

Society and its outsiders in the novels of Jakob Wassermann

DPhil in Modern and Medieval Languages

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Short Abstract

This thesis looks at a number of Jakob Wassermann's novels and the ways in which society is depicted in them. Seen as a whole, Wassermann's oeuvre can therefore be understood as an attempt to portray (mostly) German society at different historical stages. The periods in question are Biedermeier Germany, the Wilhelmine era, the years of the Great War and finally the Weimar Republic, the depiction of all of which reveal Wassermann as a fierce critic of his time. In addition to this interest in society, this thesis will examine Wassermann's concern with various outsider figures which complement his portrayals of society. The outsider figures Wassermann seems to be mostly interested in are the Jew, the woman, the child and the homosexual man. However, Wassermann is not just interested in these outsiders on their own but also draws extensive parallels between the various forms of exclusion they experience in a society dominated by the Gentile man or, as in the case of the child, by the adult. These parallels have proven to be revelatory and have led to new insights into Wassermann's works. The dynamic of the outsider vs. society is, however, in many ways no longer applicable to those novels written during and after the Great War. Instead Wassermann now combines his interest in the figure of the outsider with an interest in the depiction of character. At the same time character becomes a mirror not only for the society Wassermann portrays in his writing but also for the society he lived in. This makes for an altogether more complex but also more intriguing structure of his later writing. This thesis will examine how all these different elements when combined offer new ways of looking at Wassermann's writing.

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Long abstract

Jakob Wassermann is nowadays widely considered to be a mediocre and rather obscure author of sensationalist novels that are no longer relevant. As a result of this attitude Wassermann has not only been excluded from the literary canon but he has also inspired a lot of negative criticism. It is therefore a recent phenomenon that he is receiving some recognition from literary critics. Given all this bad press, the only aspect of Wassermann that has always been acceptable and popular as a field of research, it seems, is his life. Considerable work has been done on Wassermann's life with two clearly discernible major fields of interest. First, Wassermann as a literary figure who was acquainted and corresponding with many of the big names of his time, among them Arthur Schnitzler, Hermann Hesse, Rainer Maria Rilke, Thomas Mann and Walter Rathenau, to name just a few. Second, Wassermann as a Jew and victim of anti-Semitism, an interest which has in many cases been inspired by his widely read autobiography *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* (1921).

Thus before any thought could be dedicated to the actual thesis, the problem of how to make Wassermann's works relevant had to be solved first. This situation has led to the decision to refrain from using Wassermann's admittedly very interesting biography as a supporting wheel, in order to see if his works would be able to stand on their own. The result of this experiment has been most rewarding. With regard to the Jewish question the situation is rather more complex for it forms an integral part of at least some of Wassermann's writing. It is therefore not

possible to simply ignore the Jewish aspect of his writing as I have been trying to do with his biography. And yet the aim has nevertheless been not to reduce Wassermann's entire oeuvre to the Jewish question whilst at the same time not to leave it out entirely. The most productive solution to this problem seemed to be to use the Jewish question as a point of departure for further research. The search for a new approach to some of Wassermann's Jewish characters has inspired the idea of looking at his outsider figures more generally. This approach has equally led to new insights into his writing and opened up new paths for possible future research. It remains to be said, however, that the first and more general aim of this thesis has been to help make Wassermann's work relevant again. Wassermann will therefore not be treated as a mediocre if successful writer with an intriguing biography but instead as a major novelist.

The figure of the outsider has in many ways been the starting point for this thesis and almost immediately led to the discovery of Wassermann's concern with society. The outsider and society do not just complement each other for obvious reasons but in combination they also offer a good structure for the analysis of a larger part of Wassermann's oeuvre. Due to the sheer size of Wassermann's entire oeuvre, not all of it could be considered here. Taking this new approach it soon became apparent that Wassermann's work as a whole could be understood as an attempt to portray (mostly) German society at different historical stages, a project that has so far not been acknowledged by critics. This concern with society can be seen as the basis of this thesis, from which we are going to set out to explore what Wassermann is doing with his outsider figures and, in his later writing, with character. The choice of society as a subject offers a useful structure while at the same time it helped to determine which of Wassermann's many novels to choose for my argument. It seemed essential to give equal credit to Wassermann's portrayal of Wilhelmine Germany, the time of the Weimar Republic, and the years of the Great

War. Moreover, the choice was also informed by the wish to deal with as many different outsider figures as possible in those novels.

Chapter one is concerned with Wassermann's two early novels *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (1897) and *Die Geschichte der jungen Renate Fuchs* (1901) and thus with pre-war Germany. Apart from being written around the same time, these two novels are also connected through the reappearance of various characters which justifies dealing with them in the same chapter. The most important insight the work on these two novels has brought is that Wassermann portrays the woman and the Jew as affected by similar mechanisms of exclusion. Albeit for different reasons, both are outsiders in a world dominated by the Gentile man. Wassermann makes the parallels in their status explicit when at the end of *Renate Fuchs* the two protagonists, Agathon Geyer and Renate Fuchs, unite in order to found a new race, away from the dominance of the Gentile man. Far away from being anything like a solution, this experiment has proven to be revelatory in other ways: from the very beginning Wassermann's interest in the Jew as an outsider figure is coupled with an interest in other outsider figures. Eventually this will lead to the fusion of two such outsider figures in the character of the homosexual Jew Warschauer in *Der Fall Maurizius*. These two novels can therefore be seen as characteristic of Wassermann's early writing up to the Great War as it is very much focused on different outsider figures and the parallels between them. Moreover, this interest in the lives of two different outsiders, the rebellious young Jew and the 'fallen' woman, has led to a fairly broad depiction of society. This even includes a brief appearance of Wassermann's first homosexual outsider figure, namely the Bavarian King Ludwig II.

Following his interest in the woman as the other Other, Wassermann soon after turns his attention to another outsider figure that would remain a lifelong concern of his, i.e. the child. Written around the time when the child slowly became the focus of a more general attention, *Caspar Hauser oder Die Trägheit des Herzens* (1908) vividly portrays the mechanisms of

exclusion affecting the child in the world of the adult. This outsider figure is shown to unite with Lord Stanhope and thus with Wassermann's first main character with a clearly discernible homoerotic tendency. Even though there are no Jewish characters in the novel, parallels can nevertheless be drawn for commentators, among them Kafka, have shown how Caspar can be understood as a Jewish figure. The parallels between these outsider figures have therefore in one way become more subtle, which is a first indicator for their gradual disappearance or transformation. Wassermann's depiction of society as well as of some of the characters in the novel anticipates his later concern with double or complicated identities. Just as Caspar's identity is made up of his being a child, a secret prince and, symbolically speaking, Jewish, so is the society depicted in the novel rather complex. For Wassermann's depiction of Biedermeier society is at the same time an indirect portrayal of the Wilhelmine Germany he was familiar with. It was therefore necessary to try to understand how Wassermann has used the original sources of the Hauser story in order to create his own characters. This would also help to prepare the reader for Wassermann's later interest in questions regarding character and identity.

For the thesis as a whole, *Christian Wahnschaffe* (1919) has in some ways proven to be the most difficult as well as the most revelatory novel. Given its experimental form it was challenging to find a productive way into the novel which eventually led to an altogether new way of looking at it. Writing this chapter was therefore partly about discovering the method to Wassermann's apparent madness. Moreover, as he wrote this novel during the years of the Great War, Wassermann's interest in the figure of the outsider shifted towards an interest in the question of character. It seems that in those troubled times, the figure of the outsider had to retreat to the background for a while in order to allow for more pressing concerns. In the course of the novel Wassermann makes his protagonist, a modern version of St Francis of Assisi, gradually disappear. His character slowly disintegrates until not even his name is left which, however, does not mean that he actually dies. This disappearance of character is most

significant for even in the novels published subsequently, the realistic and psychologically rounded characters known from Wassermann's pre-war writing would never appear again. From now on character and thus identity would remain questionable entities. Tellingly, this development beginning in *Wahnschaffe* can be seen to reach its eventual climax in *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* (1934) where we are confronted with the disappearance of the text. *Wahnschaffe* therefore marks the point at which Wassermann's world slowly began to crumble.

The other reason why *Wahnschaffe* remains outstanding is its form. Contrary to the common notion of Wassermann as a traditional novelist, the form of this novel is rather experimental. In fact it is probably best understood as Wassermann's response to the modern condition and in particular to the ways in which it has altered human perception. With the help of accounts of modern life by Simmel, Freud and Benjamin this has opened up new routes into the novel's allegedly chaotic nature. As a result the novel can also be related to the then newly emerging form of the cinema, thus revealing Wassermann's acute awareness of the cultural and social phenomena of his time.

Der Fall Maurizius (1928) is even today Wassermann's most successful and most widely discussed novel. The novel became famous as a piece of detective writing, concerned with questions of justice and the failure of the legal system. As a result I was keen to offer a reading of the novel that questions the notion of it being a detective story and in which the plight of the prisoner Maurizius retreats to the background. Instead the focus will be on the link that Wassermann saw between society and character which means that character here becomes a clear reflection of a society that, in his view, had become dysfunctional. At the same time Wassermann also considered fictional characters to be a mirroring image of the actual society their creator was living in, a theory that will also feature in the analysis of this novel. On the whole *Maurizius* is a pessimistic piece of writing in which identities collapse and characters become indistinguishable from each

other. All of the main characters are stuck in double identities they have long lost control over and lead a life of complete social isolation with even the unit of the family being no longer significant. This is exemplified in the troubled relationship between the protagonist Etzel Andergast and his father Wolf von Andergast. This negative view of society is emphasised further by the return of the outsider in the form of the homosexual Jew Georg Warschauer, probably Wassermann's most striking character. As with the topic of homosexuality in general, the homosexual side of this character has hitherto been largely ignored by critics. Yet given Wassermann's prolonged interest in the figure of the outsider, the significance of this double outsider figure cannot be overestimated. With the character of Warschauer, Wassermann makes it clear that to him the Jew and the homosexual man were affected by the same mechanisms of exclusion. Warschauer is also the clearest expression of the link that Wassermann saw between society, the outsider and the way in which characters are created at a certain point in history.

Wassermann's last two novels, *Etzel Andergast* (1931) and *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* (1934), are highly complex and at times confusing pieces of writing that have not received much critical attention. This holds in particular for *Kerkhoven* which was published posthumously and did not undergo a final editing process since Wassermann died before he could do so. One aim of this chapter is to show how with their focus on male-male or symbolic father-and-son relationships these two novels can be seen as a continuation of *Maurizius* which is why the term trilogy, often debated, is appropriate. At the same time *Andergast* is Wassermann's most important examination of life in the later years of the Weimar Republic. Wassermann approaches this topic from two angles yet always by means of a male-male relationship.

First he portrays the relationship between Johann Irlen, a representative of the Wilhelmine era and another gay outsider, and the young physician Kerkhoven. In that way Wassermann shows the Weimar

Republic to be heavily influenced by the Wilhelmine era which finds expression in another character experiment: the dying Irlen literally becomes a part of Kerkhoven's character. This experiment is the first hint at a theory, propounded throughout the two novels, according to which character can never be a stable identity since every human life is made up of several existences. The other key relationship depicted in *Andergast* is that between Kerkhoven and Etzel Andergast, the protagonist from *Maurizius*, now a young man. Wassermann here offers a sensitive and intelligent account of the reasons why the older and the younger generation are at odds with each other despite a mutual longing for reconciliation. Wassermann's pronounced interest in the situation of Weimar's troubled youth needs to be considered an important contribution to this topic.

In *Kerkhoven* Wassermann adds a new layer of significance to the question of character by introducing himself, as the author Alexander Herzog, into the novel. Moreover, the novel also contains an only slightly fictionalised account of Wassermann's first marriage to Julie Speyer. However, instead of relating this account to Wassermann's biography it seemed more intriguing to look at the consequences this has had for the novel as a whole and in particular for Wassermann's approach to character. The result is that Wassermann not only allows himself to merge with his fictional creation Kerkhoven. But through the introduction of this biographical element he successfully plays with the reliability of human perception in relation to the question of human identity. Towards the end of the novel this question is extended towards a concern regarding the reliability of the text. The disappearance of Kerkhoven's precious manuscript, a lifetime's work, becomes Wassermann's strongest expression of the general collapse he had to witness around him. Wassermann's writing therefore not just ends with the end of character but also with the end of the text.

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Introduction

1.1 Critical views

The case of Jakob Wassermann is most curious: a former international star of the literary world who, as it seems, has been forgotten since his death in 1934. And yet Wassermann's works are still in print today, pointing towards an aspect of his story that was already well-established during his lifetime: loved by an international audience, Wassermann found himself largely rejected by his critics. While the criticism during his lifetime, however, was partly and increasingly tainted by the rise of anti-Semitism, the post-war discourse seems to suggest a deliberate exclusion of Wassermann from the literary canon. Most notably among the early post-war critics Marcel Reich-Ranicki and Hans Mayer spoke out against Wassermann, with Mayer openly rejecting a new edition of the author's collected works.¹ Reich-Ranicki, on the other hand wrote: 'Niemand würde die Leidenschaftlichkeit seines Engagements angezweifelt, niemals sein Ernst bestritten. Gleichwohl ist es schwer, seine Romane immer ernst zu nehmen.'² Apart from supporting the view of Wassermann as a mediocre writer, Ranicki, moreover, reinforced a trend in the Wassermann scholarship that has been ongoing until the present day, namely the interest in the writer's biography. Beginning with the early biographies by Walter Goldmann,³ Siegmund Bing⁴ and Marta Karlweis,⁵ this trend has

¹ See Hans Mayer, 'Der Fall Wassermann', in *Literatur der Übergangszeit* (Berlin: Verlag Volk und Welt, 1949), pp. 177 - 82.

² Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Jakob Wassermann, der Bestsellerautor von gestern' in *Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, 34, 16 February 1979, p. 7.

³ See Walter Goldmann, *Wassermann: Sein Kampf um Wahrheit* (Leipzig & Zurich: Grethlein & Co, 1929).

⁴ See Siegmund Bing, *Jakob Wassermann: Weg und Werk des Dichters* (Berlin: Fischer, 1933).

found further expression in the works of Dierk Rodewald,⁶ Rudolf Koester,⁷ Beatrix Müller-Kampel⁸ and Thomas Kraft.⁹

In addition to an interest in Wassermann as a literary figure, this focus on biography is inextricably linked to the Jewish question and thus to one of the other main fields of scholarship. In fact Karl Leydecker and Regina Schäfer are right to assume that it was this interest in Wassermann's engagement with his Jewish identity that led to a rediscovery of his works in the 1980s.¹⁰ The outcome of this concern with Wassermann as a Jewish figure is manifold and often contradictory. While Christa Joeris has aimed to show how Wassermann's entire work is deeply influenced by rabbinic Judaism as well as the Kabbalah¹¹, Hans Otto Horch has arrived at the altogether more convincing version that as an assimilated Jew, Wassermann's knowledge about Judaism in terms of tradition and culture was very limited.¹² This view seems supported by the fact that Wassermann, according to Arthur Schnitzler, considered leaving the Jewish community once the Jewish question or that of anti-Semitism would have been resolved.¹³ Moreover, the son he had with his second wife Marta Karlweis was baptized. And yet with anti-Semitism on the rise, Wassermann was increasingly forced to respond. Heike Lindemann-Luiken

⁵ See Marta Karlweis, *Jakob Wassermann: Bild, Kampf und Werk* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1935).

⁶ See Dierk Rodewald, (ed.), *Jakob Wassermann 1873 – 1934: Ein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984).

⁷ See Rudolf Koester, *Jakob Wassermann* (Berlin: Morgenbuch, 1996).

⁸ See Beatrix Müller-Kampel, *Jakob Wassermann: Eine biographische Collage* (Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2007).

⁹ Thomas Kraft, *Jakob Wassermann: Biografie* (Munich: DTV, 2008).

¹⁰ See Karl Leydecker (ed.), 'The Case of Jakob Wassermann: Social, Legal, and Personal Crises in the Weimar Republic', in *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics*, (Rochester, N.Y. ; Woodbridge: Camden House, 2006), pp. 85 – 101 (p. 88) and Regina Schäfer, *Plaidoyer für Ganna: Männer und Frauen in den Romanen Jakob Wassermanns* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992), p. 7.

¹¹ See Christa Joeris, *Aspekte des Judentums im Werk Jakob Wassermanns* (Aachen: Shaker, 1996).

¹² See Hans Otto Horch, 'Deutschtum und Judentum: Eine unmögliche Synthese? Jakob Wassermann im Kontext der deutsch-jüdischen Literaturgeschichte', in *Jakob Wassermann: Deutscher - Jude - Literat*, ed. by Dirk Niefanger and others (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), pp. 69-91 (p. 77).

¹³ See Arthur Schnitzler, *Tagebuch*, ed. by Peter Michael Braunwarth and Werner Welzig, 10 vols (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1981 - 2000), vol. 5, 20/09/1914.

has shown how Wassermann was subject to anti-Semitic literary criticism and how, more generally, the impact of ongoing discrimination can be traced throughout his work.¹⁴ Further analysis of Jewish aspects in Wassermann's life and writing can, among others, be found with Ritchie Robertson¹⁵ as well as in two collections of essays edited by Dirk Niefanger¹⁶ and Rudolf Wolff.¹⁷

Ever since the publication of his *Caspar Hauser*, the concept of the 'Trägheit des Herzens' has become a convenient key for the understanding of Wassermann's work.¹⁸ Moreover, this leitmotif has become significant in the context of the debate of the author's longing for justice which he reiterated rather frequently. This question of justice pervades a lot of criticism and has often been linked to Wassermann's understanding of Judaism as based on the idea of justice. The most significant scholarship on this aspect of Wassermann's work has been produced by Stephen Garrin¹⁹ and, more recently, by Elisabeth Jütten.²⁰ While Garrin focuses on the different concepts of justice presented throughout the Andergast trilogy, Jütten's findings seem more relevant in the context of this thesis. For Jütten relates the question of justice in *Der Fall Maurizius* and *Christian Wahnschaffe* to a wider philosophical framework, notably to Nietzsche, and thus demonstrates that Wassermann's concept of justice is universally relevant as well as specifically for the discourse of the early twentieth century.

¹⁴ See Heike Lindemann-Luiken, *Die Auswirkungen des Antisemitismus im ausgehenden 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert auf Leben und Werk Jakob Wassermanns* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2005).

¹⁵ See Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature 1749-1939: Emancipation and its Discontents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ See Dirk Niefanger (ed.), *Jakob Wassermann: Deutscher - Jude - Literat* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007).

¹⁷ See Rudolf Wolff (ed.), *Jakob Wassermann: Werk und Wirkung* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1987).

¹⁸ See for example Walter Voegeli, *Jakob Wassermann und Die Trägheit des Herzens* (Winterthur: P.G. Keller, 1956).

¹⁹ See Stephen H. Garrin, *The Concept of Justice in Wassermann's Trilogy* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1979).

²⁰ See Elisabeth Jütten, *Diskurse über Gerechtigkeit im Werk Jakob Wassermanns* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007).

The question of Wassermann's relevance has, unfortunately, become a topic of its own which takes us to the realm of negative criticism. While some of the accusations against Wassermann by now serve as a source of entertainment, among them John C. Blankenagel's criticising Wassermann for his 'insistence on sexual perversion',²¹ others ought to be taken more seriously. Critics have mostly taken offence at Wassermann's allegedly old-fashioned way of writing, his lack of any theoretical foundations and thus the lack of any concrete solutions to social problems. And finally some critics have come to consider him the author of trivial, sensationalist works that are of neither aesthetic nor artistic value.

The charge of being an old-fashioned narrator is among the commonest criticisms and has, for example, been put forward by Müller-Kampel: 'Im Grunde schöpft Wassermann aus einem Reservoir erzählerischer Verfahrensweisen, die sich spätestens seit den 1890er Jahren rapide banalisiert haben und seitdem einem verstärkten Vulgaritätsverdacht ausgesetzt waren.'²² Admittedly, Wassermann might not have been the most radical or experimental writer of his time, yet it seems problematic to just ignore the obvious developments that his writing underwent in the course of his lifetime. When being portrayed as traditional, the image of Wassermann as a stagnant author is easily conveyed even though it clearly fails to do him justice. As this thesis will show, Wassermann's narrative technique, especially with regards to the depiction of character is not as traditional as it is often portrayed. Most recently, Nicole Plöger has successfully demonstrated how Wassermann's early works can indeed be related to modern discourse and are not solely the products of a traditional author.²³

²¹ John C. Blankenagel, *The Writings of Jakob Wassermann* (Boston: Christopher, 1942), p. 322.

²² Beatrix Müller-Kampel, 'Jakob Wassermann und die Autoren Jung-Wiens', in *Deutscher - Jude - Literat*, pp. 45-69 (p. 61).

²³ See Nicole Plöger, *Ästhet - Ankläger - Verkünder: Jakob Wassermanns literarische Anfänge (1890 - 1900)* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007).

The claim of Wassermann being a traditional author, relying on old-fashioned narrative techniques, seems to stand in a strange contrast to the frequently mentioned critique that his works lack any coherent structure. According to Theo Elm, Wassermann's work is characterised by 'Orientierungslosigkeit'. And

in Wassermanns Romanen [bricht sich] eine „orientalische“, eine ebenso reiche wie ungezügelter Fabulierlust Bahn, die mit bizarren Zufällen, Weissagungen, dramatischen Auftritten, Flucht und schicksalhaften Verstrickungen die sozialhistorischen Konturen der Romane in den Hintergrund drängt – oft mehr Kolorit als Thema.²⁴

In his interpretation, Elm fails to see a connection that seems vital for the understanding of Wassermann's work, namely the connection between form and content. What Elm here refers to as the 'sozialhistorischen Konturen' are, in particular in Wassermann's later work, precisely brought to light by this apparent lack of an overall structure. The crumbling of the outer form and the gradual resignation into shapelessness are of pivotal importance when it comes to analysing Wassermann's oeuvre in its entirety. The alleged lack of structure in Wassermann's works can therefore be understood as a response to a world which no longer produces any clear structures and has altogether become incoherent. Similarly, the view that Wassermann is guilty of 'sensationalism', as also put forward by Elm amongst others, seems to overlook some of the more interesting reasons Wassermann had for employing those techniques. Instead of dismissing it as a cheap way of selling more copies, this thesis will attempt to link Wassermann's 'sensationalism' to a wider framework of social developments.

In his analysis, Elm touches on another issue that is often brought forward against Wassermann, that is his failure to provide concrete solutions to social problems. Elm misses a 'gesellschaftliches Programm'²⁵ in Wassermann's novels while Leydecker claims, that Wassermann's 'novels are open to the accusation that they shy away from offering a

²⁴ Theo Elm, 'Kafkas Talmud, Wassermanns Kabbala: Gibt es ein "jüdisches" Erzählen?', in *Deutscher - Jude - Literat*, pp. 127- 41 (p. 136).

²⁵ Ibid., p. 136.

concrete analysis of the specific political and social ills of the day.’²⁶ In a similar vein Mayer has claimed that Wassermann is only concerned with ‘Scheinprobleme’ and therefore fails to address the actual conflicts of his time.²⁷ Mayer’s claim about the ‘Scheinprobleme’ seems hard to maintain in the face of Wassermann’s immense popularity with his readers, especially Germany’s youth, who were looking to him for guidance and advice in all areas of their lives. They therefore clearly felt like Wassermann was addressing their concerns. Leydecker’s as well as Elm’s claims will not be refuted here but merely confronted with the question whether it is indeed the task of a novelist to come up with a ‘concrete analysis of specific political and social ills’. Moreover, given the complexity of the times Wassermann lived in, especially the Weimar years, this seems like a lot to ask for from a work of fiction. At the same time it seems that with his focus on people’s everyday lives and their psychological or even spiritual concerns, Wassermann has nevertheless come up with very important portrayals of German society. Victor Zuckerkandl’s approach seems therefore more fruitful as he observes that Wassermann tackles the important topics of his day yet ‘nicht vom Standpunkt des Fachmannes, sondern – wertvoller, weil unwiderlegbar – aus rein menschlicher Anschauung heraus.’²⁸

The final point the negative criticism has dealt with is the question whether in the case of Wassermann we are dealing with an author who was successful due to his talent, or whether he was simply the product of a clever marketing strategy. This point is closely linked to the question how far he is therefore still relevant for today’s readers and critics. According to Müller-Kampel, ‘[es] spricht alles dafür, daß Jakob Wassermann als Künstler wie Erfolgsautor in erster Linie kraft der sozialen Felder erschaffen wird, aus denen er kommt und in die er gelangt.’²⁹ This theory, according

²⁶ Leydecker, *Case*, p. 87.

²⁷ See Mayer, ‘Fall’, p. 179.

²⁸ Victor Zuckerkandl, ‘Jakob Wassermanns Essaybuch’, in *Die Neue Rundschau*, 40 (1929), 719 - 20.

²⁹ Müller-Kampel, ‘Wassermann’, p. 56.

to Martin Neubauer's findings, was already advanced during the author's lifetime.³⁰ Wassermann's most recent biographer arrives at the conclusion that only some of the author's major works are in fact still relevant and worth reading today.³¹ The question regarding the mechanisms at work in the making of Wassermann as an international success is, even though of a socio-cultural interest, not important for the interpretation of his works. It is therefore one of the central aims of this thesis to make Wassermann relevant outside a biographical framework. We will thus seek to return to Wassermann's works whilst mostly leaving the biography behind and that way look for new ways of making them worth reading. In this version relevance becomes a process that seeks to actively engage the reader and make them see beyond the usual categories. For even though Wassermann's literary merits are not on the same level with some of his contemporaries such as Thomas Mann or Robert Musil, it does not mean that we will not benefit from an engagement with his texts. We will therefore try to find significance in the less obvious.

1.2 My thesis

One way of looking at Wassermann's oeuvre, which he has not yet been given full credit for, would be to consider it as an ambitious attempt to portray German society at different historical stages and thus to see him, as Goldmann did, as a 'Wegweiser durch die Zeit'.³² Possibly due to Wassermann's indifference towards political matters, especially in his early life, his overall concern with (mostly) German society has not been acknowledged. Neubauer has even identified this lack of political interest on Wassermann's part as one of the reasons for his being neglected for quite some time after the Second World War.³³ Wassermann's project of offering critical analyses of society at different stages can therefore be

³⁰ See Martin Neubauer, *Jakob Wassermann: Ein Schriftsteller im Urteil seiner Zeitgenossen* (Frankfurt a. M., Berlin: Lang, 1994), p. 171.

³¹ See Kraft, *Wassermann*, p. 212.

³² Goldmann, *Wassermann*, p. 9.

³³ See Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, p. 30.

understood as the basis of this thesis. This influences the decision which of Wassermann's many novels to focus on for it is necessary to offer a fair representation of his entire oeuvre. To begin with it seems essential to strike an equal balance between those works written during the Wilhelmine era and those written during the Weimar Republic as well as acknowledging the significance that the Great War had for Wassermann's writing. Accordingly, the first two chapters are concerned with Wassermann's earlier novels, namely *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (1897), *Die Geschichte der jungen Renate Fuchs* (1901) and *Caspar Hauser oder Die Trägheit des Herzens* (1908). Restrictions of space will not allow for a discussion of *Das Gänsemännchen* (1915) which forms part of Wassermann's critique of Wilhelmine Germany. In order to mark the Great War as an important moment in Wassermann's writing it seems essential to look at *Christian Wahnschaffe* (1919), a novel that is in many ways the expression of the wider changes taking place around him. Finally, an analysis of Wassermann's oeuvre could never be complete without taking the Andergast trilogy into consideration, especially since it can in many ways be understood as a summary, even the climax, of his entire life as a writer. Chapter four will deal exclusively with Wassermann's most famous novel *Der Fall Maurizius* (1928) which will be followed by a discussion of *Etzel Andergast* (1931) and *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* (1934) in chapter five.

To further justify the choice of these novels it will be necessary to introduce the other two key elements of this project, namely the figure of the outsider as well as the question of character. As will become apparent in the course of this thesis, these three elements become increasingly linked in Wassermann's writing and thought. In this context character refers to the question of the possibility of its depiction in a work of fiction as well as the more general question whether it actually exists. In the course of Wassermann's life as a writer these two questions became more and more pressing with sometimes astounding results which altogether seem to refute the notion of him as a traditional writer. In fact, it is with

regard to character that the work Wassermann produced during and after the Great War can even be called experimental. For Wassermann, character therefore not only becomes a space in which to explore new narrative techniques but also a key mode of expression. Moreover, having mentioned society as the basis of this thesis, we will aim to show how these questions concerning character and Wassermann's depiction of society complement each other in most intriguing ways. Character, in Wassermann's version, is going to fall apart alongside society.

The concept of the outsider might at first seem like an obvious and not very revelatory choice given how close Wassermann himself felt to this status in society. And yet, following the aim of leaving the biographical framework behind, the discussion of this figure can indeed be taken beyond the Jewish characters in his writing. Or, to be more precise, it can be demonstrated how Wassermann starts off with the outsider status of the Jew in *Zirndorf* in order to draw, in the course of his entire work, extensive parallels between their status and that of the woman, the homosexual man and the child. The focus on these parallels offers a new as well as revelatory way of looking at these figures as well as allowing for them to be connected to the depiction of society. While the concern with the woman and the child are very much characteristic of Wassermann's early writing, the figure of the homosexual man, albeit already present in his pre-war work, is of great importance for the later works, in particular the trilogy. It is also in the trilogy that the three essential elements – character, outsider and society – are finally brought together and used connectively, thus making it the undeniable climax of Wassermann's writing.

In order to highlight the parallel status of the woman and the Jew in Wassermann's writing, it is inevitable to look at *Zirndorf* and *Renate Fuchs*. Concerning the status of the Jew in society, Wassermann here embarks on a complex journey. For he aims to show how this figure is clearly affected by mechanisms of exclusion whilst at the same time Wassermann is keen

to negate Judaism as a marker of difference in a world of mass irreligion affecting the Gentile as well as the non-Gentile world alike. This is closely tied to the question as to whether it is indeed possible to leave the outsider status behind, and, as in the case of the protagonist Agathon Geyer, to cease being Jewish. Similar to Wassermann's later concern with the depiction of character, the category of the outsider is therefore not a stable one but in constant flux. As a result, these outsider figures – with the exception of Warschauer in *Maurizius* – always contain an element of hope or of the possibility of change. In their own way they tend to embody possible solutions to their situations even if in the end the solutions can hardly ever be realised. Moreover, since these outsiders do not occupy stable positions, their views on society are equally not to be thought of as black-and-white. Through the use of these complex outsider figures, Wassermann frequently arrives at damning portrayals of society yet at the same time they are never without an element of understanding. In the case of Agathon, this element of hope is closely linked to the other outsider figure, namely the 'fallen' woman Renate Fuchs. After many trials and tribulations these two figures dare to go beyond the common categories and not only unite but even attempt to found a race and thus a society of their own, away from the Gentile man. In response to the criticisms made regarding Wassermann's lack of concrete solutions, it needs to be pointed out that this ending of *Renate Fuchs* is not to be understood as a failure to provide useful answers to pressing social questions. Instead it seems more fruitful to read it as a thought-experiment revealing the broad range of possibilities Wassermann actually considered. At the same time this strong sense that it is an unrealistic ending speaks for itself. More than anything else it makes clear that Wassermann was still writing from a point in history, where the idea of an emancipated woman as well as that of the Jew's equality were beyond most people's imagination. Through the use of these outsider figures Wassermann thus not only challenges the society depicted in those two novels, but also his readers' way of looking at the world.

The next significant outsider figure in Wassermann's writing is the child and thus the protagonist of his *Caspar Hauser*. The parallels Wassermann draws here between the status of the Jew and that of the child are in many ways more subtle than those in the previously mentioned novels. For in *Caspar* there is not a single Jewish character and yet Davide Stimilli has shown how the figure of Caspar can nevertheless be understood as a Jewish figure.³⁴ Tellingly, his interpretation is partly based on the fact, that Kafka came to think of the foundling's story as a version of the history of the Jewish people. Bearing this in mind, Wassermann's concern with the figure of the child acquires an even wider significance. For just as the foundling is given a double identity, so is the society depicted in the novel. With the help of the Biedermeier setting, Wassermann arrives at an important depiction of his contemporary Wilhelmine world. Alert to people's suffering from an oppressive political system, Wassermann creates insightful portraits of life in Germany just after the turn of the century.

Following the appearance of the 'Märchenkönig' Ludwig II of Bavaria at the end of *Zirndorf*, *Caspar* contains a less subtle attempt to pick up the theme of the homosexual man's status in society. The character of Lord Stanhope is portrayed with a clear homoerotic tendency and thus further underlines Wassermann's growing concern with other outsider figures. At the same time, Stanhope is Wassermann's first figure to show signs of his creator's developing concern with the depiction of character as well as the question of identity. The character of Stanhope contains first traces of the kind of writing that became typical of Wassermann during and after the Great War. As such, he marks the beginning of an intricate relationship between the ways in which Wassermann creates his characters and the pictures of society he draws. Increasingly, with Wassermann, character will become a mirror of the more general developments in society that he witnessed. Moreover, in *Caspar* there is once again and for the last time a

³⁴ See Davide Stimilli, 'Findlinge: Franz Kafka und Jakob Wassermann', in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 73 (1999), 478 - 500.

union between two outsider figures, namely between Caspar and Stanhope. The idea of the union between outsiders is therefore characteristic of Wassermann's early writing. For when he allows this figure to return in *Maurizius* in the character of Warschauer, the latter's world is characterised by complete social isolation with even this last element of comfort taken away from him.

With his novel *Wahnschaffe*, written during the Great War, Wassermann clearly shifts his attention away from the figure of the outsider in favour of a new approach to the question of character. The novel is thus significant because it functions in many ways as a line of separation between Wassermann's early and his later works. For not only has the concept of character acquired a new significance for him, but his analysis of society is now linked to the question of human perception, a concern that becomes an ongoing theme right up to the *Andergast* trilogy.

Wahnschaffe represents Wassermann's most significant engagement with modern life. For it is here that Wassermann acknowledges the influence of the cinema, the metropolis and the political upheaval, in particular the revolutionary forces sweeping across Europe from the East, on his own writing as well as on the way in which we perceive the world. As a result, a new way of reading *Wahnschaffe* would be to consider it as a response to the ways in which modern life has altered our perception. Wassermann shows himself to be highly aware of these changes that have also, among others, been described by Georg Simmel, Sigmund Freud and Walter Benjamin. The eponymous protagonist undergoes a journey towards perception, which, curiously also ends with the disappearance of his character, a narrative technique that can hardly be referred to as traditional. The end of the self here becomes an expression of the radical changes Wassermann witnessed around himself. This development, even though it carries positive connotations of selflessness, nevertheless foreshadows the impossibility of a stable character that Wassermann will portray in his trilogy. *Wahnschaffe* is therefore also Wassermann's first

work to be written in more of a Weimar spirit, revealing his previous writing to be part of a world he could no longer return to.

Severely troubled by the events of the Great War, Wassermann here leaves the provincial setting of his early novels behind and attempts to portray society in its entirety as well as across the European borders. Tellingly, a lot of the novel is set in Berlin, the centre of this new world which also features in the trilogy. All these characteristics make for a rather curious sense of time in *Wahnschaffe*. Whilst it is set during the time immediately before the Great War, the novel, in particular its second volume entitled 'Ruth', has a more modern feel to it. In contrast to *Caspar* where this double identity in terms of time and setting was intentional, here it seems as if these boundaries have been unconsciously blurred as Wassermann felt himself cut off from his previous experiences.

Since the development of Christian Wahnschaffe is modelled on that of St Francis of Assisi, the novel carries important religious connotations. However, following on from Agathon's search for meaning beyond religion in *Zirndorf*, Christian's development cannot be read as favouring one particular religious concept. Rather it seems that Wassermann here takes his search for spiritual renewal a step further. While Agathon's visions remained altogether vague, with the figure of Christian, Wassermann is clearly supporting the idea of saintly behaviour in an everyday context. This need for spiritual renewal which Wassermann so strongly perceived during and immediately after the Great War can be understood as major contribution towards the syncretic approach to spirituality he later takes in the trilogy.

