> Gatz, *Heinrich Böll als Moralist*, p. 168.

<sup>36</sup> Reed, *The Nazi Past*, p. 64.

innately counteracts the lingering immorality of post-fascist society in a way that Robert does not. Yet, despite these differences, the characters share a profound feeling of demoralization rooted in an anxiety that the catastrophic scale of the moral destruction wrought by National Socialism had not been recognized by society at large. This observation is significant for two main reasons. First, it sheds new light on the psychological foundation of the novel's fragmented narrative structure. Robert's and Hugo's exchange clearly does not represent a cathartic process of psychological recovery from a mutual, albeit temporally separated traumatic experience. However imbalanced the power dynamics between these characters, their dialogue is in fact rooted in their joint wariness over the immoral condition of the world around them and its close relationship with the violent past. This implies that the psychological underpinning of their relationship mirrors the basic principles of moral injury. Their shared feelings of distress are triggered by action — or indeed inaction — that transgresses their similarly acute senses of morality. Such a conclusion reinforces the vital importance of acknowledging how moral injury can inspire literary features linked to hesitancy, lacunae and absence, as it shows how Böll's employment of such traits is directly linked to his exploration of the psychological effects of reckoning with transgression and its lingering legacies. Using this new lens to elucidate this specific but crucial element of the author's approach allows readers to better connect the aesthetic, psychological and moral planes of the text.

Second, the moral injury concept also illuminates the political dimension of Böll's novel, albeit in a different way. Robert and Hugo contrast their own clearly fragile emotional and psychological states to the immoral behaviour of those around them. This is not only shown by Hugo's clear frustration over the hypocrisy and lack of true Christian values that he perceives in broader society, but also by Robert's retreat into social isolation. In this case, then, the pair's moral injury is linked to an innate feeling of moral superiority; Robert's and Hugo's shared internal dismay is pointedly contrasted to, and exacerbated by, the flawed external world in which they live. In other words, Robert's and Hugo's feelings of guilt, shame and demoralization are cast as unusual, or even exceptional, responses to the past and not as broadly felt social phenomena. It is precisely this general lack of critical engagement with the Nazi past that Böll seeks to expose and challenge in this text. Thus, on a political level, it is in fact this broader absence of moral injury that is most significant.

Indeed, exploring the political dimensions of both *Billard um halb zehn* and *Vse techet* requires consideration of those characters who experience no profound psychological response to their implication in Nazi and Stalinist violence. Doing so reveals the novels' pointed critiques of memory politics in the seemingly very different, post-totalitarian societies that they describe. It also highlights Grossman's and Böll's broader conceptualizations of memory and the links between them. Both authors emphasize the importance of continually reckoning with one's relationship with the past as a basis for fostering and maintaining human integrity in the present. In this way, they cast remembrance as an essential and ongoing task that begins with the individual subject.

### **Foregrounding the Subject: Implication and Memory Politics**

The bonds that form between Ivan and Anna and Robert and Hugo in these texts embody the possibility of interpersonal reconciliation emerging between figures of differing experiences via processes of recognition, remorse and forgiveness. However, neither author suggests that all of those individuals either implicated or directly complicit in the historical crimes of the Stalinist and Nazi states are able to acknowledge the morally injurious legacies of the past and thus embark on such a transformation. In fact, implicated characters such as Anna and Robert who consciously experience moral distress in these texts are relatively rare, with both writers describing a majority of figures who contributed to or benefitted from the Nazi and Stalinist states but who show little belated contrition. The authors thematize these abortive or failed attempts to reckon with the moral fissures wrought by the totalitarian past to critique the specific condition of memory politics in West German and Soviet societies during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Here, I assess several ways in which the authors frame these critiques. First, I compare their similar descriptions of an interaction between a victim of historical violence and an individual complicit in their suffering. Notwithstanding the obvious differences between the West German and Soviet contexts that these novels describe, I explain how these scenes similarly expose specific ambiguities within these societies' respective memory politics. Subsequently, I assess a further aspect of Grossman's and Böll's comparable critiques in this respect, exploring how both writers

contextualize the origins of Nazism and Stalinism within the longer histories of their respective countries. In this way, the section shows how both novels critique specific features of memory discourse in Soviet and West German societies at the time that they were written. Moreover, the parallels between the narratives also reveal a broader conceptual similarity between the authors' views on memory. Positing the omnipresent potential for the re-emergence of chauvinism, hatred and violence in the present, both writers cast memory as an open-ended, personal activity that requires constant renewal, rather than as a linear process of societal 'mastery' of the violent past.

### *Return and Confrontation*

Grossman and Böll both narrate interactions between a returning victim of historical violence and individuals who wronged them in order to highlight the incomplete development of memory in the respective post-totalitarian societies that they describe. In contrast to figures such as Anna and Robert, the implicated and complicit characters in these scenes show little or no sign of moral injury in response to their historical actions. In *Vse techet*, there are two such interactions that highlight the broader failure to appropriately reckon with the complex moral fissures of the Stalinist past in post-Stalinist society: Ivan's interactions, first, with his cousin Nikolai, who has built a successful scientific career due to his political conformity and loyalism, and second, with his old comrade and denouncer, the academician Pinegin. In both cases, the abortive attempts of these implicated characters to either comprehend or express the wrongdoing inherent to their actions contrasts directly to the deeply remorseful figure of Anna, thus evoking the novel's critique of the failure to properly confront the past in Soviet society as a whole. Here, I focus on the second interaction between Ivan and Pinegin, because this scene highlights striking parallels with Böll's novel, including moments of identical literary imagery and motif.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The interaction between Ivan and Nikolai has also already been subject to a number of interesting readings. For example, Alexander Etkind links the characters' struggles to communicate to the trope of 'misrecognition' that he identifies across Soviet literature of this period. Etkind argues that 'misrecognition' acts as a symbol for the moral divides created between Gulag returnees and their families. See Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, pp. 52–54.

Ivan Grigor'evich encounters the man who denounced him some thirty years before, the now successful scientist Pinegin, during a short visit to Leningrad. This meeting profoundly shocks Pinegin, not only because he thought Ivan was dead, but also because this man represents a physical embodiment of his earlier moral transgression. The narrator describes the 'лицо остолбеневшего Пинегина' ('Pinegin's dumbfounded expression') and how the character 'смотрел живыми и умными глазами в самую глубину взора Ивана Григорьевича' ('looked with lively and intelligent eyes into the very depths of Ivan Grigor'evich's gaze', p. 51), implying that he is aware that his previous actions were immoral and feels some initial distress in response. However, his fears are assuaged when Ivan says nothing about his betrayal, an obstinate silence that emphasizes the protagonist's own dignity and, in contrast, Pinegin's lack of genuine contrition. The narrator states that 'чувство уверенности, что Иван не плюнет ему в лицо, не спросит с него, наполнило Пинегина светом' ('the feeling of certainty that Ivan would not spit in his face, that he would not question him, filled Pinegin with light', p. 52). That Pinegin's alarm subsides so suddenly, and that he even feels ashamed of his initial reaction, shows that his panic was triggered less by a real sense of guilt, and more by a fear that he might be confronted and judged for his transgressions. His false sense of remorse is highlighted by the suggestion that he was filled 'with light' when realizing that Ivan will not confront him, a phrase that parodies a real process of moral enlightenment.

Pinegin's failure to truly acknowledge the depravity of his actions is also emphasized by his offer of money to Ivan, to which the latter replies only by looking in his eyes 'с живым и печальным любопытством' ('with a lively and sad curiosity', p. 52). Pinegin recognizes the devastating nature of Ivan's silent response, thinking for a moment that he would give up all his professional and material privileges, 'лишь бы не чувствовать на себе этого взгляда' ('just not to feel this look on himself', p. 52). Yet the moral gulf between the two figures remains clear: where Pinegin thinks that the suffering caused by his actions might be absolved through a symbolic sharing of the material privilege that he derived from them, Ivan appreciates the true nature of the moral fissure. Thus, Pinegin recognizes the immorality of his historical actions but, unlike Anna, he is unable to atone for them. On one level, Pinegin's self-centred and cynical response to meeting Ivan represents the behaviour of just one complicit individual. As I will explain in more detail shortly, though, this

character's attitude has broader symbolic significance for Grossman; it embodies a comprehensive failure to properly reckon with the moral legacies of Stalinist violence in Soviet society as a whole.

Böll describes an even starker confrontation in *Billard*. Having been arrested on arrival in Germany due to his name being included in a list of political fugitives left over from the National Socialist era, the returning exile Schrella is freed from jail by Nettlinger, the fascist loyalist who attacked him in the Nazi period but who remains a prominent local official in post-war society. Both the existence of this list and Nettlinger's lasting career highlights a degree of continuity between the Nazi and post-Nazi eras, and thus enacts Böll's specific criticism of the presence of officials who were active under National Socialism in the West German state.<sup>38</sup> In a similar manner to Grossman's scene, Böll's description of the subsequent interaction between Nettlinger and Schrella also exposes a more general socio-political failure to critically engage with the fissures of the totalitarian past.

Before explaining the parallels between Böll's and Grossman's scenes in this respect, it is important to note some differences between them. Unlike Pinegin's fear of confrontation with Ivan, Nettlinger feels no distress at all on encountering Schrella. Indeed, his behaviour towards the man he wronged appears disturbingly saccharine. On hearing about Schrella's experiences in exile, Nettlinger comments:

Wie ist es mit dem: rücksichtsloser politischer Haß zwischen Schulkameraden; Verfolgung, Verhör, Flucht, Haß bis aufs Blut — aber zweiundzwanzig Jahre später ist es ausgerechnet der Verfolger, der Schreckliche, der den heimkehrenden Flüchtling aus dem Gefängnis befreit? (p. 205)

How about this: ruthless political hatred between school comrades; persecution, interrogation, escape, the bitterest of hatred — but twenty-two years it is the very same persecutor, the terrible one, who frees the returning refugee from prison?

This inappropriate encouragement of Schrella to note an irony in their meeting reflects Nettlinger's stark lack of contrition. It is important to note that this denial of wrongdoing is not rooted in the unconscious repression of the past, as might be posited by a traditional psychoanalytic reading; Nettlinger clearly remembers his actions but simply lacks the integrity required to recognize their

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<sup>38</sup> Reed, *The Nazi Past*, p. 36. For historical analysis of figures associated with the Nazi regime in West German politics see e.g. Herf, *Divided Memory*, pp. 289–91; Detlef Garbe, 'Äußerliche Abkehr, Erinnerungsverweigerung und Vergangenheitsbewältigung: Der Umgang mit dem Nationalsozialismus in der frühen Bundesrepublik', in *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau: Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre* (Bonn: Dietz, 1993), pp. 691–716 (p. 700).

depravity. In fact, he appears to revel in this reminder of his behaviour. Like Pinegin, the German character also offers money to his interlocutor. In this case, however, the financial proposition is not an inappropriate or false attempt at absolution. Rather, it is an arrogant assertion of the power that Nettlinger continues to feel over Schrella, emphasizing the former figure's immoral character.

Yet there are striking parallels between Grossman's and Böll's scenes. Nettlinger's depravity is highlighted by the lavish meal of salmon hors-d'oeuvres and beefsteak that he orders during their conversation at the hotel restaurant. Disgusted by Nettlinger's enjoyment of such luxuries, Schrella feels compelled to leave his company, highlighting the moral gulf between these figures in a manner similar to Ivan's silent reproach of Pinegin's offer of financial support. Strikingly, the details of Nettlinger's meal are mirrored in *Vse techet*. Following his interaction with Ivan, Pinegin rushes to the luxury of a restaurant favoured by foreign dignitaries and the Soviet elite. Unlike Nettlinger, Pinegin is alone and still rocked by his confrontation with the man that he wronged, thinking to himself 'ох, ох, беда, прямо хоть не живи после такой дряни на свете' ('oh, oh God, how can one live with such rubbish in the world', p. 58). He is soothed by the delicacies around him: in a direct parallel to Böll's novel, Pinegin orders steak and notes the glistening salmon hors-d'oeuvres being delivered from the kitchen. The sight of this dish allows Pinegin to quell his emerging feelings of guilt and shame: 'да и не был он уже таким гастрономом, и не так уж хотелось ему есть, но именно в эту минуту старый человек в ватнике вновь перестал тревожить его правоту' ('he was not much of a gastronome, and he did not particularly want to eat, but it was at that precise moment that the old man in the quilted jacket once again stopped feeling disturbed', p. 58). Thus, the authors employ identical imagery to symbolize the lingering presence of the moral fault-lines of Nazism and Stalinism in the post-totalitarian societies that they describe. The culinary delicacies point not only to the institutionalized material and political status still afforded to those both implicated and directly complicit in the horrors of these regimes — though that is of course significant in and of itself — but also to such individuals' systematic failure to confront the moral depravity of their historical actions and its lasting ramifications in the present.

Nettlinger and Pinegin are not identical characters, with the former being a fascist loyalist who perpetrated violence and the latter having made denunciations that ruined people's lives. Nonetheless, they each reflect a fundamental inability to perceive the morally injurious nature of the past and to undertake the process of self-reflection required to instigate moral or social reconciliation. In this respect, I argue that both characters enact Grossman's and Böll's broader political critiques. They each embody how the process of reckoning with the past had developed insufficiently in their respective societies, highlighting specific ambiguities and flaws within West German and Soviet memory politics in the late 1950s. As the respective publication histories of these novels suggest, the socio-political differences between the democratic post-National Socialist West German and the authoritarian post-Stalinist Soviet contexts were profound. Yet public memory of National Socialism and Stalinism held a somewhat ambiguous position in each society at this time, and it is this sense of equivocation that the authors seek to expose in these scenes.

In the Soviet context, memory had become a significant but fraught political subject. Following Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev claimed to be realigning Soviet communism with the revolutionary 'ideals' of Marxist-Leninist thought.<sup>39</sup> His 'Secret Speech' at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 called for a reckoning with the Stalinist era through its explicit deconstruction of the dictator's 'cult of personality'.<sup>40</sup> This process of 'de-Stalinization' was expanded during the Twenty Second Party Congress in 1961, when, as Barbara Martin explains, 'Khrushchev denounced Stalinist era crimes openly and unequivocally'.<sup>41</sup> These changes led to some discussion of Stalinist violence in Soviet culture, including even the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Gulag novella *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* (*A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*) in November 1962.<sup>42</sup> However,

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<sup>39</sup> On Khrushchev era politics see e.g. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic, eds., *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953–64* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Philip Boobyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 61–62.

<sup>41</sup> Barbara Martin, *Dissident Histories in the Soviet Union: From De-Stalinization to Perestroika* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), pp. 11–12.

<sup>42</sup> On the significant impact of Solzhenitsyn's text in both the Soviet Union and in the West see e.g. Dariusz Tolczyk, *See No Evil: Literary Cover-Ups and Discoveries of the Soviet Camp Experience* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 253–63. On the importance of literature in shaping 'official' Soviet memory see e.g. Polly Jones, 'Memories of Terror or Terrorizing Memories? Terror, Trauma and Survival in Soviet Culture of the Thaw', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 86.2 (2008), 346–71.

Soviet memory during the Thaw remained the subject of political boundaries that limited what could be discussed and aimed to ensure that remembrance did not encumber ideological progress.

Continued state censorship was not a feature of West German society in the 1950s. However, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer also promoted a narrative of political restoration, embarking on a process of democratic and economic *Wiederaufbau* ('reconstruction') and seeking to integrate the country into the Western capitalist order.<sup>43</sup> Memory discourse held a somewhat ambiguous position in this context. On the one hand, figures across the political spectrum acknowledged the need to reckon with the Nazi past in some form: Adenauer began discussing the payment of reparations to Israel in 1951 and financial compensation towards victims of Nazi repression was signed into law in September 1953.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, though, Adenauer was content to deemphasize narratives of *Wiedergutmachung* ('reparation') to garner political support for economic reconstruction and his hopes for West German accession to NATO.<sup>45</sup> For example, prosecutions of senior military figures by war crimes tribunals, which were particularly unpopular amongst conservative circles, declined from the start of the decade amid growing calls for German rearmament.<sup>46</sup> Caroline Sharples suggests that this shift away from judicial measures reflected broader West German popular opinion during the *Wiederaufbau*, with many wishing to look 'towards a brighter future, rather than dwelling on a painful past' following the externally imposed de-Nazification process under post-war Allied occupation.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, notwithstanding the major differences between these societies, memory politics in both contexts fell short of a more systematic reckoning with the violent past. Remembrance was to some degree endorsed by these societies' respective political leaderships, but such discussions were also either limited or at least deemphasized in socio-political and cultural discourse in order to facilitate respective projects of ideological reconstruction. The failure of characters such as Nettlinger and Pinegin to reckon properly with their implication and complicity in the crimes of National Socialism

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<sup>43</sup> See e.g. *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau: Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre*, ed. by Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek (Bonn: Dietz, 1993) for an historical overview of West Germany in the 1950s.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Garbe, 'Äußerliche Abkehr', pp. 705–06; Herf, *Divided Memory*, pp. 281–86.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. Nibert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 147–76; Sharples, *West Germans and the Nazi Legacy*, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

and Stalinism embodies this broader equivocation over the significance of memory and emphasizes the moral degradation of society as a whole. The broader societal failing that the authors imply via these scenes is not simply designed to puncture an atmosphere of total silence over the past or highlight some sort of mass-psychological repression of its horrors. To these authors, any attempts to deflect from the legacies of the past are presented as signs of active denial or complacency. By exposing the immoral passivity of these implicated and complicit characters, Grossman and Böll also inversely emphasize the transcendental importance of the very human attributes that these individuals cannot or do not display. The authors suggest that personal integrity, self-reflection, non-conformism and individuality itself are crucial aspects of an effective memory culture.

### *The Origins of Nazism and Stalinism*

The writers' specific critiques of memory politics in these contexts are also shown by their corresponding attempts to locate the origins of Stalinism and Nazism far back in the timeline of Russian and German history, respectively. This element of Grossman's approach is crystallized via Ivan Grigor'evich's polemical essay on Russian history, which was added late in the narrative as a 'discovered manuscript' at the end of the text.<sup>48</sup> Ivan critiques the ideas of nineteenth-century writers such as Fedor Dostoevsky and Nikolai Gogol', who suggested that Russia had a 'special mission' to lead a global spiritual revolution.<sup>49</sup> He labels the Russian soul a 'тысячелетняя раба' ('thousand-year slave', pp. 95–96) that had been shaped by its historical experience of *nesvoboda* or 'unfreedom'. The character also casts Vladimir Lenin, and not Stalin, as the forefather of twentieth-century totalitarianism, an assertion that strongly jarred with the neo-Leninist party line in Soviet society at this time.<sup>50</sup> Outlining Lenin's dualistic character, which Ivan suggests combined a love of culture with a hatred of freedom, the character-narrator argues that the Bolshevik revolutionary leader suppressed

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<sup>48</sup> Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, p. 292.

<sup>49</sup> Frank Ellis, 'The Russian Idea, Lenin, and the Origins of the Totalitarian State in Vasily Grossman's *Forever Flowing*', in *Vasily Grossman: A Writer's Freedom*, ed. by Anna Bonola and Giovanni Maddalena (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), pp. 123–40 (p. 124); Ellis, *Russian Heretic* pp. 197–217. See also Garrard, 'A Conflict of Visions', pp. 57–75.

<sup>50</sup> Ellis, 'The Russian Idea', pp. 127–28.

the brief opportunity for Russia to part from the path of slavery that was presented by the February Revolution of 1917:

В феврале 1917 года перед Россией открылась дорога свободы. Россия выбрала Ленина.

Огромна была ломка русской жизни, произведенная Лениным. Ленин сломал помещичий уклад. Ленин уничтожил заводчиков, купцов.

И все же рок русской истории определил Ленину, как ни дико и странно звучит это, сохранить проклятие России: связь ее развития с несвободой, с крепостью. (p. 98)

In February 1917 a road towards freedom opened up before Russia. But Russia chose Lenin. The breakdown of Russian life instigated by Lenin was enormous. Lenin broke the way of life of the landowners. Lenin destroyed the merchants and the manufacturers. And yet, as strange as it sounds, the fate of Russian history also determined that Lenin would maintain Russia's curse: the link between its development and unfreedom and the fortress.

Thus, Ivan asserts that Lenin both encapsulated and exacerbated the notion of *nesvoboda* inherent to the Russian historical experience; the revolutionary leader aggravated underlying cultural phenomena that pushed the nation away from freedom and laid the foundations for a totalitarian politics to emerge. Curiously, Ivan also argues that, in doing so, Lenin inspired not only Stalinism, but also Italian and German fascism, as well as dictatorships in Asia. He states that through Lenin the 'тысячелетний русский закон' ('the thousand-year Russian law') of *nesvoboda* 'стал законом всемирным' ('became a law for the whole world', p. 98).

This parodying of the long-standing messianic discourse about Russia's global political impact does of course represent an inverse version of the very exceptionalism that the character claims to critique.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the suggestion that early Bolshevik violence was prototypical for later Nazi atrocity has been challenged by historians and even bears similarity to the ideas that caused such controversy in Germany and beyond during the *Historikerstreit*.<sup>52</sup> Just as with the dialogue between Liss and Mostovskoi in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, however, Ivan's essay should be viewed primarily as an intervention into Soviet memory discourse rather than into the historiography on the relationship between Nazism and Stalinism. Via Ivan's polemic, Grossman subversively suggests that Stalinism

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<sup>51</sup> Ellis defends Grossman from such criticism, noting that author suggests that these features of the 'Russian soul' are rooted not in innate cultural flaws but in the country's geography, ultimately arguing that other nations would have befallen the same fate under similar circumstances. See Ellis, *Russian Heretic*, pp. 209–10.

<sup>52</sup> See e.g. Geyer and Fitzpatrick, 'After Totalitarianism' pp. 22–23.

was derived from the longstanding trends of Russian history and, even more heretically, from the central tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

These ideas starkly contradicted Soviet memory of Stalinism during the Thaw. While Khrushchev's Secret Speech triggered some limited discussion of the Stalinist past in the Soviet system, criticism of Lenin remained prohibited. Indeed, the speech and the broader de-Stalinization process cast the Stalinist 'cult of personality' as a deviation from Leninist ethics in a manner that emphasized the post-Stalinist Soviet project's ideological realignment with the revolutionary leader's ideals.<sup>53</sup> Thus, Grossman's categorization of Lenin as the crucial figure in enabling Stalinism represented the antithesis of the state's official historical narrative. Grossman's ideas in *Vse techet* were subversive even when compared with emerging trends in dissident thought. Benjamin Nathans suggests that a re-examination of Lenin's teaching was in fact a motif in dissident memoirs about the Thaw, when young thinkers sought to establish how the promise of socialism deviated into the crimes of Stalinism.<sup>54</sup> Returning to Lenin's texts sometimes led such figures to question the revolutionary's ideas, often for the first time; like Grossman, they observed the contradictions in his ethical stances, particularly surrounding the use of violence and the suppression of dissent.<sup>55</sup> However, unlike Grossman, such non-conformist writers generally committed their criticisms of Lenin to paper only years later.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, condemnation of Lenin remained relatively rare. In her study of dissident histories, Barbara Martin notes that the separation between Leninism and Stalinism was often maintained, broadly in line with official Khrushchev-era narratives.<sup>57</sup> The radicalization of dissident histories generally occurred in response to the rehabilitation of Stalin during the Brezhnev era.<sup>58</sup>

In this context, Ivan's treatise in *Vse techet* appears markedly radical. Despite the further de-Stalinization inspired by the Twenty Second Party Congress and the publication of Solzhenitsyn's

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<sup>53</sup> See e.g. Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, pp. 17–56; Boobyer, *Reform in Soviet Russia*, p. 62.

<sup>54</sup> Nathans cites memoirs by Ludmilla Alekseeva, Vladimir Voinovich, Anatolii Marchenko and Valentin Turchin amongst others. See Benjamin Nathans, 'Talking Fish: On Soviet Dissident Memoirs', *Journal of Modern History*, 87 (2015), 579–614 (p. 595).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> See e.g. Ludmilla Alekseeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1990), pp. 74–76.

<sup>57</sup> Martin, *Dissident Histories*, p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

*Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, Grossman added this section of his text at a time when discussions of the historical roots of Stalinism remained uncommon even in non-conformist circles. Unlike the minutiae of everyday life in the Gulag presented in Solzhenitsyn's novella, Grossman's critique in *Vse techet* is strikingly systemic, challenging not only the trends of Soviet memory but also Bolshevik ideology in and of itself. This radical perspective reflects the author's desire to highlight the moral necessity of memory as a means not only to remember the victims of Stalinism — though that is clearly very significant — but also to repel continued or re-emerging oppression in the Soviet present. This implicit promotion of a present-day political engagement through grassroots acts of remembrance was clearly unacceptable to an authoritarian regime such as Khrushchev's, which was attempting to manage discussion of the past for the sake of its own political agenda. Ultimately, this at least partly explains why Grossman understood that the text could not be published in the Soviet Union when it was written, instead instructing his confidant and lover Ekaterina Zabolotskaya to try to publish the novel abroad after his death.<sup>59</sup>

Böll did not face the same continued pressures of state censorship, but he sets out a comparable analysis of the roots of National Socialism in German history, which was subversive in its own way. As Reiko Tachibana Nemoto explains, the author identifies a longstanding strand of militarism inherent to German culture since at least the nineteenth century and links this phenomenon to the sense of ideologically promoted racial superiority and political conformism that allowed Nazism to emerge.<sup>60</sup> The historical continuity of this militarism and its destructive impact on individual lives are apparent across the generations described in Böll's novel and particularly in the experiences of Johanna and Heinrich Fähmel's three sons, who embody different typical German fates and attitudes in the twentieth century. While instinctively opposed to militaristic ideology, Robert Fähmel ultimately cannot escape its consequences, as is shown by his conscription into the *Wehrmacht*. In contrast, his brother Otto is an avid Nazi supporter who gladly joins the war effort and is killed in Ukraine in 1941. Perhaps most strikingly, though, the systemic impact of this militaristic, nationalist worldview is also evident in the story of the third brother, Heinrich, who died as a child in

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<sup>59</sup> Garrard and Garrard, *Life and Fate*, p. 292.

<sup>60</sup> Nemoto, 'Mishima and Böll', pp. 231–32.

1917. Johanna recalls her son playing with his father's sabre and helmet from the First World War while singing to himself '*muß haben ein Gewehr, muß haben ein Gewehr*' ('must have a gun, must have a gun', p. 146), emphasizing his fascination with the military even at this young age. His father also remembers Heinrich reciting a militaristic poem shortly before his death:

Blücher ist's, der herniederstieg,  
 uns führen von Sieg zu Sieg.  
 Vorwärts mit Hurra und Hindenburg,  
 Ostpreußens Retter und feste Burg.  
 Solange noch deutsche Wälder stehn,  
 solange noch deutsche Wimpel wehn,  
 solange noch lebt ein deutsches Wort,  
 lebt *der* Name unsterblich fort.  
 Gemeißelt in Stein, gegraben in Erz,  
 du, unser Held, die schlägt unser Herz:  
     Hindenburg! Vorwärts! (pp. 109–10)

It's Blücher who came down  
 To lead us from victory to victory.  
 Hurray! Onwards with Hindenburg,  
 Saviour of East Prussia and mighty fortress.  
 So long as the German forest stands,  
 So long as the German banner flies,  
 So long as the German word lives,  
 His name lives on forever.  
 Chiselled in stone; dug into ore,  
 Our heart beats for you, our hero:  
     Onwards, Hindenburg!

The nationalistic tone of this poem, coupled with the fact that Heinrich was made to learn it by heart, highlights the deep roots of militaristic and chauvinistic ideology in the German consciousness well before the formation of the Nazi state.<sup>61</sup> The poem also propagates a sense of a perceived military lineage across various German political eras, including references at the start of the verse to the early nineteenth-century commander Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher — who led the Prussian army against Napoleonic forces at the Battle of Waterloo — and to Paul von Hindenburg, the veteran of the Franco-Prussian war who led the German Army at the end of the First World War and became President during the Weimar and early Nazi years.

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<sup>61</sup> Ihor Prodanuk, *The Imagery in Heinrich Böll's Novels* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1979), p. 103.

In fact, Hindenburg acts throughout the novel as a recurrent symbol of the German militarism and conformism that facilitated Hitler's rise to power.<sup>62</sup> His personal and symbolic culpability in the rise of fascism is particularly evident to Johanna, who labels him the 'geheiligte Büffel' ('holy buffalo', p. 146) and the 'große Büffel' ('great buffalo', p. 164), casting him as an archetypal embodiment of the characteristics that facilitated complicity in the crimes of National Socialism. This examination of pre-Nazi German militarism as the direct precursor of fascism highlights a link between Böll's and Grossman's respective views on the origins of the National Socialist and Stalinist states. Like Grossman, Böll saw the roots of the totalitarian system that he described within long-standing elements of his nation's history and politics that were both encapsulated in and exploited by its political leaders with catastrophic consequences.

This shared element of their approach provides an important clarification about their views on memory. While both authors place an emphasis on the importance of individual subjectivity and agency, they do not dismiss the existence of historical continuities or collective national traits and tropes. In fact, their works deliberately highlight links across political caesuras to foreground such continuities rather than the radical breaks that are usually at the heart of both national historical narratives. Within this broader historical scope, their call for the reinvigoration of personal integrity is designed to outline the individual subject's tools of reflection and resilience that can be employed to resist these tides of history and culture when they manifest themselves in the present-day context.

Indeed, Böll's historical analysis forms the bedrock of his critique of post-war West German politics.<sup>63</sup> At the climax of the text, the author describes a parade by a local right-wing militia, the *Kampfbund*, in front of a large statue of Hindenburg, suggesting that the fall of National Socialism did not extinguish German militaristic nationalism.<sup>64</sup> This spirit of continued military fervour specifically resonates amidst the calls for rearmament in West Germany that were growing amongst conservative political circles from as early as 1950.<sup>65</sup> The unnerving sense of continuity between pre-Nazi, Nazi

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<sup>62</sup> Reed, *The Nazi Past*, pp. 127–28.

<sup>63</sup> Felicia Letsch, *Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit als Moment der Gegenwartskritik* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1982), pp. 68–83.

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

<sup>65</sup> See e.g. Prodaniuk, *Böll's Novels*, p. 81 and Reed, *The Nazi Past*, p. 128. See also Frei, *Adenauer's Germany*, p. 146.

and post-Nazi German society is then reinforced by the presence at the march of the post-war politician Herr M., who, while initially reluctant, ultimately applauds the *Kampfbund* for political gain. Adding to Böll's condemnation of the continued presence of former Nazi officials in the West German state, this figure suggests a willingness on the part of democratic politicians to appeal to nationalistic impulses rather than to foster critical reflection on the legacy of National Socialism. Such political opportunism — and particularly the readiness to overlook the longstanding militaristic elements of German culture that contributed to the rise of fascism in Böll's view — was clearly incompatible with an open-ended and self-reflective form of memory discourse.

In addition to his clear-sighted critique of Germany's militaristic tradition, Böll is also broadly sceptical towards memory practices that do not emphasize the importance of self-reflection and personal integrity as crucial tenets of an effective remembrance culture. This is shown by the destruction of Sankt Anton's abbey, which, as well as reflecting Robert's protest over society's total moral collapse under Nazism, also highlights Böll's rejection of a memory culture based upon artefacts, buildings and monuments rather than on a genuine confrontation with historical human suffering.<sup>66</sup> This tendency is not confined to Germany but presented as an inherent characteristic of memory practices in Western society.<sup>67</sup> The American officer who interrogates Robert in the aftermath of the abbey's destruction describes it as a 'kulturgeschichtliches Denkmal ersten Ranges' ('cultural-historical monument of the first order', p. 183) which the Allies would have gladly spared, implying a societal obsession with material objects over reflection on human pain. This description enacts Böll's preference for subjective forms of memory that foreground self-critique and moral responsibility over strategies of remembrance that monumentalize the past and thus potentially obscure both its complexity and direct relevance to the present.

Overall, then, both authors similarly highlight the deep roots of totalitarian violence within their respective national cultures. Their broad historical perspectives do not seek to minimize the extremities of the Stalinist and Nazi regimes or elide the specific characteristics of the atrocities that they caused through reference to the violence of previous eras. Rather, their narratives suggest that it

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<sup>66</sup> Prodaniuk, *Böll's Novels*, p. 95.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

is necessary to view the developments and legacies of these regimes via a historical continuum in order to acknowledge that the respective cultural and political phenomena that they exacerbated still exist in the post-totalitarian present and could re-emerge in extreme form. Failure to consider the parallels between a society's past and present, and in Grossman's case also to look at the development of chauvinism across national boundaries, could lead to the catastrophic extremities of the atrocities committed in these systems simply to be cast as unexplainable aberrations, siloed from the rest of time and considered unrepeatable. This perspective breeds a troubling complacency; a suggestion that a society can simply 'deal with' or even 'master' its past and reach a point of sufficient understanding to ensure the irreversible eradication of violence. Grossman and Böll strongly resist this tendency towards finality in any form. This element of their texts highlights the intertwined nature of their aesthetic and thematic approaches. Their adoptions of multi-vocal narrative structures cast remembrance as an open-ended process rooted in the constant reaffirmation of individuality. While the authoritative presentations of Grossman's and Böll's respective historical theses suggest that the novels do not eschew textual authority to the full extent of Bakhtinian polyphony, their multi-vocal structures do emphasize the 'unfinalizable' nature of the past.<sup>68</sup> This scepticism about the finality of memory is evident in the earlier texts *Wo warst du, Adam?* and *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, and it is more overtly developed in the novels studied here.

### *The Reinvigorated Subject and 'aktive Nachdenklichkeit'*

Grossman accentuates the importance of individuality as the foundation of humanity's enduring strength in the midst of ever-changing, though often brutal, historical circumstances. When Ivan finally begins his testimony, he describes his conversations with a prison cell mate, Aleksei Samoilovich, who unnerves the protagonist because of his rejection of individual freedom. Their discussion reflects Grossman's long-standing interest in Pythagorean philosophy, which contrasts with Marxism-Leninism's teleological focus on human progress by emphasizing the cyclical nature of

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<sup>68</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Once again, Donna K. Reed's argument that Böll's novel is 'half-open' — i.e. simultaneously inviting a critique of ideological authority whilst asserting its own position — is relevant here. See Reed, *The Nazi Past*, p. 121.

history.<sup>69</sup> Aleksei views history as a continuing cycle of violence in which no progress could ever be sustained by humankind, repeatedly stating ‘насилие вечно, что бы ни делали для его уничтожения’ (‘violence is eternal, whatever attempts to destroy it’, p. 106). His argument strips the individual of all agency, casting them as powerless to prevent the next wave of terror that will inevitably befall humanity. Ivan maintains that a yearning for freedom represents a crucial aspect of the human condition, so he finds Aleksei’s eloquent argumentation deeply disturbing. His faith in freedom is paradoxically renewed by a further round of state interrogation. On describing his return to his cell, Ivan states ‘и легче стало. И я верю в неминуемость свободы’ (‘it became easier. I believed again in the inevitability of freedom’, p. 107), suggesting that the persistent barbarism of the Stalinist state actually reminds him that his desire for freedom is undimmed. This notion represents a key idea across Grossman’s late work, as is also embodied in *Zhizn’ i sud’ba*.<sup>70</sup>

Ivan’s ultimately undimmed belief in human liberty reflects his unchanged nature and embodies the enduring strength of the individual to act through integrity even in the midst of a violent and every-changing external world. The best example of this idea is found in the closing image of the text that I outlined earlier in this chapter, when Ivan stands at the place of his parental home in southern Russia and is described as ‘неизменный’ (‘unchanged’, p. 108). As Giuseppe Ghini suggests, Ivan’s static position here again invokes Grossman’s broader philosophy of history.<sup>71</sup> The contrast between the stationary subject and the swirling world around him echoes the opposition posed by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus between stillness and movement: while historical circumstances ebb and flow, the strength of humankind remains unyielding.<sup>72</sup> Unlike Krymov or

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<sup>69</sup> As I mentioned in the Introduction, Grossman also engaged with Pythagorean philosophy in the earlier play *Esli verit’ pifagoreitsa* (*If You Believe the Pythagoreans*), which was strongly criticized by Soviet critics on its release in 1946. On Grossman’s interest in Pythagoreanism see e.g. Ellis, *Russian Heretic*, pp. 101–13. On the reception to this play see e.g. Popoff, *Vasily Grossman*, p. 109.