Even though part of the *Andergast* trilogy, *Maurizius* will be discussed in a separate chapter. This is partly because of the substantial amount of critical attention it has received, and partly because, unlike the other novels of the trilogy, it can stand on its own as a work of art. A major success during Wassermann's lifetime, the novel was widely discussed during the Weimar Republic as well as afterwards. And yet it seems

necessary to contest the notion of this work as a crime novel and thus as an affirmation of Wassermann as a traditional narrator. This view found support, among others, with Bertolt Brecht who took offence with 'der üblichen stumpfsinnigen Form unseres Romans, dessen Prototyp etwa Wassermanns ‚Fall Maurizius‘ ist.'³⁵ Instead analysis will show that the novel is not necessarily a piece of detective writing, as the story of the innocent prisoner Maurizius merely serves as the framework for a more significant portrayal of father-and-son relationships.

The novel is characterised by a carefully constructed form yet it nevertheless contains some significant further developments regarding Wassermann's take on character. Combined with the return of the figure of the outsider in the character of Warschauer, *Maurizius* becomes the clearest expression of the link that Wassermann saw between the state of society and the fictional characters it is able to take in. Tellingly, in his 'Rede über die Gestalt' (1924) Wassermann came to understand the 'Gestalt' as the most important mirror of its time: 'Nicht in den Zuständen spiegelt sich die Zeit, nicht die Ereignisse deuten das Schicksal: die Gestalt ist Spiegel und Deuter.'³⁶ Alongside a society that has stopped functioning and only produces individuals in a state of emotional isolation, Wassermann now also focuses on the disintegration of character. He does not achieve this through the depiction of characters overcoming themselves as in *Wahnschaffe*, but instead their identities collapse as the boundaries between them and other characters are blurred. In this bleak version of the later Weimar years people have lost control over their identities which is emphasised by the fact that all of the main characters in the novel have a double identity forced onto them by the surrounding circumstances.

³⁵ Bertolt Brecht, *Die Besten Autoren über die besten Bücher des Jahres*, quoted in Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, p. 187.

³⁶ Jakob Wassermann, 'Rede über die Gestalt' in *Lebensdienst: Gesammelte Studien Erfahrungen und Reden aus drei Jahrzehnten* (Leipzig and Zurich: Grethlein & Co., 1928), pp. 347 – 383 (p. 382).

Hitherto the question of a double identity in relation to Wassermann and his work has led to discussion of his own situation as a German Jew, mostly inspired by his autobiography *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* (1921).³⁷ Yet, as *Maurizius* shows, this question had a much wider significance for him because these double identities here seem to be the expression of a world that is beyond comprehension, where nothing is as it seems. Moreover, while in his earlier novels Wassermann was keen to depict the union between different outsider figures, he now presents his reader with a character combining two such identities, namely the homosexual Jew Georg Warschauer. So far Warschauer has largely been discussed as the product of Wassermann's own experience as a German Jew and the identity crisis resulting from it.³⁸ At the same time, the obvious homosexual aspects of his character have been neglected with the exception of a few negative remarks. Yet given Wassermann's overall interest in the situation of homosexual men the importance of Warschauer's double identity cannot be overestimated. For it is through this figure that the Jew and the homosexual man are finally given a parallel status of exclusion in Wassermann's version of society.

These male-male or symbolic father-and-son relationships also stand at the centre of the last chapter and thus of *Andergast* and *Kerkhoven*. However, they are not to be thought of as mere depictions of conflicts between generations. Instead, they increasingly become an expression of a longing for reconciliation between the generations that cannot be fulfilled. In particular the relationship between Etzel Andergast and Joseph Kerkhoven is symptomatic of the rebellious son's longing for a father figure, while at the same time the 'father' is unable to develop a genuine

³⁷ Jakob Wassermann, 'Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude', in *Deutscher und Jude: Reden und Schriften 1904 - 1933*, ed. by Dierk Rodewald (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1984), pp. 35 - 132.

³⁸ See for example Gershon Shaked, 'Der Fall Wassermann' in *Die Macht der Identität: Essays über jüdische Schriftsteller*, trans. by Ulrike Berger and others (Königstein: Athenäum, 1986), pp. 94 - 112 or Martina Landscheidt, 'Mutmaßungen über Waremmé, Annäherung an Warschauer: Zu der jüdischen Doppelfigur Warschauer-Waremmé in Jakob Wassermanns Roman Der Fall Maurizius', in *Werk und Wirkung*, pp. 14-33.

emotional bond with his 'son' which ends in a catastrophe. Wassermann's lengthy engagement with Weimar's troubled youth needs to be considered as an important contribution to this topic.

Even though the two novels are mostly set in the later years of the Weimar Republic, Wassermann seems nevertheless keen to emphasise certain continuities. For with the relationship between Kerkhoven and Johann Irlen, a representative of the Wilhelmine era, Wassermann seems intent on portraying the Weimar Republic as heavily influenced by the previous era. In fact, in another experiment concerning character, Irlen becomes a part of Kerkhoven's character and thus a symbol of the ongoing Wilhelmine presence.

In his final novel, Wassermann re-engages with the question of character in yet another way by introducing himself into the novel. In the guise of Alexander Herzog, Wassermann not only merges with his fictional creation Kerkhoven but he also plays with the reliability of human perception in relation to the question of identity. Identity is therefore no longer just unstable but Herzog is at times uncertain whether he actually exists. This general sense of collapse is further emphasised by the disappearance of Kerkhoven's precious manuscript and thus, in many ways, the end of the text. Just before the end of his life we therefore find Wassermann negating what used to be his *raison d'être*: the conviction that there is meaning in literary production.

2. Looking for pleasure – the Jew and the woman in Wassermann's early novels

2.1 Introduction

In his two early novels, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (1897) and *Die Geschichte der jungen Renate Fuchs* (1901), Wassermann sets out to tell the story of two figures who are outsiders in the world of the Gentile man and through their actions become outcasts within their own communities: the rebellious Jew and the 'fallen' woman. Across the two novels, which are linked thematically as well as through the reappearance of several characters, these two figures allow Wassermann to explore the general cultural malaise affecting society at the turn of the century and to arrive at some thought-provoking conclusions. Moreover, by introducing the figure of the 'Literat' Stefan Gudstikker into these novels, Wassermann gives a prominent place to the question of the role that art plays in this context. In Wassermann's version all people are without pleasure in their lives, regardless of their religious background or their status in society. *Die Juden von Zirndorf* can therefore be read as an angry young man's attack not only on the Jewish community but on society as a whole. Through the perspective of the outcast Agathon Geyer, Jews and Christians are shown to be equally unhappy since they are all stuck in an antiquated moral system and a by now meaningless religion that does not allow them to enjoy their lives freely.

At the same time Wassermann seems eager to demonstrate that to distinguish between Jews and Christians has in many ways become irrelevant as well as impossible. Everyday life, it seems, is indifferent towards this distinction and Jewishness has, in some ways, become a mere character trait that can also be used to describe non-Jewish people. In a similar vein, in *Renate Fuchs*, Wassermann refuses to acknowledge the distinction between a 'good' and a 'fallen' woman and offers a sympathetic portrait of a woman's search for happiness which, however, does not

always coincide with a search for emancipation. At the end of the novel Wassermann carries out an exciting experiment: in one night of love, Agathon and Renate, the two outcasts, conceive a child that is referred to as the founder of a new race. Could the union of the two outcasts be the solution to their problems? Could the Jew and the woman together 'defeat' the Gentile man? And where would that leave the Jewish woman?

The analysis of the depiction of Jewish and Christian characters in *Zirndorf* will show how, in Wassermann's view, the distinction between Jews and Christians is often an arbitrary one. By focusing on the portrayal of people's daily lives, Wassermann seems keen to highlight how Jews and Christians are filled with the same hopes, dreams and desires and are not that different from each other after all. In this version the basis for a lot of anti-Semitism is therefore simply unfounded. At the same time he is launching a fierce attack not only on the Jewish community but on society as a whole and therefore including Christian beliefs and values. Or, as Nicole Plöger puts it: 'Dementsprechend finden sich in diesem Text all die Unzulänglichkeiten, all die Fehlentwicklungen und all das Beklagenswerte ebenso außerhalb der nichtjüdischen Welt.'¹

If the novel is to be understood as an attack on society as a whole, then a new understanding of its structure becomes available. The prologue, which is otherwise only loosely connected to the rest of the novel, becomes Wassermann's means of illustrating how in the course of 200 years society has changed very little and certainly not for the better. Through the use of characters functioning as mirroring images in the prologue and in the novel, Wassermann makes it clear that the general cultural malaise has if anything intensified. In this context it is important to establish that Christian characters do not exclusively function as representatives of an anti-Semitic world view but that they are shown to be equally affected by a general sense of crisis. The broad range of the

¹ Plöger, *Ästhetik*, p. 282.

critique expressed in the novel can therefore only be grasped fully if the Christian characters are also taken into account.

The protagonist Agathon Geyer, who turns out to be the son of a Christian father and a Jewish mother, stands at the centre of Wassermann's critique of society. In the course of the novel Agathon not only renounces the Jewish faith but also comes to think of Christianity as a younger yet equally obsolete religion. Towards the end of the novel he therefore declares:

"Den Menschen den Himmel nehmen und ihnen die Erde geben, [...] das ist alles, was ich will. [...] Sie müssen die reine Erde haben, ohne Kreuz, ohne Abfall, ohne Verzicht, ohne Abrechnung mit einem Drogen."²

The reasons for his revolt are most intriguing and offer the key for a new reading of the novel. Through the lens of this outcast, Wassermann shows how people's actions are largely motivated by a longing for happiness and pleasure, something they have been systematically deprived of for at least two millennia. This basic yet telling insight prompts Agathon to go on a mission of bringing people more joy that ends with a burning church and his fervent, if futile, support of the Bavarian 'Märchenkönig' Ludwig II, a king born for pleasure. The general emphasis on pleasure might seem trivial at first and yet it seems to correspond well with Sigmund Freud's insight that life is essentially 'goverened by a 'Trieb''.³ A longing for pleasure therefore stands at the centre of all our actions.⁴

The figure of the 'Literat' Stefan Gudstikker deserves further analysis since he can at times be understood as a mirror image of Wassermann

² Jakob Wassermann, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (Munich: DTV, 1996), pp. 235 – 236. The text is based on the first edition published by Albert Langen in 1897. The edition published by Fischer in 1906 has been changed considerably and will only be referred to when the argument requires it. Henceforth reference will be given in brackets with JZ followed by the page number.

³ Ritchie Robertson, 'Modernism and the Self 1890 - 1924', in *Philosophy and German Literature 1700 - 1990*, ed. by Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 150 – 97 (p. 158).

⁴ More recently this has been confirmed by neuroscientific research. See Morten L. Kringelbach, *The Pleasure Center: Trust your Animal Instincts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

himself. Gudstikker is present throughout the two novels in the course of which he advances from a penniless poet to a well-established and commercially successful novelist. In the two novels Gudstikker is a predominantly negative, at times even ridiculous figure, and yet there are moments of ambiguity on the part of the narrator. Moreover, there are hints suggesting that Gudstikker is at least partly a portrayal of Wassermann himself. However, this is not so much to be understood as an autobiographical depiction of actual events but rather as an expression of Wassermann's personal concern with the role of the commercial 'Literat', the image of the 'uncreative' Jew and the function of art in the society he is depicting.

The important female characters from both novels will be discussed in the same section because of the striking parallels between them. At the same time it will become apparent how Wassermann makes a first attempt to structure the story of a male protagonist, in this case that of Agathon, around his encounters with different women, a technique he will return to in *Christian Wahnschaffe*. Moreover, this section will also serve to highlight the parallels in the depiction of the Jew and the woman as outsiders in *Zirndorf* and *Renate Fuchs*. As with Agathon, the female characters of Jeanette Löwengard and Renate Fuchs are driven by their search for pleasure. Both women run away from a lucrative marriage that would have secured them a life of great riches and a high social status in favour of personal happiness and, in Jeanette's case, sexual liberation. In both cases this search proves to be a road of no return that inevitably leads to a life of degradation. By not allowing either of the two women to lead an independent life that does not force them to be either a housewife or involved in some form of prostitution, Wassermann seems to deny that such a life is indeed possible at the time.

As a Jewish woman, Jeanette finds a less favourable ending than Renate – while she returns to Munich as a jaded dancer desperate to become the mistress of the King, Renate gets to be a happy mother who is

reconciled with her father. The more problematic situation of the Jewish woman in comparison to that of the Gentile woman is underlined even further in the depictions of the minor characters of Monika Olifat and Gisa Schumann. The latter is reduced to being a sexual object with no voice of her own – in the opening scene of *Renate Fuchs* she finds herself naked and helpless in the streets of Munich – and eventually breaks down into insanity. As the mother of an illegitimate child, Monika is only prevented from a similar fate through her marriage to Agathon.

In terms of genre these two early novels can be considered as Zeitromane revealing the young author's ambition to present exhaustive panoramas of society. *Zirndorf* in particular helped to found the genre of the Jewish 'Zeitroman'.⁵ According to Dirk Göttsche's definition a Zeitroman deals with the depiction of a historical experience and social realities in connection with a critical reflection of the present in its historical framework.⁶ In his youth, Wassermann enthusiastically read realistic novels, presenting a panorama of society, by such authors as Ivan Turgenev, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Wassermann wrote to Hans Aufricht on 2 January 1932: 'Dieser Autor [Turgenev] ist ja, Sie wissen es, meine erste literarische Leidenschaft gewesen'.⁷ He shared their ambition to draw wide pictures of society. Hence in his early novels Wassermann attempts to show members of all social classes as well as of Jewish and Christian backgrounds whilst focusing on the individual characters of his protagonists: Renate Fuchs and Agathon Geyer.

⁵ See Ritchie Robertson, 'Schnitzler and Wassermann', in *Confrontations / Accommodations: German-Jewish Literary and Cultural Relations from Heine to Wassermann*, ed. by Mark H. Gelber (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004), pp. 249 – 63 (p. 250).

⁶ Dirk Göttsche, *Zeit im Roman: Literarische Zeitreflexion und die Geschichte des Zeitromans im späten 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Fink, 2001), p. 21.

⁷ Jakob Wassermann to Hans Aufricht, 2.1.1932, Wassermann-Nachlass, DLA, Marbach, call number: 73.200/3.

2.2 Jews and Christians – are times finally changing?

For the understanding of the relationship between Jews and Christians in *Zirndorf*, it is important to acknowledge that the novel can also be read as a critical 'Heimatroman' which stands in strong opposition to Fritz Martini's claim: 'Die Kombination von Geschichte und Heimat hat nichts mit Heimatkunst zu tun.'⁸ Wassermann here expresses his great concern with the concept of 'Heimat' by introducing his reader to the Jewish paradox of being attached to a hostile 'Heimat'. The rules of the conventional 'Heimatroman' are reversed as Wassermann focuses on those who usually only figure as outsiders and tells the story of 'Heimat' from their perspective. And yet, as we shall see, this does not result in a uniquely favourable depiction of Jewish life and characters but rather in a highly critical and searching portrayal.

The genre of the 'Heimatroman' belongs to the kind of art known as 'Heimatkunst', a term which began to be used in Germany in the 1890s describing literature as well as other forms of art depicting rural and provincial life. It is, however, not to be understood as a glorification of the 'Heimat'. It can be seen as a response to the tensions between regional and national identity which marked the unification of Germany in 1871 as well as to urbanisation and industrialisation. In Germany and Austria many people thought that their countries were changing too quickly and felt that the rural population were being driven from their land by ruthless capitalists. Moreover they resented being dominated by big urban centres such as Berlin. As can be seen with Gustav Frenssen's *Jörn Uhl* (1901) and Wilhelm von Polenz' *Der Büttnerbauer* (1895), two of the most famous

⁸ Fritz Martini, 'Die Utopie eines Messias in der Moderne', in *Zeit der Moderne: Zur deutschen Literatur von der Jahrhundertwende bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Hans-Henrik Krummacher and others (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1984), pp. 461 – 85 (p. 465).

examples of this genre, the 'Heimatroman' often depicts a 'Heimat' in decline with its inhabitants given to violence and alcoholism.⁹ 'Heimatkunst' sometimes even makes use of Naturalist techniques, notably with its bleak depictions of domestic violence and rural poverty. Yet, for all those 'modern' tendencies within the genre the 'Heimat' discourse remained a predominantly conservative one.

According to Elizabeth Boa, within the 'Heimat' discourse the Jew helped to sustain German identity by being the alien, non-German other. At the same time the assimilated Jew fuelled anxiety about the dilution of identity through infiltration: he is a scary mimic who can never become German. 'Heimat' therefore must be defined through exclusion of the radically different and alien, as the integration of a stranger endangers boundaries: in other words, 'Heimat' needs the other or the exotic to exist; what is 'Heimat' for the locals may be a place of loneliness and exile for the stranger.¹⁰ A prime example of this use of the Jew in the 'Heimat' discourse can be found in von Polenz' portrayal of the malicious Jewish usurer Samuel Harrassowitz: it not only marks the Jew as an outsider but also as the enemy to the 'Heimat'. Mayer referred to this depiction as 'offenherzig antisemitisch'.¹¹ Plöger's notion of Wassermann's engagement with 'Heimatkunst' is problematic since it is predominantly informed by a negative understanding of this form of art. In her view, Wassermann shares with 'Heimatkunst' a, reductive, black-and-white view of the world as well as an aversion to the masses, decadence, the city with its artists and intellectuals and brutal forms of capitalism.¹² Apart from being rather clichéd, this view does not seem to address the relevant reasons for Wassermann's engagement with 'Heimatkunst'.

⁹ See Gustav Frenssen, *Jörn Uhl* (Berlin: Grote, 1903) and Wilhem von Polenz, *Der Büttnerbauer* (Berlin: Fontane, 1895).

¹⁰ See Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat a German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 28 and p. 52.

¹¹ Hans Mayer, *Außenseiter* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 391.

¹² See Plöger, *Ästhetik*, p. 324.

The paradox of being attached to a hostile 'Heimat' is central for the understanding of Wassermann's particular notion of 'Heimat'. He insists that Jews are not strangers in Germany, for they have lived there for many centuries and form an undeniable part of its history and culture. Tellingly, despite the hostility he had been faced with there, Wassermann considered Franconia, where *Die Juden von Zirndorf* is set, to be his 'Heimat'. By adopting this view he goes against pervading stereotypes of the Jews as a nomadic people; by contrast he claims that they are indeed attached to their homes and landscapes which means that they could not simply live anywhere. Moreover, Plöger is certainly right in concluding that this love for his 'Heimat' is at the same time a clear rejection of Zionism.¹³ Nevertheless, in *Der Judenstaat* (1896) Theodor Herzl makes a similar claim regarding the relationship between Jews and their hostile Heimat:

In unseren Vaterländern, in denen wir ja auch schon seit Jahrhunderten wohnen, werden wir als Fremdlinge angeschrien; oft von solchen, deren Geschlechter noch nicht im Lande waren, als unsere Väter da schon seufzten.¹⁴

Wassermann's concept of 'Heimat' therefore helps to express his idea that Jews and Christians are attached to the same 'Heimat' and consequently not that different from each other. It seems that in this context the categories of 'Jew' and 'Christian' should long have become irrelevant.

Zirndorf consists of two parts: a prologue and the actual novel. The prologue tells the story of the collective Jewish excitement aroused by the false Messiah Sabbatai Zevi in the seventeenth century. Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676) was a Sephardic Rabbi and cabbalist. He appeared in Smyrna in 1666, electrifying Jewish communities all over Europe by declaring himself to be the Jewish Messiah. The Zevi movement came to a sudden end when the alleged Messiah was forced by the Ottoman Sultan to convert to Islam.¹⁵ The main function of this prologue-novel-construction is

¹³ See Plöger, *Ästhetik*, p. 291.

¹⁴ Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (Zurich: Manesse, 1988), p. 15.

¹⁵ The standard work on Sabbatai Zevi is Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973). In fiction Sabbatai is mentioned, for example, in Lion Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1991).

to highlight that nothing much has changed in the course of 200 years, in the sense that people still yearn for an unattainable happiness.

Wassermann establishes a link between the two texts not only by re-naming various places and buildings featuring in the novel as well as the prologue but also by having characters mirroring each other in those separate parts.¹⁶ The structure of the two societies that he depicts is therefore in many ways the same. Stagnation seems to be the most suitable word to describe the state of a society in which the possibility of learning from history is apparently denied: as anti-Semitism is still violently present at the end of the nineteenth century and Judaism has not undergone any substantial reforms, it becomes apparent that non-Jews and Jews are equally stuck in the past. And yet people's daily lives seem to prove the opposite for it is here that non-Jews and Jews are blind to their apparent differences. A longing for pleasure, it seems, can easily overcome racial prejudice.

The first set of characters functioning as mirroring images to be discussed are the figures of Maier Knöcker and Agathon's grandfather Enoch Karkau, who bring ruin to many lives around them. Since Maier Knöcker is the father of Rahel, who is a distant ancestor of Agathon's family, he too is to be seen as an ancestor of Enoch, which makes the link between them even more interesting. Their lives are dominated by greed: 'Er [Enoch] kannte keine Sehnsucht als die nach dem Gold, und Gefühlen anderer Art war er gänzlich verschlossen.' (JZ, 72) This description from the novel could also have been used for Maier Knöcker whose love for his treasure is described in similar terms. Moreover, both men are shown to bury a part of their possession in their garden rather than leaving it to their families. Enoch is eventually arrested and sentenced for usury, which as the wise man Gedalja points out has been equally detrimental for Jews and Christians: "Sin user fufzig Leit im Dorf, die so um all ihr Geld kommen,

¹⁶ Plöger mentions Wassermann's use of the technique of mirroring but does not go into further detail regarding specific characters. See Plöger, *Ästhetik*, p. 284.

Juden und Gojim.”¹⁷ (JZ, 138) Jews and Christians are thus not only united in their suffering from the unlawful practice of usury but, in a curious turn of events, the daughters of both men have an illegitimate child with a Christian man.

Wassermann seems keen to highlight how in matters of the heart Jette and Rahel, the two above-mentioned daughters, are indifferent towards the question of Jewish or non-Jewish. As a consequence, the distinction between a Jew and a non-Jew becomes blurred and there are children growing up in the Jewish community who are actually, like Agathon, of a mixed background.

The combination of ‘Jewish girl meets non-Jewish boy’ is repeated several times throughout the novel – Zirle and Wagenseil, Jette Geyer and Gudstikker’s father, Jeanette Löwengard and Bojesen, Sema’s mother Thella Hellmut and the Bavarian King - yet it is only in the case of Monika Olifat and Stefan Gudstikker that the link to the prologue is made explicit. As with Rahel and the student Hummel, Gudstikker leaves Monika behind even though she is pregnant:

Es zeigt sich, daß zweihundert Jahre das Gemüt der Menschen nicht verändern, daß dies nur eine winzige Phase ist im Prozeß der Umwandlungen. Es scheint, als ob Charaktere oder Seelen über Jahrhunderte hinweg in einer neuen Kette von Erscheinungen und Ereignissen zu neuem Dasein erwachen müssen. Es ist dann gleichgültig, ob dieser Wiedergekehrte Thomas Peter Hummel oder Stefan Gudstikker heißt. (JZ, 246)

This can be understood as a first hint at Wassermann’s growing interest in the concept of human character. Moreover, it also becomes apparent that he is more interested in the human side of things rather than any questions of religious affiliation. Monika’s Jewishness plays, if at all, a secondary role in her relationship with Gudstikker who also has no moral qualms about breaking his engagement with the non-Jewish girl Käthe Estrich.

¹⁷ The omission of this form of Yiddish is one of the most significant changes Wassermann made to the 1906 edition of the novel. See also Bing, *Wassermann*, p. 104. Tellingly, this later edition was commercially more successful. See Müller-Kampel, *Collage*, p. 83.

Religious affiliation only matters because it would forbid these couples to 'legalise' their relationship, i.e. their communities would not allow them to get married. Rahel is therefore aware that she would have to cope with 'Heimatlosigkeit' (JZ, 27) if her pregnancy became known. In a similar vein Jette writes to her lover: 'Mein Liebster, das kann ich nicht, was du von mir forderst. Ich bin keine freie Frau, kein freies Mädchen.' (JZ, 139) Jette signs the letter with her maiden name which indicates that her lack of freedom is not linked to another man but to the fact that she is Jewish and her lover is not. For Wassermann the idea of these mixed relationships is of pivotal importance. Florian Krobb observes how, in the prologue, the encounters between Jewish women and non-Jewish men are decisive for their individual fates as well as that of their community.¹⁸

Further evidence for this can be deduced from the role Wassermann assigns to the offspring of these unions. The pregnant Rahel is described as follows: 'Sie trug die Zukunft im Schoß, ein neues Geschlecht, Kämpfer später Zeiten.' (JZ, 55) Jette, on the other hand, gives birth to the messianic figure of Agathon while the little Sema also seems to be endowed with special gifts. Wassermann therefore seems to be clearly in favour of the idea of intermarriage, a topic that, as David Biale has shown, has been hotly debated within Jewish communities until today.¹⁹ However, this does not necessarily mean

daß für die moderne jüdische Geschichte eine autonome jüdische Entwicklung eine Illusion bleiben muß, da das Geschick der Juden untrennbar mit dem der nichtjüdischen Umgebung verknüpft ist, und daß Orientierungslosigkeit und Verführbarkeit bis in die Gegenwart hinein Kennzeichen einer jahrhundertealten jüdischen Sinnkrise geblieben sind.²⁰

Rather it seems that in Wassermann's view, Judaism and Christianity have ceased to be a significant marker of difference since both religions have

¹⁸ See Florian Krobb, *Die Schöne Jüdin: Jüdische Frauengestalten in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), p. 221.

¹⁹ See David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 23.

²⁰ Krobb, *Jüdin*, p. 223.

died a long time ago whilst at the same time he rejected the concept of race.

Through the use of mirroring images in the prologue and in the novel Wassermann therefore not only establishes a connection between the two but he also seems to have set a clear focus, namely the everyday relationship between Jews and Christians.

In the novel this at times very paradoxical relationship between Jews and Christians is embodied in the figure of the teacher Bojesen. His general views could easily be described as anti-Semitic and yet it is his passionate love for Agathon's cousin Jeanette Löwengard that will ruin his life. Apart from highlighting this paradox, the figure of Bojesen is important because it is through him that Wassermann shows how non-Jews are equally affected by a general cultural malaise and an antiquated moral system: stuck in a sexless marriage, Bojesen is dismissed from his job as a teacher because he has been seen with the dancer Jeanette and is therefore considered morally unfit.

In the following we will look at the figure of Bojesen in relation to the assimilated, decadent Jewish figure of Edward Nieberding and to Jeanette.

In his relation to Edward Nieberding, Bojesen is probably best described as a theoretical anti-Semite. Bojesen and Nieberding are, albeit in different ways, in love with the same woman, which leads to several nocturnal conversations. For Bojesen these conversations serve the purpose of expressing his anti-Semitic views, especially with regard to the figure of the Jewish artist (which will be discussed in connection with Gudstikker) and the question of Jewish assimilation. Bojesen considers the modern, assimilated Jew a great source of danger:

Die Juden sind bis zu dem Punkt ungefährlich, als sie nicht an der Kultur eines Volkes teilnehmen. Sobald das kommt, sind alle prägnanten Linien verwischt, das Bild wird unruhig, die Gärung beginnt. Es ist, als ob diese Nation eine Art giftiger Sauerteig wäre. (JZ, 181)

Bojesen thus expresses a stereotypical fear of the infiltration of society by the “invisible Jew”. Yet his main point of critique seems to be that these modern Jews have, once again, given birth to Christianity by assimilating to a Gentile culture. A consistent anti-Semite would therefore also have to be an anti-Christian as can be inferred from these words addressed to Nieberding:

“Geben Sie uns nur dies geistige Christentum wieder, endlich, das unsere starke, säftereiche Rasse ausgelöscht und vernichtet hat binnen sechzehnhundert oder weniger Jahren.” (JZ, 179)

This idea of Christianity as a direct continuation of repressive Jewish morals sounds familiar from Nietzsche’s *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, where he writes:

Dieser Jesus von Nazareth, als das leibhafte Evangelium der Liebe, dieser den Armen, den Kranken, den Sündern die Seligkeit und den Sieg bringende “Erlöser” – war er nicht gerade die Verführung in ihrer unheimlichsten und unwiderstehlichsten Form, die Verführung und der Umweg zu eben jenen jüdischen Werthen und Neuerungen des Ideals? Hat Israel nicht gerade auf dem Umwege dieses “Erlösers”, dieses scheinbaren Widersachers und Auflösers Israel’s, das letzte Ziel seiner sublimen Rachsucht erreicht?²¹

Yet the most intriguing aspect of the relationship between the two men is not only that Nieberding agrees, in the sense that he refers to himself as having the soul of a Christian, but that Bojesen becomes attached to this ‘enemy’ of his. As his social isolation increases, Bojesen feels ever more drawn towards this representative of the modern Judaism that he despises and seeks his company in moments of loneliness. Nieberding therefore seems justified in drawing the following conclusion: “Aber daß wir hier sitzen und uns über Christentum und Judentum echauffieren, ist auch trivial.” (JZ, 182) The relationship between Nieberding and Bojesen therefore seems to be further evidence of the triviality that the difference between Jews and Christians has become in the face of everyday human relationships. Many years later, in 1923, when pressed to make a statement regarding the relationship between Jews and

²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988), p. 24. For a more detailed discussion of Nietzsche’s influence on Wassermann’s early work see Plöger, *Ästhet.*

Germans, Wassermann would still arrive at the same conclusion: 'Es hat dieses ganze Gerede über "die" Juden, "die" Deutschen keinen Sinn und Zweck. Es sind angewandt auf soziale Erscheinungen, Hilfskonstruktionen und Ablenkungstheorien. Ich kenne nur Menschen.'²²

In an attempt to escape his marriage to a woman who thinks that sexuality is essentially a filthy business, Bojesen starts to frequent a vaudeville show named 'Zum Siebenten Himmel' where Jeanette works as a dancer. Jeanette uses the stage name 'Luisina' and Bojesen immediately falls for her and the air of sexual liberation that surrounds her. Yet even after he finds out who she really is, he never makes any reference to her Jewishness and vice versa. This difference therefore seems to be of no consequence to their relationship. Their union is probably best understood as that of two outcasts seeking pleasure outside the realm of the society they initially belonged to. After a brief affair Jeanette leaves for Paris, yet it seems that it is Bojesen's desperate love for her that eventually ruins his marriage and his life: 'Jeanettes Bild stieg auf. Nun wußte er sein ruheloses Forschen zu deuten [...] Er ging im Zimmer umher und dachte an nichts anderes als daran, wie er sie wieder gewinnen könne' (JZ, 206) The man who had hitherto claimed that there could be no link between a Jew and a Christian is thus proven wrong and once more revealed to be only a theoretical anti-Semite.

In the prologue as well as in the novel, Wassermann therefore depicts a society that is on the outset divided into Jews and non-Jews by a wall of anti-Semitism. And yet he seems keen to reveal the hypocrisy behind that divide by showing how Jews and non-Jews share many aspects of their daily lives. Lindemann-Luiken is therefore right to conclude that the Jews in the novel 'weder in nationaler noch in religiöser Hinsicht wesentliche Unterscheidungsmerkmale zu den Deutschen aufweisen.'²³ And just as they can be united by a longing for pleasure they can also be united by

²² Jakob Wassermann, 'Zwei Briefe an einen deutschen Philosophen' in *Lebensdienst*, pp. 160 – 173 (p. 171).

²³ Lindemann-Luiken, *Auswirkungen*, p. 123.

fear, which Wassermann conveys by depicting how the people in the prologue react to strange signs in the night sky: 'Viel Volk sammelte sich schweigend an den Ufern der Regnitz und Pegnitz, und Christen und Juden standen in gleicher Furcht, in gleicher mystischer Andacht Schulter an Schulter.' (JZ, 19) And it is shoulder to shoulder that Wassermann, whom Peter Gay rightly referred to as a 'reconciler',²⁴ would like to see the people that for him all share the same 'Heimat'.

2.3 Agathon's vision – is pleasure possible?

Another function of the prologue is to prepare the reader for Agathon's later quest for universal happiness and pleasure. In the prologue the main result of the news about Sabbatai Zevi is a form of sexual revolution that takes place within the Jewish community. Moritz Heimann, Wassermann's close friend and editor, praised the prologue as a successful depiction of how Sabbatai's message could excite the Jewish community the way it did: 'Das vom Gesetz schlimmer noch als vom äußeren Druck niedergehaltene Leben bricht mit orgiastischer Raserei aus, in religiösen, wollüstigen und grausamen Taumeln sich entladend.'²⁵ The prologue does indeed not shy away from depicting orgies that even involve sexual intercourse with animals. Moreover, when Agathon later finds out about the false messiah he seems reluctant to judge him but instead considers him a bringer of joy: '[E]r zweifelte nicht an der Ehrlichkeit des Propheten, der das Leben in so großen Linien gelebt und alle Mitlebenden beglückt hatte.' (JZ, 167) Agathon will therefore start off by renouncing Judaism and after being briefly fascinated by Christianity come to reject the idea of following one specific religion. Instead he will be looking for other, spiritual ways to make people happy which marks the beginning of Wassermann's lifelong search for a more syncretic approach to spirituality that will culminate in his final novel *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* (1934).

²⁴ Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 149.

²⁵ Moritz Heimann, 'Zwei Romane' in *Die Neue Rundschau*, 9, 1898, 642-647 (p. 646).

Even though the novel focuses on society as a whole, it can nevertheless also be understood as a Jewish family novel. The Jewish family novel is a version of the Zeitroman which was a very popular way of exploring Jewish subcultures at the turn of the century. Other examples are Arthur Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie* (1908) and Max Brod's *Jüdinnen* (1911).²⁶ With the family at the centre they all deal with conflicts between generations, often revolving around the question of assimilation and the materialism associated with the older generation. In *Zirndorf*, the family is the place in which the general unhappiness first becomes apparent, mainly because it has in many ways become dysfunctional. In the novel the reader is presented with the family of Agathon and that of his rich cousin Jeanette, in both cases generations live estranged from each other as they seem to live in different worlds. In Jeanette's case it is the vast fortune of her father that contributes to her unhappiness whilst Agathon has to witness the ever increasing poverty of his family. Moreover, the family is depicted as a space of oppression in which thoughts and desires are not allowed to roam freely. Neither Jeanette nor, as we have seen, Agathon's mother Jette are allowed to marry for love since that would have interfered with their families' interests.

In a similar vein, the generation of Agathon's father is depicted as hostile towards, and potentially scared of, any Christian influence. Agathon is appalled by the fanatical religiosity of their visitor Joelsohn, a member of the older generation:

[Er] redete sich in eine flammende Hitze gegen die Christen und wurde schließlich fanatisch in seinen Anklagen. Er ist um ein paar Jahrhunderte verspätet, dachte Agathon. Es gab viele solcher Juden [...] Das Gebet ging ihnen über alles, über Gott selbst, und wer nicht betete, war der Feind, und der Christ (JZ, 111).