<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, Ivan characterizes this ‘inevitable’ liberty not only in terms of freedom of expression but also in regard to the individual’s right to control the economic and social parameters of their lives. When earlier describing to Anna how his conceptualization of freedom had changed during his years in the camps, Ivan states that where he previously understood the concept only in terms of ‘свобода слова, печати, совести’ (‘freedom of speech, press and conscience’) he now believes that ‘свобода, она вся жизнь всех людей’ (‘freedom is all of life for all people’, p. 62). This universalizing statement encapsulates Grossman’s rethinking of basic ideas of humanity and freedom in this text.

<sup>71</sup> Ghini, ‘Everything Flows’, pp. 79–82.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79–82. The novel’s title foregrounds this connection, referencing Heraclitus’s principle of *panta rhei* (‘everything flows’).

Shtrom in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, Ivan's display of resilience is not triggered by a morally injurious reckoning with his own implication. Yet this only emphasizes the even higher form of understanding he displays. Despite all that he has suffered, Ivan retains confidence in humanity's capacity for love and kindness, even if the tides of history circle back towards violence and dehumanization.

Where Grossman idealistically posits the potential of the human subject to resist unfreedom, Böll is more sceptical, outlining the risks posed to future generations if moral responsibility is not acknowledged, internalized and fulfilled. In *Billard*, this idea is again embodied in the central image of Sankt Anton's Abbey, which is designed by the patriarch Heinrich Fähmel in the Wilhelmine empire of the early twentieth century, destroyed by his son Robert at the end of the war and rebuilt by his grandson Joseph in the post-war era. Robert's destruction of the abbey is not an effective act of protest against the Nazi regime; however, it does at least highlight his awareness of the extent of German society's moral collapse. This recognition leads him to acknowledge the need for the constant work of remembrance in the post-war context. Despite the protestations of his father, who represents the generation who observed the rise of fascism during full adulthood, Robert takes his children to live within the rubble of the city on his release from Allied incarceration, reflecting his immediate commitment to remember the devastation wrought by Nazism.

Joseph, however, views his father's sense of obligation as a puzzling and irrelevant obsession with the past. Describing Robert to his partner Marianne, he comments that 'er hat so etwas rührend Altmodisches, in seinen Kleidern und seinem Benehmen; korrekt, liebenswürdig — viel altmodischer als Großvater!' ('there's something oddly old-fashioned about him, in his clothes and his demeanour; it's correct, amiable — much more old-fashioned than Grandfather!', p. 228). Joseph's ambivalent relationship with his father reflects his instinctive reluctance to engage with the moral legacies of fascism, as he prefers an apathetic optimism in a capitalist future.<sup>73</sup> His substitute identification with his grandfather, made manifest in his reconstruction of the abbey, reflects Böll's belief in the continued danger of collective and personal moral corruption in the Adenauer era amidst West Germany's rearmament and increasing consumerism.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Butler, 'Billard um halb zehn', p. 119.

<sup>74</sup> Nemoto, 'Mishima and Böll', p. 242.

The ramifications of these inter-generational dynamics chime with Böll's argument in the essay 'Wo ist dein Bruder?' ('Where Is Your Brother?', 1957) in which the author outlines the concept of 'aktive Nachdenklichkeit' ('active reflectiveness').<sup>75</sup> As I mentioned in Chapter One, this idea denotes the need for the individual to remain continually and critically aware of their relationship with the past.<sup>76</sup> Michael Butler explains that this process requires an analytical state of mind that views remembrance not via 'anodyne moments of official mourning, but in the very fabric of everyday, personal existence'.<sup>77</sup> To Böll, the horrors of Nazism are not something that can be 'overcome' or 'mastered'; they demand constant personal vigilance both to acknowledge their profundity and to avoid their return. Thus, like Grossman, Böll conceptualizes memory in terms of forward-looking and continuous action and a personal commitment to change. Butler rightly notes that Böll's novel does not provide a 'blueprint' for effective resistance in and of itself.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the text includes several examples of seemingly ineffective direct action such as when Robert Fähmel's mother, Johanna, attempts to assassinate the post-war politician Herr M., whom she considers to embody the cynical acceptance or even active promotion of dangerous militaristic and nationalistic tendencies amongst the German population.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, Böll's novel and slightly earlier essay show that he clearly did view memory in active terms, encouraging the reader to reflect deeply on their associations with the structures of historical oppression and to modify their behaviour as a result.

## Concluding Remarks

Grossman and Böll conceptualize memory as a method of reckoning with implication, encouraging individuals to critique their relationship with mechanisms of unchecked power and ideology as a matter of personal integrity and freedom. While open public discussion of the past is of course a crucial basis for such self-reflective forms memory, it is not a marker of mastery in and of itself. The

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<sup>75</sup> Böll, 'Wo ist dein Bruder?', p. 16.

<sup>76</sup> Rebien, 'Politics and Aesthetics', pp. 61–62. Robert E. Sackett critiques this concept, suggesting that Böll fails to differentiate between Jewish and German suffering clearly enough in his non-fiction writing from this period. See Sackett, 'Germans, Guilt', p. 347.

<sup>77</sup> Butler, 'Billard um halb zehn', p. 111.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

texts suggest that memory resists such notions of closure: it is a constant state of being. The precise ways that the authors narrativize these perspectives are shaped by the distinct post-totalitarian societies that they describe. After all, their focus on the emancipation of individual moral integrity and consequent emphasis on the importance of engaged political citizenship are clearly much easier to enact in the democratic circumstances of post-National Socialist West Germany than in the continued authoritarianism of post-Stalinist Soviet society. Nonetheless, the fact that Böll was so critical of the condition of memory politics in West Germany, and particularly the ways that democratic politicians could manipulate or diminish historical discussion for electoral gain, suggests that he feared the potential denial or complacency about the troubling legacies of the past whatever the apparent openness of public discourse.

In the decades that followed Grossman's death in 1964, Böll's career became particularly characterized not only by his international literary success, but also by his extra-literary political activities, both as a public intellectual within West Germany itself and as a supporter of international human rights movements, especially in communist societies such as Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. An analysis of Böll's later fiction from the highpoint of his fame in the early 1970s can test to what extent his writing came to intersect with these political activities and outline workable ways of transforming one's implication and fostering new forms of solidarity and collective action in the present. This crucial question is considered in the final chapter, which studies Böll's novel *Gruppenbild mit Dame* within the context both of Grossman's concept of 'senseless kindness' and the German author's broader engagement with dissident figures behind the Iron Curtain.

## Chapter Four

### A Humane Aesthetics? Böll's *Gruppenbild mit Dame*, Senseless Kindness and Long-Distance Solidarity

While Vasilii Grossman died from stomach cancer in 1964, Heinrich Böll continued to write until the mid-1980s. His literary works became internationally renowned over the course of the 1960s and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972. This later stage of Böll's career is also notable for his polemical interventions into West German political discourse and particularly his vocal criticisms of the conservative establishment.<sup>1</sup> Böll developed a prominent persona as a public intellectual, the kind of role that was impossible for Grossman to inhabit due to his untimely death and the repressive nature of Soviet society. This final chapter investigates how Böll's extra-literary activities informed his literary approach to narrativizing the Nazi past in the later stage of his career. It does so via analysis of his most notable novel of this period, *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1971). This text describes the life in Cologne of its female protagonist, Leni Pfeiffer, from the early Nazi years in the 1930s, through the war period and into the post-war era up until the 1970s.

Looking beyond the moral injury lens, this analysis scrutinizes the usefulness of Michael Rothberg's theory of implication for understanding the political basis of Böll's text.<sup>2</sup> Rothberg suggests that the recognition of this more ambiguous relationship with historical violence can have a political effect: he outlines the process of 'transfiguring' implication, by which he means reckoning with one's association with the structures of oppression and acknowledging how violence continues to manifest itself in the present.<sup>3</sup> He claims that this externalization of the implicated subject's perspective should lead to forms of 'long-distance solidarity' in which such individuals identify injustice across national borders and participate in productive engagement with others in order to counter it.<sup>4</sup> In his view, it is via this 'transition' from implicated subjectivity towards long-distance solidarity that memory work can lead to new forms of political action.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, pp. 221–25.

<sup>2</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, pp. 1–28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149–98.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201–03.

This chapter assesses to what extent Böll narrativizes a similar relationship between individual and collective action in *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. To do so, it employs two separate but related comparative lenses. First, it compares Böll's apparent emphasis on the importance of individual agency in this text with Grossman's idea of 'senseless kindness' as expressed in his epic novel *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, i.e. small acts of interpersonal solidarity that cut against the grain of rational self-interest and recognize the humanity of the dehumanized other. While Grossman's text was written over a decade before Böll's, this comparison shows how the German author similarly emphasizes the subversive potential of instinctive, individualized acts of kindness in the face of totalitarian power. It also highlights the roots of this parallel between Grossman's and Böll's works in the Russian literary trope of *iurodstvo* or 'holy foolishness'.<sup>6</sup> Second, the chapter investigates Böll's representation of post-war collective action and solidarity in the context of the author's own political activities at this later stage of his career, and particularly his engagement with dissident figures in both Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s. This section also critically considers whether Böll's descriptions of post-war political solidarity anticipate Rothberg's aforementioned model of 'transfiguring' implication.

Before embarking on an analysis along these comparative lines, it is important to note that *Gruppenbild mit Dame* was written in a very different memory context than Böll's previously explored earlier narratives. The late 1960s are generally viewed as a turning point in West German memory discourse, when the Adenauer-era focus on economic reconstruction began to give way to more widespread public discussion of the Nazi past and issues of historical justice.<sup>7</sup> This development was sparked by major public events such as the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, which took place between 1963 and 1965, and the activist spirit inspired by the mass student protests of 1968.<sup>8</sup> There were some continuities between the memory politics of this era and those which Böll had critiqued some ten

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<sup>6</sup> On holy foolishness see e.g. Ewa M. Thompson, *Understanding Russia: The Holy Fool in Russian Culture* (New York, NY: University Press of America, 1987); Oliver Ready, *Persisting in Folly: Russian Writers in Search of Wisdom, 1963–2013* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Herf, *Divided Memory*, pp. 334–72.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* See e.g. Devin O. Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963–1965: Genocide, History and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Rebecca Wittmann, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

years earlier in *Billard um halb zehn*. For example, the election of the former NSDAP member Kurt Georg Kiesinger as West German Chancellor in 1966 greatly disturbed Böll, reaffirming his fears over continuities between the National Socialist and post-National Socialist German states.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, a critical engagement with the Nazi past had broadly gained much more prominence in West German public discourse by the time that Böll wrote *Gruppenbild* at the beginning of the 1970s than when he published either *Wo warst du, Adam?* in 1951 or *Billard um halb zehn* in 1959.

To facilitate this engagement with the past, the literature of this later period also marked a turn towards documentary and testimonial forms of writing, a trend which Böll strikingly appears to satirize in *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. The array of documentary-style literature published at this time included works specifically focused on questions of Holocaust memory, including Peter Weiss's seminal play about the Auschwitz trials *Die Ermittlung* (*The Investigation*), which premiered in 1965.<sup>10</sup> Yet Hans Joachim Bernhard argues that Böll's satire is more specifically focused on the popular quasi-investigate portrayals of contemporary German life by writers such as Erika Runge, Günter Walraff and Max von Grün.<sup>11</sup> Böll's text is framed around the project of an anonymous narrator — known only as 'Der Verfasser' ('the author') or simply the 'Verf.' — who researches the life story of the seemingly ordinary yet elusive figure of Leni Pfeiffer across the pre-war, wartime and post-war eras. Unable to meet Leni until the end of the text, the Verf. bases his account upon his fictional interviews with a wide array of her acquaintances, who offer sometimes contradictory descriptions of the major events of her life. The Verf. starts his investigation convinced of both the possibility and importance of producing a 'factual' record of Leni's story. However, the process of investigating this female character, whose behaviour innately eschews first Nazi ideology and then the socio-economic and political expectations of post-war West German capitalism, leads the narrator to foreground the importance of subjectivity and sensuality, which Böll perceived as a defining aspect of the human condition often overlooked or even actively marginalized in bourgeois society.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sowinski, *Heinrich Böll*, p. 141.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Weiss, *Die Ermittlung: Oratorium in 11 Gesängen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Hans Joachim Bernhard, 'Es gibt sie nicht, und es gibt sie', in *Die subversive Madonna: Ein Schlüssel zum Werk Heinrich Bölls*, ed. by Renate Matthaei (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1975), pp. 58–81 (p. 70).

<sup>12</sup> Perraudin, 'Gruppenbild mit Dame', pp. 185–94.

Given Böll's significant reputation for engaging with the Nazi past — including the focus on reckoning with implication highlighted in this thesis — his parodying of contemporaneous documentary literature may appear surprising and potentially troubling. After all, documentary and testimonial modes of representation have generally been ascribed particular salience in the study of post-atrocity fiction.<sup>13</sup> While *Gruppenbild*'s formal features are partly a response to the specific literary fashions of the day, I argue that they can only be properly understood within the longer history of his work. In fact, they reflect two key consistent aspects of Böll's works that had been evident ever since the immediate post-war era: his emphasis on the importance of literary narrative as a space for exploring the complexity of human psychology and his foregrounding of the significance of individual subjectivity as a vehicle for political non-conformity.<sup>14</sup>

The first of these continuities is particularly relevant for studying *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. The Verf.'s evolving portrayal of Leni enacts Böll's critique of the notion that literature should aspire to portray an 'objective' record of historical events. As I outlined in the Introduction, Böll consistently emphasized that the 'eye of the writer' was characterized by its ability to look beyond the surface layer of events to explore the often contradictory aspects of the human psyche and thus the drivers of individual behaviour.<sup>15</sup> Naturally, historical material and historiographical writing had an important place in memory formation, but entirely to dismiss the significance of the literary imagination in exploring individual subjectivity was unpalatable to Böll. By exploring human irrationality, psychology and emotion — in terms of both their strengths and dangers — his narratives engage the reader in the past, leading them not only to empathize with the victims of historical oppression but also to consider the moral ambiguities of the implicated. The three Böll novels explored in this thesis each reflect this aspect of his approach in relation to the differing contexts in which they were written, i.e. the post-war years, economic reconstruction and post-1968, respectively.

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<sup>13</sup> On the treatment of documentary versus fictional modes of representation in the Holocaust context, see e.g. Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past*, p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> J. H. Reid also considers the consistencies and changes in Böll's approach between his early work and *Gruppenbild*, focusing on this text's stylistic relationship with modernism and post-modernism. See J. H. Reid, 'Heinrich Böll: From Modernism to Post-Modernism and Beyond', in *The Modern German Novel*, ed. by Keith Bullivant (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), pp. 109–25 (pp. 119–21).

<sup>15</sup> Böll, 'Bekenntnis zu Trümmerliteratur', p. 60; Rebien, 'Politics and Aesthetics', pp. 84–85.

Böll's defence of fictional narrative is linked to the second key consistent feature cited above: his emphasis on the importance of individuality and non-conformity. This focus on critical subjectivity explains Böll's consistent preference for multi-vocal narrative forms and his emphasis on the importance of ongoing personal scrutiny over the legacies of the Nazi past. Foregrounding the importance of such topics also sheds light on Böll's heightened public persona at this later stage of his career. As Bernard Sowinski notes, the mid-to-late 1960s were a turning point in the author's political engagement, with public speeches such as his *Frankfurter Vorlesungen (Frankfurt Lectures)* of 1964 emphasizing both literary language's role as a medium for societal critique and the broader importance of individual freedom in society at large.<sup>16</sup> Böll's anxieties about the condition of political power in West German society only increased throughout the 1970s, when his public disputes with the Springer press and its political allies over invasive reporting practices, particularly in relation to the leftist terrorist organisation the Baader-Meinhof Group, became increasingly vicious.<sup>17</sup> While Böll would specifically narrativize these experiences in the slightly later novella *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum (The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum)*, published in 1974, reading *Gruppenbild* within the context of his political ideas on state power and individual freedom also elucidates the relationship between the author's literary approach and his status as a public intellectual.<sup>18</sup>

The connection between Böll's literary and political ideas has been studied previously, usually in terms that foreground his rejection of West German consumerism or that critique the Utopian element of his thought.<sup>19</sup> My new, comparative method shows how the basis of the author's approach was much more internationalist than has hitherto been appreciated.<sup>20</sup> In West Germany, Böll was increasingly regarded as the 'conscience of the nation'; however, this role, and particularly the

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<sup>16</sup> Sowinski, *Heinrich Böll*, p. 141. See also Heinrich Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1966).

<sup>17</sup> See e.g., Philip Payne, 'Heinrich Böll versus Axel Springer: Some Observations on "Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum"', *New German Studies*, 6 (1978), 45–57.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. See also Heinrich Böll, *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, oder, Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann*. (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Manfred Durzak, 'Leistungsverweigerung als Utopie', in *Die subversive Madonna: Ein Schlüssel zum Werk Heinrich Bölls*, ed. by Renate Matthaei (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1975), pp. 82–99.

<sup>20</sup> There are, of course, some exceptions to the tendency in scholarship to overlook Böll's transnational interests when reading this novel. Michael Perraudin briefly notes the importance of the global protests of 1968, including the author's positive attitude towards the Prague Spring discussed in detail in this chapter, for shaping Böll's political views in the late 1960s and early 1970s. See Perraudin, 'Gruppenbild mit Dame', p. 193.

author's approach to memory politics, was also informed by a wide range of influences from other, non-West German contexts. These influences fostered his transnational perspective on the relationship between past and present in his both fictional narratives and beyond.

Thus, by considering *Gruppenbild mit Dame* both within the broad development of Böll's works and in the context of his active and ongoing interest in Russian and East European literature and society, I highlight the subtle interplay of consistencies and changes that defined the progression of his career and the crucial influence of the author's internationalism on his literary work. The chapter is split into two main sections that investigate these aspects of Böll's work through the aforementioned comparative lenses. Outlining Böll's concept of an 'Ästhetik des Humanen' ('humane aesthetics'), which denotes the 'humanizing' role that he felt literary narrative plays in society at large, the first section compares the embodiment of this concept in *Gruppenbild* — the heroine Leni Pfeiffer — with the figure of Ikonnikov in Grossman's novel *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. This comparison shows how both authors emphasize the importance of individual acts of 'senseless' kindness in countering extreme ideological violence and dehumanization. However, it also assesses how Böll's narrative approach and idealistic portrayal of Leni problematizes this inherent focus on the individual and highlights the importance of engaging in collective forms of action in the post-totalitarian context.

The second part of the chapter focuses on Böll's representation of solidarity and socio-political action. It reads key examples of *Gruppenbild*'s representation of solidarity — and especially the actions of the so-called 'Helft Leni-Komitee' ('Help Leni Committee') at the climax of the text — in the context of Rothberg's theory of 'transfiguring' implication. This analysis shows how Böll viewed memory as a process of personally reckoning with one's relationship with structures of authority and seeking to engage with others in order to counter ongoing injustices. It finally considers how this meditation on solidarity in *Gruppenbild* relates to Böll's own engagement with dissident figures in the Soviet Union and his experiences of the Prague Spring in 1968. While Böll's novel is clearly focused on the tragedy of twentieth-century German history, I show that its narrative is both influenced by and in dialogue with considerations of the relationship between memory and resistance from other contexts, too. This internationalist, comparative logic leads Böll to reject the ideological binarism of the Cold War. It also shapes his broader conceptualization of political engagement.

Ultimately, I argue that Böll's fictional and non-fictional reflections on political solidarity are linked by an emphasis on the importance of recognizing specificity and difference, between both individual experiences and broader historical contexts, when fostering new forms of civic responsibility and collective action, be they local or transnational in nature.

### **The Subversive Madonna: Leni, *Zärtlichkeit* and *Dobrota***

In his *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* — originally delivered as four lectures at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main in May 1964 — Böll described the concept of an 'Ästhetik des Humanen' or 'humane aesthetics', which denoted the importance of literature in fostering the conditions for a more humane society.<sup>21</sup> Reading both these lectures and a wide array of Böll's other theoretical writing, Frank Finlay outlines the key features of the concept and its literary ramifications. First, the notion of a 'bewohnbare Sprache' ('inhabitable language'), which emphasized the importance of literature as a space to 'rehumanize' the German language in the aftermath of its catastrophic ideologization under National Socialism.<sup>22</sup> Second, an emphasis on the 'provincial', i.e. a sense that literature should focus on communities away from the centre of political power in order to highlight the forms of everyday humanity displayed by ordinary people.<sup>23</sup> Third, the idea of 'Abfall' ('refuse'), which denoted literature's role in highlighting the mistreatment of individuals or groups marginalized or 'discarded' by society at large, once again suggesting that those on the periphery of power both experienced and perceived its cruelty most evidently.<sup>24</sup> Fourth, 'eine Theologie der Zärtlichkeit' ('a theology of tenderness'), which suggested that narrative could inspire the emotional empathy for the other otherwise deconstructed by structures of political authority.<sup>25</sup> Last, Finlay draws attention to what he labels Böll's 'critical humour', a comedic approach that seeks to expose the gap

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<sup>21</sup> Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, p. 119. See also Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, p. 137. See also Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, pp. 140–43. See also Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, pp. 143–44. See also Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, p. 74.

<sup>25</sup> Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, pp. 144–148. Böll does not use this specific phrase in his Frankfurt lectures, but he refers to it in a later interview with Christian Länder from 1975. See Heinrich Böll, 'Drei Tage im März', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Interviews*, ed. by Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1980), I, 348–426 (p. 393).

between ideal and real human behaviour as a means of encouraging the reader to reflect on their own actions and their ramifications, inspiring a ‘critical exhortation to change’.<sup>26</sup>

Given *Gruppenbild mit Dame*’s setting in the suburbs of Cologne, its employment of humour and its focus on figures otherwise marginalized in society — including individuals violently persecuted by the Nazi regime and those economically and socially overlooked amidst post-war capitalist reconstruction — the novel appears to embody Böll’s ‘Ästhetik des Humanen’, an attempt to allow his writing to adopt the social, ‘humanizing’ role of literature at large. The tragic sweep of twentieth-century German history provides the backdrop for this literary experiment. However, I propose that Böll’s ‘humane’ approach also consciously reflects a transnational perspective on resisting oppressive political authority that has long roots in the Russian canon and is similarly reflected in Grossman’s work. The emphasis on the importance of peripheral subjectivity and comedic folly in exposing over-reaching power has particular precedent in Russian literature, especially via the concept of *iurodtsvo* or ‘holy foolishness’.<sup>27</sup> Dating back to at least the eleventh century and becoming a significant trope in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian literature, the ‘holy fool’ was an individual who embodied the seemingly contradictory characteristics of irrationality and wisdom; existing on the periphery of society, this figure rejected its norms and provided a source of moral authority in the face of even the most well-established political authority.<sup>28</sup>

Scholars have already drawn parallels between this archetype and *Gruppenbild*’s elusive protagonist, Leni Pfeifer, connecting the character to perhaps the most famous fool of classical Russian literature, Prince Myshkin from Dostoevsky’s novel *Idiot* (*The Idiot*).<sup>29</sup> These readings emphasize the characters’ similar personality traits, including their demonstrable irrationality, innate spirituality and instinctive rejection of the respective socio-political contexts in which they live, namely imperial Russia and twentieth-century Germany from the Nazi takeover to post-war

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<sup>26</sup> Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, p. 153.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, *Understanding Russia*; Ready, *Persisting in Folly*.

<sup>28</sup> Thompson, *Understanding Russia*, pp. 1–20 .

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Ingeborg L. Carlson, ‘Heinrich Bölls Gruppenbild mit Dame als frohe Botschaft der Weltverbrüderung’, *University of Dayton Review*, 11.2 (1974), 51–64 (p. 59); Ralph Ley, ‘Compassion, Catholicism, and Communism: Reflections on Böll’s Gruppenbild mit Dame’, *University of Dayton Review*, 10.2 (1973), 25–40 (p. 33); Harang, ‘Heinrich Böll und die klassische russische Literatur’, pp. 199–47.

reconstruction. There is also significant contextual evidence to support the link. The years that immediately preceded the writing of *Gruppenbild mit Dame* saw Böll re-engage with Dostoevsky's work, having initially read him as an adolescent.<sup>30</sup> In 1966 Böll travelled to Leningrad to film a television documentary entitled 'Fedor M. Dostojewski und Petersburg' ('Fedor M. Dostoevsky and St Petersburg'), which examined the nineteenth-century author's view of the imperial Russian capital.<sup>31</sup> Böll undertook significant preparation for this project: in a letter to the Soviet writer Lev Kopelev dated the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1968 he explained that he had read the whole of Dostoevsky's literary work over the preceding year and was hoping to read all of Tolstoy, Pushkin and Lermontov.<sup>32</sup> Böll was thus particularly engaged with nineteenth-century Russian literature around the time of writing *Gruppenbild mit Dame*, and authors such as Dostoevsky represented a form of intellectual basis for his ideas at this stage, just as they did in his early career.<sup>33</sup>

Yet my aim in this section is not to prove such a direct intertextual link, nor is it to suggest that Leni Pfeiffer should be understood as a 'holy fool' per se. Indeed, there is much to separate Böll's character from this trope: Ewa Thompson explains that the holy fool traditionally combined an innate 'humility' with an 'aggression' that could manifest itself through forms of abuse, attributes that are not to be found in Leni's behaviour.<sup>34</sup> Instead, I compare this female character with Grossman's own reinterpretation of foolishness in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* — Ikonnikov — to show how both authors came to adapt this trope in order to emphasize the importance of acting against one's own rational self-interest and showing solidarity towards the politically oppressed, as embodied in Böll's concept of *Zärtlichkeit* ('tenderness') and Grossman's concept of *bessmyslennaya dobrota* ('senseless kindness').

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>31</sup> This project would take three years to complete before its televisual release by *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* in 1969. The film was also intended to be shown by the Soviet broadcaster *Novosti* but was blocked the censor due to its inclusion of figures who had fallen out of favour with the regime, including the future Nobel Laureate Joseph Brodsky. For extracts from the documentary's script and details of its production see Heinrich Böll, 'Fedor M. Dostojewski und Petersburg', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by J. H. Reid (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008), xvi, 55–74; 521–35. See also Hummel, *Intertextualität*, pp. 205–07; Harang, 'Heinrich Böll und die klassische russische Literatur', pp. 52–56 for analyses of the film.

<sup>32</sup> Zylla, ed., *Briefwechsel*, p. 109. Böll also penned the afterword to a German translation of Tolstoy's *Voina i mir* in 1970. See Heinrich Böll, 'Annäherungsversuch', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by J. H. Reid (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008), xvi, 331–54. See also Hummel, *Intertextualität*, p. 209.

<sup>33</sup> As I noted in Chapter One, Böll mentioned the influence of Dostoevsky on his early career during a televised discussion about the Russian author in 1971. See Böll, 'Dostojewski — heute?', p. 183.

<sup>34</sup> Thompson, *Understanding Russia*, pp. 21–23.

This emphasis on the importance of interpersonal tenderness and kindness emerges from the self-reflective, individualized form of memory that I have highlighted across the authors' careers. It shows how both writers cast the process of remembrance in active terms, not only recognizing the immense moral transgressions of the past but also fostering a spirit of renewed personal integrity in the face of unchecked or unwarranted manifestations of power. These attributes form the foundation stone of reckoning with implication in Böll's and Grossman's view, i.e. of acknowledging the legacies of the past as a means of facilitating change in the present.

### *Leni and Ikonnikov*

As explained in Chapter Two, Ikonnikov embodies the philosophy of kindness that Grossman posits as the individual's bulwark against ideological dehumanization. The character's written manifesto is given a central place in *Zhizn' i sud'ba* following the crucial comparison between the National Socialist and Stalinist systems that is presented through the conversation between the SS officer Liss and his communist prisoner Mostovskoi in the Nazi camp. In this treatise Ikonnikov rejects all ideological programmes that claim to be pursuing universal *dobro* ('Good') and instead foregrounds the importance of small acts of individual *dobrota* ('kindness'). These forms of individualized 'kindness' are both instinctive and irrational in nature; they require disregarding rational self-interest and showing solidarity towards the other even in the face of their extreme ideological dehumanization. This concept is displayed not only through the descriptions of Ikonnikov but also by multiple briefer instances of interpersonal solidarity forming between characters across the political and ethnic divides of the war, moments within the epic narrative that have been described as 'parables of senseless kindness'.<sup>35</sup> The self-reflective core of the concept is especially relevant in the context of reckoning with implicated subjectivity: Grossman posits the importance of acting against dehumanizing power systems, even when doing so goes against the impulse of self-preservation, and instead behaving in a way that recognizes the shared humanity of the other. Given that implicated

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<sup>35</sup> Danchev, 'Ethics after Auschwitz', p. 361.

individuals are by very definition associated with power and violence in some form, this ability to act against the grain of ideological expectation or personal benefit is particularly significant for reflecting on the manifestations and legacies of this inherently ambiguous position.

Böll presents a similar argument to Grossman via Leni's characterization. This female figure embodies many features of the 'humane aesthetics' that to Böll represents literature's crucial role in creating a more ethical society. In line with the principles of 'Abfall' ('refuse') and a 'Theologie der Zärtlichkeit' ('theology of kindness'), Leni shows innate empathy towards those individuals marginalized by society at large. In the Nationalist Socialist era, this aspect of the heroine's character is shown via two key associations which are laden with particular moral significance: her friendship with the Catholic Jewish nun Rahel Maria Ginzburg and her wartime romantic relationship with Boris, a Soviet prisoner of war (POW). The first relationship highlights Leni's rejection of National Socialist ideology. She forms a close bond with Rahel as an adolescent at her convent school, where the Catholic Jewish character is abused by her sisters amidst the rising antisemitism of the Nazi period, leading to her death via starvation in the early war years. As J. Gregory Redding notes, Rahel's role in the convent school — she acts as a lavatory attendant who teaches Leni about physiological subjects otherwise absent from the school curriculum, such as menstruation and excretion — enables her to present her students with innately human topics often left undiscussed in society.<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, Rahel helps Leni to understand the universal nature of human biology and to appreciate the value of all human life, fostering her innate rejection of the absurd racial hierarchies of Nazi ideology.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, as Rahel becomes increasingly marginalized in the convent, Leni continues to visit her friend to give her food, showing how she counters the cruel prejudices of National Socialist society to recognize the fundamental needs of this fellow human being.

Leni's love for Boris shows the instinctive nature of her behaviour and offers the clearest parallels with Grossman's notion of 'senseless' kindness. Scholars have observed that the starting point of their relationship represents the defining moment in the heroine's moral development.<sup>38</sup> This

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<sup>36</sup> J. Gregory Redding, 'Garbage as a Literary Aesthetic: People as 'Abfall' in Heinrich Böll's 'Gruppenbild mit Dame'', *Colloquia Germanica*, 27.4 (1994), 351–63 (p. 354).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

moment in the plot is only brief; it occurs in late 1943, on the day of Boris's arrival at the garden nursery yard where Leni works. Nonetheless, the scene marks the text's moral core and enacts Böll's own emphasis on the importance of individual acts of 'tenderness', to use his term, in defying the tenets of Nazi ideology and the societal norms that they engender. The first interaction between Leni and Boris shows how even the smallest, seemingly innocuous acts of interpersonal solidarity are laden with political and ethical meaning under the totalitarian state. On joining the workers' morning break during the Russian prisoner's first day, Leni pours a cup of her high-quality ersatz-coffee and takes it to Boris, a display of kindness that contradicts the extreme marginalization of this Soviet prisoner as demanded by the National Socialist system. Leni initially appears not to grasp the politicized nature of this act. Describing this event to the Verf., Pelzer, the director of the nursery, comments:

Das war für die Leni eine Selbstverständlichkeit, jemand, der weder ne Tasse noch Kaffee hatte, eine Tasse Kaffee anzubieten — aber glauben Sie, die hat gehnt, wie *politisch* das was. Ich habe gesehen, daß sogar die Ilse Kremer blaß wurde — die wußte nämlich, wie politisch das war: einem Russen eine Tasse 1:3-Kaffee bringen.<sup>39</sup>

It was completely natural for Leni to offer a cup of coffee to someone who had neither a cup nor coffee. But do you think she realised how *political* that was. I saw that even Ilse Kremer became pale. She knew how political that was: to bring a cup of 1:3 coffee to a Russian.

The contrast between Leni and those observing her behaviour here is significant. Unlike the naive protagonist, Pelzer is a wily opportunist who is experienced in adapting to the political conditions of the day having been both a communist activist in 1920s and later a fascist stormtrooper in the early Nazi period. He thus understands the inherent risks in Leni's offer of a gift to a Russian prisoner. That Ilse Kremer turns pale on seeing Leni's action is also striking: this figure used to be a committed communist who became disillusioned with the Soviet project following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, implying that even those strongly ideologically opposed to National Socialism were concerned by the potential ramifications of Leni's behaviour.

The heroine's simple act appears so subversive to these characters because it exposes the inherent immorality of Nazi dehumanization. By disrupting this morning ritual normally reserved exclusively for German workers and extending it so naturally to an individual who was not even

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<sup>39</sup> Heinrich Böll, *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1996), p. 188. All further references will be to this edition and can be found parenthetically in the main text.

considered human under Nazism, Leni symbolically highlights the absurdity of this society's racial hierarchies. Indeed, her display of kindness towards Boris sparks a fierce reaction from the Nazi ideologues within the working group. Pelzer describes how one such figure, the injured war veteran Kremp, turns to Boris and 'schlägt dem völlig verwirrten Russen die Tasse aus der Hand' ('knocks the cup out of the completely confused Russian's hand', p. 188). Undeterred by this response — and after a moment of 'tödliches Schweigen' ('deathly silence', p. 188) — Leni picks up the fallen cup, washes it and pours a second serving of coffee for Boris, to which the Russian prisoner says 'laut und deutlich, in einem makellosen Deutsch: "Danke, meine Fräulein"' ('loud and clear, and in flawless German: "Thank you, miss"', p. 189). Leni's repeated kindness towards Boris even in the face of Kremp's physical aggression highlights the courage embodied in her actions, as well as the Russian figure's in openly appreciating them. Given the wider context of National Socialist atrocities, this gift of coffee may appear trivial; however, it is such small, instinctive acts of tenderness that Böll perceives as the basis for ethical behaviour in the totalitarian context and beyond. As in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, this central moment of Böll's text highlights the individual's innate ability to look beyond their rational self-interest and show solidarity with others. Böll refers to this concept as 'tenderness' and Grossman as 'kindness'; both suggest that personally recognizing and aspiring towards this empathetic impulse has a transcendent value.

Given that Grossman died seven years before the publication of Böll's novel, and that the German author did not read *Zhizn' i sud'ba* until 1984, there is no direct intertextual link between their ideas beyond their shared engagement with classical Russian realism and reinterpretation of the holy fool trope. However, comparing Böll's character of Leni with Grossman's Ikonnikov is particularly helpful, as it underlines the transhistorical and anti-ideological element of this female figure's scepticism towards institutional authority whatever its form. By describing Böll's approach as 'anti-ideological' here, I do not seek to ignore the fact that the individualized ethics outlined in this section could be construed as a system of behaviour, or even an 'ideology', in and of itself. Indeed, the paradox between Böll's critique of political authority, on the one hand, and apparent assertion of textual or moral authority, on the other, is an important element of his approach that I will explore later when considering the ambiguities of Leni's character. At this stage, though, I simply wish to

highlight the broad scope of Böll's scepticism towards political and institutional authority. Just as Ikonnikov rejects all political, social and religious movements that claim to provide universal benefit, Leni's innately humane characteristics are contrasted not only to National Socialism, but also to post-war capitalism and communism, as well as institutionalized religion. Exploring these additional political critiques in turn shows that Böll, like Grossman, ultimately looks beyond a specific rejection of Nazism to deconstruct the very concept of ideological authority or dogmatism.