When Elkan finds Agathon reading the New Testament he is at first furious and tears the book apart, and is then overcome by fear: 'Elkan empfand

²⁶ More examples are listed in Robertson, 'Jewish Question', p. 274. See also Ehrhard Bahr, 'Max Brod as a novelist: from the Jewish Zeitroman to the Zionist novel' in Mark H. Gelber et al. (eds), *Von Franzos zu Canetti: Jüdische Autoren aus Österreich* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), pp. 25-36.

plötzlich eine unerklärliche Furcht vor ihm [Agathon]' (JZ, 80). Elkan is thus scared of a son who dares to leave the old ways behind. At the same time, Agathon's rejection of his father's empty traditions and shallow religiosity strongly resembles Kafka's *Brief an den Vater* where he reproaches his father for the 'Nichts von Judentum' that he had received from him.²⁷

At the beginning of Agathon's mission to bring happiness to the world stands the murder of the innkeeper Sürich Sperling. This episode is rather obscure and probably best understood in terms of its symbolic value, especially since Sürich can hardly be considered an actual character. Gudstikker refers to him as the 'personifizierte Germanentum' (JZ, 90) and Sürich is indeed the village's most passionate anti-Semite. And yet the description of Sürich is not without sympathy:

Er war ein Tier: wild, stolz, unbezähmbar, keinem Vernunftgrund der Welt zugänglich. [...] Er war ein Sohn dieser großen Natur rings umher [...] Sein Vater soll eine Riese gewesen sein [...] Sürich Sperling paßte nicht herein in diese Welt. "Das Urbild des Germanen" fand kein Bett, worin es bequem ruhen konnte. (JZ, 77)

Sürich can therefore be considered an almost mythical figure or even a natural force as well as an outsider figure. When he dies unexpectedly it soon becomes apparent that it was most probably Agathon who murdered him. In conversation with Bojesen, Agathon later reveals the curious events that led to this murder:

[Er] zog mich nackt aus, nahm Stricke und band mich an ein schwarzes Kreuz an der Wand, neben dem Jesus Christus hing. Dann schlug er mich und fügte mir Wunden zu, daß ich fühlte, wie mein Blut floß. [...] "Da sagte ich zu ihm: "Sürich Sperling, das ist Ihr Tod." Da lachte er und sagte: "Sprich, du Aas, habt ihr nicht den Heiland gekreuzigt? Das ist eure Schuld. Deswegen sind wir lauter Schnapssäufer, weil er Mönche aus uns gemacht hat, Jesus von Nazareth. Er hat einen großen Sarg aus der Welt gemacht." (JZ, 133 – 134)

The scene becomes even more obscure when the Jew Lämleche Erdmann suddenly arrives to curse Sürich: 'Der ewige Jud ist jetzt erlöst, und du, Sürich Sperling, wirst werden der Ewige Christ.' (JZ, 134)

The following night Agathon murders Sürich, a deed that according to him will bring happiness to the world. One possible interpretation of this

²⁷ Franz Kafka, *Brief an den Vater* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1999), p. 37.

scene and the ensuing murder could be that Agathon wanted to break a vicious circle in a sense that he does not envision a world in which the Jews take revenge. The two religions are not supposed to reverse their roles but they ought to disappear altogether. According to Agathon the murder of Sürich is therefore a good deed because with him the entire Christian religion seems to have died, 'oder vielleicht nur der christliche Geist in diesem Volk, durch den es hassen mußte und Blut vergießen mußte' (JZ, 194).

Soon afterwards Agathon publicly renounces the religion of his fathers and leaves the house of his parents behind in order to go on his mission. Tellingly, once he has renounced his Jewishness, Agathon is no longer perceived as a Jew by the people around him. Not only the peasants he is staying with are unaware of his origins but even Jeanette doubts that he is actually a Jew: "'Wessen Blut steckt eigentlich in dir? [...] Ich kenne keinen von den Leuten, bei denen du aufgewachsen bist, der mit dir zu vergleichen wäre.'" (JZ, 234) In this version it therefore seems that it is possible to cease being Jewish at one's own will in a sense that a Jew is not recognisable by his outer appearance. This can be read as another refutation of the concept of race.

The essence of Agathon's vision becomes apparent in three key scenes: the burning of the church, the loss of his virginity to Jeanette and the death of the King.

The scene of the burning church takes place in the midst of a revolt that has been caused by a failed attempt to make people happy: the alchemist Baldewin Estrich has found a way to make gold and by giving it out freely to the poor has created an angry, greedy mob. In this scene materialist means are clearly rejected as insufficient to fill people's inner void. Soldiers try to contain the mob and people seek shelter in a church which is suddenly set on fire by a flash of lightning. Initially, Agathon appears in a Christ-like manner, protecting the people in the church from the soldiers. But then he has a vision:

Er dachte, daß die Städte zerstört, niedergerissen werden, verlassen werden müßten, damit der Mensch wieder sich selbst finde, und je mehr Agathon sein ganzes Selbst aufgab in den beengenden Träumen, je mehr wurde ihm auch der Geist des Christentums zur lebenden Gestalt, die mit feindseligen Armen stand und ihm den Weg verspernte, und dahinter, einem Gespenst gleich, klein und zäh, heuchlerisch und gewandt, der Jude, jetzt mehr als je bereit, den alttestamentarischen Mantel abzuwerfen und in das neuere Kleid des ehemals geächteten Nazareners zu schlüpfen. (JZ, 228)

Agathon's desire for the church in Nuremberg to burn down indicates that the problem of religion itself supersedes questions of Judaism and Christianity. In an era in which, as Jütten puts it, 'Glaubensverlust zum Massenschicksal [wird]',²⁸ Agathon is looking for a substitute which will make people happy and embrace life, which is why he is longing to found a 'neues, gottloses Geschlecht' (JZ, 229)²⁹ The prestige of science, the scholarly criticism of the Bible and the impact of secular philosophies such as those of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have made Christianity and traditional Judaism appear increasingly implausible. And yet, this loss of religion has left people with an inner void. There was

a need to fashion out of spare and questionable post-Christian materials a self that would not be overwhelmed by the freedom secured to it by a liberal agenda, by the social coerciveness of democratic society and by the pressures and solicitations of modern urban life.³⁰

Wassermann is alive to this dilemma yet without trying to provide answers or solutions. Atheism is not an option for Agathon and it seems that the only way of finding the universal happiness he envisions is, as we shall see in *Renate Fuchs*, to live a life outside society and away from the cities. Failure therefore becomes inevitable or, as Martini argues: 'Die Größe seiner [Agathon's] Bestimmung zieht ihrer Verwirklichung eine Grenze.'³¹ This means that Agathon's general vision of happiness has to remain an unfulfilled utopia in order for the novel to be at all realistic.

²⁸ Jütten, *Diskurse*, p. 84.

²⁹ Gunnar Och has rightly observed that this type of ecstatic language can be seen as a foreboding of expressionism. See G. O., 'Ahasver oder das andere Ich: Eine mythische Chiffre im Werk Jakob Wassermanns' in *Deutscher - Jude - Literat*, pp. 109 – 127 (p. 115).

³⁰ J.W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. XII.

³¹ Martini, 'Utopie', p. 463.

The vision quoted above also contains a first hint at the spiritual overcoming of the self as a means to happiness, a theme that Wassermann will develop at length in his later novel *Christian Wahnschaffe* (1919).

The scene of Agathon's first and only sexual encounter with Jeanette makes it apparent that sexuality plays a key role in his vision of universal happiness which justifies the use of the word pleasure in this context. His first reaction to the loss of his virginity is decidedly negative as he is affected by a 'grenzenlosen, vorher nie erfaßten noch geahnten Jammer' (JZ, 241). It does not take him long, however, to realise that a negative attitude towards sexuality stands at the centre of the unhappiness he witnesses every day: "'Ist es nicht vielleicht deswegen Schmutz, weil wir es so wollen? [...] weil Christus es gewollt hat?'" (JZ, 242). Agathon is familiar with a world in which sexuality is not talked about at school, boys at the Jewish orphanage are punished severely for masturbating and the awakening of his own sexuality is perceived by him as a threat. And yet Jeanette's reaction to his vision of a new way of looking at sexuality immediately reveals it to be unfeasible:

"Du willst die Sinnlichkeit wieder auf den Thron setzen, den sie seit zweitausend Jahren verlassen hat. [...] Ja, eher kannst du dein Hirn verbrennen, oder du mußt neue Menschen formen. [...] Und dann bedenke, eine Religion, die nicht die Sinnlichkeit erstickt, schleudert die Könige vom Thron." (JZ, 242)

Wassermann therefore sees a clear link between people's sexual repression and their overall freedom. This was already hinted at in the prologue where people enjoyed their new and brief freedom in the form of a sexual liberation. The topic will be explored further in connection with the depiction of the Bavarian King at the end of the novel.

Agathon's vision of universal happiness and sexual freedom comes to a sudden end when he has to accept that it is already a reality – albeit not in his idealised form. His counterpart Gudstikker reveals a certain level of hypocrisy behind Agathon's claims when he mocks the latter's outrage at Gudstikker's illegitimate affair with Monika Olifat:

”Sie kommen daher als Ritter eines kleinen Mädchens, das in leichter Stunde vom Piedestal der Tugend stieg. Was macht das? Leben wir etwa, um tugendhaft zu sein? He? Oder leben wir, um zu leben?” (JZ, 258)

While this argument certainly serves as an excuse for leaving Monika behind with a child, it also shows at the same time the worldly limits of Agathon’s vision.

Yet Gudstikker does not stop there. He volunteers to be Agathon’s Asmodeus, his demon of lust, for one evening and introduces Agathon to the city’s nightlife. Tellingly, it is the false laughter of the prostitutes that is among the most shocking experiences for Agathon: ‘[...] sie hatten keine Aufgabe, als die zu lachen.’ (JZ, 260) It is this propagation of false happiness combined with a ubiquitous level of depravity that makes Agathon give up his vision and realise that true happiness has become an unrealistic aim.

Und Agathon sah das Ziel in der Ferne zerstäuben zu nichts [...] und erkannte, daß er gegen die gigantische Masse des Elends nichts war als ein Kind, das mit seinen Händchen Gebirge abtragen will. Und Jude oder Christ, was bedeutete ihm das noch gegenüber diesem heimlichen und lautlosen Kampf, der hier zwischen schlafenden Mauern geführt wurde? Jude und Christ hatten in gleicher Weise dazu beigetragen, das Jahrhundert dorthin zu führen, wo es stand (JZ, 261)

Outdated Christian as well as Jewish morals have therefore proven to be inadequate when it comes to allowing people to have a liberal approach to sexuality. Instead, their repressive ways have led to the state of general depravity that turns out to be overwhelming for Agathon.

Towards the end of the novel Agathon and Jeanette both feel drawn towards the figure of the King, who, according to Jeanette, was “für die Freude geboren.” (JZ, 269) Given the time the novel is set in, the King’s mysterious death by drowning and the reference to his alleged insanity it becomes clear that the novel is referring to the Bavarian King Ludwig II (1845 – 1886). While Jeanette unsuccessfully attempts to become the King’s mistress, Agathon decides to lead the people in an attempt to free the King, who has been arrested and incapacitated, a fate he shares with the historical figure. The motivation behind this seems to be that the King has become a symbol for the detrimental consequences of the Church’s

oppressive power. The brief, sympathetic depiction of the King is that of a victim as he utters the following words:

Was ist Majestät heute, daß sie sich beugen muß vor einem Krämer, der in einer guten Stunde unter Beihilfe seiner Schwäger und Tanten Minister wurde und zufrieden das christlich Hausbrot ißt? Eine schöne Majestät, die sich der Kirche opfern soll und keine Hand rühren darf ohne den Pfaffen. (JZ, 267)

The negative influence of religion is thus shown to stretch far beyond people's daily lives, as it does not allow this King, even though popular with the people, to reign. Agathon successfully motivates the peasants to try and free the King yet before they can start marching they find out that he has drowned.

Given Wassermann's later concern with homosexual outsider figures, King Ludwig II would have to be named as the first figure in that line, especially since he is described as a monarch 'der doch seit Jahren sich von allen Frauen ferngehalten. Er verachtete und geringschätzte die Frauen und war hart und brutal gegen sie.' (JZ, 265) Moreover, as can be deduced from Heinz Häfner's biography, the king's homosexuality was already being talked about during his lifetime, especially the sexual abuse of his soldiers, hence Wassermann would no doubt have been familiar with this detail.³²

The short-lived nature of Agathon's vision finds further emphasis in *Renate Fuchs* where, just before the end of his life, Agathon renounces his former beliefs:

"Ich entäußerte mich alles Glaubens und sah in der entgötterten Welt starke Menschen sich zur Freude wenden. [...] Die Moral der Religionen und der Gesellschaft hatte mich erbittert und zum Kämpfer gemacht. Durch Andersthun, durch Worte glaubte ich wirken zu können. Heute glaub ich es nicht mehr."³³

The idea of achieving happiness through the renunciation of religion is therefore denied and yet the search for happiness continues in *Renate*

³² See Heinz Häfner, *Ein König wird beseitigt: Ludwig II. von Bayern* (Munich: Beck, 2008), pp. 50 – 76.

³³ Jakob Wassermann, *Die Geschichte der Jungen Renate Fuchs* (Berlin: Fischer, 1901), pp. 472 – 473. Henceforth reference will be given in brackets with RF followed by page number.

Fuchs where the topic of religion is moved to the margins. Even though Agathon's vision turns out to be a failure it nevertheless offers intriguing insights into the ways in which Wassermann perceived society at that point in his life.

2.4 Gudstikker – the devil in disguise?

As with the depiction of Jews and Christians in general, with the portrayal of the writer Gudstikker, Wassermann seems keen to demonstrate that making a distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish artists has become a futile and irrelevant pursuit since they are all affected by the same 'Literatentum'. Wassermann gets his point across by making the non-Jewish artist Gudstikker conform to all the stereotypes about non-creative Jewish artists as formulated by the anti-Semite Bojesen. Moreover, the character of Gudstikker is also a reflection on the role of the commercial artist, or 'Literat', in this troubled society. This reflection seems at times to be turning into moments of self-reflection on Wassermann's part, making them all the more intriguing.

Gudstikker represents the increasingly commercialised institutions of culture and thus the kind of artist whom Wassermann later described as the 'Literat'. Though Wassermann only introduces his concept of the 'Literat' in 1909, the figure of the inferior commercial man of letters is clearly anticipated in the character of Gudstikker. Gudstikker stands in opposition to the true creative artist as he combines two trends which were common at the time: his books are mere products and not inspired by true genius. Or, as Wassermann puts it, they are simply produced instead of being born from contact with the divine. Moreover, he writes unworldly, merely aesthetic poetry following the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*. In 'Die Kunst der Erzählung' (1904) Wassermann rejected this watchword of the 1890s: 'Gewiß muß es [das Kunstwerk] um seiner selbst willen hervorgebracht werden. Aber es darf, wie das lebendige Geschöpf, nicht

um seiner selbst willen existieren.³⁴ In his essay 'Der Literat oder Mythos und Persönlichkeit' (1909) Wassermann introduces the concept of the 'Literat' who has no true inspiration and thus turns literature into an article of mass production: 'Der Literat ist der vom Mythos losgelöste produktive Mensch.'³⁵ According to Wassermann, great literature should be based on a timeless myth like Faust or Don Quixote. Besides, Gudstikker considers his art as a means to an end: 'Ich mache in Kunst' (JZ, 110). To him writing is a job like any other and it is not based on any genuine inspiration but merely on the desire to earn money.

In the novel as well as in the essay Wassermann is highly aware that most people are quick to associate the concept of the 'Literat' with the Jewish artist. Lindemann-Luiken tells us:

Der ‚Jude‘ erweist sich für die völkische Literaturpolemik durch seine angeblich intellektuelle Arbeitsweise als Literat im Gegensatz zum intuitiv arbeitenden ‚arischen‘ Dichter und von daher gilt ‚jüdische Literatur‘ „als artistisch-formal“.³⁶

Moreover, some critics even perceive this kind of art as a threat to genuine, profound German art and culture. As a rejection of this attitude, Wassermann seems to have created the character of Gudstikker in a way that Bojesen's lengthy complaint about Jewish artists could as easily be read as a description of this Gentile 'Literat'. It is therefore not, as Lindemann-Luiken has rightly observed, as a moment of anti-Semitism by Wassermann himself:

Sie [Jewish artists] sind Künstler, echte Künstler, daran ist nicht zu zweifeln. Aber sie richten uns zugrunde. [...] Sie haben keine Tiefe. Nur in die Breite gehen sie, und wenn sie tief scheinen, ist es eine Lüge. [...] Sie nehmen uns die Wahrheit und die Aufrichtigkeit in der Kunst [...] Sie ersetzen es unbewußt mit dem Schein von Wahrheit, dem Schein von Aufrichtigkeit; sie bringen uns eine neue Art von Sentimentalität, die sich als Naivität gibt und mit grüblerischer Wehmut nach den Gründen der Dinge schreit. (JZ, pp. 123 – 124)

Throughout the two novels, Gudstikker's art is also described as phony in a sense that it is written with virtuosity but that it is shallow, untrue and

³⁴ Jakob Wassermann, 'Die Kunst der Erzählung' in *Lebensdienst*, pp. 550-585 (p. 575).

³⁵ Jakob Wassermann, 'Der Literat oder Mythos und Persönlichkeit' in *Lebensdienst*, pp. 502-550 (p. 544).

³⁶ Lindemann-Luiken, *Auswirkungen*, p. 62.

unable to leave a lasting impression. This kind of art is commercial and not meant to last. This description of Gudstikker culminates in a scene where Agathon cannot help but think of the artist as the most Jewish person he ever met:

Es war die Lüge selbst, die ihm in ihrer ganzen brutalen Unbekümmertheit entgegentrat. [...] Agathon fand kein anderes Wort dafür als das Wort jüdisch, in seinem häßlichsten Sinn. Gudstikker schien ihm die jüdischste Natur, die er je getroffen. (JZ, 257)

In this scene, where a Jewish character accuses a non-Jewish character of being Jewish, it becomes apparent that in Wassermann's understanding the term 'Jewish' has turned in this context into a negative characteristic that has little to do with an actual religious affiliation. The artist that many people think of as Jewish is simply, in his view, a type of modern artist. To distinguish between the Jewish and the non-Jewish artist is therefore a futile pursuit.³⁷

In his essay on the 'Literat', Wassermann adds complexity to this point as he admits that there are indeed many Jews among these 'Literaten', a fact which he attributes to the exclusion of Jews at the time from state employment. As a consequence many of them went into law, medicine and the arts. However, Wassermann is not entirely dismissive of these artists but rather argues that even though their originality is artificial they are capable of producing noteworthy works of art. Most importantly though, in his view, no modern artist can help sharing some character traits with the 'Literat' which raises this figure to a universal level, detached from any question of religious affiliation.

In accordance with this argument, the depiction of Gudstikker is not entirely negative. For instance, Agathon is shown to be aware of 'einen hohen Zug [...] durch den Gudstikker fähig war, das wirklich Große zu verstehen und sich ihm hinzugeben.' (JZ, 195) The 'Literat' therefore remains an ambiguous and questionable figure, a necessary side-effect of

³⁷ Lindenmann-Luiken's claim that Wassermann does not react to the image of the Jew as a 'krankhaft sexuellen Triebwesen' seems refuted by the fact that Gudstikker, with his very active sex life, could indeed be read as an indirect reaction to that prejudice. See Lindenmann-Luiken, *Auswirkungen*, p. 85.

modern life and an ubiquitous phenomenon but not an exclusively Jewish figure. Plöger is therefore right in asserting that Wassermann rejects the idea that inferior modern art is necessarily made by Jewish artists. However, her view that as a Jewish artist Wassermann was keen to distance himself from the figure of the 'Literat' at all costs does not seem to do justice to the complexity of the matter.³⁸ Similarly, Erwin Poeschel seems to be mistaken when he claims that Wassermann had identified the 'Literat' as a 'geheimer innerer Feind' that he needed to make 'unschädlich'.³⁹ Joeris's claim that Wassermann here confirms Jewish stereotypes seems as erroneous as her claim that his critique of the 'Literat' was aimed at Thomas Mann.⁴⁰ The latter claim seems particularly problematic since Wassermann, despite a strong sense of rivalry, never doubted Mann as an artist, which can be inferred from a letter to Marta Karlweis where he writes: '...und war dann über drei Stunden bei Thomas Mann. Er ist ja über jede Kritik und jedem Lob'.⁴¹

Being a Jewish writer himself, it seems that Wassermann felt the need to make his own person part of the debate revolving around the 'Literat'. There are a few hints in the two novels suggesting the possibility that the figure of Gudstikker can also be understood as partly modelled on Wassermann himself. In *Zirndorf* Gudstikker is leaving for Berlin because one of his plays is being performed, an ambition that he shares with the young Wassermann who soon after the publication of *Zirndorf*, in October 1900, travelled to Berlin where his play *Hockenjos* was performed alongside Hofmannsthal's *Der Tor und der Tod* at the Sezessionsbühne.⁴² In *Renate Fuchs* Gudstikker is writing a book about Renate in order to address the 'Frauenfrage' just as Wassermann does with his own novel. Moreover, in a letter to Gudstikker, Renate writes: 'Ich kann nur ihre Schrift schwer

³⁸ See Plöger, *Ästhetik*, pp. 305 – 307.

³⁹ Erwin Poeschel, 'Jakob Wassermann', in *Juden in der deutschen Literatur*, ed. by Gustav Krojanker (Berlin: Welt-Verlag, 1922), pp. 76 – 101 (p. 83).

⁴⁰ See Joeris, *Aspekte*, pp. 65 -67.

⁴¹ Wassermann to Marta Karlweis, 18.2.1916, DLA Marbach, call number: 73.205/3.

⁴² See Rodewald, *Ein Weg*, p. 45.

lesen. Sie ist so klein.' (RF, 204) This minor detail becomes important in the context of Wassermann's own correspondence since some of his correspondents complained about his notoriously small handwriting, among them Martha Karlweis and Ferruccio Busoni.⁴³

If Gudstikker is therefore to be understood as a reflection on Wassermann's own role as an artist in society, then it reveals his concern with the possible limitations of that role. When confronted with the submissive behaviour of Käthe Estrich towards her fiancée Gudstikker, Agathon has an important insight: 'Er hat ihr den Glauben geraubt. Was hat er ihr dafür gegeben? Seine eigene Person.' (JZ, 165) Yet, as the two novels show, this type of artist is not a person to believe in. Ruminating on her numerous encounters with famous poets in Berlin, Jeanette comes to a sobering conclusion: "'Aber wie schrecklich bin ich immer enttäuscht worden!'" (JZ, 152) Most of the art in circulation it seems, cannot offer any substantial or long-term relief to people. The kind of art that Gudstikker produces reaches many people, yet it is to no avail. It never leaves a lasting impression and even his book on the 'Frauenfrage' proves to be of no consequence to Renate. Even though aiming to become a commercial artist himself, Wassermann remains suspicious of the possible benefits of it.

That is because the notion of finding genuine happiness through art is not denied in the novel. In fact, it looks as if the only character to find happiness and contentment in the two novels through art is the minor character of Edward Nieberding's sister Cornely. Following an obsessive phase of believing herself to be a Christian, Cornely finally discovers writing poetry as a source of true happiness and liberation:

Die Ruhe, die sie erfüllte, war so frauenhaft und ausgeglichen, daß sie sich ganz neubelebt fühlte. [...] Diese Empfindung des Losgelöstseins und der Leichtigkeit hatte sie wünschen lassen, nackt zu sein. (JZ, 254)

⁴³ On 28. 2. 1916 Wassermann writes in a letter to Martha Karlweis: 'Liebste, so schreib ich also größer.' DLA, Marbach, call number 73.205 / 7. On 8. 4. 1921 Wassermann writes to Ferruccio Busoni: 'Merken Sie, dass ich mich fortwährend bemühe, gross zu schreiben?' DLA Marbach, call number 96.48.3 / 16.

Plöger is therefore mistaken in her claim that in the novel only Jeanette and Sema Hellmuth produce genuine art, even more so as neither of the two achieves happiness that way.⁴⁴

2.5 An emancipated woman – just a dream?

The two figures that Wassermann is particularly interested in throughout the two novels are the woman and the Jew. Even though he frequently denies any basis for making a distinction between the Christian and the Jew he is nevertheless aware of the mechanisms of exclusion affecting the latter. Seeing the woman and the Jew as parallel outsider figures in Wassermann's fiction offers a new way of looking at the two novels and the connections between them.

In his book *Freud, Race and Gender* Sander L. Gilman offers an explanation of how the two can both be considered as others – albeit in different ways - in relation to the Gentile man. Gilman argues that within the race and gender categories that prevailed in the nineteenth century, the stereotype of the woman and that of the Jew were considered parallel categories to the Christian male. However, woman was not the opposite of man but his complement, needed for reproduction, therefore the protected and inclusionary other. By the end of the nineteenth century this conventional relationship had become strained and threatened by the figure of the prostitute and the intellectual woman who were both considered the bad other. The bad other stands in opposition to the good other, i.e. the figure of the obedient wife and mother. With the bad other challenging male superiority as well as traditional family values these women were perceived as a threat.

Historically, the Jew had also been an inclusionary other: 'Jews were the historical elements against which they [Christians] could define

⁴⁴ See Plöger, *Ästhetik*, p. 303.

themselves' which made the Jew a necessary inclusionary other.⁴⁵ Yet when in the course of secularisation religious categories gave way to racial ones, and the Jew became the opposite not of the Christian but of the Aryan, he was no longer needed and became the exclusionary other. Thus even though the Jew and the woman were not equivalent, the categories underwent similar changes and they were both 'different from and less than the male'.⁴⁶ The idea of the woman and the Jew as a suppressed other in relation to the Gentile man explains why Wassermann was anxious to explore the contemporary situation of women in *Renate Fuchs*. Moreover, the emancipated or 'fallen' woman as the bad other, threatening conventional gender relations, seemed even closer in her status to that of the Jew.

The concept of linking the woman and the Jew because of their similar status as outsiders can also be found in Hans Mayer's book *Außenseiter*. Mayer also adds the homosexual to the category of the existential outsider: an individual who is made an outsider by his or her birth, sex or any other mental or physical abnormality (*Eigenart*). Mayer goes on to argue that the bourgeois enlightenment of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has failed in the face of these three outsiders. All that has been achieved is a form of tolerance which tolerates the outsider without actually integrating him or her. For centuries these three outsiders had to conform to the rules of a heterosexual, male-dominated and Gentile society: it was not acceptable for them to live their otherness. Even though the category of the homosexual is more relevant for Wassermann's later fiction Mayer's approach nevertheless allows it to be placed in a wider theoretical framework.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ See Mayer, *Außenseiter*.

2.5.1 Jeanette

Just like her cousin Agathon, Jeanette Löwengard breaks with the world of her father in search of a more pleasurable existence. As a woman Jeanette is confronted with a problematic, though as *Renate Fuchs* will show not exclusively Jewish tradition, that is marriage as a mere way of doing business. Despite her family's high level of assimilation, she is turned into a marriageable object (one could almost say a tradeable good). Or, as Jeanette puts it: "[B]ei uns werden alle Mädchen verschachert wie Häuser und Grundstücke."⁴⁸ (JZ, 95) In his novel *Jüdinnen* Max Brod refers to this dilemma as 'das allgemeine traurige Schicksal der Mädchen, der jüdischen namentlich, die für keinen anderen Zweck als die Ehe erzogen werden.'⁴⁹ In the 1897 version of *Zirndorf* the controversy surrounding this practice is highlighted even further by the depiction of Jeanette's fiancé the widower Salomon Hecht: 'Ein alter, grinsender, gebückt gehender Mensch mit brauner Perücke und gefärbtem Bart' (JZ, 97)⁵⁰ When Jeanette publicly refuses to get married to this 'Greis', her longing for pleasure becomes immediately apparent: "Was soll ich denn anfangen mit diesem Schwein in der Nacht, wenn ich von Männern träume, die nicht ein paar matte Nachtlichter im Kopf haben, sondern Augen, Augen, Augen?" (JZ, 100) Her decision to break with her family forever is therefore predominantly motivated by a longing for sexual freedom rather than emancipatory concerns.

⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that Wassermann uses such a strong term as ‚schachern‘ here which carries extremely negative connotations not alone because of the way it has been used by Karl Marx in *Zur Judenfrage* (1844). Marx writes: 'Die Emanzipation vom Schacher und vom Geld, also vom praktischen, realen Judentum war die Selbstemanzipation unserer Zeit.' See Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage' in *Frühe Schriften I*, ed. by Hans Joachim Lieber and Peter Furth (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1962), pp. 451-88 (p. 481).

⁴⁹ Max Brod, *Jüdinnen* (Leipzig and Vienna: Kurt Wolff, 1915), p. 174.

⁵⁰ In later versions of the novel this depiction is toned down as Hecht is described as ‚ein elegant gekleideter, ziemlich fatter Mann‘, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (Berlin: Fischer, 1918), p. 105.

Jeanette's means of escaping from a world where, as she puts it, "die Lebensfreude bei der Prostitution anfängt"⁵¹ is dance. The dance is important in her process of sexual liberation because it is an act of self-expression through the body. On stage Jeanette publicly exposes her body which stands in strong opposition to the claim that women should dress modestly and cover their bodies. In Brod's *Jüdinnen* (1911) the character Irene Popper admires the famous female dancers of her time, yet when she tries to dance herself in front of the protagonist Hugo Rosenthal she trips and falls. Combined with her later 'traditional' marriage her inability to dance can be understood as a symbol for her failed attempt at emancipation or sexual liberation. And yet it remains questionable whether Jeanette herself achieves a form of emancipation or whether she simply remains an object of male sexual desire. In her job she dances for the entertainment of men thus turning from an object of her father's business interests into a victim of male exploitation. Koester's claim that Jeanette is indeed a 'junge emanzipierte Jüdin' therefore remains dubitable.⁵² At the end of the novel Jeanette returns from Paris as an outsider figure who is dead to the house of her father since her journey towards sexual liberation has proven to be a road of no return. As with Agathon her final hopes lay with the Bavarian King as a potential bearer of joy.

Jeanette becomes the first important female figure in Agathon's life since she introduces him to her world of sensuality. In a society in which joy of life equals prostitution, Jeanette is forced to lead a solitary, nocturnal existence with Agathon as the last member of her community to hold on to. Similar to Gudstikker, she exposes him to the depravities of a 'vermorschte Gesellschaft' (JZ, 239) and at the end of it takes his virginity. This brings the story of Agathon's sexual awakening to a close, a process which he had experienced as unpleasant due to it being a taboo in the

⁵¹ Wassermann, *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, p. 146. In later versions of the novel it reads: 'wo die Lebensfreude beim Verlust der bürgerlichen Ehre anfängt.', *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (Berlin: Fischer, 1918), p. 203. This shows that the young Wassermann was a fierce social critic who later on, possibly with regard to his middle-class readership, toned those criticisms down.

⁵² Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 18.

society he grew up in. And yet it seems important to point out that, according to David Biale, 'the Jewish tradition cannot be characterised as either simply affirming or simply repressing the erotic.'⁵³ The reader is thus confronted with Wassermann's subjective notion of society. At the same time it also reflects a conflict in Wassermann's own writing. Siegmund Bing emphasises that Wassermann's entire work is characterised by what he refers to as 'Körperscheu' meaning that the author usually shies away from depicting sexual matters.⁵⁴ Agathon's troubled response to his own sexuality therefore mirrors a conflict present in Wassermann's entire work: the longing for sexual freedom combined with an inability to depict it.

2.5.2 Monika

The minor character of Monika Olifat deserves a brief discussion, not only because she becomes Agathon's first wife. Monika is not just a Jewish woman but she is also an Eastern European Jew which adds a heightened significance to her character. As mentioned above, *Zirndorf* can be considered a Jewish family novel, a genre which often bears testimony to the resentment felt by many Jews towards Jews from Eastern Europe, the so-called 'Ostjuden'. The latter frequently make an appearance in these novels in the form of

unacculturated relatives who often turn up from Poland or Galicia and cause embarrassment by embodying the Gentile image of the hateful Jew from which the assimilationists are desperate to distance themselves.⁵⁵

Jews from Eastern Europe were therefore often seen as outsiders within the Jewish community.

Even though *Die Juden von Zirndorf* offers traditional if not stereotypical depictions of contemporary Jewish culture, it also allows for exceptions otherwise rarely to be found in Jewish family novels. Monika Olifat, who has emigrated from Poland with her mother and sister, is

⁵³ Biale, *Eros*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Bing, *Wassermann*, p. 132.

⁵⁵ Robertson, 'Jewish question', p. 274.

described as educated, fluent in standard German as well as Polish, and good-looking; even her name is unusual. She is not portrayed as different from or inferior to other members of the Jewish community, which means that she is not an internal outsider. Yet at the same time she is not shown to be exceptional for an Eastern European Jew. Kraft's claim that Wassermann openly despised Jews from Eastern Europe is therefore in need of revision.⁵⁶

Monika has an illegitimate child with Gudstikker which leaves her ostracized by her community in addition to already being an outsider figure within Gentile society. By marrying her, Agathon not only enables her to return to her own community (as depicted at the end of *Zirndorf*) but he also bridges the gap between Eastern European and Western Jews. Even though it is mentioned in *Renate Fuchs* that Monika dies soon after the wedding (RF, 473), Agathon spends the rest of his life in Eastern Europe, in Moravia, a region with many Jewish communities where the son he has with Renate will also grow up. This seems to suggest that the figure of Agathon also embodies the vision of a Jewish culture no longer separated by an East-West division. In fact his marriage to Monika at the end of *Zirndorf* can be understood as the symbolic marriage of Eastern and Western Jewish culture. Wassermann thus offers one of the few exceptions to conventional representations of Jews, insofar as this work is free from stereotypical and derogatory depictions of ginger-haired and backward Jews from Eastern Europe.

This notion of Agathon as a mediator between different worlds is a recurring theme and will be crucial for the understanding of the final scenes of *Renate Fuchs*.

⁵⁶ See Kraft, *Wassermann*, p. 104.

2.5.3 Renate Fuchs

In *Renate Fuchs* the perspective is widened as the novel moves from the parochial setting of Franconia to that of the cosmopolitan Munich. After dealing with his immediate surroundings in *Zirndorf* Wassermann is now able to explore the urban world and the world of women, i.e. the other Other. Following Gilman's as well as Mayer's approach Renate can be seen as representing the other Other in relation to the Gentile man. As we have seen, at the time the woman and the Jew both experienced discrimination and were only allowed partial participation in a society dominated by Gentile men. Thus, despite the differences between them, they are both outsiders longing for emancipation from their outsider status.

Renate Fuchs is the story of a young and beautiful woman from a privileged background who breaks off her engagement to a duke by eloping with another man called Anselm Wanderer. Renate and Anselm live together for a while as an unmarried couple, yet after the loss of Wanderer's fortune Renate leaves for Vienna where she starts selling her body as a high-class cocotte or prostitute. Unable to bear this situation, Renate tries to earn a living with manual labour – a situation which turns out to be equally unbearable. After many trials and tribulations Renate eventually meets the dying Agathon Geyer. In one night of love they conceive a child which Renate is to bring up on her own, away from society somewhere in the countryside in Moravia. Her quest for emancipation thus ends with motherhood.

Renate Fuchs marked the beginning of Wassermann's thriving career as a novelist which led to, as Karl Leydecker has put it, 'an extremely lucrative relationship for Wassermann and Fischer.'⁵⁷ In *Die Bilanz der Moderne* (1904) Samuel Lublinski attributed the popularity of the novel, which for a

⁵⁷ Leydecker, 'Case', p. 86.

long time remained Wassermann's most successful novel even after the publication of *Caspar Hauser*, to Wassermann's strong awareness of those issues in need of public discussion: in this case women's struggle for emancipation.⁵⁸ In 1903 Georg Brandes wrote: 'Er [der Roman] war vergangenes Frühjahr von allen Büchern das meist besprochene und meist gelesene.'⁵⁹ Thus, even though not all critics agreed that the novel was actually a successful depiction of the issue of emancipation, it struck a nerve and aroused extensive interest and discussion.⁶⁰

Before looking at the novel's eponymous protagonist, the minor character Gisa Schumann needs a brief discussion at this point. With Gisa, Wassermann has chosen a Jewish woman to become the ultimate sexual object, the victim of other people's longing for pleasure. Wassermann here designates the Jewish woman as the ultimate outsider whose situation is far worse than that of the male Jew or the Gentile woman. Gilman tellingly refers to the situation of being Jewish and female as a 'double-double bind'.⁶¹ Gisa stands at the centre of the opening scene of the novel: she runs away, naked, from Renate's fiancé Rudolf. She has been tricked and essentially sold by her parents to Rudolf who could not resist her beauty. Conversely, her nudity underlines the fact that she is a defenceless object.