### *The 'Anti-Ideological' Novel*

The heroine's refutation of Western capitalism has been well established by scholars.<sup>40</sup> In the post-war period, Leni and her son Lev, who is fathered by Boris before his death in the war's final stages, reject the performance-orientated goals of capitalist society, sharing their accommodation and remaining in low-paid jobs even when offered positions with higher earnings and responsibility. As Ralph Ley notes, this 'Leistungsverweigerung' ('refusal to perform') contrasts to the attitudes of those focused on the rapid economic growth promoted during the *Wirtschaftswunder* ('economic miracle').<sup>41</sup> Bourgeois disdain towards Leni's lifestyle is reflected through the behaviour of the Hoyser family, who move into her building during the early war years, before later claiming ownership of it and seeking to evict the protagonist due to her refusal to demand market-level rent from its tenants.<sup>42</sup> This betrayal of lasting communal bonds — this family's patriarch, Otto Hoyser, was the longstanding bookkeeper at the business of Leni's father, Hubert Gruyten — enacts Böll's criticism of a capitalist system that he felt placed profit before social solidarity and human need. In this context, Böll also highlights Leni's instinctive recognition of the humanity of those individuals commonly marginalized by society. She later forms a romantic relationship with a Turkish *Gastarbeiter* ('guest worker'), Mehmet, and shares her lodgings with other Turkish and Portuguese workers. While it would clearly be inappropriate to draw a parallel between such characters and the victims of National Socialism, J. Gregory Redding argues that by highlighting the socio-economic

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<sup>40</sup> See e.g. Ley, 'Compassion, Catholicism and Communism', p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

marginalization of these guestworkers, who work as refuse collectors, Böll suggests that they are considered ‘distasteful’ in society at large, i.e. that they too are treated as a form of ‘Abfall’.<sup>43</sup> This highlighting of discriminatory attitudes reflects Böll’s belief in the continued, underlying xenophobia of post-Nazi German society, emphasizing the enduring importance of Leni’s ‘humanizing’ ethics.

The contrast between Leni’s character and the German communist movement is less commonly observed by scholars, but it also has significant ramifications. In the immediate aftermath of Boris’s death, Leni joins the German Communist Party (KPD), participating in a number of their rallies and even appearing on stage amidst quasi-iconographic banners and flags. Yet her motivation for attending these events is rooted less in ideological conviction than in her love for Boris. When asked long after her disengagement from the party why she had originally joined, Leni reportedly responds, ‘weil die Sowjetunion solche Menschen wie Boris vorgebracht hat’ (‘because the Soviet Union raised people like Boris’, p. 320). This implies that her actions were motivated by her affection for this specific figure rather than political opinion. While Leni’s innate anti-capitalist impulse would seemingly make her an ideal communist agitator, Böll suggests that her demonstrable characteristics of sensuality and kindness are in fact at odds with the demands of this ideological movement. Her colleague, the former communist Ilse Kremer, tells the leader of the local party, who is known only as Fritz: ‘laßt doch das nette Mädchel in Ruhe, ihr bringt sie nur in Schwierigkeiten’ (‘leave the nice girl in peace, you’ll just get her into trouble’, p. 319). Having himself become disillusioned with communism by the time of his interview with the Verf., Fritz admits that ‘die Ilse hat recht behalten: wir haben ihr [Leni] geschadet und uns nicht genützt’ (‘Ilse had it right, we damaged her [Leni] without helping ourselves’, pp. 319–20). This suggestion of the elusive heroine’s apparent incompatibility with this highly ideological form of politics is significant. Somewhat like Böll’s deconstruction of the cult of Nazism in his initial post-war fiction that I studied in Chapter One, this element of Leni’s character suggests that it is the ritualized and highly dogmatic nature of ideological movements that Böll seeks to critique in the text. He implies that ideological dogmatism is

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<sup>43</sup> Redding, ‘Garbage as a Literary Aesthetic’, p. 354.

irreconcilable with the forms of interpersonal tenderness that can genuinely facilitate solidarity and universal human freedom.<sup>44</sup>

Where Böll's perspective has developed from his early work, however, is its extension of this political critique towards institutionalized religion. As Finlay notes, Böll's non-fiction writing from this later stage of his career reflects an anxiety that the Christian sacrament — particularly that of the Catholic church — had become a powerful tool of coercion in its own right, a web of rules and dictates that restricted individual freedom and encouraged conformism.<sup>45</sup> Böll suggests that the sacrament must be redefined on an individual basis, rooted less in the practices of the church than in personal expressions of God's will amidst the mundanity of everyday life.<sup>46</sup> As in the case of his political critiques of capitalism and communism, the author's perspective here is reflected in Leni's characterization. She is described as performing poorly in religious studies at her convent school and rarely attending church services, which she finds unpalatable. Yet Leni is treated with great reverence and endowed with the moral authority of a saint by the characters who describe her, suggesting that her lack of engagement with the church in no way diminishes her spiritual status.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the heroine is recurrently linked to the figure of the Virgin Mary. The Verf. mentions that the image of the Madonna appears to Leni on her television screen throughout the narrative; however, at the very end of the text, the former nun Klementina, who leaves her order in Rome to form a relationship with the Verf. and aid his investigation, suggests that this image is simply Leni's own reflection: 'es ist sie

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<sup>44</sup> Leni's experiences with the KPD also critique the virulent anti-communism of post-war West Germany. Leni's house is later raided by the police following the banning of the KPD and Fritz recalls that one newspaper runs an article about her with the headline 'Lernt Beten mit der KPD. Delacroix-Blondine erweist sich als trojanisches Pferd' ('Learns to pray with the KPD. Delacroix-Blonde turns out to be a Trojan Horse', p. 320). These details only reinforce Böll's critique of ideological dogma, suggesting that even limited links with leftism could have significant social ramifications for the individual in capitalist West Germany.

<sup>45</sup> Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, pp. 146–47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148. Böll discussed this need to reimagine the sacrament in an interview with René Wintzen in 1976, stating 'es muß ein neuer Begriff für das Sakramentale gefunden werden, es muß ein neuer Begriff für Gottesdienst gefunden werden, für dieses Zusammensein von Menschen, die gemeinsam etwas wollen, es ist ja eine großartige Sache ursprünglich' ('a new term must be found for the sacrament, a new term must be found for the liturgy, for this gathering of people, who want something communal. It is originally a great thing'). See Heinrich Böll, 'Eine deutsche Erinnerung', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Interviews, 1961–1978*, ed. by Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1978), I, 504–665 (p. 563).

<sup>47</sup> Matthias Uecker, 'Saints and Sinners: The Good German and Her Others in Heinrich Böll's Gruppenbild mit Dame', in *Representing the 'Good German' in Literature and Culture after 1945: Altruism and Moral Ambiguity*, ed. by Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013), pp. 98–110 (p. 101).

selbst, sie ist es, die da aufgrund noch zu klärender Reflektionen sich selbst erscheint' ('it is her herself, it is she who appears due to the still unexplained reflections', p. 404). This playful connection between Leni and Mary emphasizes the heroine's status as an embodiment of morality, which crucially manifests itself outside of the church's authority.

This anti-institutional form of spirituality is not entirely incompatible with the religious underpinning of Böll's early fiction. The importance of enacting the spirit of the sacrament in the activities of everyday existence was similarly emphasized by the authors of the Catholic Revival, who, as I explained in Chapter One, strongly influenced Böll's initial post-war work.<sup>48</sup> However, at this later stage of the author's career, this anti-institutional sentiment is increasingly politicized, reflecting his belief in the importance of the individual subject as a moral agent. Once again, it is worth noting that this critique of external political authority does not necessarily dictate that Böll avoids asserting textual authority in the fully formed sense of Bakhtinian polyphony. After all, despite their clear critique of political structures and movements, novels such as *Gruppenbild* do still enact Böll's own interpretation of Christian ethics at least to some degree. Nonetheless, the author's general critique of institutionalized politics and religion draws a noteworthy parallel between his writing and Grossman's ideas. As in the case of Ikonnikov, Leni comes to innately reject all projects that proclaim universal benefit for society, advocating instead individualized acts of kindness.

Indeed, Böll's invocation of the Virgin Mary creates direct parallels with Grossman's own employment of Christian imagery. The image of the Madonna plays an important role throughout Grossman's late writing, acting as an embodiment of the human traits of love and kindness that he suggests even the extreme violence of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes cannot destroy. Böll draws a similar link between female biblical figures and these human behaviours: Michael Perraudin and Kristina Jokić independently observe the author's emphasis on the concept of a 'Trinität des Weiblichen' ('Trinity of the Feminine') in his *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*; based on the biblical characters of Eve, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, this triadic framework denotes the 'feminine' principles of sensuality, tenderness and love that Böll suggests form the foundation of a

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<sup>48</sup> Sánchez-Costa, *Catholic Revival*, p. 324.

humane society.<sup>49</sup> This somewhat reductive and clichéd depiction of femininity has led to criticism of Böll's work amidst suggestions that it belies a nuanced account of female experience under totalitarianism.<sup>50</sup> Yet it does show that both he and Grossman felt that narrative representation of the past could highlight universal, but also individually rooted, ethical traits and that they employed fundamentally similar imagery in order to present these ideas. Böll adopts the backdrop of twentieth-century German history to describe the terrible dangers of unchecked and extreme manifestations of power. However, his critique ultimately reflects a broader perspective on the importance of the individual's ability to transform themselves and resist troubling political expectations by acting through the principle of tenderness, whatever the circumstances in which they live.

### *The Limits of Kindness?*

Notwithstanding the parallels between Böll's and Grossman's concepts of tenderness and kindness, however, there are also clear differences between their presentations of these ideas that illuminate the distinctiveness of the German author's approach in *Gruppenbild*. Grossman's concept of *dobrota* is given a prominent place within the epic structure of *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, both via Ikonnikov's thesis and the many 'parables' of kindness that are included throughout the narrative.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, Leni is a largely silent figure whom the narrator does not personally encounter until the end of the novel. Her behaviour is described by a network of her friends and acquaintances, whose accounts of her life form the basis of the Verf.'s investigation. This group of characters represent a wide range of identities and experiences including figures marginalized under National Socialism such as Liana Hölthohne, a Jewish woman and Rhinish separatist who masquerades as a non-Jewish German worker in order to avoid detection by the Nazis, and Bogakov, a Soviet POW. Generally, though, the Verf.'s

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<sup>49</sup> Perraudin, 'Gruppenbild mit Dame', p. 181; Kristina Jokić, 'Frauenfiguren in Heinrich Bölls Werken und ihre Rollen in der Erzählstruktur: Zu Frauenfiguren in Heinrich Bölls Romanen Billard um halb zehn, Ansichten eines Clowns, Gruppenbild mit Dame und Erzählung Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum', *Acta Neophilologica*, 44.1–2 (2011), 113–27 (pp. 121–22); Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, p. 101. See also Theodore Ziolkowski, 'Typologie und "Einfache Form" in "Gruppenbild mit Dame"', in *Die subversive Madonna: Ein Schlüssel zum Werk Heinrich Bölls*, ed. by Renate Matthaei (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1975), pp. 123–40 (pp. 125–26).

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. Schlant, *Language of Silence*, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Danchev, 'Ethics after Auschwitz', p. 361.

‘informants’ are implicated or directly complicit subjects. These figures include the nuns who worked at Leni’s convent school and were complicit in the death through neglect of Rahel, their Jewish sister; the director of the nursery yard at which the heroine worked during the war, Pelzer, who was formerly both a communist and fascist stormtrooper; Leni’s closest friend, Margret Schlömer; and the housekeeper at the heroine’s family home, Marja van Doorn.

The fleeting and sometimes contradictory nature of these figures’ descriptions of Leni endow the heroine with a somewhat elusive quality that jars with the moral significance that is seemingly ascribed to her character and behaviour. This aspect of Böll’s approach has received criticism. Reading her characterization in the context of the trope of the ‘good German’ in post-war literature, Matthias Uecker notes that Böll’s indirect approach to describing the heroine via the perspective of other characters risks casting her as a ‘projection of utopian ideals’ that could be seen to sidestep the ‘unpleasant reality’ of German behaviour under National Socialism rather than properly critique its legacy.<sup>52</sup> Leni’s naivete has also caused controversy. The character is apparently unaware of the ideologically racist motivations of Rahel’s maltreatment under Nazism, as is suggested by her friend’s Margaret’s comment that ‘bis zuletzt hat die Leni gar nicht gewußt, was überhaupt ein Jude oder ne Jüdin ist’ (‘to the very end, Leni didn’t even know what a Jewish man or a Jewish woman is’, p. 104). Marcel Reich-Ranicki has argued that it was unrealistic for an adult character to be ignorant of the racial aspect of National Socialist ideology in this way and has suggested that Böll was unwise to centre a text about this historical period on such a naive character.<sup>53</sup> Ambiguities also surround Rahel’s characterization: her identity as a Catholic convert raises similar issues to Böll’s earlier novels such as *Wo warst du, Adam?*, which have been strongly criticized for ‘Christianizing’ the Holocaust and eliding Jewish and German experience.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Uecker, ‘Saints and Sinners’, p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> Reich-Ranicki also felt that Böll’s broader concept of a ‘Theologie der Zärtlichkeit’ was unconvincing because it was difficult to take seriously the notion that individual tenderness could prevent societal violence. See Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Mehr als ein Dichter: Über Heinrich Böll* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1986), pp. 59–60; p. 86. See also Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, p.146.

<sup>54</sup> Ernestine Schlant refers to Rahel when criticizing Böll’s earlier representation of the Catholic Jewish woman Ilona in *Wo warst du, Adam?* arguing that both characters reflect his consistently problematic depiction of Jewish figures and the Holocaust. See Schlant, *Language of Silence*, p. 29.

It is only by tracing the lineage of such details throughout Böll's literary career that they can be properly understood. As in the case of Ilona in *Wo warst du, Adam?* — who is Jewish convert to Catholicism who considered becoming a nun — Rahel's characterization draws an apparent parallel with the figure of Edith Stein, the German-Jewish philosopher who became a Carmelite nun in the 1920s and was murdered in Auschwitz in 1942.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, Böll denied that Stein was a model for Rahel in a conversation with the Soviet author Lev Kopelev during his final visit to Moscow in 1979.<sup>56</sup> However, he would have been well aware that describing a Catholic Jewish nun who lived in a convent close to Cologne, where Stein also famously resided, would evoke the image of the real-life philosopher for many readers. Ilona and Rahel are in many ways very different figures, with the former being ascribed stereotypically virtuous characteristics and the latter displaying her inherently moral behaviour in more unusual ways, such as her interest in the human body. However, the basic parallels between these characters and their associative link to Stein suggests that the Christianized element to Böll's writing and its connection to early twentieth-century Catholic culture is not entirely erased from the author's later work. Although the presentation of the Catholic church is much more critical in *Gruppenbild*, Böll still links his presentation of inherently moral behaviour to individualized notions of an essentially Christian spirituality. This aspect of his approach shows that even if the impact of the Catholic Revival and the German Catholic inner emigration movement are much less apparent in Böll's later work, their influence remains, and his writing continues to reflect cultural continuities across historical periods.

This simultaneous critique of institutional religious authority, on the one hand, and assertion of a textual authority based upon individualized Christian values, on the other, highlights a paradoxical element of Böll's approach that is also pertinent to Leni's ambiguous presentation. This figure is seemingly presented as the moral model around which both the narrator and the broader chorus of characters reflects, or fail to reflect, upon their actions.<sup>57</sup> Such an approach arguably allows the reader little opportunity to form a critical reading of her character, the types of behaviours that she

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<sup>55</sup> Berkman, 'Edith Stein', p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> This conversation is noted in the diaries of Kopelev's wife, the literary critic Raisa Orlova. See Orlova and Kopelev, *My zhili v Moskve*, p. 174.

<sup>57</sup> Uecker 'Saints and Sinners', pp. 107–08.

employs or the ethics that she represents. In this light, Leni's simple refusal to recognize, or even inability to comprehend, totalitarian authority could be seen to imply that her behaviour represents an entirely adequate and practicable form of resistance in and of itself. This notion surely oversimplifies the complex dynamics of implication under Nazism and risks promoting a solipsistic engagement with the past that refuses to recognize forms of responsibility beyond individual guilt.

Yet such a critique fails to acknowledge the deliberate ambiguity of Böll's literary method. This is reflected not only in the vague and second-hand descriptions of Leni's actions, but also within the very details of her characterization. While the protagonist's innate tenderness is contrasted to the dehumanizing basis of National Socialist ideology, Böll does not minimize her overall position of privilege within the very racist power structure to which she refuses to subscribe. In fact, he even parodically exaggerates this position. The narrator stresses how Leni's appearance correlates to the Nazi 'Aryan' racial archetype, even noting that she won a prize as the 'deutscheste Mädels der Schule' ('most German girl in the school', p. 31) and was a member of a National Socialist girls' organization. Given that these particular events took place during the protagonist's childhood, Böll is not inviting moral judgement here. Yet these details do highlight Leni's relative safety within Nazi society, a position generally replicated in her adult experiences of this system described later in the text. In fact, such details enact Rothberg's broad definition of the 'implicated subject' concept; Leni 'inhabits' and 'benefits from' a system of racial domination and discrimination even if she does not condone or comprehend it.<sup>58</sup> Thus, even if Leni's rejection of authority does render her a moral model of sorts, it remains crucial not to overlook these broader realities about her experience of National Socialist power. Doing so risks a reductive interpretation of Böll's approach as morally didactic and fails to acknowledge how the author's deliberate employment of exaggerated narrative contradictions acts as a mechanism to foster critical engagement with his text. By juxtaposing Leni's own behaviour with her intrinsic status in Nazi society, Böll invites the reader to consider the tension between personal and collective forms of responsibility, i.e. between how the individual has acted themselves and what has been done in their name as a member of a community.