Just after the wedding to a man she does not love, Gisa has a violent fit of madness. Throughout the novel, Gisa hardly ever speaks: 'Gisa Schumann sprach nicht, auch schien man nicht zu erwarten, daß sie rede.' (RF, 25) Madness in the novel is therefore not shown to be subversive. Instead, Marta Canimero-Santangelo's theory applies that the figure of the madwoman 'provides a symbolic resolution whose only outcome must be greater powerlessness'.⁶² Moreover, Wassermann evokes the image of the

⁵⁸ The relevant reference is quoted in Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, p. 31.

⁵⁹ Georg Brandes, *Gestalten und Gedanken: Essays* (Munich: A. Langen, 1903), pp. 25-30 (p. 25).

⁶⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the novel's reception see Plöger, *Ästhet*, pp. 346 – 349.

⁶¹ Gilman, *Freud*, p. 21.

⁶² Marta Caminero-Santangelo, *The Madwoman can't speak, or, Why Insanity is not subversive* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 3.

sensual Jewish woman, the *belle juive*. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Jewish woman is frequently depicted as a highly sensual femme fatale.⁶³ Due to her status as a double outsider, the Jewish woman is therefore, in Wassermann's view, at a far greater risk to become subject to male exploitation. Her longing for emancipation, it seems, can only, as in the case of Agathon's sister Miriam, be satisfied if she is willing to relinquish all sexual pleasure in order to focus on her education instead. Female madness as the only way out of a hopeless situation will remain a constant theme throughout Wassermann's entire oeuvre.

The character of Renate Fuchs is Wassermann's main contribution to the so-called 'Frauenfrage'. As a character, Renate is probably best understood if seen as a victim of the various mechanisms of exclusion affecting her life. After all, she spends almost all of her life in complete social isolation. With her depiction Wassermann seems less interested in concrete emancipatory concerns but rather seeks to convey the psychological situation as well as the daily life of a naive young woman who chooses what looks like a free life of pleasure over a lucrative marriage to a middle-aged man. Herbert Tiefenbacher, in one of the very few critical discussions of *Renate Fuchs*, describes this process as follows: 'Sehnsucht nach Ich-Findung [...] verbunden mit der Ahnung, zu Höherem berufen zu sein, sind die Kräfte, die die Heldin zu dem für die Gesellschaft so außergewöhnlichen Handlungsschritt bewegen.'⁶⁴ Moreover, through the eyes of Renate, Wassermann seeks to explore the lives of a number of women ranging from a baroness to a prostitute.

At the beginning of the novel the connection between the situation of the woman and the Jew is made apparent through Renate's strong attachment to the Jewish writer Süßenguth. The latter has to be seen as a

⁶³ See Mayer, *Außenseiter*, p. 318 and Ritchie Robertson, 'Historicizing Weininger: The Nineteenth-Century German Image of the feminized Jew' in *Modernity, Culture, and 'the Jew'*, ed. by Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 23-39 (pp. 28-29).

⁶⁴ Herbert Tiefenbacher, *Textstrukturen des Entwicklungs- und Bildungsromans* (Königstein: Forum Academicum, 1982), p. 105.

major influence towards Renate's decision to elope with Anselm Wanderer. Süssenguth, a self-declared 'Retter der Frauen und Mädchen' (RF, 17) is an acute observer of the troubled situation of many women. His status as a distanced observer standing outside society is highlighted by the fact that he lives 'im letzten Haus der Stadt, mitten in der Wiesen-Einsamkeit' (RF, 24). Even though he is far below her social status Renate feels irresistibly drawn towards this man, who eventually talks her out of a marriage that is solely based on rational, material interests that would leave her emotionally isolated: "Jedes wird seiner Vereinsamung müde werden, frieren, innerlich absterben, elend und verlassen sein." (RF, 33) Similar to Jeanette, Renate would thus be simply married off. Moreover, Süssenguth opens her eyes to the existing discrepancy in sexual experience between men and woman when they enter a marriage:

"Er [Süssenguth] meint, daß alle die körperlichen Tugenden, die die Männer von uns verlangen, nichts als Lug und Trug sind. Er meint, daher kommt es, daß so viele, viele Frauen zu Grunde gehen." (RF, 18)

Renate's life-changing decision to break off her engagement, to look for happiness and to explore the lives of the 'Frauen unten' (RF, 71) is thus at least partly based on her contact with the other outsider.

For a brief period after her escape, Renate finds the 'beglückende Lebensfülle' that she had been looking for. Renate and Wanderer live as an unmarried couple with Renate frequently rejecting Wanderer's attempts to marry her, or, as he puts it: 'ihren Bund gesellschaftlich zu sanktionieren' (RF, 117). The price for this lifestyle is high since her father disowns her and she is forced to live in complete social isolation in a house close to the woods. At the same time Wanderer is still able to enjoy, at least to a certain extent, a social life outside of their relationship. Once Wanderer has lost his entire fortune and their relationship falls apart, it soon becomes clear that Renate's previous life and education have left her too inexperienced to support herself:

Aber was hatte sie gelernt? Ein altersgraues Vorurteil hatte sie daran gehindert, ihre Sinne zu sammeln für eine Thätigkeit, ihre Gedanken zu gewöhnen an ein übersichtliches Maß

von Geschäften, ihre Hände zu üben in Stetigkeit und Ausdauer [...] Mußte also ein Weib das Edelste ohne Zögern feilbieten, wenn sie sich im grauenhaften Kampf der Existenzen behaupten will? (RF, 254 – 255)

As soon as other men realise that Renate has lived with a man without being married, she is considered an object of prey. As a result she finds herself almost automatically drawn towards a life of degradation. After several attempts at earning her own living – Renate works as a governess, in a factory and as an accompanist to a female choir – she arrives at the conclusion that the working conditions for women do not allow them to lead an independent existence let alone to find true happiness. Selling her body becomes the only option to make a living outside wedlock. Tellingly, Renate is also referred to as a 'Heimatlose' (JZ, 292) by Gudstikker which brings her into close proximity to the status of many Jews who were equally denied their claim to a 'Heimat' – albeit for different reasons – by the greater part of the Gentile society.

The majority of women in the novel are prevented from experiencing sexuality as a source of happiness or pleasure. Instead it becomes a space in which they are subject to humiliation and powerlessness, since they are either, like Renate, confronted with domestic violence or stuck in a loveless marriage or relationship. These women are contrasted with a whole array of female students whom Renate meets during her time in Switzerland. The depiction of these women is predominantly negative and clichéd as the portrayal of Gertrud Werkmeister shows:

Ihr Gang war vernachlässigt (absichtlich watschelnd), wie alles an ihr vernachlässigt war. Eine dürrtige Kleidung schlotterte an ihrem Körper, und die kurzgeschnittenen Haare gaben dem Gesicht trotz seiner Blässe etwas Pausbäckiges. (RF, 379)

The common denominator of most of these almost caricatured figures is that they are ‚durchaus geschlechtslos‘ (RF, 381) The possibility of an intellectual emancipation in combination with sexual fulfilment is seemingly denied. The narrator's reaction to the intellectual woman is therefore surprisingly unsympathetic as they are on the whole ridiculed and denied all feminine qualities. In a similar vein, Renate is only allowed

to experience a form of physical, that is sexual freedom while her mental faculties are shown to be limited.

This allows for the novel to be placed in the context of writers such as Elsa Bernstein and Lou Andreas-Salomé even if they do not necessarily caricature their 'new women' like Wassermann does. The figure of the intelligent yet therefore rather masculine woman can also be found in the character of Sabine Graef in Elsa Bernstein's play *Dämmerung* (1893): the possibility of being happy as an unmarried and educated woman is seemingly denied. In fact, Sabine dreams about getting married to Ritter when she will eventually be 'ganz glücklich dumm'.⁶⁵ Similarly, in Lou Andreas-Salomé's two short stories *Fenitschka* and *Eine Ausschweifung* (1898) the female protagonists remain strangely incapable of living up to their emancipated claims.⁶⁶ During his time in Munich (1894 – 1898) Wassermann and Andreas-Salomé frequently spent time together which allows us to suspect that he was familiar with her work.⁶⁷ Wassermann is therefore no exception when he eventually denies his protagonist an emancipated lifestyle.⁶⁸ It makes it, however, doubtful whether the novel, despite its awareness of the complicated situation of women, actually supports their liberation and independence.

In its latter stages the novel moves from a realist presentation of women's situation to a more symbolic, even allegorical bond between two outsiders, namely Agathon and Renate. This union stands in strong opposition to Mayer's claim that solidarity between the outsiders cannot exist.⁶⁹ Instead, Lindemann-Luiken is right in claiming that Renate is the 'nicht-jüdische Pendant zu Agathon'.⁷⁰ The two are united and designated

⁶⁵ Elsa Bernstein, *Dämmerung: Schauspiel in fünf Akten*, ed. by Susanne Kord (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003), p. 121.

⁶⁶ See Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Fenitschka, Eine Ausschweifung: Zwei Erzählungen*, ed. by Ernst Pfeiffer (Frankfurt a.M. and Berlin: Ullstein, 1983).

⁶⁷ See Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Lebensrückblick*, ed. by Ernst Pfeiffer (Frankfurt a. M: Insel, 1974), p. 110.

⁶⁸ This view is supported by Plöger's findings, see Plöger, *Ästhet*, pp. 360 – 361.

⁶⁹ Mayer, *Außenseiter*, p. 464.

⁷⁰ Lindemann-Luiken, *Auswirkungen*, p. 201.

as outsiders by another curious fact: their proximity to animals. Agathon is frequently compared to animals whilst Renate's companion throughout the entire novel is a dog named Angelus with whom she can communicate. The idea of linking the outsider with animals, thus underlining their otherness, reappears and features most strongly in *Caspar Hauser* (1908). Renate realises that the inner voice she has been following actually belongs to Agathon. In their one night of love she becomes pregnant with their son, the first member of a 'neues Geschlecht'.

The Jew and the Gentile woman thus unite in order to make the Gentile man superfluous from their point of view. It is the attempt to found a society in which they could both participate fully without being classed as inferior which clearly adds more significance to the ending than Koester allows for in his interpretation where he refers to 'ein kaum nachvollziehbarer, unglaublicher Ausklang.'⁷¹ However, this union would only prove to be a noteworthy alternative if the relationship between them was based on equality and respect. That means that women would no longer depend on men because of their weaker legal status, lack of education and confinement to the domestic world. Yet this remains one of the drawbacks of the thought-provoking solution which simply excludes the oppressor: this solution signifies an escape from a world in which all of Renate's attempts at emancipation have failed. Even though the idea of a union between the two outsiders remains appealing, it therefore also proves unsatisfactory in other aspects: is a life removed from society the only way in which a woman can experience freedom? Where does the union of the two outsiders leave the Jewish woman? Is madness her destiny?

As a result of Wassermann's engagement with the question of belonging or not belonging to a community, the reader is made aware of the parallel dilemmas surrounding the discrimination of women and Jews. The conclusions he arrives at are in many ways remarkable. In the course

⁷¹ Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 24.

of his two novels he makes it clear that for both of them the 'Gleichheit der Ausgangschance'⁷² – for Mayer one of the key pre-requisites for the integration of the outsider – is still out of reach and both outsiders are denied their 'Heimat'. In the case of the Jew, Wassermann has demonstrated how, concerning people's daily lives in particular, there is no longer a difference between non-Jews and Jews that could in any way make the discrimination of the latter seem justifiable. His awareness of the plight of women is, with the exception of his depiction of the intellectual woman, highly sympathetic. And even though the end of *Renate Fuchs* might appear conservative and antiquated to a modern eye, it remains altogether unusual for a novel written at that time to allow a woman to combine the otherwise contrasting types of the 'whore' and the 'mother'. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that the parallels drawn between the woman and the Jew are not negative in themselves, meaning that the Jew is not depicted as effeminate as, for instance, only a few years later by Otto Weininger.⁷³ In terms of the overall picture drawn of society here, the insight into the general lack of pleasure offers a simple yet telling understanding of how Wassermann perceived the world around him at the turn of the century.

⁷² Mayer, *Außenseiter*, p. 387.

⁷³ See Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter: Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung* (Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 1932), pp. 398 - 441 and Robertson, 'Historicizing Weininger'.

3. Talk to me – on the life of the child in *Caspar Hauser*

‘Die Zeit wird kommen, in der das Kind als heilig angesehen werden wird’¹

3.1 Introduction

The novel *Caspar Hauser oder Die Trägheit des Herzens* (1908) is one of Wassermann’s best known works until today and has received a fair amount of critical attention. It was one of Kafka’s favourite books² whilst Erich Kästner still felt the need to mock the ‘Trägheit des Herzens’ in his novel *Fabian* in 1931.³ Thomas Mann considered it to be Wassermann’s ‘erstes Meisterwerk’.⁴ *Caspar* tells the story of the historical figure of Kaspar Hauser from his sudden appearance in Nuremberg in May 1828 to his death in Ansbach in December 1833. With the story of the mysterious foundling, Wassermann chose a subject that not only inspired subsequent artists⁵ but also remains a hotly debated topic until today with books still being written on the subject. Wassermann thus uses the material of a widely familiar story as the basis for his novel – with the exception of *Alexander in Babylon* (1905) and *Donna Johanna von Castilien* (1906),⁶ a unique instance in his oeuvre.⁷ Yet while Joana of Castile and Alexander the Great are figures from a remote past, the figure of Kaspar Hauser is in many ways closer to home, serving an altogether different purpose. ‘Das Kind von Europa’, as Kaspar was frequently called, became Wassermann’s

¹ Ellen Key, *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes*, trans. by Francis Maro (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz, 1992), p. 36.

² See Max Brod, *Über Franz Kafka* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1974), p. 276.

³ See Erich Kästner, *Fabian: Die Geschichte eines Moralisten* (Munich: DTV, 2011), p. 10, p. 35 and p. 40.

⁴ Quoted in Karlweis, *Wassermann*, pp. 334.

⁵ For the most famous examples see Georg Trakl, *Kaspar Hauser Lied* (1913), Klaus Mann, ‘Kaspar-Hauser-Legenden’ in *Vor dem Leben* (1925), Peter Handke, *Kaspar* (1967) and Werner Herzog’s movie *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* (1974). See also Kálmán Kovács, *Kaspar-Hauser-Geschichten: Stationen der Rezeption* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2000).

⁶ Jakob Wassermann, ‘Donna Johanna von Castilien’ in *Die Schwestern* (Berlin: Fischer, 1906), pp. 9 – 69.

⁷ Tellingly, Wassermann considered *Die Schwestern* as a practice for his *Caspar Hauser*.

chance to present the outsider par excellence, namely the child. Critics have shown how the figure of Caspar in the novel can be understood as a Jewish or a homosexual figure.⁸ Yet while the figure certainly lends itself to these interpretations, it seems even more intriguing to complete this notion of Caspar as the ultimate outsider by showing how he is being ostracised as a child without a childhood and no chance of ever growing up. Wassermann's general concern with the figure of the child here reaches an early climax as he dedicates an entire novel to the mechanisms of exclusion that do not allow children to participate fully in a society of adults. The creation of his Caspar therefore becomes Wassermann's discovery of childhood as a space of oppression and exclusion.

Wassermann's use of the original sources of the historical Kaspar Hauser case will be analysed in the first part of this chapter. Given the author's growing interest in the question of character, it is of great importance to see how he uses or changes the historical material in order to create his characters whilst sticking to the original cast. Analysis will show how this confined creative space nevertheless allowed Wassermann to come up with his own version of character and to offer not only a critique of Biedermeier society but also of the Wilhelmine Germany he was confronted with. The history of the novel's genesis will reveal how it has to be understood as the fusion of contemporary and historical material in a sense that it was initially intended to have a modern setting. The final result is a work of cultural criticism in a thin historical disguise.

When looking at Caspar as a child, it will be necessary to take into account how during the process of writing Wassermann was inspired by his first son, then a toddler, Albert, whose linguistic development in particular is reflected in the figure of the foundling. Tellingly, Caspar's literal and symbolical inability to communicate stands at the centre of his exclusion

⁸ See Stimilli, 'Findlinge', 478 - 500 and Roman Graf, "'Alles ist Verdächtig': Zum Thema der 'Homosexualität' in den Bearbeitungen der Kaspar-Hauser-Legende von Jakob Wassermann, Klaus Mann und Werner Herzog", in *Der Imaginierte Findling*, ed. by Ulrich Struve (Heidelberg: Winter, 1995), pp. 103 – 23.

from the adult world as he seems to be forever misunderstood. Moreover, those who do understand him are also branded as outsiders, namely the homosexual character Lord Stanhope and the intellectual woman Klara von Kannawurf. As in his early novels, Wassermann seems keen to highlight a network of loyalties between those who cannot find access to a society dominated by the ideals of the heterosexual Gentile man.

3.2 Fact or fiction?

The question of fact or fiction in this context is not aimed at establishing the level of Wassermann's historical accuracy. Such a purpose would already be defeated by the opaqueness of the subject matter as well as Wassermann's own rejection of the question's relevance: 'Bei der Konzeption des Romans und der Vision der Caspar-Hauser-Gestalt mußte mir die historische Grundlage schließlich ebenso gleichgültig werden, wie die kriminalistischen und genealogischen Forschungsergebnisse.'⁹ Wassermann's spelling of his protagonist's first name with a 'C' instead of the 'K' can therefore be read as a constant reminder of the author's fictional intentions. After all, his novel was not to be understood as another contribution to the ongoing debate about Kaspar Hauser's origins. Similarly, even though convinced of Hauser's princely identity, Wassermann refrains from using the full name of his alleged mother - Stéphanie de Beauharnais, Grand Duchess of Baden – in the novel. Given this strong emphasis on the novel's fictional nature, it will be even more revealing to look at the ways in which Wassermann made use of the original sources.

To begin with, however, it is necessary to take the novel's genesis into consideration in order to understand the novel's underlying structure. The intention to write a novel about the foundling dates back to the seventeenth year of Wassermann's life.¹⁰ Similar to *Zirndorf*, this novel is

⁹ Jakob Wassermann, 'Meine persönlichen Erfahrungen mit dem Caspar-Hauser-Roman' in *Lebensdienst*, pp. 123 – 149 (p. 143).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

another expression of the author's concern with the 'Heimat' of his childhood and youth. Yet, in the case of *Caspar*, Wassermann was for a long time unsure about the time his novel should be set in. On 30 March 1904 Wassermann notes in his diary that he has started to occupy himself with a fictional account of the life of Kaspar Hauser yet soon lost interest in the material.¹¹ Instead he now focused on a novel set in contemporary Ansbach which was going to be entitled *Die Trägheit des Herzens*. In this version the figure of the foundling was going to be reduced to a symbolic figure with a clear focus on contemporary events. It was not until 3 December 1905 that he wrote in his diary: 'Die ganze Tragödie stand gewaltig da und der Titel war mit leuchtenden Lettern an die Wand gemalt: Caspar Hauser oder die Trägheit des Herzens.'¹² Apart from revealing Wassermann's vanity in comparing himself to the biblical character of Daniel, this means that the final product is a fusion of two rather different projects: one novel dealing with the historical figure of Kaspar Hauser and another concerned with life in the Ansbach of the early 1900s. The final novel is set exclusively in the cities of Nuremberg and Ansbach between 1828 and 1833 and yet, analysis will show that it can nevertheless be related to Wassermann's own time to which he later referred as an 'Epoche der Auflösung'.¹³

This description of the early twentieth century is significant because it points us to another reason for Wassermann's ostensibly choosing the Biedermeier period as his main focus. It seems that he was simply overwhelmed by the task of describing his contemporary world and therefore chose to change the period of time as a means of facilitating the writing process. Evidence for this can be found in his diary: 'Das Resultat ist bei einem unleugbar großen Talent wie dem meinen [...] daß es seiner großen, vielfältig bewegten Zeit, einer ungeheuren Epoche, nahezu

¹¹ Wassermann's kept a diary between 06/03/1903 and 16/07/1904 for his eldest son Albert. So far it has only been reprinted in Karlweis, *Wassermann*, pp. 115 – 163 (p. 155).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹³ Wassermann, *Hofmannsthal der Freund* (Berlin: Fischer, 1930), p. 61.

ohnmächtig gegenüber steht.’¹⁴ By taking a step backwards in time, Wassermann makes use of the Biedermeier setting in order to create, as Schmitz-Emans puts it, a ‘panoramatisches Bild der zeitgenössischen Gesellschaft’,¹⁵ thus formulating a cultural critique of his own time.

In order to see whether and how Wassermann has or has not modified the historical characters it is necessary to look at some of the original sources. In a letter to the writer and publisher Alfred Walter von Heymel, Wassermann mentions the sources he mostly relied on for his novel: ‘Meine Quellen sind hauptsächlich die Daumerschen und Feuerbachschen Bücher und das schauderhafte Aktensammelsurium des Julius Meyer gewesen.’¹⁶ This means that Wassermann used Georg Friedrich Daumer’s three sympathetic publications on Hauser, *Mitteilungen über Kaspar Hauser* (1832), *Enthüllungen über Kaspar Hauser* (1859) and *Kaspar Hauser: Sein Wesen, seine Unschuld* (1873). Moreover, he is referring to Anselm von Feuerbach’s *Kaspar Hauser, Beispiel eines Verbrechens am Seelenleben des Menschen* (1832) and Julius Meyer’s damning *Authentische Mittheilungen über Kaspar Hauser* (1872). Since the story of Kaspar Hauser is very complex, Wassermann had to simplify it by leaving out certain characters and events in the life of the foundling. Similarly, this analysis will only be concerned with some of the novel’s main characters, namely Daumer, Quandt, Hickel, Lord Stanhope and Feuerbach.

3.2.1 Daumer – the failure of the intellectual

The figure of Daumer serves as one of Wassermann’s first examples of the failure of the intellectual in the face of the crisis of modernity. Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800 – 1875), Hauser’s first foster-father, was a poet and a philosopher of religion whose publications frequently caused controversies. Combined with his poor health, these controversies led to

¹⁴ Karlweis, *Wassermann*, p. 201.

¹⁵ Monika Schmitz-Emans, *Fragen nach Kaspar Hauser: Entwürfe des Menschen, der Sprache und der Darstellung* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), p. 82.

¹⁶ Jakob Wassermann in a letter to Alfred Walter von Heymel, 23 May 1908, DLA, Marbach, call number: 62.1894.

his resignation from his post as a teacher at the Egydiengymnasium in Nuremberg. The real Daumer was therefore a disputatious character, who dared to speak his own mind and occupied a prominent place in the dispute that broke out just after the foundling's death. Throughout his life Daumer strongly contested the idea that Hauser had been a mere impostor. His book *Kaspar Hauser: Sein Wesen, seine Unschuld* (1873) has been called the 'bedeutendste [Schrift] über Kaspar Hauser im 19. Jahrhundert.'¹⁷ For Daumer, Hauser was the proof 'daß der Mensch edel geschaffen ist und daß die Bestialität nicht die Grundlage seiner Natur bildet.'¹⁸ To him Hauser was a miracle that ought not to be meticulously questioned but accepted with simple belief, albeit not in a religious sense but referring to the 'Anerkennung des Außerordentlichen, auch wenn es der allgemeinen Begriffswelt widerspricht.'¹⁹ His view of the foundling was therefore diametrically opposed to the materialistic approach of his opponents in whose understanding there was no such thing as a soul, let alone a miracle.

The view of Daumer as a romantic dreamer and a dubious scientist was encouraged further by the numerous experiments that he carried out with Hauser in connection with mesmerism, spiritualism and homeopathy.²⁰ Despite the great caution that Daumer claims to have exercised, these experiments had alarming physical consequences as he reports that Hauser 'am ganzen Leib gelb wurde [...] die Augen tränten [...] Nasenbluten, Erbrechen, schnelle Abmagerung.'²¹ Wassermann, who otherwise entertained a favourable view of him, seems rather critical of Daumer in this regard: 'Er [Daumer] sah nicht den Menschen, er sah nur seine Idee vom Menschen.'²² This critique of Daumer as lost in the world of the mind

¹⁷ Peter Tradowsky (ed.), 'Einleitung', in Daumer, *Kaspar Hauser: Sein Wesen, seine Unschuld* (Dornach: Gerring, 1984), pp. 3 – 11 (p. 5).

¹⁸ Daumer, *Wesen*, p. 28.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁰ On the topic of mesmerism see also Jürgen Barkhoff, *Magnetische Fiktionen: Literarisierung des Mesmerismus in der Romantik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995).

²¹ Daumer, *Mitteilungen über Kaspar Hauser*. ed. by Peter Tradowsky (Dornach: Geering, 1983), p. 18.

²² Wassermann, 'Erfahrungen', p. 138.

with very little impact on the actual world around him becomes even more apparent in Wassermann's rendering of the fictional Daumer.

And yet, even though Hauser soon lost his extraordinary skills (he was for instance able to read in the dark or to detect metals without seeing them) as well as his absolute love for truth through the corruption of a 'täuschungsvolle Welt',²³ Daumer never ceased to think highly of him. Even more importantly, he always remained in contact with Hauser, who visited him in Nuremberg in the autumn of 1833 just a few months before his death. The real Daumer gave up fostering Hauser because of his poor health and, following the first attack on the foundling, the lack of security that his house offered. Despite his view that Hauser was a miracle, he was also able to see that Hauser would inevitably become a more ordinary person one day and therefore deliberately helped the latter to overcome some of his sensibilities.

These details are important when it comes to distinguishing the real from the fictional Daumer in order to understand how Wassermann modified his sources to come up with the figure of the discerning yet impractical intellectual.

In Wassermann's version, Daumer is equally drawn to Caspar because of the latter's romantic nature as well as his special gifts. Daumer despises most of the people for being rational 'Philister' and is accordingly convinced that his experiments with Caspar will provide 'gültige Beweise [...] für die Existenz der Seele, die von allen Götzendienern der Zeit mit elender Leidenschaft geleugnet wird.'²⁴ Caspar thus becomes his weapon in his struggle against the rationalistic mindset of his time. Daumer's great sense of compassion for Caspar is thus inextricably linked with his own

²³ Daumer, *Wesen*, p. 165.

²⁴ Jakob Wassermann, *Caspar Hauser oder Die Trägheit des Herzens* (Munich: DTV, 1983), p. 21. Henceforth quoted in brackets as CH with page number. This edition does not differ from the first edition and it therefore seems more reader friendly to quote from an edition that is still in print. For the original edition see Wassermann, *Caspar Hauser oder Die Trägheit des Herzens* (Stuttgart & Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1908).

scientific as well as philosophical purposes. 'Er muss mir leben' (CH, 43) are the words that Daumer utters just after Caspar has fallen seriously ill for the first time. Although Daumer is genuinely worried about Caspar, the 'mir' nevertheless denotes his egoistic pursuit. The experiments that Daumer carries out in the novel are exactly the same as those described by the real Daumer. However, in the novel these experiments come across as far worse because they seem to have been turned into a performance that people enjoy as an entertainment with Caspar as a 'dressiertes Äffchen' (CH, 54) and Daumer delighted with all the attention. Meanwhile nobody notices that Caspar was 'blaß und mit kühlem Schweiß bedeckt' (CH, 53) with his state of mind being equally ignored. The narrator therefore describes the theories that Daumer follows so passionately as 'Theorien, die mit der Seele des Menschen hantieren wie ein Alchimist mit dem Inhalt einer Retorte' (CH, 53).

Apart from treating Caspar like an object when it comes to his experiments, the fictional Daumer is also guilty of abandoning Caspar once he has turned into a mere ordinary person. Daumer thus lets his personal disappointment with the foundling prevent him from helping Caspar even though he knows that the latter will suffer at the hands of other people:

Aber ist dies etwa ein Grund, den Geschehnissen wie einem Feind, der das Schwert erhoben hat, in die Arme zu fallen und den Schlag abzuwenden? Nein, es ist kein Grund. [...] Darin haben die Idealisten und Seelenforscher nichts voraus vor Dieben und Wucherern. (CH, 133)

This serves as an illustration of what Wassermann considered to be the 'Trägheit des Herzens'. It also tallies with what Eda Sagarra describes as the Germans' reputation for 'impractical idealism' especially before 1848. This passive character prompted the writer Ludwig Börne to refer to the Germans as 'a nation of flunkeys.'²⁵

In Wassermann's understanding the story of Hauser is not just the case of a pitiable individual but it also became a political issue with a far wider

²⁵ Eda Sagarra, *Tradition and Revolution: German Literature and Society 1830 - 1890* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 64.

significance. In his version a whole section of society is suppressed alongside the founding. Wassermann does not allow his Daumer to be as eccentric and outspoken as the historical character; instead he shows him to be hemmed in and oppressed by the provincial society around him. He is unable to give public voice to the critique of society that Caspar inspires in him. As a result of his lack of personal freedom in the face of authorities who dismiss the concept of 'Freigeisterei', Daumer has developed what could be called 'Untertanengeist', a mindset also described by Heinrich Mann in his novel *Der Untertan* (1918). Although Daumer often feels offended and humiliated by Feuerbach's harsh behaviour or Frau Behold's possessive attitude towards Caspar he is meek and obedient in their presence. Daumer is only able to voice his complaints in the safety of his own home.

Wassermann despised this submissiveness towards the authorities yet considered it still to be present at the beginning of the twentieth century. He refers to it as the

dem Deutschen anezogenen Glauben an die Unantastbarkeit gekrönter Häupter. [...] man konnte im Notfall darüber tuscheln [...] in der Öffentlichkeit hieß es kuschen und schweigen. Das war bis zum Jahr 1918 nicht anders.²⁶

In this context Caspar's tragic end can be understood as an illustration of the acute danger lying beneath this mindset. For it makes people susceptible towards manipulation as well as cold towards vulnerable outsiders like Caspar. Jutta Schlich therefore rightly concludes that it is Wassermann's way of showing his 'Publikum [...] wohin Nichtstun führt – ein indirekter [...] nachhaltig wirkender Appell an dessen tatkräftige Entschlossenheit im Vorfeld des ersten Weltkrieges.'²⁷ Wassermann has thus modified the figure of the historical Daumer in order to show how the figure of the Romantic intellectual was unable to successfully overcome the

²⁶ Wassermann, 'Erfahrungen', p. 136.

²⁷ Jutta Schlich (ed.), "Warum fliegen da so schwarze Würmer herum?": Das Kaspar-Hauser-Syndrom in Literatur und Film, *Forschung und Lehre* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1999), p. 57.

strict social hierarchy of his time or to oppose the strict Biedermeier mindset, even more so as he is himself affected by it. The failure of Daumer's Romanticism as well as his other theories is an early example of Wassermann's overall dismissal of ideologies or any other theoretical approach as a means to overcome the general malaise affecting society in his view.

3.2.2 Quandt – the revolt underneath the surface

Quandt is the only character whose fictional name differs from that of the historical model and yet this is the character who has been changed the least. He is based on the figure of the teacher Johann Georg Meyer who became Hauser's foster-father when the latter moved to Ansbach in December 1831. Hauser lived with the Meyer family until his death in 1833. This was followed by the publication of Meyer's *Notizen über Kaspar Hauser* where the foundling is described as an impostor who accidentally killed himself. Meyer therefore never considered Hauser a miracle nor did he ever believe that he was dealing with a prince.

Yet despite this great congruence the figure of Quandt is interesting because of the ways in which his character has been created as well as his double-identity. To begin with it is important to take note of how this character was initially created as he is the combination of a doctor character from Wassermann's modern Ansbach story and the one based on the historical teacher Meyer: 'urplötzlich war mein Arzt und Ehemann zum Lehrer Quandt geworden.'²⁸ And just as the character is based on two rather different sources, the figure in the novel is equally split into two, meaning that this character embodies the past as well as the potential future.

In the novel, Quandt is on the outside the archetypal representative of a German citizen during the Biedermeier period. He seems to repudiate the idea of social and political change, proves himself to be a loyal subject

²⁸ Wassermann, 'Erfahrungen', p. 131.

accepting the strict social hierarchy and is also the proud patriarch of an orderly and conventional household. Quandt is frequently described as wearing a nightcap, slippers and a 'Schlafrock' (CH, 313, 456). In the nineteenth century the latter was a symbol for the conservative preference for a peaceful domesticity. People wearing a 'Schlafrock' at home in order to spare their clothes were equally considered to be sleepy in a political sense since they were sparing themselves instead of making personal sacrifices to bring about change. A well-known example for this symbol of the 'Schlafrock' is Heinrich Heine's poem number LVIII from *Die Heimkehr*:

Zu fragmentarisch ist Welt und Leben!
Ich will mich zum deutschen Professor begeben.
Der weiß das Leben zusammen zu setzen,
Und er macht ein verständlich System daraus;
Mit seinen Nachtmützen und Schlafrockfetzen
Stopft er die Lücken des Weltenbaus.²⁹

As a 'provinzlicher Schultyrann',³⁰ the teacher Quandt is also a main source for the propagation of those strict and pious principles governing Biedermeier life. In his obsession with uncreative book learning and his unfeeling treatment of Caspar, Quandt becomes a relevant figure for the critique of the educational system at the beginning of the twentieth century. Quandt seems to be in many ways an illustration of Ellen Key's critique of the pedagogical system as formulated in *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes*. Wassermann met Key during a stay in Rome³¹ and was familiar with some of her work.³² Quandt not only believes in the benefits of caning his pupils and even threatens to beat Caspar at one point but he is the archetypal pedagogue who acts according to doctrines and is always suspicious of the child:

²⁹ Heinrich Heine, 'Die Heimkehr', in *Buch der Lieder*, ed. by Pierre Grappin (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1975), pp. 204 – 334 (p. 270).

³⁰ Wassermann, 'Erfahrungen', p. 133.

³¹ See Müller-Kampel, *Collage*, p. 51.

³² See Plöger, *Ästhetik*, p. 140.

Man lehrt die neue Seele, nicht zu stehlen, nicht zu lügen, auf ihre Kleider aufzupassen, ihre Lektionen zu lernen, mit ihren Groschen hauszuhalten, Befehlen zu gehorchen, älteren Personen nicht zu widersprechen, Gebete zu sagen und sich hie und da zu balgen, um tüchtig zu werden.³³

In this understanding the child is an object that requires to be shaped according to very strict rules and ideas, something which Key considered detrimental for the child's development. Rudolf Koester observes how Wassermann himself would have been subject to this kind of education, thus adding to the notion that it has indeed undergone very little change between Hauser's time and Wassermann's.³⁴

The following passage from Hermann Hesse's novel *Unterm Rad* (1906) can serve as one example of showing how Wassermann was at the same time engaging with a popular literary topos:

Seine [the teacher's] Pflicht und sein ihm vom Staat überantworteter Beruf ist es, in dem jungen Knaben die rohen Kräfte und Begierden der Natur zu bändigen und auszurotten und an ihre Stelle stille, mäßige und staatlich anerkannte Ideale zu pflanzen. [...] Der Mensch, wie ihn die Natur erschafft, ist etwas [...] Gefährliches.³⁵

This is a direct continuation of Wassermann's critique of the educational system in his earlier novels and confirms Theisz's view that *Caspar* is 'eine Kritik der Erziehung der Zeit.'³⁶ Moreover, as Schmitz-Emans points out, stories revolving around the relationship between teachers and students were a popular means at the time for the 'literarische Auseinandersetzung mit Machtstrukturen und gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen.'³⁷ At the same time this teacher-pupil dynamic, that stretches into all areas of Caspar's private life, helps to confine him permanently to the space of childhood. In

³³ Key, *Jahrhundert*, pp. 81 – 82.

³⁴ See Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 7.

³⁵ Hermann Hesse, *Unterm Rad* in *Sämtliche Werke* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 172 – 73.

³⁶ R.D. Theisz, 'Caspar Hauser im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert: Der Außenseiter und die Gesellschaft', in *German Quarterly*, 49 (1976), 168 – 80 (p. 171).

³⁷ Schmitz-Emans, *Fragen*, p. 82.

his review, Stefan Zweig therefore referred to the novel as a 'pädagogisches Gleichnis.'³⁸

But there is still that other side of Quandt. As the public person Quandt is a citizen, taxpayer, patriot, in other words a 'Heros der Tugend' (CH, 280) who prides himself on never having told a lie. And then there is the 'Quandt an sich' who rejoices every time a misfortune occurs: 'Der Quandt an sich hatte etwas von einem Revolutionär und war immer auf dem Posten, um der Weltregierung auf die Finger zu schauen' and 'er belauerte die liebe Gotteswelt' (CH, 281). This 'heimlich aufrührerische Quandt' is full of envy, highly critical of the authorities and frustrated with his situation as an underpaid teacher. This contrast often makes Quandt an exceptionally funny character as he is, according to Thomas Mann, 'mit einer so klug-ergötzlichen Heiterkeit behandelt.'³⁹ As Quandt is the only character the narrator gives such an explicit account of, we may assume that he is supposed to represent a type, namely the narrow-minded bourgeois. By turning Quandt into a type, Wassermann is able to show that an authoritarian regime, whether during the Biedermeier or the Wilhelmine era, produces obedient yet frustrated subjects. Moreover, as can be seen with Quandt, these subjects were even likely to develop an initially unconscious sense of revolt despite a strong sense of loyalty.

Quandt therefore also functions as a symbol of change. Schmitz-Emans has rightly pointed out that the novel 'spiegelt eine Zeit im Umbruch, des Wertewandels und Werteverfalls.'⁴⁰ The inevitability of change is not only mirrored in Quandt's other personality but also in his encounter with Ludwig Feuerbach at the end of the novel. During their conversation Quandt is highly critical of the first railway about to start operating between Nuremberg and Fürth in 1835 (CH, 449). Yet the reader finds himself in a position of superior knowledge, sure that Quandt's scepticism

³⁸ Quoted in Neubauer, *Wassermann*, p. 40.

³⁹ Thomas Mann, 'Jakob Wassermanns "Caspar Hauser oder Die Trägheit des Herzens"', in *Gesammelte Werke*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1960), vol. 2, pp. 553 – 55 (p. 554).

⁴⁰ Schmitz-Emans, *Fragen*, p. 83.

will be of no use. By mentioning this encounter with Feuerbach, Wassermann reminds the reader that the intellectual forces opposing the Biedermeier mindset were already at work. Feuerbach was one of the intellectual leaders of the Vormärz movement which led to the revolutions of 1848/9. However, Feuerbach was also important for later materialist philosophy which the novel is highly critical of. The reference to Feuerbach therefore seems to suggest that the changes were inevitable yet not necessarily positive in the long run. Given Wassermann's aversion towards the idea of an actual revolution, he was faced with a similar dilemma at the beginning of the twentieth century.

3.2.3 Hickel – dreams of power

The even darker aspects of life in Biedermeier Germany are represented by the figure of Polizeileutnant Hickel. The biographical situation of this figure is rather complex. The historical Hickel was never hostile towards Hauser and the foundling seems to have been close to him and his wife. Yet after Hickel's death, Dr Julius Meyer, son of the teacher Meyer, published a collection of Hickel's letters according to which Hickel considered Hauser to be an impostor. In 1956 Hermann Pies proved that the so-called "Hickelschen Briefe" were forgeries.⁴¹ Even though Daumer had already hinted at the possibility of the letters being a fraud, it cannot be established whether or not Wassermann was aware of it. In any case the letters clearly served him as an inspiration for 'his' Hickel.

In Wassermann's version Hickel becomes the representative of a nineteenth-century police state which closely monitored and oppressed its subjects, above all through intimidation and a rigid censorship. By refraining from actually depicting the rulers of a country, governed in unfathomable ways with dark intrigues as part of the system, Wassermann emphasises the powerlessness and insecurity of its subjects. Hickel is a violent character who throughout the novel is associated with the night

⁴¹ Hermann Pies, *Die Wahrheit über Kaspar Hausers Auftauchen und erste Nürnberger Zeit* (Saarbrücken: Minerva, 1956), p. 313.

which he uses to spy on other people. He is fuelled with disgust and indifference for the people around him: 'Mochten sie einander die Köpfe abhacken, [...] mochten sie morden, stehlen, einbrechen, schänden und betrügen [...] ihm war schließlich alles Schwindel' (CH, 318). At the same time Wassermann does not fail to reveal Hickel as a banal figure who is emotionally inept and tries in vain to overcome his lower class background by exercising power over people of a higher class. The figure of Hickel can thus be understood as a hint that Wassermann perceived his own time as repressive and illiberal.

3.2.4 Stanhope – the stranger makes an appearance

The depiction of Philip Henry Stanhope (1781 – 1855), the 4th Earl of Stanhope, led to a controversy in the course of which Wassermann was forced by the Lord's family to sign a document stating that 'der Stanhope des Buches und der Stanhope der Wirklichkeit nichts mit einander zu tun hätten.'⁴² Stanhope was an intellectual and a politician who studied in Germany, travelled extensively in Europe and was known to be eccentric and estranged from his wife and his two children. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Hauser whom he met for the first time in May 1831, when Stanhope came specially to visit him in Ansbach. He spoilt Hauser with luxurious presents and in December 1831 officially became his foster-father. However, some sources suggest that the love he bore for Hauser was not that of a father but that of a lover. Daumer quotes an eye-witness reporting 'wie sich der Graf von H. küssen und streicheln ließ.'⁴³ Even though there are no more definitive historical proofs for Stanhope's homosexual inclinations, it would tally well with Stanhope's behaviour after Hauser's death. In 1835 he published a collection of letters under the title *Materialien zur Geschichte Kaspar Hausers* in which he portrays Hauser as an impostor who eventually killed himself. Stanhope bribed and re-interviewed former witnesses and thus came up with a new version of

⁴² Wassermann, 'Erfahrungen', p. 146.

⁴³ Daumer, *Wesen*, p. 288.

Hauser's story in which he considered himself betrayed by the foundling. This could indeed be the behaviour of a disappointed lover now ashamed of his former affections, though other people saw the behaviour of a spy, working for Hauser's murderers, in this extreme change of attitude.

The novel picks up this ambiguity surrounding the character of Stanhope, making him one of its most intriguing figures. Not only because of his apparent homosexuality (which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter) but also because Stanhope becomes Wassermann's first likeable villain. This is a figure that will return most prominently in the character of Warschauer-Waremme in *Der Fall Maurizius* (1928), with whom Stanhope also shares the homosexual tendency as well as the talent as an actor of the everyday life.

In the novel Stanhope is gradually revealed to be a diabolic figure who is being paid to kill Caspar. At the same time, the reader is also offered an insight into this character whose life as an impoverished noble forced him to play a role he can no longer identify with. He finds himself haunted by the person he used to be: 'der Doppelgänger stand an seiner Seite, dieser Schattenleib des Gelebten, Begangenen, Versäumten' (CH, 227). And yet, even though he is a 'Meister in der Kunst, seine wahren Absichten zu verschleiern' (CH, 170), Stanhope gradually loses control over his character as he can no longer distinguish between his performances and his genuine feelings. This becomes most apparent when he shares secrets of his employers with Caspar and Feuerbach and actually considers escaping with the foundling. Towards the end of his life the extreme discrepancy between the private and the public Stanhope can be considered as the first signs of madness of an actor who is not allowed to give up his role. Even though the narrator leaves us in the dark as to the motives of Stanhope's eventual suicide, it can be seen as partly motivated by his growing mental instabilities.

This suicide is a considerable deviation from reality (the real Stanhope died naturally in England in 1855) and caused the above-mentioned

controversy. At the same time it helps to turn this complex outsider figure into a tragic and more humane character. Otto Hartwich's description of Stanhope seems therefore adequate: '[Stanhope] ist ein Lucifer, eine moralisch gesunkene, göttliche Größe, die bei aller Gemeinheit ihren heiligen Ursprung nie ganz vergessen kann.'⁴⁴ The complex structure of Stanhope's personality as well as the depiction of his character, testify to Wassermann's growing interest in the question of character and his incipient doubts whether such a thing actually exists. Stanhope therefore has to be acknowledged as in many ways his most modern character before the publication of *Christian Wahnschaffe* (1919).

3.2.5 Feuerbach – the revolution from within

Wassermann's Feuerbach is based on Paul Johann Anselm von Feuerbach (1775 – 1833), one of the greatest German legal scholars of his time, who became famous for his reform of the Bavarian penal code which included the abolition of torture. His son Ludwig, in his preface to *Paul Johann Anselm Ritter von Feuerbachs Leben und Wirken* (1852), describes him as 'eine durchaus dramatische Persönlichkeit, mit allen Tugenden, aber auch Fehlern einer solchen behaftet.'⁴⁵ This description helps to shape the image of a man who officially lived with his mistress and liked to sign his letters 'Vesuvius', a rather appropriate self-description. In a letter to Kriminaldirektor Hitzig he remarks: 'seit Jahren ist er [Hauser] der erste und wichtigste Gegenstand meines Beobachtens, Forschens und Sorgens, meiner höchsten Teilnahme als Mensch, Gelehrter und Staatsbeamter.'⁴⁶ This great interest he took in the foundling was largely motivated by his firm belief that the latter was a prince; however, his untimely death from a stroke prevented him from continuing his struggle for Hauser's rights.

⁴⁴ Otto Hartwich, 'Feinde der Natürlichkeit. Wassermann: *Caspar Hauser oder Die Trägheit des Herzens*' in *Kulturwerte aus der modernen Literatur* (Bremen: F. Leuwer, 1911), pp. 247 – 273 (pp. 263 – 64). Quoted in Neubauer, *Wassermann*, p. 43.

⁴⁵ Ludwig Feuerbach (ed.), 'Vorwort', in *Paul Johann Anselm Ritter von Feuerbachs Leben und Wirken*, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), pp. 1-19 (p. 10).

⁴⁶ Quoted in Johann Friedrich Karl Merker, *Caspar Hauser: Nicht unwahrscheinlich ein Betrüger* (Berlin: August Rücker, 1830), p. 13.

Feuerbach's *Beispiel eines Verbrechens am Seelenleben eines Menschen* is a very affectionate and lenient depiction of the foundling as the victim of a 'partiellen Seelenmordes'.⁴⁷ As a result of Feuerbach's own psychological studies, this work gives vital insights into Hauser's psyche. While Feuerbach's opponents dismissed it as mere fiction, Wassermann makes extensive use of it for his depiction of Caspar. Wassermann greatly admired Feuerbach and referred to him as a 'Reformator aus Leidenschaft und Menschenliebe'.⁴⁸ In the novel Wassermann also provides the reader with a summary of Feuerbach's other work on Hauser, the *Memoire* (CH, 123 – 26), only published in 1853, which stays true to Feuerbach's language but without revealing the actual names of the people involved. In that way Wassermann avoids direct borrowings from Feuerbach's text.

In the novel Wassermann portrays Feuerbach as a tragic figure of resistance who struggles to remain a loyal subject in the face of a corrupt and inefficient legal and court system that is indifferent towards human rights and suffering. It is therefore not a demagogue or a young revolutionary who rebels but a Staatsrat who is part of the ruling class, thus operating from within the system. Even more than Quandt, Feuerbach symbolises the angry passions underneath the surface that first led to smaller revolutions causing the accession to the French throne of Louis Philippe in 1830 and eventually the revolutions of 1848. Feuerbach is the most political figure in the novel as he also seems to embody the debate over Hauser's origins that soon turned into a political issue with nationalist forces seeking to destroy the myth of his princely descent. Feuerbach's strong will to see crimes punished even if they are 'mit einem Purpurmantel bedeckt' (CH, 219) ends in failure, which in the novel is emphasised further by the inescapable hints that Feuerbach has been poisoned. Murdered for political reasons he becomes an even more heroic

⁴⁷ Anselm von Feuerbach, *Kaspar Hauser oder Beispiel eines Verbrechens am Seelenleben eines Menschen* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1984), p. 32.

⁴⁸ Wassermann, 'Der Kriminalist Feuerbach' in *Lebensdienst*, pp. 30 – 37 (p. 31).

figure whilst the true and brutal nature of the regime is fully exposed. In the world that Wassermann depicts here, justice is simply unavailable.

At the same time Wassermann is keen to show how the frustration with this system has even corrupted a figure like Feuerbach. Abused by his rulers for many years, Feuerbach's strong will to seek justice for Caspar carries connotations of revenge and a desire for self-vindication. He openly admits that the achievement of his aims would be worth Caspar's death. For the fictional Feuerbach the case is therefore not so much about Caspar as a person but ultimately about the question whether his lifelong struggles have been a futile pursuit: 'ob denn alles Geopferte und Gewirkte umsonst gewesen [...] ich muß wissen, ob ich in Wind geredet und auf Sand geschrieben habe' (CH, 225 – 26). To him Caspar becomes a living proof, a weapon that is supposed to help him in his struggle to make the crown a symbol of humanity. Feuerbach is driven by 'die bis zur Selbstverleugnung getriebene Erfüllung der Idee' (CH, 348) which makes him exploit Caspar for an egoistic pursuit. With the figure of Feuerbach, Wassermann makes the figure of the politically motivated fighter an altogether questionable one.

Wassermann has thus modified his sources in order to carve out the picture of a society affected by an oppressive regime which in the course of history might have changed its name – from Biedermeier to Wilhelmine – but not its nature. In his version all areas of people's lives are shaped by a lack of personal freedom that corrupts even the best of intentions. At the same time he seems confident that this state of oppression cannot last yet seems apprehensive of the future. Throughout the novel Caspar functions as the focaliser to highlight how people's hearts and minds have been corrupted. For the rest of the chapter the role of Caspar as a child as well as his relationships with the other two outsiders, Stanhope and Klara von Kannawurf, will stand at the centre of the analysis.

3.3 Caspar – the child does not speak

Caspar's status as an eternal child is confirmed throughout the novel by his childlike appearance yet most of all by his inability to communicate with the people around him. Jan Cölln has rightly concluded that Wassermann was deeply concerned with the question why communication fails.⁴⁹ Caspar's story is that of an exclusion through language for even after he has learned to use language he is still not able to communicate with others. He is prevented from integrating fully because he is forever at a loss to understand the actions and emotions of the people in charge of him which in turn leads to their rejection of this most innocent figure. Tellingly, Caspar's strong attachment to the other outsiders in the novel, namely to Stanhope and to Klara, can be seen as a result of their ability to understand him due to their similar status in society. This time Wassermann therefore portrays the homosexual, the child and the intellectual woman as outsiders with none of them surviving the end of the novel.

As we can learn from Wassermann's diary, he has integrated the process of language learning that he witnessed with his first son Albert into the novel. Some of the things uttered by Caspar at the beginning of his familiarisation with the German language are therefore direct quotes of an infant trying to grapple with language. One example for this would be Caspar's way of conveying that he is afraid of the dark: "In der Nacht sitzt das Finstere auf der Lampe und brüllt." (CH, 63)⁵⁰ Wassermann has therefore literally allowed the language of the child into his novel and in an intriguing experiment confronts it with the language of the adult. As this entails a childlike perception of things it often results in endearing as well as amusing scenes, for instance when Caspar thinks that an apple rolling along the pavement must be exhausted. Or when he is unable to understand why Stanhope is kneeling down to pray:

⁴⁹ See Jan Cölln, 'Von der Gewalt und Ohnmacht der Worte: Eine literarische Psychologie gestörter Kommunikation im Werk Jakob Wassermanns' in *Deutscher – Jude – Literat*, pp. 29 – 45 (p. 29).

⁵⁰ See Karlweis, *Wassermann*, p. 179.

Caspar, peinlich berührt, schaute sich unwillkürlich um, ob niemand Zeuge dieser demütigen Handlung sei. [...] Warum krüppelt er sich so zusammen, dachte er verstimmt, Gott kann doch nicht im Boden drinnen sein. (CH, 278)

However, this other way of looking at the world soon becomes a problem as it turns Caspar into a figure of an initially unconscious resistance.

Once Caspar has overcome his initial and obvious lack of language, the people around immediately expect him to be able to speak their language. This not only includes language to be able to communicate, but refers just as much to social conventions. Throughout the novel Caspar fails to comply with the rules of politeness and when confronted with the news of the suicide of his former-foster mother, Frau Behold, he has nothing nice to say about her: "Sie war ein schlechtes Weib, Herr Lehrer." (CH, 326) As a consequence, a lot of the language he is surrounded by in the adult world simply is meaningless to him. On the occasion of one of the numerous parties he is being forced to attend his feelings towards that language are described:

[E]s schien ihm gefährlich zu sprechen, es war, als ob alle Worte zwiefach vorhanden wären, einmal offenbar, das andre Mal verhüllt, und so wie die Worte, hatten auch die Menschen etwas Zwiefaches, und unwillkürlich suchten seine Blicke in ein und derselben Person die zweite, die lauernd hinterherging und verführerisch mit den Fingern winkte. Es war ihm unverständlich, was sie von ihm wollten, ihre Kleidung, ihre Gebärden, ihr Nicken, ihr Lächeln, ihr Beisammensein, alles war ihm unverständlich, und auch er selbst, er selbst fing an, sich unverständlich zu werden. (CH, 102)

As a child, Caspar is unable to participate in the language games and conventions of the adult world. Caspar is therefore not just excluded from society because he is, as Graf has argued, a 'feminisierter Mann' lacking the power of the phallus,⁵¹ but because he is unable to become an adult. This, however, does not provoke a reaction of compassion in people but instead makes them suspicious of the foundling.

The above-mentioned negative reaction is epitomised in the figure of Quandt, who is determined to get behind Caspar's 'secret', meaning that he wants to prove that the story of the foundling's incarceration is simply a

⁵¹ Graf, 'Verdächtig', p. 106.

lie. Moreover, Quandt is keen to prove that Caspar is generally a dishonest person while a lot of these so-called lies are based on his inability to understand his foster-father (for example, CH 425). The more lenient view of these so-called lies as proposed by the priest Fuhrmann seems to be confirmed by Key's view according to which children are often unaware of their lies and not driven by evil intentions.⁵² Quandt, however, does not even refrain from accusing Caspar of being a liar after he has been fatally wounded which reveals the outright brutality of the teacher's views. The lie therefore becomes a symbol of the educator's cold-hearted refusal to engage with the child on a level that does the latter justice.

Even though Caspar fails to communicate with most of the adult world – significantly he gets to act a silent part in a play performed at Frau von Imhoff's – there are nevertheless moments in which he acts as a figure of resistance. This resistance finds its strongest expression in the diary that Caspar successfully hides from Quandt and subsequently destroys before anyone can read it. When once again pressed by Hickel and Quandt to produce the diary, Caspar cries out: "Ja, bin ich denn ein Eigentum von einem andern? Bin ich denn wie ein Tier?" (CH, 344) These two questions confirm the proximity of Caspar's status to that of an animal, creatures which in this society are eaten, kept as pets or even violently mistreated, as shown in the scene of the carter and the horse or the blackbird killed by Frau Behold. Kálmán Kovács moreover draws the interesting parallel: 'Caspar's Gemeinsamkeit mit den Tieren [zeugt] von dem Urstandscharakter der Existenz des Protagonisten.'⁵³ Yet at the same time, Caspar's utterance denotes not only an awareness of his problematic status but also a growing will to show resistance to a humiliating form of control and mistrust. When Caspar grabs his diary from Hickel's hands the latter feels 'als werde er zermalmt oder zertreten' (CH, 345) and cannot prevent the foundling from incinerating it. Caspar considers the diary (and

⁵² See Key, *Jahrhundert*, p. 102.

⁵³ Kálmán Kovács, 'Ein Fall für zwei: Anthropologische Konzepte in Wassermanns *Caspar Hauser* oder *Die Trägheit des Herzens* und in Peter Handkes *Caspar*', in *Die Zeit und die Schrift*, ed. by K. F. Auckenthaler (Szeged: JATE, 1993), pp. 261 – 77 (p. 263).

thus his own text documenting his progress) his only true possession, which makes it a powerful reminder of text as a space of privacy, personal development and eventually resistance.

Despite the outward signs of puberty, Caspar never leaves the realm of childhood behind. This is confirmed when, just before his death, Caspar still talks to the wooden horse, his companion during his weeks in the prison tower in Nuremberg. Moreover, his notion of what it actually means to be a prince is childlike and far removed from the realities of ruling a country. Tellingly, throughout the novel Caspar is not interested in the various theories about his origins – with regards to them he is described as ‘unneugierig’ (CH, 361) - all he cares about is his mother. Caspar frequently expresses a longing to meet his parents and in particular his mother. He shows himself to be highly conscious of lacking a place in life because he does not have a family.

If we briefly return to Ellen Key, who places an equal significance on the role a mother plays in the life of a child, a new understanding of Caspar’s being a prince becomes available. Key writes:

Bevor nicht Vater und Mutter ihre Stirne vor der Hoheit des Kindes in den Staub beugen; bevor sie nicht einsehen, daß das Wort Kind nur ein anderer Ausdruck für den Begriff Majestät ist [...] werden sie auch nicht begreifen, daß sie ebensowenig die Macht oder das Recht haben, diesem neuen Wesen Gesetze vorzuschreiben [...] wenn der Vater in seinem Kinde den Königssohn sieht, dem er in Demut mit seinen eigenen besten Kräften dienen soll – dann kommt das Kind zu seinem Rechte!⁵⁴

The novel’s insistence on the special role that Caspar ought to occupy in society, could therefore also be understood as a plea to improve the situation of the child in general. The rights he has been deprived of would therefore not be his claim to an actual throne but rather his claim to be treated with dignity and respect. The outrage expressed in the face of Caspar’s constant mistreatment at the hands of adults can therefore be read as an accusation of the treatment children receive in this society. Goldmann seems therefore right to refer to the novel as depicting the

⁵⁴ Key, *Jahrhundert*, p. 120.

‘ewige Tragödie menschlicher Kindheit.’⁵⁵ This view finds support in the depiction of Frau Behold’s daughter, who is obviously being neglected by her parents and can therefore be seen as another victim of the adult world. Moreover, Key considers the situation of the child to be increasingly defined by ‘Heimatlosigkeit’, a notion that, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is essential for Wassermann’s understanding of the outsider.⁵⁶ If the child were indeed treated with reverence, the face of society would be altered in a way that Wassermann seemingly approved of. Given Wassermann’s overall concern with the figure of the child, beginning with the early novella *Hier ruht das kleine Öchslein* (1896) or Agathon’s return to the world of the child at the end of *Zirndorf*, it seems plausible that he would have considered them to be Kings and Queens in their own rights.⁵⁷

3.3.1 Caspar and Klara

Klara von Kannawurf is enabled to develop an important relationship with Caspar because despite being an adult she has retained many childlike qualities and like the foundling she is an orphan. She is not only described as having ‘kindliche Gestalt’ (CH, 377), ‘große Kinderaugen’ (CH, 389) and the facial expression of an ‘aufmerksamen Kindes’ (CH, 379) but she is also the only character in the novel who is willing to accept Caspar as a child. Moreover, during her stay in Ansbach she is frequently seen walking the streets surrounded by a ‘lärmenden Schwarm von Knaben und Mädchen’ (CH, 401). Her willingness to allow Caspar his status as a child finds its strongest expression in their communication. They see each other every day or write letters to each other and yet their conversations never touch on anything that is remotely profound. The content of their letters is ‘unverfänglich’ and the same applies to their conversations if they talk at all, for they often spend hours without saying a word (CH, 387). In his relationship with Klara, Caspar is therefore not expected to comply with

⁵⁵ Goldmann, *Wassermann*, 88.

⁵⁶ See Key, *Jahrhundert*, pp. 137 – 144.

⁵⁷ Koester also observes this continuous interest in the ‘Kinderseele’, see Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 14.

the rules and conventions of the adult world. Moreover, when Caspar hears about Klara's life story and the death of her brother, he is for the first time able to feel the pain of another human being: '[W]ie durch den Wink eines unsichtbaren Geistes öffnete sich zum erstenmal sein Herz den Leiden eines andern Ichs, einer fremden Existenz.' (CH, 298) Throughout the novel Klara remains the only character whose words and actions are always understandable for him.

Klara's understanding of Caspar's situation even reaches far enough to understand that he will never be mature enough to have a sexual relationship with her. As Klara finds herself falling in love with Caspar she decides to leave: 'Ihn anzutasten! Seinen Schlummer stören! O verbrecherische Lippen, denen ein Kuß nichts bedeutet! Hätt' ich's getan, ich müßte seine Mörderin heißen, was kann ich Besseres tun als fliehen?' (CH, 412 – 413) For even though Caspar occasionally seems to reciprocate Klara's sexual feelings, she seems right in assuming that he would be at a loss to actually understand them. This view seems to be confirmed when, in their only moment of intimacy after having performed together in the play, Caspar tries to touch her yet calls her 'Schwester' (CH, 410) thus revealing his state of emotional confusion.

Without parents, Klara is also without a place in life and can therefore be seen as a parallel outsider figure to Caspar. Moreover, her strong attachment to Caspar makes her suspicious in the eyes of the world: 'Wahrscheinlich ist sie eine Demagogin, hieß es.' (CH, 401) This watchword of the Biedermeier period clearly denotes Klara as standing on the margins of society. In this context a demagogue would be a young, hot-headed person believing in the ideals of the French Revolution and who would later on support the ascension of Louis Philippe to the French throne. Moreover, in the context of the novel, the supporters of the prince-theory are equated with demagogues which foreshadows the historical dispute that broke out soon after Hauser's death. And Klara is indeed depicted as a political activist who has dedicated her life to improving the situation of

the poor. She has studied politics, law and national economy in a small, unspecified university town, spends most of her time travelling on her own, is childless and lives apart from her husband. She therefore forms a strong contrast to the Biedermeier ideal of womanliness which was, according to Sagarra 'a motherly figure yet full of girlish innocence.'⁵⁸

Klara's level of education, her independent character and her depiction as a potential lover rather than a wife make her resemble prominent figures such as Rahel Varnhagen, Bettina von Arnim and Charlotte Stieglitz. Bettina von Arnim was well educated and a writer who actively tried to help the poor and underprivileged members of society. Charlotte was also a writer and Rahel Varnhagen was famous for her salon in Berlin which was frequented by people like Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt as well as Heinrich Heine. Rahel is of particular importance in this context, not only because she knew Hauser's alleged mother Stephanie whom she described as a 'metaphysischer Kopf',⁵⁹ but also because Daumer compared Rahel to Hauser as they were both disadvantaged yet gifted with extraordinary talents: 'Sie war eine Art von Kaspar Hauser'.⁶⁰ Rahel was weak in a sense that as a Jew and a woman she struggled with social boundaries and exclusion which are comparable to Caspar's situation yet in the novel have also been transferred to Klara.

The notion of Klara as a successful fighter for human rights is gradually deconstructed throughout the novel as she fails to save Caspar. Her failure, it seems, is based on the romantic and childlike nature of her ideals as well as on the fact that as a woman she will never be taken seriously enough to oppose the regime represented by Hickel. The only plan to save Caspar that Klara ever devises is for the two of them to run away together, which sounds more like the adventure of two children than a feasible option in face of the severity of Caspar's situation. Caspar consequently refuses the idea of escaping with her to her house in the Swiss mountains, which seem

⁵⁸ Sagarra, *Tradition*, p. 19.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Daumer, *Wesen*, p. 458.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

to symbolise a liberty that can never be achieved. Moreover, his life there would simply be another form of social isolation which Klara fails to see when trying to convince Caspar: "Das Haus liegt vollständig einsam zwischen hohen Bergen im Tal und an einem See." (CH, 379) This plan of running away to Switzerland as the country especially associated with popular democracy is therefore dismissed as too abstract to solve Caspar's situation. As with Daumer, Klara's romanticism is of no use when it comes to fighting an authoritarian regime.

Moreover, Klara's situation is complicated further by the fact that she is a woman. This problematic situation of hers is depicted in her relationship with Hickel. Instead of suspecting Klara because of her political activities and her close relationship with Caspar, Hickel merely finds her attractive, so much so that he spends time underneath her window at night. And to her great disappointment, this sexual attraction Hickel feels towards her becomes her only chance to save Caspar. In a rather chilling scene, Hickel asks her to give in to his sexual desire and offers a favour in return: "Madame, von Ihrem Mund hängt zur Stunde manches ab [...] Hier steh' ich und bettle. Verleugnen Sie nicht ihr Gesicht, das einen Engel glauben läßt!" (CH, 413 – 414). Klara simply storms past Hickel and leaves Ansbach the next morning as this scene clearly confirms her defeat as a political activist and as a woman. This can be understood as a continuation of Wassermann's depiction of the situation of women at the turn of the century in *Renate Fuchs*. The intellectual woman now receives a more favourable depiction but still fails while at the same time being reduced to her sexual functions. As with Stanhope, Klara is not to survive the end of the novel. Even though she is physically alive, we are told that: 'Sie war wahnsinnig geworden. Noch am selben Tag wurde sie in eine Anstalt gebracht. Mit der Zeit verging die Raserei, aber ihr Geist blieb umnachtet.' (CH, 458) Klara is therefore to be seen as standing in one line with Caspar and Stanhope, at the same time she is another woman whose weakness finds a strong expression in her insanity.

3.3.2 Caspar and Stanhope

Stanhope is a character of great interest because he has to be seen as the first in a number of outcasts with a clear homosexual tendency making an appearance in Wassermann's works. Graf has shown how Stanhope can be understood as a homosexual character, yet seems to be going too far in assuming that the latter's as well as Caspar's death are solely based on their being rejected as homosexuals.⁶¹ It seems more rewarding to see the link between those two characters not in a potential homosexual relationship but in their status as outsiders. Similarly, when looking at Stanhope it seems more intriguing to look at the ways in which his homosexuality affects his status in society instead of searching for hints at an actual relationship with Caspar.

From the beginning Stanhope is clearly constructed as an exotic figure and can be seen as a version of the eccentric English Lord that was popular in nineteenth century German literature: e.g. in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and in Nestroy's *Die beiden Nachtwandler*. In this function he allows a different and more sophisticated perspective on life in Germany around 1830. Stanhope's observations strongly resemble those of foreign visitors of Germany during the Biedermeier period as described by Sagarra: 'The consensus of opinion among foreign visitors was that the Germans were pedantically self-sufficient, contented and well-mannered.'⁶² By also turning him into a sexual outsider, Wassermann arrives at an even more damning picture of a society that is forever suspicious of the other. Moreover, in the figure of Stanhope, Wassermann makes it clear that parallels between the figure of the Jew and the homosexual as outsiders do exist. Stanhope compares himself to Ahasver and seemingly shares the pain of this 'auf immer Verstoßenen.' The narrator describes him thus:

⁶¹ See Graf, 'Verdächtig', p. 110.

⁶² Sagarra, *Tradition*, p. 5.

Vater und Mutter tot, ehemalige Freunde gegen den edlen Sproß des Hauses verschworen, und er, ein Mann von fünfzig Jahren, ohne Heim und Weib und Kind, Ahasver! (CH, 180)

The character of Stanhope can therefore be understood as a continuation of Wassermann's concern with society's outsiders as well as a broadening of it since he now fully adds the homosexual to that group.

And yet the relationship between Caspar and Stanhope cannot be considered mutually homosexual. The most remarkable thing about Stanhope is that he not only calls Caspar 'Liebling' and caresses him but that he is happy to do so in public: 'er gebärdete sich wie ein Verliebter, der seine Empfindungen ohne Scheu preisgibt.' (CH, 175) When Caspar and Stanhope walk around arm in arm, 'achteten sie der Blicke nicht, die sie verfolgten.' (CH, 177) And yet rumours begin to spread, with people asking for Caspar's protection against the 'Machenschaften des englischen Grafen' (CH, 181). Caspar, however, is far from suspecting the Lord's true intentions and is happy about the latter's attentions. Caspar soon grows attached to his new protector and to a certain extent adopts his lifestyle, making him likewise suspicious in the eyes of the world.

As with Stanhope who offends the bourgeois citizens with his decadence, Caspar is criticised for his vanity. Frau Quandt complains that 'Immer müsse er herausgeputzt sein wie eine Docke, und schon in aller Herrgottsfrüh fange er an, seine Kleider zu bürsten.' (CH, 317) Caspar is therefore emulating the behaviour of a man who rejects the idea of becoming a Catholic monk because having to grow a beard would be too disgusting for him. Caspar also begins to dream of travelling to Italy, yet his ideas about it are those of a child while Stanhope might well have Italy in mind as the country that, as James W. Jones tells us, was considered a place of homosexual freedom.⁶³ Caspar's strong attachment to Stanhope can therefore partly be explained because the latter satisfies many of the

⁶³ See James W. Jones, *"We of the Third Sex": Literary Representations of Homosexuality in Wilhelmine Germany*, ed. by Jost Hermand, *German Life and Civilization* (New York, Bern, Frankfurt a. M., Paris: Peter Lang, 1990), p. 282.

foundling's childlike desires as he showers him with presents and tells him exciting stories about foreign lands. Their relationship is comparable to that between Waremme-Warschauer and Etzel Andergast in *Maurizius* in that here the homosexual attraction is also one-sided and undermines conventional power relations. In both cases it is the love for a young man that not only makes the 'evil' character confess but also paralyses their bad intentions.

Moreover, as another outsider, Stanhope is full of understanding for Caspar's refusal to comply with many of society's rules and regulations. Even though Stanhope immediately becomes the talk of the town in Ansbach with people being all too keen to invite him to their parties, his private views about them could not be more damning. In a letter to his employer, Stanhope writes: 'Das [...] Volk ist kaum der Rede wert. Die guten Deutschen sind servil bis zum Erbrechen. [...] Nichts hindert mich, hier eine Art Caligula zu spielen.' (CH, pp. 261 – 62) Albeit for different reasons, Stanhope is also bored as well as disgusted by a society in which he too is forced to play his role.⁶⁴ It is therefore largely due to Stanhope's influence that Caspar is 'dem Kreis friedlicher Bürgerlichkeit entwachsen' (CH, 242).

The other aspect of Caspar's life that Stanhope is happy to free him from, is the regular schedule that has been imposed on the foundling. Whilst staying with von Tucher as well as with Quandt, Caspar's life is subject to the strictest schedule that leaves nothing to chance. Stanhope regularly estranges Caspar from this routine and could not care less when listening to Quandt's complaints about Caspar's scholarly shortcomings: '[...] wobei die Langeweile seine Nasenflügel auseinander dehnte.' (CH, 287) And finally, when Stanhope and Caspar fall out over the diary that the latter refuses to share with the Lord, his motives for wanting to see it could not be more different from those of Hickel and Quandt:

Er hatte gehofft, aus den Aufzeichnungen des Jünglings manches über sich selbst zu hören. Dies lockte. Er wußte, daß er dort auf einem hohen Postament stand und daß er vergöttert worden war [...] Dies lockte. An das Verräterische des Büchleins dachte er nicht (CH, 291)

Yet even after their relationship has cooled down considerably, Caspar and Stanhope still spend time together regularly because for both of them this relationship has become a mutual space of freedom. For Stanhope also feels liberated in Caspar's presence: 'Der Lord fand sich durch diese Form eines Verkehrs lebhaft angezogen, ja, im wahrsten Sinn ergriffen. Durfte er sich doch einmal wieder unbefangen fühlen' (CH, 284) The love between the two outsiders that Wassermann depicts here is therefore an expression of their longing for a space of freedom away from society's rules and regulations.