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<sup>58</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 1.

It is this interrogation of the relationship between individual and collective forms of engagement that makes Böll's novel an intriguing forum through which to consider questions of memory work and political solidarity. Specific exploration of Böll's work in this respect does not dictate that Grossman was unaware of the limitations of his individualized ethics; his writing does not naively propose that the principles of 'senseless kindness' can change society in and of themselves. However, this specific element of Böll's novel does allow us to acknowledge that he had the opportunity to consider how these ideas might lead to new, more collective forms of political engagement in the Cold War era in a way that Grossman did not. Understanding the ramifications of Böll's novel in this later historical context requires us to look beyond the comparison with Grossman and to consider *Gruppenbild* in relation to the author's association with the Soviet dissident movement of which Grossman is sometimes considered an antecedent figure.<sup>59</sup> Doing so emphasizes the critical, internationalist spirit that underpins Böll's text.

### ***Müll-Happening: From Implication to Solidarity***

When outlining the process of 'transfiguring' implication, Rothberg suggests that this self-reflective task 'opens the self to others', leading the subject not simply to 'dwell' on their own 'responsibilities, complicities, and debts' but to look outwards and recognize how violence continues to manifest itself in different contexts and forms.<sup>60</sup> This externalization of the implicated subject's perspective can lead to what Rothberg labels 'long-distance solidarity' in which the individual engages in productive action with others in order to challenge injustice on a transnational basis.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, Rothberg suggests that the 'transition' from implicated subjectivity towards long-distance solidarity can lead to effective forms of collective action.<sup>62</sup> In this section, I argue that Böll also outlines a transition from implication towards solidarity and action in *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. I propose that his depiction of solidarity in this text — which, while set in Cologne, involves a diverse and international set of

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<sup>59</sup> Anna Bonola and Giovanni Maddalena, 'Introduction', in *Vasily Grossman: A Writer's Freedom*, ed. by Anna Bonola and Giovanni Maddalena (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), pp. 3–15 (p. 4).

<sup>60</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 201.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149–98.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201–03.

characters — is informed by the author's own form of nuanced progressive internationalism. Of particular relevance is his engagement with dissident figures in the communist bloc around the time that *Gruppenbild* was written. By contrasting the novel's anti-capitalist message with Böll's critique of Soviet communism, I show how the author explores a distinct form of political engagement that highlights the importance of fostering solidarity between individuals with dissimilar experiences. His nuanced viewpoint eschews the ideological dichotomy that shaped the Cold War era, whilst aiming to avoid trans-historical or -contextual relativism.

*'Helft Leni-Komitee' and 'Sowjetparadies'*

The most significant representation of solidarity in *Gruppenbild* comes during its descriptions of post-war society, when the Verf.'s historical investigation of the Leni's life merges with the narrative present. In response to Leni's struggle to retain her home in the midst of the Hoysers' threat of eviction, the Verf. describes how many of his interviewees form a solidarity group, named the 'Leni in Not — Helft Leni-Komitee' ('Leni in Need — Help Leni Committee', p. 338), which aims to protect not only the heroine but later also her son Lev, who is arrested for confronting the Hoysers on his mother's behalf. This group, which is founded by Helwig Schirtenstein, a music critic and Leni's admiring neighbour, organizes an act of resistance. The former POW Bogakov devises a plan which involves Lev's fellow refuse collectors, Turkish and Portuguese guestworkers, crashing their trucks at a busy urban intersection, thereby blocking the officials travelling to deliver Leni's eviction documentation and preventing her removal. The Verf. refers to this action as the 'Müll-Happening' ('Garbage-Happening', p. 366) and it represents the climactic moment of his account.

On first reading, this group and its protest appear to bear only limited resemblance to the forms of transnational solidarity and collective political action that Rothberg outlines. After all, contra to Rothberg's focus on border-spanning social movements, the activism that Böll describes seems to be distinctly local in nature. Moreover, given that this fictional group is based around a network of Leni's acquaintances who clearly view her as a victim of injustice, their motivations appear to be at least partly rooted in the simplistic form of identification that Rothberg eschews in favour of more

active and outward-looking political solidarity focused on changing oppressive political structures.<sup>63</sup> This equivocation around the political foundation of the group's actions is heightened by the narrative's frequent employment of humour and irony. The committee's organization is ironically linked to the Bolshevik revolution (p. 359), a comparison that comically underlines its own lack of ideological basis or doctrine.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, critics have argued that the so-called 'Müll-Happening' represents an unpragmatic form of protest that has only a momentary effect and is fundamentally unserious.<sup>65</sup> Such critiques question the episode's status as a model of effective political protest.

Yet it is important not to reduce the complexity of Böll's literary and political vision. Closer investigation of the Helft Leni-Komitee not only suggests that reckoning with implication is a significant aspect of its basis, but also that Böll's literary approach can actually expand our understanding of Rothberg's formula. The specific membership of the group is significant here. Its participants include individuals marginalized in either Nazi or post-war society such as Bogakov, the former POW, Lianne Hölthohne, the Jewish Rhinish separatist, Mehmet, Leni's Turkish partner, and Tunç and Pinto, his fellow guestworkers. It is in fact these latter figures who largely carry out the 'Müll-Happening', at personal risk of legal and social reprimand.<sup>66</sup> However, the committee also includes several figures who are implicated in the fissures of the National Socialist past. The most obvious examples are Pelzer, the former fascist and communist stormtrooper who was Leni's manager during the war, and Dr Scholsdorff, an amateur expert in Slavonic literature who worked as a tax auditor under Nazism. I return to Pelzer's particular role within the narrative later in this section.

First, I focus on the latter character to highlight the relationship between Böll's views on solidarity and the concept of implication.

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<sup>63</sup> On Rothberg's critique of 'solidarity-via-identification' see *Implicated Subject*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>64</sup> The Verf. notes that 'in Schirtensteins Wohnung ging es zu, wie es in einigen Nebenräumen des Smolny in St. Petersburg im Oktober 1917 zugegangen sein mag ('the goings on in Schirtenstein's flat resembled what might have unfolded in some of the side rooms of the Smolny Institute in St Petersburg in October 1917', p. 359).

<sup>65</sup> Redding, 'Garbage as a Literary Aesthetic', p. 360. A notable example comes from Böll's interview with Dieter Wellershoff in 1971. Wellershoff suggested that the Müll-Happening was 'eine groteske Form von Widerstand' ('a grotesque form of resistance') and 'eine Utopie des Widerstandes' ('a utopia of resistance'). See Heinrich Böll, 'Gruppenbild mit Dame: Tonbandinterview mit Dieter Wellershoff am 11. 6. 1971', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Interviews, 1961-1978*, ed. by Bernd Balzer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch 1980), I, 120–34 (p. 128). See also Durzak, 'Leistungsverweigerung', p. 89

<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the Verf. notes that a newspaper runs the headline 'Müssen es Ausländer sein?' ('Must it always be foreigners?', p. 366) in response to the Müll-Happening. This reiterates Böll's emphasis on lingering xenophobia in West German society.

Scholsdorff's interest in Leni is partly rooted in his feelings of personal culpability over the scandal that led to the wartime conviction of her father, Hubert. As an auditor, Scholsdorff noticed how Hubert had used the names of notable Russian authors to create fake employees on his payroll and embezzle money. Beyond this specific feeling of remorse, though, there is a subtler aspect of Scholsdorff's character that renders him analytically interesting. The narrator recurrently emphasizes that Scholsdorff avoided direct participation in Nazi terror, despite his position working for the state as a bureaucrat. The Verf. describes the character as too 'zart' ('gentle') and 'sensibel' ('sensitive', p. 143) to be conscripted into the German army; notes how he rejected opportunities to work as an interpreter to avoid participating in interrogations; and observes that he refused to make denunciations. Indeed, Scholsdorff even denies denouncing Leni's father and suggests that the aforementioned scandal was broken when his superiors reviewed his investigation into Hubert's firm. However, while he may not have contributed to the direct implementation of Nazi terror, as a senior bureaucrat Scholsdorff did occupy a position of power and privilege within the political system that perpetrated it. The Verf. highlights this association with the state when summarizing his account of Hubert's trial, ironically noting that 'Finanzbeamte mit literarischer Bildung können sich durchaus als nützlich und staatsfördernd erweisen' ('financial officials with a literary education can definitely be useful and beneficial to the state', p. 147). This connection to the state links this character's ambiguous relationship with the past to the realm of implication.

These details suggest that the implication concept can help to elucidate Böll's literary descriptions of solidarity at least to some degree. Certain members of the Helft Leni-Komitee enact a transition from passive association with structural violence in the past towards more active participation in critical, political action in the present, albeit in response to forms of injustice that fundamentally differ from totalitarian oppression. It is also worth reiterating Leni's own complex experiences across the historical timeline presented in the text. While Leni may be viewed as a 'victim' of relative injustice in the post-war period, her position within the oppressive hierarchies of National Socialism is clearly very far from a straightforward notion of victimhood. Indeed, she is a beneficiary of the system, the 'most German girl in the school' whose father initially ran a successful construction business that worked for the state. This element of implication within the protagonist's

social position suggests that the Helft Leni-Komitee is not only rooted in simple identification with injustice and victimhood. Its actions should also be viewed within the context of the novel's full historical timeline and as a prism through which Böll interrogates the relationship between implication in the past and civic responsibility in the present. The diverse composition of the group, including individuals wrestling with both marginalization and implication, enacts the importance of negotiating interpersonal differences and of forming bonds of solidarity *across* significant but fluid boundaries of identity and experience. Even the comic dimension of the Müll-Happening can be seen to reinforce this more sophisticated facet of Böll's approach, reflecting what Finlay labels the author's 'critical humour'.<sup>67</sup> By outlining this light-hearted or even idealistic form of resistance, the author encourages reflection on the gap between pragmatic behaviours and those displayed by these characters. This invests the Happening with deeper symbolic meaning.<sup>68</sup> It highlights the ability of ordinary people to act together in responsibility and explores how self-critical recognition of one's association with broader structures of oppression can provide a crucial foundation for instigating political critique and solidarity.<sup>69</sup>

These more critical elements of Böll's approach can be shown by contrasting the Helft Leni-Komitee to an earlier example of solidarity in the text. It is here that the perspective of the other implicated character mentioned above, Pelzer, is significant. In the final stages of the war, Leni, Boris and their colleagues at the nursery yard hide from intense Allied bombing in a network of underground vaults that its inhabitants name the 'Sowjetparadies' ('Soviet Paradise', p. 273). This subterranean dwelling — which had previously acted as the place where Leni and Boris met to pursue their secret relationship — protects the group of workers from the attacks, allowing them to share resources such as food, water and tobacco. The quasi-socialist atmosphere of this community also leads previously meaningful labels of political or national identity to disintegrate, fostering forms of communal identification long lost during their work creating wreaths for the Nazi war effort.<sup>70</sup> When

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<sup>67</sup> Finlay, *Aesthetic Thinking*, pp. 148–53.

<sup>68</sup> Redding, 'Garbage as a Literary Aesthetic', p. 360.

<sup>69</sup> In this way, the group also somewhat embodies Mark Sanders's concept of 'responsibility-in-complicity'. See Sanders, *Complicities*, p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> David Myers, 'Heinrich Böll's Gruppenbild mit Dame: Aesthetic Play and Ethical Seriousness', *Seminar*, 13.3 (1977), 189–98, p. 192.

describing the ‘Sowjetparadies’ to the Verf., Pelzer suggests ‘da kams doch nicht mehr drauf an, ob der eine mal ein Nazi oder Kommunist gewesen war, der andere ein russischer Soldat (‘there it didn’t matter if one had been a Nazi or communist, another a Russian soldier’, p. 285). This statement implies that the members of the community strikingly disregard the otherwise violently enforced ethnic and political boundaries of the Nazi regime to recognize their shared humanity. Indeed, the Russian Boris even asks the German Pelzer to baptize his and Leni’s son, Lev, who is born in the ‘Sowjetparadies’, a display of trust that appears to emphasize a form of universalist human solidarity that counters the dehumanizing violence of fascism and war.

Yet the presentation of the Sowjetparadies is more ambiguous than these details imply. The Verf. emphasizes the difficulty of finding information about the commune, largely leading him to quote Pelzer’s account in full: ‘es bedurfte einiger Gespräche und ausgiebigen Recherchen, um über das Sowjetparadies in den Grüften exakte Auskünfte zu bekommen (‘it took several conversations and extensive research in order to get precise information about the Soviet paradise in the vaults’, p. 273). Pelzer is one of the Verf.’s principal ‘informants’ throughout the text and is ultimately a nuanced figure who comes to support Leni in the midst of her post-war struggle to avoid her eviction. However, in this particular instance, the almost total reliance on his perspective is significant, because this character retains a vested interest in the breakdown of the historical identity labels which he describes. The chaos of the late- and immediate post-war period allows this serial opportunist to shed his past associations as a former fascist stormtrooper and form a successful business despite the ongoing context of de-Nazification. The fact that almost all the details about the ‘Sowjetparadies’ are provided by a character who, at this stage at least, has done little to reflect on his own implication and complicity in the rise of Nazism, highlights the commune’s ambivalent and elusive nature. The lack of reliable evidence casts it as a mirage based less upon genuine political or social solidarity than the basic need to protect life in the face of war. Pelzer even admits this feature of the ‘Sowjetparadies’ following his description of its universalist spirit, stating ‘da gabs doch nur eins: Leben und Tod’ (‘there only one thing mattered: life and death’, p. 285). The allusion to Soviet society in the community’s name could suggest that it represents an ironic comment on Soviet communism, the author’s views on which I examine later in this chapter. More significant here, however, is the

difference between this somewhat ambivalent example of solidarity and the later prominence given to the Helft Leni-Komitee, which reflects the importance that Böll ascribed to individual self-reflection in inspiring new forms of collective action.

The difference between the Sowjetparadies and the Helft Leni-Komitee lies in the transition from implication towards solidarity and then resistance, which is clearly delineated in the latter example but not in the former. Where those figures in the earlier underground community are united by a shared survival instinct, the members of the later committee enact a form of solidarity predicated on a desire for action, even if small-scale. This discrepancy partly reflects the fact that resistance is more easily practicable in a democratic society than in a context of totalitarian rule and war. Nonetheless, it also shows the specific behaviours that Böll seeks to depict and thereby encourage: to utilize relative freedoms, to acknowledge the injustices of the past and to stave off personal complacency, selfishness and dogma in order to resist their re-emergence in the present. Implication cannot simply be shed, as Pelzer's account of the 'Sowjetparadies' suggests, but must be consciously and continuously transformed by the subject into positive acts. This notion of self-awareness connects Böll the prominent public intellectual, who called for continuing critical engagement with the Nazi past, and Böll the writer of fiction, who wanted to 'humanize' society via literary language and form.

Questions remain, though, about how this emphasis on self-critical individual engagement with the past relates to Rothberg's concept of 'transfiguring' implication and its apparent focus on transnational collective action. Even though the members of the Helft Leni-Komitee are diverse in terms of nationality, social class and historical experience, it is reasonable to query whether its localized ambition can be linked to the 'long-distance' solidarity that Rothberg outlines. However, I propose that it is in fact precisely by challenging a dichotomy between localism and internationalism that Böll's political perspective can subtly nuance theories of implication and its transfiguration. In order to exemplify this point, I will now explore how Böll's own international political activism chimes with his representation of solidarity and action in this novel.

*Heinrich Böll behind the Iron Curtain*

Given the anti-capitalist undertone of the Helft Leni-Komitee's actions, scholars have sometimes viewed *Gruppenbild* in Marxist terms.<sup>71</sup> However, I argue that Böll's conceptualization of the relationship between memory, solidarity and resistance actually challenges the ideological dichotomy of the Cold War, inspired by the author's engagement with dissident figures in both the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. Böll's rejection of Cold War binarism is evident in his public interventions into German memory debates from around the time of *Gruppenbild*'s writing. In the essay 'Deutsche Meisterschaft' ('German Mastery') — penned to mark the twentieth anniversary of the *Bundesrepublik*'s foundation in 1969 — Böll critiqued the developing socio-political conversation surrounding the legacy of National Socialism:

Wir leben in einer Gegenwart, die alles Vergangene enthält. Ich weiß nicht, wer die barbarischen Wortbildungen 'Bewältigung der Vergangenheit' und 'Wiedergutmachung' zu verantworten hat. Ich erkläre mich unschuldig an diese Wortbildungen, unschuldig auch daran, sie benutzt zu haben.<sup>72</sup>

We live in a present that contains everything from the past. I don't know who is responsible for the barbaric word formations 'overcoming the past' and 'atonement'. I declare myself innocent of these word formations, and innocent of having used them.

The author's criticism is aimed not at the very fact of this emerging engagement with the fascist past — a process with which he strongly agreed — but rather at its conceptual and ideological manifestation in West German society. In contrast to memory paradigms that viewed the past as something to be 'overcome', and particularly to narratives of 'mastery' purported by more conservative elements of the West German establishment, Böll viewed remembrance as a continuous, introspective task in which the individual remained critically aware of the legacy of the violent past and vigilant regarding the excessive, unfounded and unchecked use of political power in the present.

Crucially, though, Böll emphasizes that the potential for unwarranted and extreme uses of authority continues to exist across a wide variety of political and social contexts. In the above-cited essay, he argues, 'es ist immer problematisch, wenn eine einzige Person oder Institution den

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<sup>71</sup> See e.g. Leys, 'Compassion, Catholicism, and Communism', pp. 26–27.

<sup>72</sup> Heinrich Böll, 'Deutsche Meisterschaft', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008), xvi, 75–81 (p. 78). All further quotations will be to this edition and can be found in the text. See also pp. 536–47 for details of the essay's publication.

Anspruch erhebt, “Autorität” zu sein, gleichgültig ob als Politiker, Parteifunktionär, Professor, Feldwebel, Lehrer, Richter, Pfarrer, Partei, Politbüro oder Regierung’ (‘it is always problematic when a single person or institution claims to be an “authority”, regardless of whether it is a politician, party functionary, professor, sergeant, teacher, judge, priest, a party, politburo or government’, p. 77). The inclusion of the ‘party functionary’ and ‘politburo’ in this list suggests that Böll’s scepticism towards political or institutional authority transcended political and ideological divides. He promotes a kind of political engagement that cuts across the geopolitical dichotomy of the Cold War, a democratic programme that, while clearly anti-capitalist in nature, is also distinct from the ‘Real Socialism’ promoted by the Soviet Union. Böll notes that this new form of politics — which he labels a ‘dritte Kraft’ (‘third force’, p. 77) — is ‘weder Kapitalismus noch den von Moskau administrierten kryptokolonialistischen Kommunismus, sondern den eigenen Weg zum Sozialismus’ (‘neither capitalism nor the ‘crypto-colonial’ communism administered from Moscow, but rather its own path towards socialism’, p. 77). Thus, much like the subtle distinctions made between Leni’s characterization and the dogmatic forms of politics highlighted earlier in this chapter, Böll’s political viewpoint is clearly leftist in nature, but it does not subscribe to a rigid ideological creed. This contextual information changes the way that scholars should consider the forms of solidarity narrativized in *Gruppenbild*. The Helft Leni-Komitee clearly represents a critique of West German capitalism; however, it is not simply an expression of Marxist doctrine. Instead, Böll’s conceptualization of solidarity is directly linked to a process of remembrance, one capable of transforming implication. By adopting a transhistorical panorama of the characters’ lives in the novel, Böll emphasizes the importance of not only reckoning with history but also looking beyond one’s own perspective and experiences in order to consider the injustices that continue to face others.

Two key elements of Böll’s own political engagement informed this nuanced literary vision of progressive internationalism. First, was Böll’s interest in Soviet society and friendships with prominent cultural figures in the USSR, and second, was his experiences in Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring of 1968. Böll’s engagement with Soviet culture and society developed during the decade immediately preceding the writing of *Gruppenbild* and extended beyond its publication until the author’s death in the mid-1980s. As explained in the Introduction, Böll travelled to the Soviet

Union seven times between 1962 to 1979.<sup>73</sup> His visits, and his attitude towards the Soviet project more broadly, were increasingly influenced by the friendships that he forged with intellectuals in Moscow, Leningrad and Tbilisi.<sup>74</sup> Böll met numerous significant writers of the late Thaw and Brezhnev eras, including Alexandr Tvardovskii, Konstantin Paustovskii, Yevgenii Yevtushenko, Bella Akhmadulina, Vasilii Aksenov, Bulat Okudzhava, Fazil' Iskander, Viktor Nekrasov, Vladimir Voinovich, Yurii Trifonov, Joseph Brodsky and Lev Kopelev, who along with his wife the literary critic Raisa Orlova, was largely responsible for expanding the German author's social network in the Soviet Union.<sup>75</sup> Böll also developed a friendship with his fellow Nobel Laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whom he hosted at his summerhouse in Langenbroich when the Russian author was forced into exile from the Soviet Union in 1974.<sup>76</sup>

Böll's support for Solzhenitsyn represents perhaps the most prominent example of the help that he extended towards Soviet dissident figures and activities. As well as sending medicines and other items unavailable behind the Iron Curtain to his friends, Böll helped smuggle politically sensitive writing to the West, supported writers and activists who had been forced into exile, and lobbied the Soviet authorities to show leniency towards those incarcerated at home.<sup>77</sup> For example, in February 1975 Böll co-signed a letter to the Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev requesting the release of the writer Vladimir Bukovskii and the physicist and activist Semen Gluzman alongside the Nobel Peace Prize winning human-rights campaigner Andrei Sakharov, whom the author first met in 1972.<sup>78</sup> Such political activities led to Böll's work being effectively banned in the USSR from around 1975.<sup>79</sup> However, the suppression of his writing did little to stop him showing solidarity with his Soviet

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<sup>73</sup> For details of these trips and a broad overview of Böll's engagement with the Soviet dissident movement see Azadovskii, 'Genrikh Bell'; Hummel, *Intertextualität*, pp. 204–13.

<sup>74</sup> Documents published in the Russian media in the 1990s suggest that the Soviet authorities had initially hoped that Böll might become a sympathetic cultural voice in the West. Following his second trip in 1965, party functionaries claimed that the author had repeatedly expressed his wish to see the reality of communist society in contrast to inherently 'anti-Soviet' Western propaganda. See Sergei Zemlyanoi, 'Grupповoi portret s literatorom: iz istorii chastnykh poezdok Genrikha Bellya v SSSR', *Segodnya*, 18 April 1995, 71, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> For a comprehensive list of Böll's friends and acquaintances in the Soviet Union see e.g., Azadovskii, 'Genrikh Bell', pp. 162–64.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164. See also Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, p. 158.

<sup>78</sup> ASAM, f. 1, op. 3, d. 9. See also Azadovskii, 'Genrikh Bell', p. 166 for more details about Böll's and Sakharov's friendship.

<sup>79</sup> See e.g. Kopelev and Orlova, *My zhili v Moskve*, p. 172.

counterparts. During his final visit to Moscow in 1979, Böll attended a gathering with writers embroiled in the so-called ‘Metropol’ Affair in which the authorities suppressed the publication of a literary almanac of the same name in response to its allegedly ‘anti-Soviet’ content.<sup>80</sup> Thus, Böll came to employ forms of ‘long-distance’ solidarity in his own public and private life, helping his friends and other figures living under Soviet authoritarian rule.<sup>81</sup> These experiences may appear to have little direct reflection in *Gruppenbild*’s narrative aside from the inclusion of multiple Russian and Soviet characters; however, I propose that they informed the author’s understanding of solidarity as embodied in this text, reflecting a transnational and ‘anti-ideological’ belief that individual freedom should be protected from the excessive intrusions of political power, whatever its basis.

Böll’s experiences in Czechoslovakia had an even more demonstrable impact on *Gruppenbild*. The author personally witnessed, and was greatly disturbed by, the Soviet suppression of the Prague Spring in August 1968. Invited to speak at the Czechoslovak Writers’ Union, Böll travelled to Prague on the eve of the invasion with his wife Anne-Marie — who was of German-Czech descent — and his son, René. The author spent four days in Prague watching the events of the occupation unfold and showing solidarity with Czechoslovak protestors and intellectuals alike through interviews on dissident radio and literary magazines.<sup>82</sup> This solidarity would ultimately become lasting and reciprocal: on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1976, a group of prominent Czechoslovak intellectuals, including the writers Jaroslav Seifert, Ivan Klíma, Pavel Kohout and Václav Havel, sent an open letter to Böll asking him to show solidarity with the young members of the country’s underground music scene — mostly famously associated with the rock band *The Plastic People of the Universe* — who faced imminent trial.<sup>83</sup> Czechoslovak figures were also keen to show their own support for Böll. H. Gordon Skilling highlights another letter to the German author from the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1977,

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 177. There is a photograph of Böll with the Metropol’ writers at this event. See Zylla, ed., *Briefwechsel*, pp. 488–89; RGALI, Lev Kopelev Papers, f. 2549, op. 3, d. 638. For Aksenov’s description of the Metropol’ affair, see Vassily P. Aksyonov, ‘The Metropol Affair’, *The Wilson Quarterly*, 6.5 (1982), 152–59.

<sup>81</sup> Böll also publicly advocated for authors as president of the International PEN club between 1971–1973. See Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, pp. 221–22; p. 241; Azadovskii, ‘Genrikh Bell’, p. 165.

<sup>82</sup> A collection of Böll’s writing on the Prague Spring, including his personal notebooks, subsequent essays and transcripts of his interviews, has recently been published. See Heinrich Böll, *Der Panzer zielte auf Kafka: Heinrich Böll und der Prager Frühling*, ed. by René Böll (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2018).

<sup>83</sup> H. Gordon Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 199–200. Jonathan Bolton, *World of Dissent: Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 115–51; p. 134.

‘expressing regret over the campaign against him for his stand in defence of human rights’ following his problems with the Springer press and its political allies.<sup>84</sup> This reciprocated support exemplifies the form of interconnected, trans-contextual solidarity that Böll felt could reconcile the existential opposition between individual liberty and unchecked power.

Yet it was the particular kind of peaceful resistance that the Czechoslovak protestors employed against their Soviet occupiers in 1968 that proved most meaningful to Böll. In the essay ‘Der Panzer zielte auf Kafka’ (‘The Tank was Aimed at Kafka’, published in 1968), Böll noted that the Moscow authorities had likely been surprised by the protestors’ non-violent forms of resistance:

Politiker denken wohl immer dualistisch; Unterwerfung oder bewaffneter Aufstand. Das erste wäre ihnen am liebsten gewesen, das zweite hatten sie wahrscheinlich einkalkuliert, das dritte hatten sie nicht erwartet: permanenter, geschlossener Widerstand, unbewaffnet.<sup>85</sup>

Politicians always think dualistically: submission or armed rebellion. The first would have been preferable to them, the second they had probably taken into account. The third they had not expected: permanent, unified resistance, unarmed.

In turn, the author also suggests that the Czechoslovak uprising marked not only a turning point for eastern European societies under Soviet influence, but also a timely renaissance of ideas of freedom and democracy for the West:

Diese Kraft war neu — machte vieles neu: Wenigstens eine Fahne in Europa bekam wieder einen Sinn, hier wurde das entleerte Wort Freiheit wieder gefüllt. Sogar Denkmäler wurden wieder erträglich. Und das Evangelium der Demokratie wurde verkündet.<sup>86</sup>

This force was new — it made many things new: at least one banner in Europe regained meaning, here the empty word ‘freedom’ was refilled. Even monuments were once again bearable. And the gospel of democracy was proclaimed.

Thus, the ‘force’ that Böll observed in the Prague Spring provides the model for the new form of political engagement for which he later advocates in ‘Deutsche Meisterschaft’: a broadly leftist but non-dogmatic form of action that encourages permanent scrutiny of authority and its excesses. I propose that this eschewing of ideological solipsism and rigidity also represents the key principle that underpins the emphasis on social solidarity narrativized in *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. Written just two years after Böll’s experiences in Prague, the actions of Leni’s neighbours in *Gruppenbild* embody the

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<sup>84</sup> Skilling, *Charter 77*, p. 101.

<sup>85</sup> Heinrich Böll, ‘Der Panzer zielte auf Kafka’ in *Der Panzer zielte auf Kafka: Heinrich Böll und der Prager Frühling*, ed. by René Böll (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2018), pp. 109–36 (p. 110).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.

spirit of the Czechoslovakian ‘dritte Kraft’, and particularly its emphasis on personal integrity, societal equality and communal courage in the face of power. Böll considered the struggle for human freedom as an interconnected phenomenon and employed similar principles to the ‘dritte Kraft’ when describing solidarity against the excesses of the West German capitalist system in his later fiction.

The specific context that informed Böll’s understanding of the ‘dritte Kraft’ is of course notable, as historical research on the 1968 student movement has emphasized the internationalism of the protests across Europe and beyond, including in communist societies.<sup>87</sup> This observation leads us to scrutinize to what extent Rothberg’s writing on implication and transnational solidarity is helpful for understanding Böll’s ideas in contrast to such other, already well-established models of internationalism. Indeed, another potentially relevant reference point is the global human rights movement, which emerged from the early 1970s and was clearly also rooted in questions of memory, i.e. in critically engaging with the atrocities of the past and learning from them.<sup>88</sup>

Rothberg’s framework is arguably more useful for elucidating Böll’s politics in two main ways. First, it can account for the author’s considerations of economic factors in relation to his broader ideas about individual freedom and democracy. As Rothberg notes, human rights discourse has been critiqued for being apolitical and for overlooking the importance of economic injustices when considering abuses of power and violence.<sup>89</sup> Drawing on socialist internationalist and anti-imperialist discourses, he explores how structural global inequalities can be better considered in the context of historical reparation.<sup>90</sup> While the direct transference of any such socialist framework onto Böll’s ideas would be unwise, especially considering his nuanced leftist political worldview outlined above, the acknowledgement of economic inequality within broader debates about memory and solidarity is clearly pertinent to the German author’s political ideas. In both his fiction and non-fiction, Böll emphasizes capitalism’s marginalization of individuals with low material wealth and socio-economic status. For example, in an interview about *Gruppenbild mit Dame* in 1971, Böll notes

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<sup>87</sup> See e.g. *Europe’s 1968: Voices of Revolt*, ed. by Robert Gildea and James Mark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>88</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, pp. 156–57.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16; p. 158. See also e.g. Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

<sup>90</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, pp. 14–16; pp. 154–58.

that by the end of the text Leni is associated with the 'Abfall' or 'refuse' due to her debts and potential homelessness, which see her effectively discarded by bourgeois society.<sup>91</sup> In this way, the character's experiences in the post-war period enact Böll's growing conviction that the inequalities of West German capitalism infringed upon vital notions of individual freedom and rights.

The second, more significant synergy between Böll's and Rothberg's ideas relates to their shared conviction that fostering solidarity across borders should not lead to the denial of inter-contextual or transnational differences. Böll acknowledged that the circumstances he faced and described in democratic West Germany were unlike those his acquaintances operated under in the context of Soviet authoritarianism. For instance, in a televised conference with Lev Kopelev and the journalist Klaus Bednarz in Moscow in 1979 (and later published as *Warum haben wir aufeinander geschossen?* or *Why did we shoot at each other?*) Böll noted that his own ability to publish, speak and travel freely represented a crucial difference from life behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>92</sup> While Böll clearly believed that scepticism towards authority and resistance against its excesses remained vital even amidst the relative freedoms of West German democracy, his perspective was nuanced. He critiqued excessive manifestations of power in West Germany whilst simultaneously acknowledging the inherent privileges enjoyed in this society in contrast to other, more oppressive contexts. Overall, Böll managed to avoid the risks of 'adventurism', 'appropriation' and 'ideological rigidity' that can accompany 'long-distance' solidarity in Rothberg's view.<sup>93</sup> He employed an essentially multidirectional form of political engagement that was not only influenced by the productive potential of trans-contextual dialogue, but also curious about the importance of cultural and political specificity and differentiation for enacting effective forms of solidarity.

It is this appreciation of difference that links Böll's own internationalism with the localized activism described in *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. Across his non-fiction and fiction Böll consistently emphasizes how the acknowledgement of individuality and specificity can act as a crucial basis, rather than a hindrance, for fostering critical engagement with the past and political solidarity in the

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<sup>91</sup> Böll, 'Tonbandinterview mit Dieter Wellershoff', p. 128.

<sup>92</sup> Heinrich Böll and Lev Kopelev, *Warum haben wir aufeinander geschossen?* (Bornheim-Merten: Lamuv, 1981), p. 57.

<sup>93</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 203.

present. A negotiation of difference connects the logic of the Helft Leni-Komitee, whose members straddle various nationalities and historical experiences, to the author's own border-spanning political engagement. In both cases, these examples of solidarity are less rooted in 'identification' or 'sameness' than in the social mediation of different individual experiences in order to facilitate political critique and action, even if only at a grassroots level.<sup>94</sup> Thus, in line with Rothberg's ideas, they imply that recognizing and accepting difference is a fundamental but underappreciated means of thinking through collective responsibility and developing ethical forms of solidarity.<sup>95</sup>

In fact, the ways that Böll's writing blurs the boundaries of local and transnational solidarities highlights a potential ambiguity within Rothberg's framework itself, or at least its presentation. Rothberg's use of the term 'long-distance' solidarity clearly implies that 'transfiguring' implication tends toward transnational political engagement. However, this label is possibly a misnomer. Böll's literary approach suggests that the logic which informs this 'solidarity premised on difference' is equally important when engaging with the past on a local level.<sup>96</sup> This was true of the West German society that Böll describes at the end of *Gruppenbild* and it is surely even more the case in the multicultural and globalized European societies of today.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The comparative lenses employed in this chapter prompt us to rethink Böll's status as both a public intellectual and a literary writer. In regard to the former position, the solidarity that Böll showed towards intellectuals in the communist bloc suggests that he perceived himself as part of an international network of activism rather than simply the 'conscience' of the West German nation. This being said, Böll's consistent, trans-contextual defence of individual freedom highlighted in this analysis does help to explain his specific interventions into West German public life, too. This includes his infamous dispute with the Springer press in the context of Ulrike Meinhof, which would see him labelled a terrorist sympathiser.<sup>97</sup> While distancing himself from the violent methods of the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, pp. 221–25.

Rote Armee Faktion ('Red Army Faction'), Böll suggested that Meinhof's treatment by the press came to infringe upon her individual rights which he argued she retained despite her terrorist activities.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, Böll's consistent scepticism towards institutional authority also explains why, unlike fellow major post-war writers such as Günter Grass, the author generally did not engage in political party campaigning. Notable exceptions to this tendency include Böll's public support for his friend Willy Brandt, who assumed the Chancellorship in 1969, and his backing of the emerging Green movement in the 1980s.<sup>99</sup> In general, though, the author viewed politics through the prisms of critique and resistance. He felt that the writer should scrutinize political power rather than endorse any one particular party in a way that might lead to ideological over-simplification or complacency. Thus, while Böll was well-known for his leftist views and criticisms of German political conservatism, he felt that the intellectual should remain outside of traditional political activities and critique the more general ways that different structures of authority could encroach upon human dignity.

Acknowledging Böll's critique of ideological dogma and his innate internationalism also enhances our understanding of both *Gruppenbild mit Dame* and his broader literary approach. This novel predominantly focuses on the specific legacies of the National Socialist era in the West German capitalist context. However, this analysis shows that Böll subtly weaves his nuanced perspective on the post-war geopolitical order into the narrative by critiquing both sides of the Cold War ideological binary. The internationalist spirit that I have highlighted in Böll's writing should change the way that scholars approach this literary work. The subtle trans-cultural allusions to Russian concepts such as holy foolishness and the forms of solidarity inspired by the Prague Spring suggest that Böll's approach to narrativizing the legacy of Nazism was 'multidirectional' in nature, to use Rothberg's term; it was informed by both literary devices and political thought from other contexts, and especially by his engagement with Russian and other eastern European societies.<sup>100</sup> This emphasizes the importance of considering Böll's work in comparative perspective in order to examine how his

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. This controversy was sparked by an article that Böll wrote about Ulrike Meinhof in 1972. See Heinrich Böll, 'Soviel Liebe auf einmal: Will Ulrike Meinhof Gnade oder freies Geleit?', in *Heinrich Böll Werke: Kölner Ausgabe*, ed. by Viktor Böll, Ralf Schnell, and Klaus-Peter Bernhard (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2003), xviii, 41–49.