With the figure of Caspar, Wassermann's concern with the outsider as a faultless character who mirrors society's failings comes to an end. In his subsequent works his understanding of this figure becomes increasingly complex alongside his more critical way of looking at the possibilities of human character. In that sense *Caspar* has to be seen as a prime example of the kind of work Wassermann produced before World War One and that became impossible after four years of hitherto unknown human suffering. As will become apparent in the next chapters, the works that Wassermann produced during the Weimar Republic differ greatly from his previous ones as they become more and more pessimistic, dark and at times even opaque. In *Christian Wahnschaffe*, the subject of the next chapter, the link between Wassermann's depiction of character and that of society will come under close scrutiny. It will become clear that the state of innocence embodied in the figure of Caspar is now forever out of reach as the Great War proves to be the most significant caesura in Wassermann's life as a writer.

4. If you can see me – perception as sainthood in Christian Wahnschaffe

4.1 Introduction

In pre-war Germany, a decadent young man leaves his family, his wealth and eventually his name behind in order to become a modern saint. This is, in a nutshell, a summary of Wassermann's 1919 novel *Christian Wahnschaffe*. Although it was an immediate commercial success, the novel has until today attracted surprisingly little critical attention. *Wahnschaffe* signifies in many ways a turning point in Wassermann's writing as he, for the first time, explores new ways of handling issues of style, characterisation and form. The novel marks the beginning of Wassermann's career as a writer of the newly-founded Weimar Republic as it proves to be a radical departure from his previous works. It is an ambitious project that attempts to offer a panorama not only of pre-war Germany but also of Europe and thus deals with a world that had ceased to exist by 1918. Yet contrary to his previous works such as *Zirndorf* and *Caspar*, Wassermann has now left behind the small world of provincial Germany, the petty bourgeoisie and the question of 'Heimat'. With it he is putting aside the aim of creating psychologically rounded characters or naturalistically 'real' people in favour of a more radical, modern approach to the question of character. Indeed, the novel could be referred to as Wassermann's truly modern work: it is a conscious reflection of a 'modern condition'. Changing modes of perception and life in the metropolis Berlin stand at the centre of a journey, undertaken by the eponymous protagonist, that will lead to the end of the self. Inspired by the story of St. Francis of Assisi, this unexpected subject enables Wassermann to combine his by now intensified concern with the question of character with the subject of perception in the modern world. His new narrative technique results in the disappearance of character and at the same time defines an altered perception as a form of modern sainthood. Written between 1915

and 1918 and thus under the influence of the Great War, Wassermann's novel tells a striking tale of overcoming one's self as the only way to remain human in a modern world.

In order to make the concept of sainthood as perception understandable and to be able to link it to Wassermann's new narrative techniques, analysis requires three steps.

The novel's form will stand at the centre of the first section. After showing how it can be related to the newly emerging cinema, the novel's form will be analysed further in the context of accounts of modern life by three major thinkers of the early twentieth century: Georg Simmel, Sigmund Freud and Walter Benjamin. By linking some of their thoughts about modern life with each other as well as the novel, the latter's form will become understandable as a direct response to the ways in which modern life has altered our perception. This will also serve as the foundation for an understanding of how Wassermann's concept of sainthood has its roots in a concern with the question of human perception.

Another technique used in the novel to highlight the importance of an altered perception will be discussed in the second section, namely the appearance of three allegorical figures representing respectively art, religion and political ideology. By experimenting with these allegorical figures, Wassermann finds a new way of revealing ostensible forms of sainthood to be unhelpful in the face of modern life. None of those three is of much help when it comes to improving people's daily lives since neither of them allows for the human being in crisis to be seen. Moreover, this use of allegorical figures instead of 'realistic' characters becomes another way for Wassermann to reflect on the ways in which people perceive each other in a world in which the individual has become invisible.

In the third section we will analyse how these 'false' saints are contrasted with Christian's development that eventually leads to the end

of his self. Given the overall structure of the novel it seems most appropriate to trace this development via the protagonist's encounters and relationships with other characters. In that way his gradual development, namely the gradual disappearance of aspects of his character will become visible. At the same time it will also become clear that in Wassermann's version sainthood can only ever be part of the everyday and not something remote or abstract. Sainthood here is about the ways in which we, on a daily basis, share a world with each other.

4.2 Perception in a modern age

On 11 January 1919 Thomas Mann writes in his diary:

Abends Fortsetzung des Wassermann [*Wahnschaffe*]. Kostbar. Das Kino läuft, flirrt, zeigt alles und das Erdenklichste [...] Alles in einem geläufigen, wohlgesetzten, konservativen, mundwässrig-schwatzhaften Erzählstil, der selbst sprachliches Kino ist. Nichts kann komischer sein.¹

A few days later Mann adds that the novel contains 'tausend flirrende Bilder.'² The repeated use of the word 'flirren' (to flicker) underlines its importance in this context since it immediately conveys the sense that these images change so rapidly that it is impossible to contemplate them at length or in great detail. More generally, Mann's emphasis on the cinematic nature of the novel offers a good starting point for a new understanding of it: *Wahnschaffe* can be understood as a response to the ways in which modern life has changed our perception and thus estranged us from, as Detlev Peukert puts it, 'die traditionelle Ästhetik des Sehens.'³

It is the form of the novel that makes the connection to the cinema comprehensible. Its chapters each consist of up to thirty short and numbered passages, which could be referred to as episodes or narrative units. At the same time Mann's use of the word 'Bilder' implies the use of

¹ Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt a. M. : Fischer, 1979), p. 133.

² Ibid., p. 142.

³ Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), p. 80.

images, which highlights their scenic nature and gives them a visual quality. These episodes, often no longer than one page, tell the stories of numerous characters in numerous places. Indeed, many of the characters travel constantly all over Europe and even to South America. They make full use of modern means of transport which no longer allows them to be associated with one particular place, or a language, as most of them are shown to be fluent in various European languages. They are restless characters with modern life not allowing them to slow down. Some of the storylines are only loosely connected and the images often change abruptly with no transition from the previous one.

This abruptness itself mimes the shock effect which, as we shall soon see, has often been ascribed to modern urban life. This effect is intensified even further by the flamboyant and at times dramatic nature of these episodes: with very colourful language, characteristic of Wassermann, they tend to focus on one particular characteristic of a person or a place, without giving much context. The reader is therefore often left with what is best described as a 'Momentaufnahme', that means that s/he is confronted with moments that are isolated. Altogether this makes for the quick and thus modern pace of the novel. Critics, such as Koester, claiming that Wassermann adhered to 'aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert überkommenen Formgesetzen epischer Komposition', will therefore be proven wrong.⁴ Moreover, *Wahnschaffe* has frequently been criticised for introducing too many characters and thus creating unnecessary confusion.⁵ Yet, as this chapter will show, it is precisely the novel's kaleidoscopic nature which makes it so relevant in the context of modern, urban life.

⁴ Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 83.

⁵ Klaus Karlstetter writes: 'Dabei steht Wassermann immer in der Gefahr, die einzelnen Elemente nicht zur großen Einheit zusammenschmelzen zu können, sondern dysfunktional werden zu lassen.' See Klaus Karlstetter, *Das Bild des Jugendlichen in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur der Zeit zwischen dem Ersten Weltkrieg (1918) und der Diktatur (1933)* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1980), p. 53. Similarly, Jürgen Jacobs denies that the novel succeeds in presenting a 'überzeugendes Totalbild.' See Jürgen Jacobs, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Munich: Fink, 1972), p. 211.

That there are certain similarities between the form of a movie and that of a novel was also observed by Kurt Pinthus in his introduction to the *Kinobuch* (1913). Contrary to the drama, he argues, the novel as well as the movie open the doors to a realm of endless possibilities: limits of time and space no longer apply as we can follow a protagonist from one corner of the earth to another in no time. It is this new freedom of movement, as Pinthus emphasises, that separates the novel and the movie from the drama where 'die Personen auf der Bühne festgehalten sind'.⁶ With its quick pace the novel strongly echoes these new possibilities as we follow its characters on their endless journeys across the globe. Pinthus remained critical of the attempt to turn novels into movies, as the silent movies he would have been familiar with could merely function as the illustration of a novel. And yet his analysis of the relationship between movie and novel is vital in the context of this chapter as he arrives at the following conclusion: 'Das Kinopublikum ist im wesentlichen ein Romanlesepublikum.'⁷

The novel appealed strongly to contemporary taste, yet among critics only Erwin Poeschel and Moritz Heimann, Wassermann's friend and editor, seem to have understood the meaning of the novel's form. Heimann writes:

Je energischer der Roman seinem Thema zustrebt, um so breiter wird das Bett der Erzählung; und wenn wir zurückblicken, erscheint uns die frühere Sprunghaftigkeit als ein zwar noch immer bedenkliches, aber doch als ein Mittel, auch durch die äußere Form, die innere Zerrissenheit und seelische Zufälligkeit, das Unfruchtbare und Zerflatternde der Luxuswelt fühlen zu lassen. Es ist einer der schönsten Siege eines Dichters, wenn er uns zwingt, auszulegen und Sinn und Symbol dort zu entdecken, wo wir geneigt waren, Willkür oder Laune und Schwäche anzuklagen. Daß wir bei diesem Buche Wassermanns den umeinander wirbelnden hundert Figuren, den Kühnheiten, ja Dreistigkeiten der Erfindung nachträglich Bedeutung für das Ganze zuschreiben, ist ein solcher Sieg; und er ist in der Folgerichtigkeit der Entwicklung Christians, als der geistigen Einheit des Romans, begründet.⁸

⁶ Kurt Pinthus, (ed.) 'Das Kinostück (1913)', in *Das Kinobuch*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1983), pp. 19-29 (p. 21).

⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

⁸ Moritz Heimann, 'Das jüngste Gericht im Roman' In: *Die Neue Rundschau*, 30, March 1919, 367-73 (p. 372).

Heimann thus points out the episodic character of the novel and shows how the form brings out the fragmented and arbitrary nature of the social world it depicts. Moreover, Heimann makes it clear that this is the essential setting for Christian's spiritual development. Poeschel rightly remarks that through its form, the novel becomes ‚ein vollkommener Abglanz des Lebens. Die Oberfläche bekommt etwas Flimmerndes, Bewegtes, die vorgetäuschte Wahlllosigkeit des wirklichen Lebens.‘⁹

Even if only Heimann and Poeschel analysed the form of the novel in that way, it nevertheless struck a chord. The novel was not only popular in the German-speaking world: translated by Ludwig Lewisohn as *The World's Illusion* in 1921, it was the first of Wassermann's works to become an international success and the translation of other works followed soon after. Moreover, the novel was made into a movie by the Danish director Urban Gad in 1921.¹⁰

4.2.1 Simmel and the city

In his essay 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben' (1903) Georg Simmel argues that what separates life in a modern city from life in a rural area is, among other things, the 'Steigerung des Nervenlebens [sic], die aus dem raschen und ununterbrochenen Wechsel äußerer und innerer Eindrücke hervorgeht.'¹¹ Life in a big city therefore challenges our nervous system much more than life in a rural area, because the stimuli that a city offers are constantly changing, while those in a rural area tend to remain the same. In *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Robert Musil also comments on this phenomenon:

Könnte man die Sprünge der Aufmerksamkeit messen, die Leistungen der Augenmuskeln, die Pendelbewegungen der Seele und all die Anstrengungen, die ein Mensch vollbringen muß, um sich im Fluß einer Straße aufrecht zu halten, es käme vermutlich – so hatte er [Ulrich] gedacht und spielend das Unmögliche zu berechnen versucht – eine Größe heraus,

⁹ Poeschel, *Wassermann*, p. 99.

¹⁰ For further details regarding the novel's reception see also Müller-Kampel, *Collage*, pp. 156 – 159.

¹¹ Georg Simmel, 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', in *Das Abenteuer und andere Essays*, ed. by Christian Schärf (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2010), pp. 9 – 26 (pp. 9 – 10).

mit der verglichen die Kraft, die Atlas braucht, um die Welt zu stemmen, gering ist, und man könnte ermessen, welche ungeheure Leistung heute schon ein Mensch vollbringt, der gar nichts tut.¹²

The modern individual, the city-dweller, is thus confronted with a constant wave of new sensations, and the only form of protection against this sensory overload is to react to it with the intellect rather than emotions (Simmel uses the word 'Gemüt' in this context). The city has therefore produced what Simmel refers to as the 'Verstandesmensch'.

And yet these intellectual properties come at a high cost: life in the city is impersonal, inner lives are impoverished and affectionate relationships with other people are increasingly out of reach. Instead, relations in the city are instrumental and practical, with money as the only value that matters: in the city everything has its price, including human beings. Nevertheless, as Simmel argues, we can never be truly indifferent towards each other. Our human nature inevitably compels us to react somehow when confronted with another human being. However, our nervous system cannot afford to react with empathy towards every person we encounter. As a consequence, the only reaction we have left is antipathy. It is a form of protection as well as the 'elementare Sozialisierungsform' of the city.¹³ In *Wahnschaffe* the minor character of Dr Voltolini seems like an illustration of Simmel's theory when he says to the protagonist:

[I]n dieser großen Stadt [Berlin] ist es möglich, sich eine Einsamkeit zu schaffen, in die kein unberufener Blick zu dringen vermag. Lange Zeit konnte ich meinen Beruf nur ausüben, wenn ich vergaß, daß es Menschen waren, mit denen ich zu tun hatte; es waren Mechanismen für mich [...] Begreifen Sie diese Fühllosigkeit und Verachtung?¹⁴

Voltolini has thus used his intellect as a means of protection against the sensory overload of a metropolis like Berlin. Christian's approach, however,

¹² Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, in his *Gesammelte Werke*, 9 vols, ed. by Adolf Frisé (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1978), vol. 1, p. 12.

¹³ Simmel, 'Großstädte', p. 17.

¹⁴ Jakob Wassermann, *Christian Wahnschaffe*, 2 vols (Berlin: Fischer, 1920), vol. 2, pp. 310-11. Henceforth passages will be identified in the text by CW followed by volume and page number. The 1932 edition of the novel has been changed and abridged considerably, see Wassermann, *Christian Wahnschaffe* (Berlin: Fischer, 1932). The DTV edition currently in print is based on the 1932 edition and will therefore not be quoted from.

will aim for the opposite: on his way to sainthood he develops a perception that is not predominantly based on the intellect but instead on the 'Gemüt'.

At the same time it is the physical proximity of life in the city with its crowds that offers anonymity, mental distance and therefore personal freedom. The city-dweller has successfully left behind the small social circles or groups, still to be found in rural areas, that exercise control over their members:

Je kleiner ein solcher Kreis ist, der unser Milieu bildet, je beschränkter die grenzenlösenden Beziehungen zu anderen, desto ängstlicher wacht er über die Leistungen, die Lebensführung, die Gesinnungen des Individuums.¹⁵

The bigger a group is, therefore, the more personal freedom it will grant its members even though this freedom is not necessarily perceived as pleasant. After all one can nowhere be as lonely as in the crowd of a modern city.

In fact, the crowd becomes the space for one of the key struggles of the city-dweller, namely to assert his or her individuality. Simmel here talks about the 'Widerstand des Subjekts, in einem gesellschaftlich-technischen Mechanismus nivelliert und verbraucht zu werden.'¹⁶ Moreover, city-dwellers are not only part of the same crowd but they are united further by the same aim, and that is money. Money, however, and thus the 'Verstandesmensch' who is desperate to possess it, is indifferent towards all matters of individuality. Money reduces objects and people to their mere financial worth without paying attention to any individual characteristics. Simmel therefore refers to money as the 'fürchterlichste Nivellierer'.¹⁷ Affective relationships ('Gemütsbeziehungen'), however, are based on people's individual character and personality, which makes us so keen to preserve our individuality. This leads to the eccentric characters one is likely to encounter in a big city: '[...] deren Sinn gar nicht mehr in den

¹⁵ Simmel, 'Großstädte', p. 18.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

Inhalten solchen Benehmens, sondern nur in seiner Form des Andersseins, des Sich-Heraushebens und dadurch Bemerklichwerdens liegt.¹⁸

Moreover, encounters in the city tend to be brief and rare. The individual is therefore forced to give a performance that is as memorable and characteristic as possible. At the same time, money has led to a devaluation not only of objects and other human beings, but also of ourselves. To be noticed by others is therefore often the last chance to save some self-esteem ('Selbstschätzung'): eccentricity is the only way we can be heard by ourselves as well as others.

The exaggerated self-representation required by modern life allows Wassermann's novel to be related to Simmel's essay even if there is no proof that Wassermann was familiar with the latter's work. In *Wahnschaffe* the reader has only brief encounters with its characters during which they all come across as remarkable in some way. They may deliberately present themselves in such a way, or they may have been shaped by peculiar circumstances. As Simmel rightly remarks, modernity has led to a seeming domination of form over content: our perception is already so challenged by the exterior of people and things that it can hardly afford to pay attention to their interior. In the modern world it is therefore the exterior that matters most. The novel itself, as well as each of its episodes, can be understood as an expression of this shift in meaning.

To begin with, the opening line of each passage has the crucial function of drawing the reader in. This helps to create the impression of a particular, ephemeral moment rather than a continuing narration: 'Auf den Samtsofas des Restaurants lagen Tote und Verwundete' (CW, vol. 2, 36) is a typical example of this technique. These suspense-creating opening lines are usually followed by exuberant descriptions of characters and events which, however, give very little space to people's inner lives. Opulence and misery are presented in their most extreme forms as sharp contrasts are used to create strong images: Christian's mother wears the most expensive pearl

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

necklace to be found in Europe, with pearls the size of a child's fist, while the children of the imprisoned worker Kroll lie naked on the floor of an overcrowded room, their skin covered with rashes. The dancer Eva Sorel wears a shawl so expensive that the annual salary of a general in the Russian army would equal a mere fraction of its worth. The unspeakable riches of the Russian as well as the German upper class are contrasted with endless suffering of the Russian people as well as life in the poor parts of Berlin. Wassermann seemingly perceived the world around him as torn apart by contrasts that could not be bridged. Koester's negative critique that the novel merely achieves a 'reißerische Wirkung' through its 'stilistische Erhöhungen' therefore seems to miss the point.¹⁹ In a similar vein, Blankenagel is unable to see anything but 'strained artifice' in this technique.²⁰

Most of the characters stand out, be it because of their beauty or their ugliness, their wit or their evil nature, their great talents or their lifestyle: by whichever means, most of them have found a way to be remarkable. Moreover, the characters interact in conspicuous ways as the novel contains intrigues, love affairs, a mysterious diamond, fortune-telling, murder and other dramatic deaths, for instance when the animal tamer Adda is killed by her own lions. And yet, as Simmel has analysed it, this hunt for individuality leaves very little room for genuine and meaningful relationships. People react to each other with antipathy because their nervous system can no longer afford positive emotions. In the novel *Amadeus Voss* therefore appositely refers to the 'einsamen Menschen mit ihren Augen ohne Gnade.' (CW, vol. 1, 228)

4.2.2 Freud – the shock cannot be remembered

The idea of a need for protection against the sensory overload resulting from modern life is taken up again by Freud in his essay 'Jenseits des Lustprinzips' (1921). The context of Freud's essay is a sensory overload

¹⁹ Koester, *Wassermann*, pp. 57 – 58.

²⁰ Blankenagel, *Writings*, p. 174.

of a more drastic kind, as it deals with the traumas suffered by shell-shocked soldiers during World War One. Freud argues: 'Die meiste Unlust, die wir verspüren, ist ja Wahrnehmungsunlust, entweder Wahrnehmung des Dränges unbefriedigter Triebe oder äußere Wahrnehmung.'²¹ Simmel's city-dweller reacts to the world around him with the intellect ('Verstand'); by coming back to this theory Freud refines it and differentiates Simmel's concept of the intellect further.

Freud's theory is largely based on the idea of a correlation between consciousness and memory. Instead of using Simmel's term 'Verstand', Freud arrives at a definition of human consciousness in connection with the senses as the individual's 'Reizschutz'. According to Freud, it is human consciousness that separates the inner from the outer world as well as the individual itself from the world. Stimuli ('Erregungsvorgänge') first come into contact with a person's psyche via his or her consciousness, yet unlike with other systems within the human psyche, these stimuli leave no traces behind. Since consciousness remains unaltered by these stimuli, they are also unlikely to become part of a person's memory: '[Erinnerungsreste] sind oft am stärksten und haltbarsten, wenn der sie zurücklassende Vorgang niemals zum Bewußtsein gekommen ist. [...] *das Bewußtsein entstehe an Stelle der Erinnerungsspur* [sic].'²² Consciously experienced stimuli are therefore doomed to disappear soon after they have reached consciousness. This also implies that most sensations never actually reach the inner person but remain on the threshold. By using the senses as antennae, consciousness is thus enabled to function as a kind of breakwater. These antennae take samples of the outside world and only pass them on to different mental systems in a diluted form. Freud therefore considers 'Reizschutz' to be almost more important than 'Reizaufnahme', since a breakdown of this protective system would inevitably lead to trauma. In the context of *Wahnschaffe*, and in particular

²¹ Sigmund Freud, 'Jenseits des Lustprinzips', in *Studienausgabe*, 11 vols, ed. by Alexander Mitscherlich and others (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1975), vol.3, pp. 215 - 73.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 234 - 35.

the protagonist's personal development, it is also noteworthy that, according to Freud, 'Reizschutz' can only protect us from stimuli from outside, and is of no use when it comes to protecting the individual from his or her inner life or inner stimuli.

4.2.3 Benjamin – the desire to be shocked

Freud's concept of the 'Reizschutz' and the stimuli that will not be remembered reappears in Benjamin's essay 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire' (1939). If we take Benjamin's analysis of modern perception into consideration, it will be easier to understand Christian's gradual move towards sainthood as a move towards a new kind of perception. Benjamin starts his description of our altered perception by claiming that the conditions for the reception of poetry have worsened – a claim which seems to be confirmed in the novel when Christian is at a loss to understand why his friend Crammon reads poetry (CW, vol.1, 27). At the heart of this altered perception stands, according to Benjamin, the constantly decreasing relevance of 'Erfahrung' and the rise of what he refers to as 'Erlebnis'. He defines 'Erfahrung' thus:

In der Tat ist die Erfahrung eine Sache der Tradition im kollektiven wie im privaten Leben. Sie bildet sich weniger aus einzelnen in der Erinnerung streng fixierten Gegebenheiten denn aus gehäuften, oft nicht bewußten Daten, die im Gedächtnis zusammenfließen.²³

In other words, 'Erfahrung' is a collective as well as an individual experience. It is not remembered as a particular moment in time, but can rather be understood as a sediment on which our life is based. Since the modern city-dweller, however, is isolated, s/he can only have an 'Erlebnis'.

It is the unconsciously remembered data that is crucial in this context, for it leads Benjamin on to make the distinction between the *mémoire volontaire* and the *mémoire involontaire* based on Marcel Proust's novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The *mémoire volontaire* is part of our intelligence and can be used at any given moment and yet: '[...] von ihr gilt,

²³ Walter Benjamin, 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire' in *Illuminationen*, ed. by Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 185-230 (186).

daß die Informationen, welche sie über das Verfllossene erteilt, nichts von ihm aufbehalten.'²⁴ Or, as Christian puts it in the novel: 'Ich habe kein Gedächtnis für das, was ich erlebt habe.' (CW, vol. 2, 185) The more meaningful memory is thus part of the *mémoire involontaire* which, as in the case of Proust's famous madeleine, can only be triggered by an object. In fact it is linked to one particular object. Whether or not one will ever be able to find the relevant object in order to gain access to a particular memory and thus to a picture of oneself, remains a matter of chance. Only things that have not been consciously 'erlebt' can therefore become part of the *mémoire involontaire*. This peculiar state of our memory, however, is not a natural one but is a result of our modern way of life as the inner person has become private and isolated. One reason for this isolation is the fact that the 'äußeren Anliegen' (information, sensations) can no longer become part of a person's 'Erfahrung', instead they have turned into a mere 'Erlebnis'.

At this point, Benjamin connects his theory with Freud's previously mentioned ideas about the 'Reizschutz':

Im Jahre 1921 erschien der Essai [sic] "Jenseits des Lustprinzips", der eine Korrelation zwischen dem Gedächtnis (im Sinne der *mémoire involontaire*) und dem Bewußtsein aufstellt. [...] Die Überlegungen, die sich im folgenden an sie anschließen, werden nicht die Aufgabe haben, sie zu beweisen. Sie werden sich begnügen müssen, die Fruchtbarkeit derselben für Sachverhalte zu überprüfen, die weit von denen abliegen, die Freud bei seiner Konzeption gegenwärtig gewesen sind.²⁵

Benjamin thus applies Freud's theory, which is based on the experience of shell-shocked soldiers, to modern life in general. Every impression delivers a slight shock to our system, what Freud's soldiers went through is therefore only an extreme version of something we experience on a daily basis. Yet our reaction to these constant shocks is of a two-sided nature.

Our initial reaction is to refuse to assimilate those shocks as we want to expel them out of ourselves instead of making them part of our 'Erfahrung'. The more our consciousness has to function as a 'Reizschutz'

²⁴ Ibid., p. 188.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 190.

against the shock-like ('chockförmige') nature of an impression, the less likely that it will become part of our 'Erfahrung'. Benjamin therefore describes the result of the 'Chockabwehr' as follows: 'dem Vorfall auf Kosten der Integrität seines Inhalts eine exakte Zeitstelle im Bewußtsein anzuweisen.'²⁶ Modern life with its constant shocks, as can be experienced when using the public transport of a big city, has therefore forced people to accept an altered perception.

And yet, at the same time Benjamin describes a new 'Reizbedürfnis' which can be understood as a significant by-product of this new perception. Contrary to what one might expect, namely that these shocks are merely unpleasant, the city-dweller also develops a need for such stimulation and seeks an equivalent in aesthetic experience. This new desire to be shocked is best satisfied by the movie: 'Im Film kommt die chockförmige Wahrnehmung als formales Prinzip zur Geltung.'²⁷ In this context, *Wahnschaffe* can therefore be thought of as an attempt to create a form of art that would correspond to its readers' 'chockförmige Wahrnehmung' of the world around them. The novel is an endeavour to satisfy the perceptual needs of an audience used to a new rhythm of life and a sensory overload. Comparable to the scenery of an urban landscape, the novel is designed to over-stimulate its reader's nervous system: rather than counterbalancing the shock modern life has caused, it reinforces the shock.

Apart from trying to satisfy its reader's 'Reizbedürfnis', the novel is also highly critical of the consequences of this altered, modern perception. Initially, Christian's life is shown to be made up of 'Erlebnisse' in the Benjaminian sense, as he is happy to embrace many aspects of modern life: Christian travels all over Europe, indulges in luxury, has an adventurous love life and, with no real purpose in life, constantly seeks new sources of entertainment to satisfy his ever increasing 'Reizbedürfnis'. To him the

²⁶ Ibid., p. 193.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 208.

world is purchasable, ephemeral and essentially meaningless. He is unwilling as well as unable to engage seriously with himself or other people. His transformation from a decadent young man to a modern saint therefore begins with a change in his perception: initially, however, not of people, but of objects.

Objects are also central to Benjamin's argument, not only because of their potential to trigger our *mémoire involontaire*, but also because he attributes an aura to objects. Benjamin writes:

Wenn man die Vorstellungen, die, in der *mémoire involontaire* beheimatet sind, sich um einen Gegenstand der Anschauung zu gruppieren streben, dessen Aura nennt, so entspricht die Aura am Gegenstand einer Anschauung eben der Erfahrung, die sich an einem Gegenstand des Gebrauchs als Übung absetzt.²⁸

What characterises the experience of the aura is the fact that it enables objects to return a human gaze and thus make a reciprocal relationship with them possible. Moreover, such an experience cannot become part of the *mémoire volontaire*. Modern life has largely led to the destruction of the aura, which means that we are no longer capable of looking at objects in this way. In other words, we are no longer capable of looking at an object steadily, for a long time and with concentration: our eyes have forgotten how to gaze. This, according to Benjamin, is the price we pay to experience the sensation of modernity: 'die Zertrümmerung der Aura im Chockerlebnis.'²⁹

Christian has the first experience of what could be referred to as the aura in the squalid flat of a poor worker's wife with her five children:

Sein Blick fiel auf einen Waschkrug mit abgebrochenem Henkel [...] einen einzelnen Stiefel mit einer dicken Kotkruste [...] Dann fesselte eine Strick seine Beachtung [...] dann die kleine Petroleumlampe [...] Nur Dinge, an denen sich sein Auge festsaugte. Aber die Dinge gingen in ihn über, und er verwandelte sich in sie [...] Er wurde in einem Schmelzfeuer umgeformt, Gestalt wechselte mit Gestalt [...] und obwohl er auch die Menschen [spürte] [...] war es sein innigstes Bemühen, sie noch von sich abzuhalten, eine kleine Weile noch, ehe sie mit ihrer Qual, ihrer Verzweiflung, ihrer Besessenheit, ihrer Grausamkeit über ihn stürzten: wilde Hunde über ein Stück Fleisch. (CW, vol. 1, 161-2)

²⁸ Ibid., p. 221.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 229.

The essential first step in his transformation, is therefore a change in the way he perceives objects. Before Christian can open his eyes to the human misery around him, he has first to familiarise himself with the material misery.

Christian even develops a reciprocal relationship with these objects: not only does he 'turn into' them, but they will also reappear, seemingly against his will, as a *mémoire involontaire*. In Wassermann's version, the object therefore becomes more than just a trigger for a particular memory but it becomes part of the memory itself. In this context, the character of Christian offers parallels to Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos (*Ein Brief*, 1902) and Rilke's Malte (*Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, 1910), who find significance precisely in the most commonplace objects. This fascination with the banal objects of the everyday enables us to place *Wahnschaffe* in the context of a widespread interest in perception also to be found in the fiction of the beginning of the twentieth century.³⁰ Another parallel could be seen in the Dada movement that began in 1916 in Zürich and also, among other things, demonstrated a considerable interest in objects of the everyday.³¹

When Christian later remembers these broken objects, they will prove to have a major influence on the path his life is going to take. It is as if through his engagement with these objects, his eyes have been opened to the world outside his bubble of decadence and pleasure. Christian's altered character is therefore predominantly defined by his altered perception: objects are given back their aura and his eyes are eventually enabled to gaze again.³²

³⁰ See also Naomi Segal, *The Banal Object: Theme and Thematics in Proust, Rilke, Hofmannsthal, and Sartre* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1981).

³¹ See Peukert, *Weimar*, p. 167.

³² In his interpretation, Karlstetter is aware of the importance of perception for Christian's spiritual development, yet he does not link it to the development of perception in the modern world. See Karlstetter, *Bild des Jugendlichen*, p. 76. Hermann Greissinger writes that Christian's decision to leave his world behind leads to a 'Wahrnehmungserweiterung' but similar to Karlstetter, he does not link it to other, more general, developments of

4.3 How not to do it – the blind saints

Apart from a new form the novel also confronts its reader with a new approach to the question of character. Up to this point Wassermann was keen on creating psychologically rounded characters whereas now, amongst other things, he becomes interested in exploring the use of allegorical types instead. This new approach not only corresponds to the end of his concern with a realistic depiction of the provincial world of the petty bourgeoisie but it also tallies with the ways in which modernity has changed our perception: Wassermann's new approach to the question of character also seems to be an attempt to mirror the ways in which we perceive the people around us on a daily basis. The most poignant aspect of this new approach is the fact that the reader is most likely to have forgotten about some of the novel's characters by the time s/he has finished it. A popular point of critique, this overdose of characters could equally be seen as one of the novel's most modern features which is why Poeschel's claim that it is merely an expression of Wassermann's 'Unersättlichkeit nach Menschen' seems to miss the point.³³ It demonstrates that we are no longer able to remember all the people we encounter. Moreover, as we have learned from Simmel, eccentricity is the only way to be seen in a modern society. Tellingly, the eccentric characters are those we are most likely to remember at the end of the novel.

Another aspect of this new way in which we perceive people, apart from forgetting about them altogether, is that it is no longer possible to get to know their private person. At best we might be able to get a glimpse of it, for it is otherwise completely isolated. This means that to our eyes people are mainly made up of 'äußere Anliegen' and it has become increasingly difficult to see the individual human being behind them. The novel echoes this effect as it does not allow most of its figures to turn into

perception. See Hermann Greissinger, *„In die vierte Existenz vielleicht“: Konzeptionen von 'Leben' und 'Nicht-Leben' im Werk von Jakob Wassermann und in den Erzähltexten der frühen Moderne* (Bern, Frankfurt a.M., New York: Lang, 1986), p. 86.

³³ Poeschel, *Wassermann*, p. 86.

fully developed characters. Instead Wassermann makes use of these figures as allegories, in particular of Eva Sorel (art), Iwan Becker (political ideology) and Amadeus Voss (religion). These three figures are most suitable to highlight Wassermann's new technique of characterisation and will therefore be discussed in the following. Moreover, there is a strong link between the depiction of character and its content, meaning that all three of them represent failed attempts at finding salvation that stand in stark contrast to Christian's eventual sainthood. At the same time this abundance of potential saints depicts a situation in which, after the loss of traditional religions at the end of the nineteenth century, people were confronted with various new spiritual options.³⁴ The failure of those three attempts can again be linked back to the question of perception, thus completing the picture that Wassermann draws of society immediately before the Great War.

4.3.1 Eva Sorel – the power of art

The figure of the dancer Eva Sorel offers a good starting point as the way she is presented clearly links back to the connection made previously between the novel and the cinema: more than any other character in the novel Eva is presented like a silent movie star. That means that her appearance and her dance, i.e. her movements, stand at the forefront whilst her personality retreats to the background. This character is mainly made up of visible features which do not allow significant psychological depth. Whenever Eva is present the reader always knows what she is wearing and how she moves. However, since Eva is a rather quiet character with no inner monologues, we rarely find out anything about her inner life. And even the conversations she has are described as beautiful but meaningless whilst her dress as well as her movements, that means her dance, are exceptional, eccentric and memorable. The character of Eva therefore lends itself perfectly for the creation of those 'images' that are so vital for the form of the novel.

³⁴ For a further discussion of those options see Jütten, *Diskurse*, p. 86.

In fact, these rapidly changing and very extravagant outfits of Eva, greatly influencing the fashion of her day, are yet another indicator of the new 'Reizbedürfnis' resulting from the ways in which modernity has changed our perception. Simmel observes this phenomenon in his essay 'Die Mode' (1905): 'Daß in der gegenwärtigen Kultur die Mode ungeheuer Überhand nimmt [...] ist nur die Verdichtung eines zeitpsychologischen Zuges. Unsere innere Rhythmik fordert immer kürzere Perioden im Wechsel von Eindrücken'.³⁵ Our desire to be shocked and to experience a sensory overload therefore also extends to the world of fashion and it is one of the functions of Eva's character to fulfil this desire.

All these properties of her character also lend themselves to an allegorical use as Eva becomes a significant symbol of her time as well as an allegory describing the role of art in it. Eva advances within ten months from a dancer in a backstreet theatre in Paris to an international star and immediately surrounded by a group of adoring followers she becomes an idol and a symbol of hope for many people:

[I]hre Kunst galt als hohe Blüte der Epoche. Es lagen ihr alle zu Füßen, deren geistig-unruhigem Verlangen sie eine Gestalt dargeboten hatte. Die Vorläufer der gehetzten Menschheit schöpften Atem und blickten zu ihr empor. Die Anbeter der Form und die Verkünder eines neuen Rhythmus warben um ein Lächeln ihres Mundes. (CW, vol. 2, 59)

Eva thus represents the new era with its new, faster pace. At the same time people see her art as a source of comfort, to the extent that, as suggested by the choice of words, she is worshipped in a semi-religious way. And yet, as Wassermann already hinted at in *Zirndorf* and *Renate Fuchs*, the artist, in that case the 'Literat' Gudstikker, is not a figure to be believed in, let alone to be worshipped. The character of Eva thus has to be seen as a continuation of Wassermann's concern with the role of the artist in society. Moreover, as a dancer, Eva also becomes a later and more successful version of Jeanette Löwengard. Eva is not only successful as an artist but her emancipation as well as her sexual liberation are credible.

³⁵ Simmel, 'Die Mode' in *Das Abenteuer*, pp. 58-92 (p. 69).

Eva's function as an allegory begins when she is made aware of the sheer endless agony of the Russian people under an authoritarian rule. As a consequence she decides to redeem the world through her art: "Die Verdammnis will ich tanzen. Die Verdammnis in der Hölle und die Erlösung." (CW, vol. 1, 61). She thus attributes a (religious as well as political) purpose to a form of art that has hitherto been an ephemeral source of entertainment. Eva wants to bring people the salvation they are so desperately looking for through her art. Contrary to the comfort commonly found in art she wants to take it to the level of international politics. Initially, some people are thrilled by her step: 'Es gab verzückte Propheten, die behaupteten, sie tanze das neue Jahrhundert, den Untergang der alten Ideen, die kommende Revolution' (CW, vol. 1, 61).

However, that under these circumstances art would betray its purpose is already hinted at in the work of art that becomes a great source of inspiration to Eva: namely, the thirty-third canto of the Inferno from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Significantly, the canto deals with traitors who find themselves in the ice of Cocytus. It is there that

we have the last state of the corruption of love; that every devouring passion, sexual or otherwise, that sets itself against the order of God and the City, bears in itself the seeds of treachery and a devouring passion of destruction.³⁶

This is a first hint at Eva's inevitable fall and the megalomania that leads to her own destruction. The passage quoted in the novel (beginning with 'Lo pianto stesso li pianger non lascia') describes how the traitors cannot even weep because their tears are frozen, which seems to foreshadow not just Eva's downfall but also her increasing inability to see and thus to love and show empathy.

When art comes into contact with worldly powers, its fall becomes inevitable and Eva is branded as a traitor. In this context the figure of the dancer becomes a particularly fruitful representative of art, because as a dancer Eva and her work are inseparable: the dancer is the art work itself.

³⁶ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy. 1: Hell*, trans. by Dorothy L. Sayers (London: Penguin, 1949), p. 282.

In order to influence his decisions, Eva becomes the mistress of the Russian Großfürst Maidanoff, who has allegedly spilt enough blood to drown the whole of Moscow in it. The allegorical nature of these two figures is further underlined by the lack of any historical foundation for the figure of Maidanoff.³⁷ Moreover, Maidanoff can hardly be referred to as a character at all since he is represented as a dark force that is rarely present as an actual figure. Maidanoff only has a few lines of speech throughout the novel which adds to the sense that in this society people are ruled by an anonymous force rather than actual, tangible people. In the figure of Maidanoff, Wassermann has depicted the most sinister aspect of modern society, namely the brutality of a regime that seemingly has lost all human qualities.

It does not take long before art becomes corrupted by the game of international politics as well as defeated by her own desires. The Russian Iwan Becker observes: "Sie empfängt die Minister und fremden Gesandten wie eine gekrönte Herrscherin." (CW, vol. 2, 67-8) Art is thus seated on the throne of worldly powers, allowing Eva to live a life of almost unspeakable luxury in Russia. Her initial aim is soon forgotten: "[I]ch will den Tiger [Maidanoff] an die Kette legen." (CW, vol. 1, 260). She had hoped to persuade Maidanoff to adopt more humane politics but instead no longer minds the sacrifice of human lives for the satisfaction of her own desires. Art has thus been betrayed, even destroyed (as indicated by Eva's eventual suicide) in Eva's attempt to influence politics. As soon as Eva became the tyrant's lover, her art ceased to be a source of relief for her audience as she was never again able to perform her dance of 'Freiheit und Erlösung' (CW, vol. 1, 264). In other words, salvation through art is therefore only possible if the latter is free from any worldly purpose. This understanding of the role of art in society can be linked back to *Zirndorf*. Here only the minor character of Cornely Nieberding finds salvation through her art whilst the commercial artist Gudstikker had instrumentalised his work to

³⁷ See for example Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy : the Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (London: Pimlico, 1997).

an extent that it became meaningless. Similarly, in her function as an allegory, Eva becomes a strong reminder, that art and power should stay apart to prevent it from becoming superficial as well as to avoid a situation in which the artist is worshipped like a god.

4.3.2 Iwan Becker – revolution at any cost

The Russian revolutionary leader Iwan Michailowitsch Becker represents another failed attempt at bringing people salvation. Once again, Wassermann carefully avoids presenting an actual historical figure. Instead, he makes an allegorical use of this figure in order to depict the failure of political ideology as well as the dangers lurking behind any kind of mass movement. There is an earlier, similar version of the figure of Becker, named Rachotinsky, in *Der goldene Spiegel* which is a first indicator that Becker is more of a type than an individual character.³⁸ Moreover, Robert Service tells us that the figure of the politically persecuted Russian in exile was a familiar sight in early twentieth-century Europe, which makes Becker an easily identifiable and imaginable figure.³⁹

Yet even though Becker gives the usual account of horror and agony under the Tsarist regime, Wassermann seems neither interested in creating a heroic, martyr-like figure nor is he giving in to the fear of revolutions that had reached its height in Germany just after World War One. At that time Germany went through a number of revolutions or revolutionary outbreaks, notably the revolution of November 1918, the Munich Räterepublik, the Spartakus uprising and the Kapp putsch, which caused widespread alarm.⁴⁰ By making Becker have a radical change of heart, abandon the revolutionary cause and join a pro-Tsarist movement,

³⁸ See Jakob Wassermann, 'Aurora' in *Der goldene Spiegel: Erzählungen in einem Rahmen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1911), pp. 291 - 323.

³⁹ See Robert Service, *Trotsky: a Biography* (Basingstoke & Oxford: Pan Books, 2010), pp. 87 – 114.

⁴⁰ See for example Harry Graf Kessler, *Tagebücher 1918-1937*, ed. by Wolfgang Pfeiffer-Belli (Frankfurt a.M: Insel, 1996), pp. 6 – 87 and Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, pp. 3 – 119.

Wassermann instead seems to aim at a more general rejection of any kind of political extremism taken up by a mass movement. This depiction tallies with the author's critique of the figure of the intellectual in his earlier novels.

Becker's decision to abandon the revolutionary cause shows him to be blind to the suffering of the people he is ostensibly fighting for. Following the insight that ever since the beginning of the revolutionary movement in Russia (in 1905) more blood has been shed than before, Becker decides to turn his back on the political left. Tellingly, this insight does not prevent Becker from spilling even more blood as he first leads a workers' movement in support of the Tsar and later becomes the head of a group of violent ex-soldiers who terrorise entire regions on the coast. In fact, it is one of these groups that storms Eva's castle, prompting her to commit suicide. The false saints are therefore shown to be without mercy for each other. During all this time, Becker wears the dress of an Orthodox priest and the men revere him as a saint: '[E]r galt ihnen als der Heilige des Volkes und der Prophet des neuen Reiches' (CW, vol.2, 414). Becker thus ran the gamut from a revolutionary leader to an Orthodox 'saint' with the result that all of his endeavours have led to the loss of further lives. Becker is obviously unable to see the human being behind his various political causes.

By placing Becker in the context of his opponent Maidanoff, Wassermann illustrates how tyranny and revolutionary endeavour potentially lead to the same outcome. Even though unable to predict what the future will hold, Wassermann clearly felt the need to issue a warning against any kind of extremism, be it revolutionary or authoritarian. In order to get his point across, he refrains from using fully developed characters or actual historical figures but instead relies on the symbolic significance of his figures. That way he arrives at an over-arching critique of the consequences of ideology being put to the test. Moreover, Becker's attempt at bringing people salvation and relief through mass movements

including the use of violence stands in stark contrast to Christian's approach, which aims at saint-like behaviour in an everyday context. Or, as Koester has put it: Christian's aim is 'seine Nächstenliebe praktisch zu leben.'⁴¹ Blankenagel's critique that Christian lacks any interest in 'organized philanthropy' therefore clearly misses the point.⁴²

4.3.3 Amadeus Voss – religion in need of salvation

With the character of Amadeus Voss, Wassermann dismisses religious dogmatism as a means to find salvation. It might seem that religion offers the most obvious way to achieve salvation and yet, the novel confronts us with a form of religious dogmatism that is in need of salvation itself. Voss is the representative of this dogmatism and even though he is a less obvious allegorical figure, it soon becomes apparent that his symbolic value by far exceeds his importance as a character. In this context Karlstetter seems seriously mistaken when he identifies Voss as a 'Zivilisationsliterat', trying to place him in the context of Thomas Mann's critique of that figure.⁴³ An eccentric figure like Voss is clearly a very different kind of person from the liberal, Francophile, secular type that Mann had in mind and later embodied in Settembrini:

Der Typus dieses deutschen Anhängers der literarischen Zivilisation ist, wie sich versteht, unser *radikaler Literat*, er, den ich den "Zivilisationsliteraten" zu nennen mich gewöhnt habe, - und es versteht sich deshalb, weil der radikale Literat, der Vertreter des literarisierten und politisierten, kurz, des demokratischen Geistes, ein Sohn der Revolution, in ihrer Sphäre, ihrem Lande geistig beheimatet ist.⁴⁴

Wassermann himself associated this term with Heinrich Heine, a very plausible antecedent of the 'Zivilisationsliterat', which shows that he understood the term as Mann did.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 57.

⁴² Blankenagel, *Writings*, p. 277.

⁴³ Karlstetter, *Bild des Jugendlichen*, p. 71.

⁴⁴ Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1983), p. 76.

⁴⁵ See Jakob Wassermann, 'Mein Weg', p. 74. See also Anne-Liese Sell, *Das metaphysisch-realistische Weltbild Jakob Wassermanns* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1932), p. 21. For a more detailed discussion of Wassermann's relationship with Heine see Markus May, 'Die Wunde Heine' in *Deutscher - Jude - Literat*, pp. 91 - 109.

Although the reader is provided with some information regarding Voss's background and personal development, his character is mostly made up of his religious fanaticism. He is shown to be a tormented character who received his education at a Catholic seminary and is unable to free himself from an extreme form of religiosity. The extent of his fanaticism becomes apparent when he does not refrain from using physical abuse as a means to educate his pupils during a brief interval as a private tutor ('Hofmeister'). He reports his treatment of the two boys as follows:

Sie mußten beten, einmal in der Woche fasten, auf harten Lagerstellen schlafen und des Morgens um fünf Uhr aufstehen. Ich brach ihren Trotz auf alle Weise, ihre dumpfe Trägheit, ihre Lüsternheit, ihre Ränke [...] Ich züchtigte sie. Ich schlug sie bei der geringsten Widersetzlichkeit mit der Peitsche. Ich lehrte sie den Schmerz. Nackt mußten sie vor mir liegen, mit den blutigen Striemen auf der Haut, da sprach ich ihnen vom Martyrium der Heiligen. (CW, vol. 1, 207-8)

Even Voss's language is therefore soaked in the vocabulary of Christian extremism making it difficult to trace any personal aspect of it. This is emphasised further by his frequently quoting or reading from the Bible when he wants to make a point which renders him less individual as his words are not his own. Voss's personality has therefore been taken over by a dogma to the extent that hardly any individuality remained. And yet it is important to bear in mind, as Elisabeth Jütten has observed, 'dass sich die Kritik des Romans gegen jegliches religiöse Dogma, das religiöse Intoleranz erzeugt, nicht jedoch gegen den Glauben als solchen wendet.'⁴⁶ The figure of Voss is therefore a continuation of Wassermann's critique of religion in *Zirndorf*. Moreover, this rejection of dogmatism and, more generally, the superiority of one religion over another, is an important step towards the search for a more syncretic approach towards spirituality as presented in *Kerkhoven*.

Hatred stands at the centre of Voss's world view, making him among other things a radical anti-Semite. The idea of religion as a means to channel one's hatred is fundamentally opposed to Christian's approach, which is why Voss becomes the latter's opponent. Voss has been blinded

⁴⁶ Jütten, *Diskurse*, p. 117.

by his dogmatism and consequently fails to see the human being which becomes most apparent in his open contempt for the prostitute Karen. Voss's blindness to life and love is underlined by several references to his face being 'augenlos' (see for example CW, vol.1, 173). Greissinger rightly remarks that Voss rejects 'die wesentlichen Transformationen: [...] die von Wahrnehmung und Erkenntnis.'⁴⁷ In this version, religion therefore prevents the individual from altering his or her perception to be able to see the human being. Christian and Voss thus find themselves on opposite journeys: Christian towards light and the ability to see despite the blinding influences around us and Voss towards darkness and the inability to see beyond his hatred.

As an allegorical representation of religion, Voss also functions as a foil for Christian in order to demonstrate how the latter, as a modern saint, is without religion. In an ironic scene, when Voss mentions St. Francis of Assisi to Christian, he replies: "Ich weiß von ihm nichts." (CW, vol. 2, 209) In the novel Christian's behaviour is thus, at least from his perspective, not inspired by any known religious movement. Moreover, while Voss constantly has to force himself to be religious, Christian's development comes across as natural. This becomes most apparent in their different approaches towards sexuality: as a follower of a fanatical Catholicism, Voss has learned to suppress his sexuality even though nature has other plans for him. He therefore constantly expresses his hatred for sexuality as well as women who arouse these forbidden desires in him. Christian's sexual abstinence, in contrast, seems to be a natural part of his transformation and is at no point depicted as a struggle against himself. Religiosity and even sainthood, it seems, therefore has to be the result of an inner, natural development that cannot be forced onto somebody, neither from the outside as Voss tried to with his pupils nor from the inside as he tried to with himself. A religious dogmatism, as represented by Voss, that is so

⁴⁷ Greissinger, *Vierte Existenz*, p. 117.

fundamentally opposed to human nature can thus never be a source of salvation for the victims of modernity.

Religious dogma is shown to be standing between a religious figure and the people instead of facilitating the contact between them. Wassermann seems to insist that the human being should always come before any kind of dogma, be it religious or political, as with Becker. The inability to focus on the individual human being has led to the failure of all of these three false saints. The depiction of them as 'semi-characters' helps to show how Wassermann's criticism is inextricably linked to the way he creates his characters.

4.4 Wassermann and his saint

On 29 May 1916 Wassermann writes in a letter to his friend, the pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni:

Ich arbeite seit Monaten an einem grossen [sic] Roman mit religiöser Grund-Idee, einem modernen Franz v. Assisi-Stoff. Er hat mich ganz und gar verschluckt, und die Widerwärtigkeiten der Welt klopfen nur, schreckhaft genug, doch im tiefsten machtlos, an das Schneckengehäuse.⁴⁸

These lines not only justify commentators in comparing Christian to St Francis.⁴⁹ They also highlight the significance that the figure of Christian had for Wassermann in a period of great distress, namely the years of the Great War. During that time he noted in his diary: 'Ich blicke in eine zerstörte Welt. Es ist, als ob die Menschheit sich selbst verloren, Gott verloren hätte.'⁵⁰

Only one year after *Wahnschaffe*, in 1920, Wassermann published the first volume of a collection of novellas entitled *Der Wendekreis*. 'Der unbekannte Gast', the first novella of this volume, can be understood as a

⁴⁸ Wassermann to Ferruccio Busoni 29/05/1916, DLA, Marbach. Call number: 96.48.3 /1-33, A: Wassermann, 1911-1924.

⁴⁹ See for example Joeris, *Aspekte*, p. 123. For a more general discussion of the reception of the story of St Francis at the turn of the century as well as the influences of Buddhism on the novel see Jütten, *Diskurse*, pp. 107 – 110 and 124 – 131.

⁵⁰ During the Great War, between 25/07/1914 and 25/12/1915 Wassermann kept another diary. See Karlweis, *Wassermann*, pp. 242 – 275 (p. 243).

reflection on the comfort Wassermann found, not only as a writer, in the figure of Christian. In the novella we meet a middle-aged writer named Mörner, who is presented in a way that is very similar to Wassermann. Mörner finds himself in a personal and professional crisis, as he has lost faith in his own mission, namely his art, as well as the people around him. He therefore refers to the 'Zerstörung der Geister und Seelen. [...] War jemals eine Menschheit so zu Boden getreten?'⁵¹ Even though there are no direct references to the Great War in the novella, this quotation is very similar in tone to that from Wassermann's own diary. Moreover, according to Mörner recent events have left society in a state too devastated for humanity to receive or inspire great works of art.

One evening he suddenly finds himself in the presence of a nameless visitor, who is described in a way that suggests he is an aged version of Christian. This ghostlike visitor has come to cure Mörner of his negative and unproductive views which are the result of his diseased perception: '[...] das Ganze ist eine Erkrankung des Auges; freilich nicht des physischen Auges; was darf nicht alles Auge heißen bei den Edleren: das Herz ist selber Auge.'⁵² By recounting numerous instances of human suffering that he has witnessed all over the world, the visitor demonstrates that the human soul is invincible. Even the most tragic events bear witness to its omnipresence and its beauty. He also reminds Mörner that it is his duty to continue writing, as his soul has not been directly affected by this recent wave of destruction: 'Ist das eigene Auge und die eigene Seele unzerstört, so ist die Welt unzerstört.'⁵³ When the visitor vanishes, Mörner has won new faith in the human soul and, to all appearances, can continue with his work. The use Wassermann makes of the word 'Auge' confirms that, for him, goodness is initially a matter of perception.

⁵¹ Jakob Wassermann, 'Der Unbekannte Gast' in *Der Wendekreis: Erste Folge* (Berlin: Fischer, 1920), pp. 7-45 (p. 15).

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

This comforting aspect of the figure of Christian and thus of *Wahnschaffe* sheds light on another potential reason for its great popularity and commercial success: it might have been a source of hope to those whom the war had left bereft and / or impoverished. This uplifting nature of the novel seems to be confirmed by some of the contemporary reviews. Max Rychner, for instance, refers to Christian as 'ein Regenerationsheld in der Niederbruchszeit'.⁵⁴ Koester has therefore rightly observed that Wassermann was, amongst other things, concerned with the 'seelischen Wiederaufbau im Nachkriegsdeutschland'.⁵⁵

At that time the idea of finding a source of hope and renewal in a spiritual yet non-religious way was of course not exclusive to Wassermann. Hermann Hesse, who also wrote a brief text about St. Francis,⁵⁶ displays a similar attitude towards religion, the need for spiritual renewal and even an altered perception in his novel *Demian: Die Geschichte von Emil Sinclairs Jugend* (1919). In the novel, Sinclair is looking for a 'Weltgefühl, das über allen Bekenntnissen stand'.⁵⁷ In the course of the novel he realises that the world does not need new gods or a new religion but that only the altered behaviour of each individual will make the difference. His mentor Pistorius teaches him that the equivalent of a modern saint must want nothing but his own destiny:

Wer wirklich gar nichts will als sein Schicksal, der hat nicht seinesgleichen mehr, der steht ganz allein und hat nur den kalten Weltenraum um sich. Wissen Sie, das ist Jesus im Garten Gethsemane. [...] Wer nur noch das Schicksal will, der hat weder Vorbilder noch Ideale mehr, nichts Liebes, nichts Tröstliches hat er! [...] Er darf auch nicht Revolutionär, nicht Beispiel, nicht Märtyrer sein wollen.⁵⁸

The parallels to the path that Christian is following are rather striking. Sinclair tries to follow this path together with his other mentor and friend

⁵⁴ Max Rychner, Ein neuer Roman Jakob Wassermanns. "Christian Wahnschaffe". In: *Neue Züricher Zeitung*. 140 Jg. (6. Juli 1919), p. 1. Quoted in Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, p. 56.

⁵⁵ Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 61.

⁵⁶ Hermann Hesse, 'Aus der Kindheit des Heiligen Franz von Assisi' in *Legenden*, ed. by Volker Michels (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 162-173.

⁵⁷ Hermann Hesse, 'Demian: Die Geschichte von Emil Sinclairs Jugend' in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Volker Michels, 21 vols (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2001 - 2007), pp. 233 - 366 (p. 311).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p 336.

Max Demian. As with Christian, this new way of life is linked to an altered perception: '[W]ir waren von der Mehrzahl der Menschen nicht durch Grenzen getrennt, sondern nur durch eine andere Art des Sehens.'⁵⁹ The novel ends with the beginning of the Great War and Sinclair, like so many others, senses a potential for renewal in this collapse. However, this collapse will have rendered all previous ideas of religion and morality obsolete and only the new, individual path he has discovered will be a means of salvation.

Another novel that offers parallels to *Wahnschaffe* is Gerhart Hauptmann's *Der Narr in Christo Emanuel Quint*, most notably in its lenient depiction of prostitutes and in the fact that Emanuel's companion Ruth also becomes the victim of a sexual murder.⁶⁰

The figure of Christian is therefore of significance to Wassermann beyond the actual novel as well as being part of a wider search for a spiritual renewal following the devastation caused by the Great War.

Even though Christian is not presented as a religious saint in the traditional sense it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that his character has been inspired by the thirteenth-century saint St. Francis of Assisi. It is safe to say that Wassermann used *Saint François d'Assise: sa vie et son oeuvre* (1910) by the Danish writer Johannes Jørgensen as a source for his novel, as a copy of the book can be found in the author's private library.⁶¹ Generally it can be said that Wassermann relies heavily on Jørgensen's account, with some striking parallels between the novel and the biography. Moreover, in the early chapter 'Der Globus auf den Fingerspitzen einer Elfe' the poet Ermelang is said to recite a poem about St Francis, yet the novel only offers a summary of it. This summary is in

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 348.

⁶⁰ See Gerhart Hauptmann, *Der Narr in Christo Emanuel Quint* (Berlin: Fischer, 1910).

⁶¹ See Johannes Jørgensen, *Saint François d'Assise : sa vie et son oeuvre*, trans. by Teodor de Wyzewa (Paris: Perrin, 1910). Wassermann's private library now belongs to the Stadtbibliothek, Nuremberg. The book was first published in Danish. See Johannes Jørgensen, *Den hellige Frans af Assisi* (1907).

large part a direct quotation from Jørgensen's book.⁶² In this scene St Francis is asked by Brother Matteo why he in particular was so popular among the people and why they had started to follow him. St Francis replies:

Warum mir alle nachfolgen? Das hat mir der Blick des allmächtigen Gottes ersehen, der allerorten auf Guten und Bösen weilt. Denn seine heiligen Augen sahen unter den Sündern keinen, der elender war denn ich, keinen, der untüchtiger war denn ich, keinen, der ein größerer Sünder war denn ich; und um das wundersame Werk zu vollbringen, das er sich vorgenommen, fand er kein Geschöpf auf Erden, das armseliger war denn ich. Darum hat er mich auserwählt, um die Welt zu beschämen mit ihrem Adel und ihrem Stolz. (CW, vol. 1, 78)

This emphatic reference to St Francis early in the novel is a massive clue about how we are to read it and what to expect from it. By becoming the lowest of the low Christian will demonstrate that salvation can only be achieved if one recognises one's own insignificance and as a result overcomes one's self. The reference to God's holy eyes is another hint at the idea that in the novel the ability to see is depicted as a divine quality.

4.5 The disappearance of character

In 'Der Unbekannte Gast' the mysterious visitor is nameless, which reads like a final confirmation of the fact that for Wassermann the idea of sainthood is strongly connected to that of the disappearance of character. The nameless visitor has disappeared for the benefit of others and all that is left of him, really, are his good deeds in everyday life and his unusual perception. The notion of sainthood that Wassermann presents us with is thus predominantly based on an altered perception that is the result of the overcoming of the self. He tries to depict this overcoming of the self in *Wahnschaffe* by using a new narrative technique: he gradually makes his protagonist disappear until he vanishes completely at the end of the novel. In *Wahnschaffe* the question of the outsider therefore retreats to the

⁶² Johannes Jørgensen, *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, trans. by T. O'Connor Sloane (New York, Bombay and Calcutta: Longman, Green & Co., 1912), p. 74.

background since Christian's character can no longer be seen in relation to society. By virtually ceasing to exist it has indeed become impossible for society to exclude him.

Given the complex structure of the novel it seems most reasonable to trace Christian's development from a rich and decadent young man to a modern version of St. Francis through his relationships with some of the other characters. Each of these relationships leads to the loss of an aspect of his former character until Christian eventually disappears altogether. Moreover, it will also become apparent that Koester's interpretation of Christian's development is in need of qualification: 'die Entwicklung der Hauptfigur verliert sich schließlich in legendenhaft-idealistischer Verschwommenheit.'⁶³

4.5.1 Katharina Zöllner

Christian's first important moment, with another character, regarding his inner development is his encounter with Katharina Zöllner, the daughter of a sailor and generally a minor character. This encounter documents the beginning of the changes in Christian's perception while at the same time it serves as a first hint at his later practice of sexual abstinence. In a town on the Rhine, just after leaving Paris and Eva Sorel, Crammon and Christian witness how Katharina is molested by numerous drunken men in a beer garden, where she has come looking for her father. Neither of them attempts to help her, even though the situation is rather severe:

Ihr Haar war aufgelöst, ihre blaue Bluse zerrissen, daß man die nackte Brust gewährte, ihr Gesicht voll häßlicher Flecken. Sie suchte sich aufrecht zu halten, nach einigem Umsichtasten brach sie zusammen [...]' (CW, vol. 1, 110)

Though he is not yet ready to interfere the event has nevertheless left Christian doubting his lifestyle for the first time: "'Glaubst du [Crammon], daß ich richtig lebe, so wie ich lebe?'" (CW, vol.1, 111-2)

⁶³ Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 57.

Apart from a sense of guilt Christian is driven by a strange curiosity, keen to explore how 'diese Sorte Mensch' is living. Together with Crammon he visits Katharina at her parents' home, conquering for the first time the disgust that regularly affects him when confronted with poverty. Unable to offer any genuine support to the traumatised girl and her family, all Christian has to give is a diamond ring as he is literally struck speechless by what he sees. This inability to find one word that would not be 'überflüssig und gemein' (CW, vol.1 115) shows how the need for a different way of seeing the world is deeply connected to the need of finding a way back to more supportive and meaningful human relationships.

At this point Christian is unable to interact with any of the family members which is, significantly, expressed in his inability to return their gaze. And yet, this moment marks a pivotal moment in the development of his altered perception as becomes apparent when Christian's perception is compared to that of Crammon. While the latter can see nothing but a squalid room inhabited by poor members of the lower classes, Christian can see beyond that:

Was Crammon sah und was Christian sah, war nicht dasselbe. [...] Für Christian war es wie ein Traum vom Fallen. Auch er sah den Schiffer, das abgehärmte Weib, den schlafenden Burschen, den Säugling in der Wiege und das Mädchen [...] aber er sah es wie man Bilder sieht, während man in einen Schacht heruntergleitet; Bilder, die beständig wiederkehrten und von anderen abgelöst wurden, die sich von oben her dazwischen schoben. So sah er Eva, die einem ihrer Affen eine Walnuß reichte [...] und jedes Ding, auf das sein Auge fiel, hatte Bezug auf ein anderes aus der andern Welt. (vol. 1, 113-14).

Another technique that is used here by Wassermann to highlight the importance of an altered perception becomes apparent. In these early stages, Christian can only sense that his perception is about to change as part of a gradual process, stimulated in many ways by recurring images, rather than a sudden transformation. The reader and Christian therefore have a similar experience as they are both confronted with rapidly changing images that potentially inspire a different way of looking at the world. At the same time these images are a great challenge that affects reader and protagonist in a similar way.

This passage precedes the one, quoted above, where Christian first perceives spiritual significance in mundane objects in the flat of the worker's wife. Now he starts to connect objects from the world of the poor to objects of his own world. Christian thus becomes increasingly aware of the discrepancy between the two worlds, here hinted at by contrasting the decadent Eva with the poor family, which will later prompt him to leave his life as the son of a rich businessman behind.

4.5.2 Lätizia von Febroni

As we have seen, the first depiction of Katharina Zöllner is highly sexualised, yet Christian's wish to help her is free from any sexual attraction towards her. This motif of his incipient sexual abstinence, and thus the loss of his sexuality as a key aspect of his character, is developed further in his relationship with Lätizia von Febroni. This sexual abstinence accompanies a quite radical change in Christian's visual and emotional outlook: his personal and egoistic desires cease to stand at the centre of his actions as he is no longer able to ignore the feelings of others as well as life's ugly sides. Hitherto he has been engaged in a number of brief and meaningless affairs which tallied with Simmel's notion of human relationships in a modern age. Womanising was an essential part of his former lifestyle, a symbol of his personal freedom, his power and his status above common moral conventions. Under previous circumstances the seduction of a girl like Lätizia would therefore have been a routine matter of no consequence which makes his refusal to sleep with her most significant.

The increasing impact of visual experiences on Christian's behaviour becomes apparent when he first tries to seduce Lätizia. On this first occasion, his refusal and his disgust find a rather curious symbolic expression in the figure of a toad. Christian and Lätizia find themselves in a state of sexual arousal yet he is prevented from seducing her by the sight of a toad:

Er zögerte nicht mehr, sich der Beute zu bemächtigen. Da gab es kein Bedenken. Er griff nach ihrer Hand; plötzlich gewahrte er eine Kröte, die mit ekelhafter Langsamkeit über Lätizias weißes Kleid kroch, erst über den unteren Saum, dann gegen die Hüfte empor. Er erblaßte und kehrte sich ab. (CW, vol. 1, 52)

It is not clear whether the toad symbolises sexuality in general, or Christian's desire for the virgin Lätizia in particular. In either case, the toad is seen as a disgusting creature, ugly and slimy, moving towards Lätizia's hips and thus her private parts, as though about to take the virginity that is symbolised by her white dress. This rather extreme vision of sexuality as repulsive offers the reader a first hint at Christian's later practice of absolute sexual abstinence. Schäfer's view that Christian here is scared of the 'weibliche Prinzip' seems to be mistaken because he is about to reject sexuality in general.⁶⁴ It is equally difficult to accept Karlstetter's interpretation of the scene when he writes: 'Der Ekel vor allem Dunkeln, Häßlichen, Schleimigen, der ihm von jeher eigen, läßt ihn Lätizias Reize vergessen. [...] Das Bild des gefühllosen und kalten Menschen [...] bestätigt sich.'⁶⁵ As we shall see in the next paragraph, it is precisely Christian's love for Lätizia that does not allow him to sleep with her.

The scene of Christian's second refusal is a further proof of the impact visual experiences have on his behaviour towards others. This time a *mémoire involontaire* is strong enough to defeat his intention of sleeping with Lätizia. It therefore seems to happen against his will when he sends her away again, for even though he has never been more excited by a woman's promise to come secretly to his room at night, something is holding him back:

Aber es war etwas dawider. [...] Es war ein blutüberströmtes Gesicht dawider, an dem die schwarzen Haare klebten, und es war ein vom Wasser aufgedunsenes Gesicht dawider, das vordem schön gewesen war. Es war ein Gesicht dawider voll Haß und Scham, das auf schlechtem Linnen ruhte, und ein anderes, in einer Kofferkammer, mit einer weißen Binde umkleidet. [...] Es war sein Herz dawider. Es war die Liebe dawider, die er für Lätizia empfand. (CW, vol. 1, 146)

⁶⁴ Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 318.

⁶⁵ Karlstetter, *Bild des Jugendlichen*, p. 59.

This rapid flow of images based on the memory of people whom he has either seen publicly humiliated, like Katharina, or whose violent deaths he has witnessed (his lover Adda who was killed by her own lions, his friend Sir Denis Lay drowned in the Thames) prevents him from sleeping with her and thus makes him suppress his sexual desires. In fact he is described as obeying an inner voice urging him to restrain himself. He is thus gradually moving away from the sort of love represented by 'eros' towards the concept of 'agape'. That means that he is leaving the world of sensual pleasures behind in order to live according to a more pure and divine concept of love.⁶⁶ The novel as a whole lacks positive depictions of sexuality which is why it is so significant that Christian dissociates love from sex. Moreover, his transformation is taken a step further as even his memory has opened to the misery and pain of others. It is no longer solely concerned with objects of everyday use. His memory can therefore be seen to be mirroring his gradual transformation. For the first time his unselfish love for another person, expressed in his refusal to seduce Lätizia, combined with his diffuse awareness of the human agony around him, comes before the satisfaction of his own needs and desires.

4.5.3 Eva Sorel

The end of Christian's love affair with the dancer Eva Sorel symbolises the main turning point in his life, which is also expressed in the original form of publication of the novel in two volumes, entitled 'Eva' and 'Ruth'. Eva is the key representative of the life Christian has been living so far, a view that seems to be corroborated by Thomas Mann's analysis of her character:

Die bedrohliche Ratlosigkeit des international-kapitalistischen Lebens ist bunt und eindringlich gegeben. Seine Spitze, sein höchster Sinn, seine Form der Vergeistigung, die

⁶⁶ See Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros: A Study of the Christian Idea of Love*, 3 vols, trans. by A.G. Herbert (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932), vol. 1.

zur Herrschaft gelangt: die Tänzerin. Die Frage nach dem Ziel des Lebens wird schmerzhaft und brennend, während Erzähllust sie mit tausend flirrenden Bildern umspinnt.⁶⁷

Christian is indeed at a loss to understand where life is taking him, yet he knows that the merely sensual love that Eva has to offer can only be a distraction from his inner turmoil. Unfamiliar with the road ahead, Christian knows that parting with Eva means parting with life as a rich young man and thus, in many ways, it can be understood as the end of his former self.

The final scene of their relationship marks another step in the development of Christian's perception. Following an incident involving a drunken man who inflicts an injury on Eva's feet, Christian kneels before her holding her feet in his hands. The symbolic act of kneeling is otherwise only performed twice in the novel: at the beginning of his transformation Christian kneels before Frau Kroll and in the end before the 'Lustmörder' Niels Heinrich. Both times it is a highly significant act and a dignified symbol of spiritual devotion. Eva, however, spoils it by deriving a kind of sexual pleasure from it: '[D]aß du vor mir kniest, ist wunderbar, mein süßer Freund' (CW, vol. 1, 311). Moreover, she is impudent enough to press his head even further down. There is thus a strong contrast between this act of crude sexuality and the spirituality that kneeling should imply. (Similarly, when Johanna Schöntag kneels before Eva (CW, vol. 1, 374) it has an air of idolatry to it.) At this point Christian remembers the miserable objects from Frau Kroll's squalid flat and suddenly fails to see Eva's beauty and attractiveness:

Diese menschenhaften Gebilde, diese Füße einer Tänzerin, Glieder einer geliebten Frau, das Seltenste und Kostbarste der Welt, schienen ihm auf einmal häßlich und abstoßend, und jene niedrigen und armseligen Dinge, [...] waren dagegen schön und verehrens-wert. [...] Er begriff [...] daß er, im Wechsel von Gestalt zu Gestalt, die Menschen wohl gesehen und gehört [...] daß es aber dabei sein innigstes Bemühen gewesen, sie noch von sich abzuhalten [...] Die Frist war verstrichen. (CW, vol. 1, 312-3)

⁶⁷ Mann, *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, p. 142.

Eva, the most appealing of all women in his world, has lost all charm in his eyes. With her, Christian therefore leaves another crucial aspect of his character behind, namely his love for beauty, wealth and comfort.