<sup>99</sup> Schubert, *Heinrich Böll*, pp. 234–39; pp. 279–80.

<sup>100</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 6–7; p. 18.

approach to representing the past and its traces was created in dialogue with memory work in other areas. As both Böll and Rothberg show, highlighting such collaborative and transnational approaches to memory formation need not elide or diminish the importance of specificities when considering the legacies of the Nazi past. However, comparison is necessary to elucidate Böll's views on the relationship between memory, literature and politics.

Böll's multifaceted interventions into both literary and political discourse perhaps also indicate the public intellectual role that Grossman could have developed if he had had the opportunity. Although the Soviet author was clearly circumscribed in how the ethical behaviour embodied in his concept of 'senseless' kindness might be put into practice in his own society, he also emphasized the sacrosanct importance of individual freedom in the face of tyranny whatever its form. His work similarly encourages the individual to reflect on their behaviour, to look beyond their self-interest, to aspire towards kindness and to act in solidarity with others. By bringing together the various strands of these ideas that I have identified across both authors' works, it is possible to reflect further on what the comparison between them contributes to our understanding of memory in the German and Russian contexts, and potentially beyond.

## Conclusion

### Implication, Moral Injury and the Future of Memory

Comparison of Heinrich Böll's and Vasilii Grossman's writing in the context of implication and moral injury transforms our understanding of their works. It shows how their respective approaches to narrativizing the Nazi and Stalinist pasts developed over their careers from early conceptualizations of memory that emphasized the potential for societal renewal in the aftermath of war and genocide, towards a more individualized perspective, which illuminated the importance of personally reckoning with the legacies of historical violence. In Böll's case, his initial emphasis on the importance of collective spiritual revitalization was rooted in the strong influence of pan-European Catholic revival literature and the writing of the German inner emigration. This influence is most evident in his early works such as *Wo warst du, Adam?* but it is also apparent through his recurrent emphasis on the importance of individual non-conformity in later texts such as *Billard um halb zehn* and *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. The moral injury lens shows that Böll's narratives also consistently psychologize characters confronting their own roles in the catastrophic moral transgressions of the Nazi era. His approach to characterization includes depiction of both victims and perpetrators of violence, but it is most notable for its focus on experiences of implication that sit uncomfortably between these categories. This aspect of Böll's writing, as well as his recurrently stated belief that fictional narrative provides a crucial vehicle for exploring the ambiguities and dilemmas of behaviour and emotion, is also reflected in the author's consistent preference for multi-vocal narrative forms, which resist any finalizable understanding of the past by casting memory as a subjective, continual process. In later works such as *Gruppenbild*, Böll scrutinizes how this individualized form of remembrance might be transformed into new strategies for political solidarity and collective action.

In Grossman's case, his initial promotion of an over-arching, collective memory narrative was rooted not in religious belief, but in his unerring conviction in the necessity of the war against National Socialism and his pride in the Soviet, and particularly Russian, people in showing the strength of character required to defeat it. This conviction led him to adopt many of the long-standing

characteristics of Russian historical fiction, and most notably the work of Tolstoy, to highlight his admiration for the Russian people, an aspect of his approach in the novel *Za pravoe delo* that broadly conformed to the demands of late Stalinist war memory. Grossman's belief in the importance of victory over Nazi Germany remained unchanged after Stalin's death; however, his experiences of post-war antisemitism undermined the author's willingness to propose an intrinsic connection between the role of the Stalinist state and the Soviet victory in his fictional narratives. This change can at least partly be understood in the terms of moral injury: the Soviet state's transgression of the moral underpinning of Grossman's anti-fascism — and the author's feelings of complex association with this betrayal — enacts the focus on implication that is evident in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. This emphasis on reckoning with implication also highlights Grossman's developing preference for narrative structures that foreground individual and open-ended perspectives on the past.

Böll's and Grossman's corresponding adoption of such multi-vocal narratives is central to the striking intersection between their literary approaches evident in their novels from the late 1950s, *Vse techet* and *Billard um halb zehn*. These texts are explicitly focused on confronting the ramifications of systemic implication and cast their characters' struggles to reckon with this phenomenon in terms analogous to the concept of moral injury. In fact, the comparable narrative features of these texts — which include formal traits such as silence, interruption and hesitation, and representations of feelings of guilt, shame, social isolation and demoralization — highlight a potential new and expanded poetics of moral injury that merits further analysis. Moreover, the similar characteristics of these novels represent the clearest point of convergence between Böll's and Grossman's conceptualizations of memory on a thematic level. In contrast to memory narratives that posit clean caesuras between historical eras or claim that the violent past can be 'mastered' or 'overcome', both Böll and Grossman seek to locate the origins of totalitarianism within the historical continuum of their respective national cultures in order to emphasize the close relationship between past and present, and to highlight the possibility that violence could re-emerge in extreme form. Perhaps paradoxically, they suggest that the main bulwark against these sweeping tides of history is the individual subject, who through their capacity for love and kindness can recuperate and maintain human dignity and freedom in the face of state power and ideological coercion.

The numerous analogies between Grossman's and Böll's approaches affect our understanding of their respective careers. In Grossman's case, the text that crystallizes the clearest moment of stylistic and intellectual intersection with Böll's work, i.e. *Vse techet*, perhaps does not enjoy its rightful place in his oeuvre. Scholarly attention on Grossman has predominantly fallen on *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, probably due to its epic structure and remarkable publication history. Reading Grossman's work in comparison with Böll's writing, however, shows that *Vse techet* is at least no less significant. The intellectual relationship between these texts is close with many of the historical and philosophical ideas that are apparent in *Vse techet* also evident in *Zhizn' i sud'ba*. Nevertheless, *Vse techet* highlights a perhaps even clearer synergy between Grossman's narrative approach and views on memory, emphasizing the entangled psychological, moral, historical and political planes of his complex literary method.

Böll scholars have often viewed *Gruppenbild mit Dame* as his most significant literary achievement.<sup>1</sup> My comparative analysis shows, however, that understanding this novel requires a sophisticated appreciation of his earlier career. The text reflects the subtle interplay of consistencies and changes that characterize the development of Böll's oeuvre. While *Gruppenbild's* narrative is more broadly critical of institutional or political authority than his earlier works, it arguably reflects the innate emphasis on Christian values that is also characteristic of his initial post-war fiction. In this way, this later text enacts a further, broader consistency across the examples of Böll's novels studied here: a tension between more 'monologic' elements of his approach that seem to assert moral authority, and its 'polyphonic' aspects that emphasize the independent voice of the subject and invite dialogue and critique. It is this apparent ambiguity that renders Böll's writing particularly interesting from a literary historical perspective. The simultaneous presence of narrative continuity and evolution across Böll's novels shows how his career resists the strategies of periodization that have traditionally been used to structure analysis both of his writing and of post-war German literature more broadly. Böll was a major voice of 'Trümmerliteratur' ('rubble literature') who helped to foster new avenues for German literature in the aftermath of National Socialism; however, his writing also reflects the

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Perraudin, 'Gruppenbild mit Dame', p. 176.

lasting influence of pre-1945 Catholic non-conformist culture on his worldview.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, while Böll's reputation became intrinsically associated with the specific conditions of West German culture and society, his perspective was consistently informed by a range of transnational influences, including nineteenth-century Russian literature, the interwar pan-European Catholic Revival and eventually the Czechoslovak and Soviet dissident movements. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of his literary vision requires an appreciation of these influences, which are sharply elucidated by comparative study of his works.

Beyond these contributions to knowledge about Grossman's and Böll's individual careers, comparing these authors through the lenses of implication and moral injury also provides new strategies for studying memory literature that are more broadly applicable. These prisms suggest that these authors viewed memory in active and generative terms, deliberately highlighting the deep ambiguities of lived experiences and encouraging individuals to reflect on their own behaviour and engage in action with others. Such conceptualizations of memory, and particularly the analytical paradigms used to highlight them, have clear relevance for the broader Russian and German contexts, and for comparisons between them. Numerous scholars of Russian memory have observed that the boundaries of the categories of victimhood and perpetration were often blurred under Stalinism, with those committing violence in one wave of terror often later being persecuted themselves.<sup>3</sup> This aspect of the regime is often cited as an important reason for the seemingly dysfunctional nature of subsequent Soviet and post-Soviet memory politics.<sup>4</sup> Exploration of experiences of 'implication' may prove helpful and productive in this context. Moreover, Rothberg's sub-concept of 'complex implication' and its emphasis on the potential overlap between categories of victimhood and perpetration would seem to be especially relevant and potentially fruitful.<sup>5</sup> Grossman's work suggests that moral injury can act as a key prism for studying how post-Stalinist fictional narratives thematize these complex experiences.

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<sup>2</sup> Tomko, 'Böll's War', p. 360.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Assmann, 'Europe's Divided Memory', pp. 34–35; Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Rothberg, *Implicated Subject*, p. 8.

In the German context, the most prominent figures of post-National Socialist West German literature, who subsequently also became the initial moral standard-bearers of societal *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (i.e. the process of ‘coming to terms with’ the past), were generally non-Jewish authors such as Böll and Günter Grass. As scholars such as Kirstin Gwyer have shown, many German-Jewish writers of the ‘first generation’ such as H.G. Adler, Jeni Aloni, Elisabeth Augustin, Erich Fried and Wolfgang Hildesheimer have not been afforded the same stature within the literary canon or have been recognized only belatedly.<sup>6</sup> Attempts such as Gwyer’s to foreground these authors are important as they counteract the earlier tendency to overlook such figures.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, given the increased cultural weight that has been placed upon non-Jewish authors in forming German memory of the Nazi past, studying the literature of the post-war period also requires new theoretical paradigms that specifically enable us to consider how such writers engaged with phenomena such as implication and its legacies. Once again, moral injury provides one such framework and will likely prove more broadly useful for literary analysis in this context.

In addition to these avenues for enquiry in both German and Russian studies, the lenses utilized and developed here can also improve critical memory-focused comparisons between these contexts. The specific targets, methods and features of violence differ between particular atrocities, as do the political circumstances of the societies that follow them. However, focusing on how different cultures have reckoned, or failed to reckon, with pervasive forms of implication provides new avenues to compare memories of systems such as National Socialism and Stalinism, whilst avoiding inappropriate elisions between the suffering that they caused. It is via this alternative axis that more ‘multidirectional’ approaches to memory, to use Rothberg’s term, can develop in the European context, less by competitively ‘hierarchizing’ remembrance of different atrocities in order to dominate the public sphere than by focusing on underappreciated areas of dialogue between processes of memory formation that may facilitate solidarity.<sup>8</sup> Naturally, literary research cannot resolve or avoid memory wars in and of itself; however, Grossman’s and Böll’s careers highlight the existence of a

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<sup>6</sup> Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past*, pp. 1–10.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 1–29.

literary history of more constructive forms of memory comparison, which can provide new insights into how the past informs the present on a transnational basis.

Thus, the findings of this study highlight potentially helpful strategies for studying memory in both German and Russian studies, and for comparative work between them. Yet the analysis also has broader relevance beyond these specific contexts, particularly in sharpening our understanding of the implication and moral injury concepts themselves. The relationship between these theoretical ideas and the literary texts studied in this thesis is not unidirectional in nature. The prisms of implication and moral injury have elucidated underappreciated aspects of the Grossman's and Böll's works, but their fiction has also revealed the strengths and limitations of these lenses, and certain broader flaws in current theoretical approaches to memory. For example, these authors' representations of moral injury challenge the tendency in literary trauma studies to focus on narrative's therapeutic benefit or its status as a space to piece together an otherwise unspeakable past. While these authors clearly explore the psychological legacies of the past and their painful intrusive on individual lives, they generally do not narrativize processes of mental 'recovery' in a quasi-therapeutic sense. Rather, any characters that are able to reconcile with their morally injurious experiences do so by drawing on ideas of moral revitalization, personal resilience and renewed appreciation for human dignity. Thus, Grossman's and Böll's works provide an important reminder that the employment of psychological prisms in literary analysis must not become overly schematic or rigid. For authors such as these, the representation of human psychology is deeply and complexly entangled with broader moral, social and political questions of integrity and responsibility. It is only by considering all of these intertwined elements in a dynamic manner that scholars can appreciate such writers' complex and variable views on the relationship between memory and literature.

Moreover, Grossman's and Böll's works arguably improve our understanding of implication as a concept for analysing post-atrocity fiction and broader memory work. The recurrent emphases on emotions such as guilt, shame and demoralization in their narratives suggest that these authors characterize the process of reckoning with implication in moral and emotional, as well as political, terms. In line with Prade-Weiss's expansion of Rothberg's framework of implicated subjectivity, this aspect of their writing implies that scholars should acknowledge the potential importance of basic

concepts such as ‘guilt’ and ‘morality’ when considering how reckoning with the past on an individual basis should correspond to changing socio-political structures that replicate violence and oppression in the present.<sup>9</sup> As I noted in my analysis of *Billard um halb um zehn* and *Vse techet*, moral injury seems unlikely to be a universal paradigm that might explain responses to historical implication on a collective or societal level; in fact, the absence of moral injury may often be more common and relevant for understanding broad public or political attitudes to the past. Nevertheless, in those individual cases where we do see moral injury narrativized in Grossman’s and Böll’s work, its emotional features are clearly ascribed a productive quality that fosters the subject’s awareness of their moral and civic responsibilities, and thus provides a foundation for political critique and resistance. Moreover, Böll’s later representations of solidarity in *Gruppenbild mit Dame* also expand Rothberg’s formula by showing the importance of acknowledging historical and cultural specificity and difference when engaging in memory work not only on a transnational or ‘long-distance’ level, but also in the context of local activism and grassroots political engagement.

In these respects and others, the comparison that I have modelled here points to new avenues of enquiry for literary memory and trauma studies as a whole. In their recent survey of the field — entitled ‘The Future of Trauma’ — Lucy Bond and Stef Craps outline four potential areas of investigation that should represent priorities for future research.<sup>10</sup> These are expanding the scope of comparative memory studies particularly to focus on the Global South and other non-Western Contexts; considering literature that describes experiences other than victimhood such as perpetration or more morally ambiguous experiences; broadening the range of aesthetic features usually associated with the fictional representation of historical violence beyond the traditional quasi-modernist characteristics commonly linked to trauma fiction; and examining the potentially important psychological and literary effects that can be caused not only by violence that occurs in the past, but also by the anticipation of troubling events in the present and future.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Prade-Weiss, ‘Guilt-Tripping’, p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> Bond and Craps, *Trauma*, pp. 103–31.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

While comparison between Grossman's and Böll's works does not satisfy Bond's and Craps's persuasive call for scholars to consider work from currently understudied literatures of the Global South, it does confirm and develop all three of the other key areas that they identify. The comparison illuminates with particular clarity the second area of Bond's and Craps's vision of the future of memory studies, i.e. a focus on perpetrators and other non-victim experiences. The analytical paradigms that I have utilized and developed in this thesis, namely implication and moral injury, suggest that the increased investigation of these other positions should be acutely sensitive not only to the potential psychological consequences of personally committing violence, but also of the more morally ambiguous experiences of being indirectly associated with its perpetration.<sup>12</sup> As fundamental as the categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' remain on both a moral and legal basis, it is important to acknowledge that many individuals are not likely to have experiences of violence that fit comfortably into these headings, and will instead have more indirect or systemic associations with structures of oppression. Continuing to expand our understanding of these ambiguous experiences is of crucial importance for ascertaining how historical violence informs the present. Grossman's and Böll's works suggest that there is a long cultural history of interrogating the ramifications of implication, which exists across contexts and in a variety of forms.

In broadening the narrative features that might be associated with a poetics of moral injury to include traits commonly associated with trauma fiction, it might be said that this study has only strengthened the preference for quasi-modernist literary aesthetics that Bond and Craps cite as a problematic tendency in the field as a whole.<sup>13</sup> However, this would be to misinterpret the thrust of the analysis. The process of breaking down the intrinsic connection between the trauma paradigm and narrative features such as silence, interruption and fragmentation, and opening up these characteristics to study through alternative lenses such as moral injury, is intended to challenge overly inflexible associations made between stylistic traits and any one theoretical framework. In this respect it should be noted that the expanded range of narrative traits that I have proposed can be associated with moral

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<sup>12</sup> Bond and Craps briefly highlight the potential opportunities for further study offered both by Rothberg's framework of the 'implicated subject' and recent research on moral injury. See Bond and Craps, *Trauma*, pp. 122–24.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112–16.

injury in this thesis is not static or complete; it is open to expansion and critique as the literary manifestations of the phenomenon are further examined.

Finally, the way that literary memory studies might consider the ramifications of anticipating present or future 'traumatic' events may appear beyond the scope of this study. After all, Grossman and Böll are two writers most famous for looking backward towards the past. Yet their shared emphasis on the importance of considering the lingering manifestations of violence, of remaining vigilant over the condition of human freedom and dignity, and of anticipating the excesses of political power by engaging in action with others, provides a significant resource for this more future-orientated strand of the field. Their most helpful contributions in this area are their shared scepticism towards finalizable memory narratives and their sense that self-improvement and societal change are rooted in the subject's capacity for reflection, love, kindness and solidarity. While these human attributes clearly cannot comprehensively protect human life, dignity and freedom in and of themselves, these authors emphasize their enduring, trans-historical value and suggest that they provide the fundamental bases of strength and resilience from which action and change can arise. In both these respects and in many others, Vasilii Grossman and Heinrich Böll profoundly shape our understanding of memory, and of literature's role in its formation.

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