4.5.4 Karen Engelschall

Instead, Christian is now possessed with what could almost be termed a desire for ugliness. Appreciating a human being even behind the ugliest shell will prove to be one of the main trials on his way to sainthood. It will show whether his altered perception can stand the test in the face of everyday life. Soon after his last encounter with Eva (tellingly described as 'letzte Lockung, letzter Verzicht' (CW, vol. 1, 398), Christian meets his task in the form of the prostitute Karen Engelschall. He comes across the pregnant streetwalker in a bar where she is being assaulted by her pimp for not earning enough money. Yet even though Karen finds herself in the most miserable situation with blood streaming down her face, the narrator immediately prevents us from feeling any sympathy for her. Her cries are referred to as 'viehisch monotone Laute' (CW, vol.1, 414) and the description of her person is even more drastic: '[Sie] sah tückisch und böse aus [...] Reizloseres, Verwüsteteres als der Anblick, den sie darbot, war kaum zu denken.' (CW, vol. 1, 416-20) Later on the narrator will go even further when he portrays her as '[E]in Tier mit der Häßlichkeit des zerstörten und verstörten Menschen, eine böartige Wilde.' (CW, vol.2, 52)

The character of Karen is therefore not in line with depictions of prostitution in other literature from around that time. She does not conform to the stereotype of the 'prostitute with a heart of gold' (unlike, say, Shen Te in *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (1939)). Nor is she a 'Madonna of sexual liberation' or a victim of modern urban space which, as Christiane Schönfeld has shown, were common ways of depiction in Expressionist

writing.⁶⁸ Instead, as a woman Karen is depicted as repulsive, with no perceivable sexual appeal, in addition to which she is of a rather dislikeable character. However, all of these characteristics make her the ideal centre for Christian's new life and he decides to move to Berlin with her. Moreover, his new interest in Karen makes Christian forget all about Eva:

Das strahlende und königliche Wesen lockte ihn nicht mehr, wenn er an das blutüberströmte Gesicht der Dirne dachte, denn diesem gegenüber empfand er eine Art von Neugier, die mehr und mehr sein ganzes Inneres ausfüllte, so daß nichts daneben Platz hatte. (CW, vol. 1, 424)

The depiction of Karen as repellent in body and character enables the narrator to create sharp contrasts, which are an important narrative tool in this novel. The most significant of these contrasts that are achieved through the use of her character is when Karen asks Christian for his mother's pearl necklace. Frau Wahnschaffe is said to own the most precious pearls in the whole of Europe and ever since Karen has seen them in a photo of her, she has been longing for them. Pearls in particular are a long-established symbol of extreme luxury, one of the most famous examples being the legend of Cleopatra according to which she had pearls dissolved in water in order to drink them. In the novel jewellery (the diamond Ignifer, the pearl necklace and so on) is generally a symbol of power as it is one of the key symbols of the ruling class. As can be deduced from various entries in the diaries of Harry Graf Kessler, in post-war Germany pearls had become a symbol of a form of Wilhelmine life that had ceased to exist, namely the rule of the aristocracy of wealth and blood. On 31 March 1919 during the revolution in Berlin Kessler writes:

Diese Gesellschaftsdamen aus der Vorkriegszeit, Mumien, die ihre Perlen auf alten, vergilbten Hälsen herumtragen, wirken erschreckend im heißen Atem und Blutdurst der Massen, die keine seidenen Vorhänge mehr selbst aus Abendunterhaltungen der besten Kreise ausschließen.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Christiane Schönfeld (ed.), 'Streetwalking the Metropolis: Prostitutes in Expressionism', in *Commodities of Desire: The Prostitute in Modern German Literature* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000), pp. 110-131 (p. 117).

⁶⁹ Kessler, *Tagebücher 1918-1937*, p. 170.

Bearing all this symbolic value in mind, Wassermann creates a stunning contrast here when he has his protagonist give Europe's finest pearls to a syphilitic prostitute. The result is one of those strong images that the novel depends upon and that most certainly proved to be provocative and uncomfortable to some readers.

Through his time spent with Karen, Christian has therefore become indifferent to all material matters and yet even more importantly, also to all matters concerning the human body. A few months ago Christian would have thrown away his coat if a beggar had touched it. Having grown up in a society obsessed with an immaculate physical appearance, it proves to be a major challenge for Christian to overcome his strong sense of disgust at any physical aspect of human suffering. Accordingly, when Karen dies he is asked to put his new perception into practice. Her description at that moment strongly resembles that of a leper and yet for the first time during their relationship, Christian takes her into his arms where she dies peacefully: '[E]r verspürte keinen Ekel vor dem riechenden Körper mit den aufgebrochenen Eiterschwären; er umfing sie [...] als sei es gar kein Mensch, sondern ein kleiner Vogel' (CW, vol. 2, 300-1) This scene strongly resembles the legend, according to which it was St Francis' greatest victory when he finally managed to overcome his sense of disgust and embrace a leper.⁷⁰

With this experience Christian seems to have moved beyond the body and is now in search of the soul. The end of Karen's life also seems to signify the end of his bodily existence in a sense that he has become indifferent to all aspects of it. The body, hitherto a main concern of his, matters no longer.

⁷⁰ Jørgensen, *St. Francis*, p. 33. See also for a similar scene Gustave Flaubert, 'St Julien l'Hospitalier' in *Trois Contes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 81 – 131 (pp. 127 – 129) .

4.5.5 Ruth Hoffmann and her 'Lustmörder'

The last part of Christian's character that is left before he can finally disappear is that of human attachments. He has severed all ties with his family, looks after the poor whilst being poor himself and practises absolute sexual abstinence. Yet he is still emotionally attached to his friends in Berlin, most of all to Ruth Hoffmann. With the introduction of Ruth to the novel and her dramatic death, Wassermann once again creates a great contrast in front of which Christian's behaviour appears saintly, almost superhuman.

Ruth Hoffmann is the sixteen-year-old daughter of an Eastern European Jew who, like so many others, came to Berlin to make his fortune and failed. The character of Ruth offers another positive depiction of an Eastern European Jew, linking her back to Monika Olifat in *Zirndorf*. Yet unlike Monika, Ruth is an angelic figure and thus another character whose depiction in the novel is exaggerated. Her state of innocence equals that of Caspar Hauser, which is underlined even further by her association with an element or a spirit. If Karen represents the human body then Ruth represents nature and the human soul:

Da war ein reines Element, aufgeschlossen, enthusiastisch, mitlebend, mitschwingend; der Instinkt eines jungen Tieres, das sicher schreitet [...] Aus Steinen wuchsen ihr Seelen zu. Sie war befreundet mit Wegen, Türen, Zäunen, Laternen, Ladenschildern [...] der Mut zum eigenen Herzen gab der Atmosphäre um sie einen bestimmten Charakter wie kräftiger Pflanzengeruch. (CW, vol. 2, 165)

The surprising word 'Pflanzengeruch' could even be a reference to St. Clare, a saint and female follower of St. Francis, who was accustomed to call herself 'Brother Francis's plant'.⁷¹ Ruth is thus a saintly, spiritual character with no perceivable bodily existence as she has devoted her life to helping the poor and the support of her family. Christian finds a spiritual

⁷¹ Jørgensen, *Saint Francis*, p. 110.

guide in her and they form a very close relationship which, however, carries at no point any sexual connotations. Instead, she makes him understand that he has still a long way ahead of him: '[Er] fing an zu begreifen, daß er nicht sehen und fühlen konnte.' (CW, vol.2, 168) When Ruth dies at the hands of Karen's brother, the 'Lustmörder' Niels Heinrich, Christian is faced with the biggest challenge of his life: he has to understand why Niels Heinrich rapes and murders Ruth, the virgin with the eyes of a child.

With its depiction of a 'Lustmord' the novel becomes part of a whole range of works of art engaging with this topic. As Maria Tatar has shown, there was a widespread obsession with the theme of 'Lustmord' during the 1920s.⁷² Otto Dix and George Grosz filled their canvases with the bodies of mutilated prostitutes, Musil's Moosbrugger and Döblin's Reinhold are shown to murder prostitutes in the most brutal way and Peter Lorre stars as the child murderer M. in Fritz Lang's *M. Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*. At the same time, there were well-known real-life cases like Fritz Haarmann and Peter Kürten who were brought to trial. The fact that *Wahnschaffe* was published in 1919, making it a very early depiction of 'Lustmord', is another proof of Wassermann's acute awareness of social developments as well as the demands of the literary market.

Nevertheless, in this early depiction of the theme Wassermann departs from the usual order of events as he does not choose a derelict prostitute as the victim but an angelic figure. The contrast between the murderer and his victim could therefore not be greater, thus highlighting the brutality of the crime. To make matters worse the novel even confronts the reader with a very detailed account by Niels Heinrich of how he raped and murdered the young girl:

⁷² See Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Sie habe die Hände aufgehoben, und er habe bemerkt, daß sie, während er draußen gewesen, die Adern an ihren Handgelenken durchgeschnitten habe. Das Blut sei dick heruntergeronnen. Sie müsse es mit einer Glasscherbe getan haben, die zwischen Mauersteinen gesteckt. Da sei er in helle Tobsucht geraten, wie wenn es drauf und dran gewesen wäre, daß sie ihm einer wegnähme. Er habe sie an den Haaren zu Boden gerissen. Sie habe geschrien. Einen einzigen, langen Schrei. Den Schrei höre er noch jetzt. Glied um Glied, Hauch um Hauch, Zuckung um Zuckung sei sie sein geworden. So nur könne man besitzen; so und nicht anders. Himmels-, Gottes-, Erdenseligkeit. (CW, vol. 2, 389)

Afterwards he mutilates her body and cuts off her head which makes the crime recognisable as a 'Lustmord'.

This unsparing account of a sexual murder contributes to the creation of Christian as a saintly figure. The murder and the confession of the crime are not only the climax of the novel's action but also of Christian's spiritual development. The loss of Ruth has led to the severest crisis of his life at the end of which he has become a modern saint. Or, as Karlstetter puts it: 'Ihr [Ruth's] Tod ist es schließlich, der ihn in die schwerste Krise seines Lebens führt, deren Überwindung ihn dann den Weg seiner Bestimmung mit aller Konsequenz ergreifen läßt.'⁷³ Joeris's claim that with the cruel killing of Ruth 'erscheint der Holocaust wie im voraus dargestellt' seems inappropriate given the at that time unimaginable horrors of the Third Reich.⁷⁴

The impression of Christian's strength of character and his sainthood is amplified by another detail in the depiction of the murderer: Niels Heinrich is not insane. Christian as well as the reader is denied the easy way out of having a deranged character who is not really responsible for his crimes. Leja's interpretation of Niels Heinrich as insane is therefore mistaken.⁷⁵ Instead we are presented with a repellent yet intelligent young man who is fully aware of what he has done. Niels Heinrich simply rejects any common values, prefers a state of violence and lawlessness and could therefore almost be understood as a personification of evil. In this context it is

⁷³ Karlstetter, *Bild*, p. 88.

⁷⁴ Joeris, *Aspekte*, p. 132.

⁷⁵ See Gabriele Leja, 'Jüdische Gestalten im erzählerischen Werk Jakob Wassermanns' in *Werk und Wirkung*, pp. 66 – 98 (p. 95).

important to remember that in the poem by Cornelius Ermelang about St. Francis, referred to earlier, god is described as watching equally over the good and the bad. Similarly, Christian is determined to see the human being behind this evil shell.

4.6 What is Dostoevsky doing here?

When discussing the final scene between Christian and Niels Heinrich it seems impossible to do so without acknowledging the influence that Dostoevsky had on Wassermann. It might at first seem arbitrary at this point to bring in Dostoevsky but a comparison of the ending of *The Idiot* and that of *Wahnschaffe* will lead to a contribution to the Wassermann-Dostoevsky scholarship and make the parallels between the two novels immediately recognisable. As Horst-Jürgen Gerigk in particular has shown, the influence that Dostoevsky had on other writers is of great significance for the development of twentieth-century literature.⁷⁶ Wassermann himself professed:

Es ist kaum möglich, die Erscheinung eines Schriftstellers wie Dostojewski auf einen äußeren Anstoß hin zu umschreiben oder, was sie für die eigene Existenz bedeutet hat, mit einiger Verlässlichkeit zu fixieren. [...] selten noch ist ein einziger Mann, der nicht Religionsstifter oder Welteroberer war, Veranlasser einer so umfassenden Veränderung der psychischen Situation von Generationen gewesen.⁷⁷

In her 1951 dissertation Ruth Richter offers a very broad discussion of the influence Dostoevsky's novels and writing techniques had on Wassermann's work, including *Wahnschaffe*.⁷⁸ She points out the striking parallels between Prince Myshkin and Christian yet rather curiously she fails to mention the parallels between Niels Heinrich and Rogozhin. In contrast she considers Voss to be Christian's opponent and thus Rogozhin's

⁷⁶ Horst-Jürgen Gerigk, *Ein Meister aus Russland: Beziehungsfelder der Wirkung Dostojewskijs* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2010). See also M. Wegner, 'Europäische Romanentwicklung im 20. Jahrhundert und F.M. Dostojewskij' in *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 21 (1976), 500-12.

⁷⁷ Wassermann, 'Einige allgemeine Bemerkungen über Dostojewski' in *Lebensdienst*, pp. 259-263 (pp. 259-261).

⁷⁸ Ruth Richter, *Der Einfluss F. M. Dostojewskijs auf die Werke Jakob Wassermanns* (Diss. Bonn, 1951).

parallel figure which leads her to overlook the strong similarities between the final scenes of the two novels.⁷⁹

It is in these final scenes that Christian and Myshkin are finally revealed as saints, as they have their final encounters with the two murderers who bereaved them of those human beings they loved the most: Ruth and Nastassya Filippovna. In the final passage of Wassermann's novel, when Christian kneels before Niels Heinrich, the text runs:

Niels Heinrich, heruntergezogen, sank in die Knie. [...] Und sie knieten, einer vor dem andern. Sich selbst entrissen durch Berührung, gab der Mörder seine Schuld dem Menschen, der ihn richtete, ohne zu verdammen. Er war frei. Und auch Christian war frei. (CW, vol. 2, 429-30)

After Rogozhin has confessed his murder to Myshkin and lies down with a fever, the events are described in similar terms:

Dann streckte der Fürst jedesmal seine zitternde Hand nach ihm aus und berührte leise seinen Kopf, seine Haare, streichelte sie und streichelte seine Wangen...das war alles was er tun konnte. [...] schließlich beugte er sich wie in bereits völliger Entkräftigung und Verzweiflung nieder auf das Kissen und schmiegte sich mit seinem Gesicht an das bleiche und unbewegte Antlitz Rogoshins. Tränen rannen aus seinen Augen auf Rogoshins Wangen [...] ⁸⁰

In both scenes the worldly institutions of justice are of no consequence as they are, at least in the case of Wassermann, shown to be inefficient and flawed. Jütten therefore rightly concludes that for Wassermann 'das rechte Maß und der rechte Ausgleich [...] [sind] einzig vom Individuum selbst zu bestimmen' whilst any form of institutionalised justice is rejected.⁸¹ But in both scenes we have the saint-like figures carrying out an act of devotion and compassion in front of one of the lowest members of society and thus accepting them as a part of themselves. Or, as Lion Feuchtwanger puts it in his review of the novel: 'Wie blättert eine behutsame Hand noch die Ärmsten, Bösesten, Vertiertesten auf, bis auf ihren Kern, bis dahin, wo sie dein Bruder, bis

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁸⁰ Fjodor M. Dostojewski, *Der Idiot*, trans. by E. K. Rahsin (Munich: Piper, 1954), p. 935. Rahsin's translation of Dostoevsky's entire oeuvre first appeared between 1905 and 1919, this is most probably the translation Wassermann would have read.

⁸¹ Jütten, *Diskurse*, p. 149.

dahin, wo sie Du sind!’⁸² This is expressed in their physical contact: as they touch each other for the first time, these two extremes included in human nature become one. ‘Christian und Niels verkörpern den Kampf des guten und des bösen Prinzips’⁸³ is how Jütten describes the dynamics between the two figures, and yet it seems that Christian who has set out to become the lowest of the low has finally achieved his aim. He does not defeat Niels Heinrich but recognises him as a part of himself, as human nature is inevitably composed of good and evil and God watches over both.

The novel ends with the disappearance of its protagonist. All that remains of him are legends, according to which he was seen doing good in London’s East End, New York’s China Town or at a mining accident: always among the poor and as close as possible to human misery. Apart from being a remarkable technique of fictional closure, it is the final moment of Christian’s transformation into a modern saint: the transcendence of the self becomes his greatest achievement. He has ceased to be the person he used to be to the extent that he has even given up his name. The question of what a modern saint actually does is mostly avoided in favour of this spiritual triumph. The sense that Christian’s development is now complete is further emphasised when Voss mocks him and is subsequently called ‘Judas’ (CW, vol. 2, 447) by one of Christian’s friends. Following this analogy further would lead to the conclusion that Christian has now become Christ.

This panorama of multi-faceted pre-war Europe is an ambitious attempt to attain the rank of world literature and marks an important step in Wassermann’s writing career. It is a strong proof of his engagement with other writers and writing traditions, as he tries to assimilate Dostoevsky and offers by far the largest-scale treatment of the Expressionist theme of the ‘neuer Mensch’. But it can also be seen as an attempt at coming to terms with the dramatic social and political changes brought about by the events of the War. Wassermann’s ‘solution’ might seem peculiar at first, as

⁸² Lion Feuchtwanger, ‘Christian Wahnschaffe’ in *Ein Buch nur für meine Freunde* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1984), pp. 337-342 (p. 340).

⁸³ Jütten, *Diskurse*, p. 132.

he introduces a saintly figure into the modern world. Yet unlike other saints Christian has no real followers and founds no movement but tries to be saintly in the context of everyday life. It is this engagement with the ordinary that allows Christian to explore different ways of perception and arrive at this celebration of selflessness which is expressed in the disappearance of his character. The novel is nevertheless not a rejection of modernity and the changes it has led to, but rather an attempt at combining modernity with a profound love of humanity. Not to forget about the human being in the daily chaos of a modern existence and to recognise human nature even in the lowest members of society seems to be one of the novel's central messages.

5. A world beyond hope – the impossibility of character in *Der Fall Maurizius*

5.1 Introduction

Wassermann's most famous and most successful novel, even beyond the German-speaking world, *Der Fall Maurizius* (1928), is an open expression of the author's disillusionment as his lifelong mission, namely his struggle against injustice, has failed.¹ Beginning with *Maurizius*, we are therefore confronted with the pessimistic outlook of the late Wassermann who observed the rise of Nazism in the Weimar Republic and realised that its influence would soon spread to his 'Wahlheimat' Austria. In the last years of his life, as documented in his *Selbstbetrachtungen* (1933), he was left feeling more and more isolated as he feared the rise of a 'Barbarenära' in which art would be of no consequence.² Given the general state of society, people's loneliness alongside their political radicalisation with its ever increasing appeal of the masses, Wassermann has come to consider the project of being a writer an ethical failure. Wassermann's writing is therefore no longer informed by the humanist principle of writing as a means of educating his readers, which Neubauer has identified as a key characteristic of his works.³ As an artist he has thus lost faith in the possibility of art being an agent for change in a world that is beyond hope:

Nicht als ob es nicht da und dort Ergriffene gäbe, Reuige und der Verwandlung Fähige, aber am Lauf der Welt ändert sich nichts, am Haß, an der Lüge, am Mißverständnis, am Wahn und an der Ungerechtigkeit nichts.[...] warum vermag im Bösen ein Einzelner so viel,

¹ Wassermann's only work to have been the basis for a post-war TV production. See Theodor Kotulla, 'Der Fall Maurizius', (Germany: ZDF, 1981). Tom Appleton informs us that *Der Fall Maurizius* was the biggest success of a German author in the USA so far with more than one million copies sold in hardcover during Wassermann's lifetime alone. Jakob Wassermann, *The Maurizius case* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1930). See Tom Appleton, 'Nachwort' in Jakob Wassermann, *Christoph Columbus: Der Don Quichote des Ozeans* (Munich: DTV, 1992), pp. 217 – 221.

² For another example of this pessimism see also Jakob Wassermann, 'Der Jude in der Kunst' (1932) in *Reden und Schriften*, pp. 157 – 161.

³ See Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, p. 93.

und im Guten ein Einzelner fast nichts? Es ist in großen und in kleinen Dingen so, das bricht den Mut in uns.⁴

Anticipating his *Selbstbetrachtungen*, *Maurizius* is Wassermann's bleakest work so far, with very little space for hope to thrive in. Esther Schneider-Handschin sees a further indicator for the author's pessimistic mood in his initially considering 'Deutsches Inferno' as a more drastic title for the novel.⁵ The society depicted in the novel is far beyond the problem of the earlier 'Trägheit des Herzens' and thus, it seems, beyond the possibility of redemption. Gershon Shaked's claim that in his innocence as a victim of society *Maurizius* offers many parallels to Caspar Hauser therefore seems problematic.⁶ In the society that Wassermann depicts now, this kind of innocence has indeed become unimaginable. Instead, people are shown to be without compassion as they live in a state of emotional isolation. Schäfer has therefore rightly observed that in this novel nobody even seems to have a friend.⁷ Characters are callous and remain opaque to each other as they have become incapable of maintaining relationships. Against the background of an ostensible murder mystery, Wassermann unfolds a version of the modern condition that is in many ways a negation of his previous hopes. The author who for so long refused to give up his belief in a better world has now come up with a searching portrayal of individual and social life which has, almost inevitably, turned into a destructive critique of civilisation and an even more pessimistic vision of its future.

Maurizius can in part be understood as a recapitulation of some of the topics that preoccupied Wassermann throughout his career as a writer, most significantly the question of justice and the role of the Jew in an increasingly anti-Semitic society. Alongside the novel's aesthetic merits, these topics have already received considerable discussion in the relevant

⁴ Jakob Wassermann, *Selbstbetrachtungen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1933), pp. 105-06.

⁵ See Esther Schneider-Handschin, *Das Bild des Bürgertums in Jakob Wassermanns "Andergast-Trilogie"* (Bern, Frankfurt a. M., New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1990), p. 19.

⁶ Shaked, 'Fall', p. 109.

⁷ See Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 53.

secondary literature and will therefore be of little importance in this chapter. Instead, this chapter will offer a different reading of the novel in which the Maurizius case retreats to the background to make room for the analysis of Wassermann's depiction of modern life in relation to his ongoing concern with the depiction of character.⁸ Analysis will show that the judicial murder that seemingly stands at the centre of the novel merely serves as a framework for a work of fiction that is arguably not even a crime novel. This stands in strong opposition to Garrin's claim that despite the 'various digressions and excursions [...] the murder trial remains the core of the novel.'⁹ Rather than focusing on the plight of the prisoner Maurizius, this chapter will concentrate on two other aspects of the novel: first, the portrayal of identity as performable and unstable and the impact this has on the human relationships portrayed; second, the fact that towards the end of his literary career, Wassermann once again returns to the figure of the outsider. After having seemingly left the figure of the outsider behind, Wassermann now presents us with the homosexual Jew Georg Warschauer. In a curious turn of events, Wassermann makes this predominantly negative figure into a spokesman for an indictment of Western civilisation and fails to introduce any contrasting figure to oppose Warschauer's overwhelming cynicism. To use Schäfer's words, the novel therefore becomes a 'beklemmendes Dokument eines von Verzweiflung und Destruktion geprägten Lebensgefühls.'¹⁰

The novel presents its reader with a curious constellation of characters. First, we have Wolf Freiherr von Andergast, a prosecutor who is made responsible for a judicial murder that was crucial to his professional success. Second, we have the prisoner Leonhart Maurizius who, in order to protect the woman he thought he loved, namely the murderer and sister of his wife Elli, Anna Jahn, serves a life sentence in prison even though he is

⁸ This approach seems in agreement with Peter de Mendelssohn's view according to which the novel's concern with questions of justice and guilt is only 'vordergründig'. See Peter de Mendelssohn, 'Nachwort', in *Der Fall Maurizius* (Vienna, Munich: Langen, Müller, 1981), pp. 541-63 (p. 544).

⁹ Garrin, *Concept*, p. 15.

¹⁰ Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 77.

innocent. And finally there is Gregor Waremme, an intellectual of great gifts with promising future prospects who, in order to destroy Maurizius, ruins his own career and commits the perjury that makes this life sentence inevitable. As they are all involved in the crime of incarcerating the wrong man, all three men receive the same punishment: irrespective of actual prison walls, they are all doomed to a life in solitary confinement. This means that after the trial they each begin to lead a life of almost complete social isolation, incapable of maintaining relationships with others. Contrary to a conventional murder mystery, the idea of bringing the actual culprit Anna Jahn to justice is absent from the novel, which is a first indicator that the actual solving of the crime is only of secondary importance.

This Andergast-Waremme-Maurizius triangle embodies a negative version of the disappearance of character which is probably best described as the disintegration of character. In *Wahnschaffe* the gradual disappearance of the protagonist's character is depicted as a positive development that leads to modern sainthood, and even in *Laudin und die Seinen*, a novel published as late as 1925, the protagonist's longing for a different self carries positive connotations.¹¹ Wassermann's take on the question of character in *Der Fall Maurizius*, however, is far more dismal: character seems to have become impossible, in the sense that none of the main characters is able to maintain a stable identity. I would therefore contest Pazi's claim that Wassermann's concept of 'Doppeltsein' is nothing but a masquerade because 'das wahre „Ich“ beherrscht absolut die Wahl der jeweiligen Identität'.¹²

Instead the instability of one's identity was for Wassermann one of the negative side effects of the modern condition. Further evidence for his

¹¹ See Wassermann, *Laudin und die Seinen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1925).

¹² Margarita Pazi, 'Die Kraft des Intellekts: Jakob Wassermanns "Der Fall Maurizius"', in *Juden in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. by Julius H. Schoeps and Walter Grab (Stuttgart: Burg, 1986), pp. 61 – 88 (p. 67).

concern with this question can be found in his *Selbstbetrachtungen* where he writes:

Die maßlose Zerrüttung unserer Welt, die sich bei unzähligen Einzelnen in einer bis zur Psychose gesteigerten Existenzangst äußert und eine bis in den Kern jeder Gemeinschaft dringende geistige und moralische Unsicherheit erzeugt hat, ja sogar im Begriff ist, die Fundamente der Persönlichkeit zu untergraben und damit die Idee des Menschentums und die des Gottestums zu stürzen [...]¹³

As a result of the 'maßlose Zerrüttung unserer Welt' all the main characters in the novel have several identities forced onto them by the surrounding circumstances and not necessarily by their own choice. They even serve one another as mirroring images. Schneider-Handschin's claim that Wassermann was unwilling to part with traditional narrative styles and thus failed to deal with an increasingly complex reality in his works seems in need of revision.¹⁴

As with the previous chapter, one aim of this chapter is indeed to refute the claim that Wassermann was an exceedingly traditional, even anti-modern author. Theo Elm, for example, has classified Wassermann among authors such as Franz Werfel or Stefan Zweig, who, 'mit Schicksalsformeln und moralistischem Credo gegen die Moderne die „Welt von Gestern“ beschwören.'¹⁵ This portrayal of Wassermann and Werfel as conservative Bildungsbürger seems unfair in light of the fact that they both retain elements of radical Expressionism such as the dramatic father-son-conflict. The comparison to Zweig's autobiography is uncalled-for since Wassermann's own autobiography, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, could not be less nostalgic. And even in those novels that are set in an earlier period, for example *Caspar Hauser*, he offers a critical picture of society and clearly refrains from idealising the past.

In the midst of this triangle of identities that sometimes seem to collapse into one another stands Etzel Andergast who is ambitious to solve

¹³ Wassermann, *Selbstbetrachtungen*, p. 17.

¹⁴ See Schneider-Handschin, *Bild*, pp. 73 -74.

¹⁵ Elm, 'Talmud', p. 136.

the Maurizius case, yet soon finds himself drawn into this world of unstable identities. For reasons of structure it seems most appropriate to analyse Etzel's relationship with his father as well as that with Waremmé and in turn their relationship with Maurizius in order to understand the connections between those characters. As a side effect of this analysis it will also become apparent that the popular image of Etzel as a 'brother' of Agathon Geyer (*Zirndorf*) or even Caspar Hauser (*Caspar*) is in need of revision. Analysis will show that Martina Landscheidt's description of Etzel as a 'reiner Gerechtigkeitssucher'¹⁶ is as erroneous as Isabelle Classen's claim that Etzel remains free from guilt¹⁷ or Koester's description of him as an 'Idealfigur'.¹⁸ Similarly, it remains doubtful whether Etzel really is the purest embodiment of Wassermann's messianic vision, as claimed by Elm.¹⁹ As a result of his altered and more pessimistic outlook, Wassermann seems no longer willing or indeed able to produce the type of adolescent hero who is an unequivocally positive figure. Until now the figure of the child or adolescent was still allowed the position of the innocent outsider in Wassermann's writing. The character of Etzel therefore embodies a critical review of this position which adds another layer of significance to it. It seems that by now Etzel is a more apposite expression of the ways in which modern life has impacted on human relationships, as even childhood has ceased to be a space of innocence. Since Etzel's character in *Maurizius* is already understood as bearing traits that can be called negative, that could also make it less surprising that when he returns in *Etzel Andergast* (1931) he is depicted as a dislikeable, fallen hero.

¹⁶ Landscheidt 'Mutmaßungen', p. 25.

¹⁷ Isabelle Classen, 'Wider die Todesstrafe: Über Vorlage und Fabel zum *Fall Maurizius*', in *Wassermann: Werk*, pp. 33-46 (p. 43).

¹⁸ Koester, *Wassermann*, p. 74.

¹⁹ Elm, 'Talmud', p. 135.

5.2 Critical reception

Given the amount of critical attention *Maurizius* has received in comparison to Wassermann's other works, it seems appropriate to give a quick overview before beginning with the analysis.

In general critics differ sharply on the aesthetic merits of the novel. In his lengthy analysis of the novel, Kaspar Schnetzler focuses on elements of style and technique on the basis of which he aims to defend the novel as an important and ingeniously constructed work of art.²⁰ In contrast, Marcus Bullock more recently maintains that Wassermann is in fact indifferent to any aesthetic consideration.²¹

The representation of the legal system in the novel was the main focus of the contemporary criticism as can be deduced from Neubauer's overview. The novel was indeed one of the most widely discussed books of the Weimar Republic and even received reviews in publications specialising in questions of law and criminology. Opinions regarding Wassermann's success in depicting the judicial system as well as the literary merit of the work as whole differ greatly. They range from referring to the novel as superficial and 'effekthascherisch' to comparing it to a Greek tragedy. The overall consensus, however, seems to be that Wassermann's depiction exhibits a tendency of being one-sided in its sympathy with the prisoner Maurizius and even 'rechtsfeindlich'.²² Interestingly, in his diary, Schnitzler, who knew Wassermann well, compared *Maurizius* to Arnold Zweig's *Grischa*:

Lese Arnold Zweigs *Grischa*. Außerordentlich. Gegen Maurizius gehalten: Wenn man Jacob fragte (in einer Tiefe wo man nicht lügen kann)- Wählen Sie – entweder Justizreform oder neue hundert Auflagen – seine Antwort: Hundert Auflagen. Fragte man Zweig: Ihr Roman

²⁰ See Kaspar Schnetzler, *Der Fall Maurizius: Jakob Wassermanns Kunst des Erzählens* (Bern: Herbert Lang and Cie, 1968).

²¹ See Marcus Bullock, 'Jakob Wassermann's novel *Der Fall Maurizius* presents the final expression of his views on the relationship of Germans and Jews', in *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096 - 1996*, ed. by Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 471- 79.

²² See Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, pp. 69 – 77.

verschwindet für ewig – aber Grischa ist gerettet – seine Antwort: Grischa's Rettung!- Und das spürt man natürlich in den Romanen selbst.²³

In a similar vein, Stephen Garrin considers the trilogy as a whole with a focus on the question of justice arriving at the result that each volume of the trilogy deals with a different concept of justice, namely judicial, social and moral justice.²⁴

Peter de Mendelssohn looks at the genealogy of the novel and offers a comparison to the famous real-life case of Karl Hau that allegedly served as a template for the novel. Moreover, he considers the question whether Warschauer can be seen as an autobiographical figure in a sense that he embodies Wassermann's divided identity as a German and a Jew.²⁵ Pazi's interpretation shows how the character of Warschauer is used to illustrate Wassermann's failed attempt to assimilate into German society.²⁶ Similarly, Jütten discusses the character of Warschauer as an embodiment of the fate of the over-assimilated Jew who wastes all his potential by trying to move from the East to the West.²⁷ Shaked too arrives at the conclusion that Warschauer is without a doubt the Jewish "shadow" that haunted Wassermann throughout his life.²⁸

Schneider-Handschin's analysis considers the trilogy as a whole and examines the three works in relation to their own time as well as their socio-historical context. She presents Wassermann as a member of the 'Bildungsbürgertum', and the trilogy as an expression of the conservative pessimism of this class as well as Wassermann's cultural criticism and his rejection of processes of modernisation.²⁹ Similarly, Bullock claims the author to be a spokesman of the past who is guilty of a neglect of philosophical discrimination as his ideology is sustained by pathos instead

²³ Schnitzler, *Tagebuch*, vol. 9, 19/06/1928.

²⁴ See Garrin, *Concept*.

²⁵ See Mendelssohn, 'Nachwort', pp. 541 – 63.

²⁶ See Pazi, 'Kraft', pp. 61 – 88.

²⁷ See Jütten, *Diskurse*, pp. 251 – 90.

²⁸ See Shaked, 'Fall', pp. 94 – 112.

²⁹ See Schneider-Handschin, *Bild*.

of a more structured position.³⁰ Jütten, in contrast, shows how any longing for justice in the novel can be understood as a longing for revenge. Moreover, she reveals how the judicial system is not only immoral but also how it serves to maintain a bourgeois 'Scheinmoral'.³¹ The following analysis will incline towards Jütten's views in a sense that Wassermann will be shown to be a fierce critic of the society he lived in.

5.2 Father and son

In *Maurizius* childhood is no longer a safe space as Etzel is growing up in a world in which maternal tenderness is unavailable and the relationship with his father is in many way characterised by its non-existence. When Wolf von Andergast found out about his wife's adulterous affair he drove her lover into committing suicide and deprived her of any contact with her son. Yet Andergast's relationship with Etzel is essentially the relationship between two actors, pretending to be father and son according to their individual understanding of the role. As a consequence, each only knows the other's interpretation of that role but not the actual person behind it. For Etzel the world of the father is dark, mysterious and ultimately unknowable. Hence he privately starts calling him 'Trismegistos' which translates as 'thrice-greatest' and refers back to Hermes Trismegistos, the alleged author of the *Hermetic Corpus*. He was given the sobriquet 'thrice-greatest' because he was believed to be the greatest philosopher, priest and king. When applied to Etzel's situation, this nickname strongly conveys how he feels overwhelmed and intimidated by his father. Yet at the same time it also carries satirical connotations which is a first hint at the son's growing resistance. However, Garrin's interpretation of the name

³⁰ See Bullock, 'Wassermann's novel', pp. 471- 79.

³¹ See Jütten, *Diskurse*, pp. 251 – 90.

Trismegistos as ‘the monster who has denied the boy of his mother’ seems to have missed the point.³²

Acting has a crucial function in the game of varying identities as it is presented throughout the novel, and Etzel, so to speak, receives his training at home by observing his father. Etzel soon realises that his father’s acting is a means of maintaining a certain distance between them:

Ihre [Andergast’s hand] stumme Beredsamkeit oder ausdrucksvolle Ruhe ließ bisweilen an die Hand eines Schauspielers denken, eines besonders erfahrenen und überlegenen allerdings, der nur strenge und gelassene Charaktere verkörpert und sie wohlwogen “spielt”, nicht geradezu lebt, sondern eben spielt, um begreiflich zu machen, daß der die Distanz wahrt.³³

Etzel is inevitably affected in a negative way by his father’s extremely formal and cold behaviour towards him. He not only becomes taciturn and reserved at a very young age but he also comes to understand acting as a handy tool when he wants to use other people for his own benefit. He is frequently shown to be putting on an act with the housekeeper or his grandmother, yet most importantly, as will be shown later, he uses his acting skills in his fight against Waremmé.

The reference to Andergast’s acting but not living his role is crucial for the understanding of his character. He is unable to live his role because he has neglected his inner life to the extent that it has virtually disappeared. His life is characterised by utter social isolation with the obvious exception of social obligations resulting from his position in society. Moreover, there is the somewhat uncanny exception of his ‘lover’ Violet Winston, a young American woman he met three years earlier and decided to rent an apartment for, in return for which she would have to receive him there two or three times a month. Besides Andergast’s relationship with Etzel, this secret affair with Violet is the most striking expression of his lack of

³² Garrin, *Concept*, p. 32.

³³ Jakob Wassermann, *Der Fall Maurizius* (Munich: DTV, 2007), pp. 15 - 16. Henceforth reference will be given in brackets with FM followed by page number. Since the DTV edition is still in print and identical with the original edition it seems more reader friendly to refer to the DTV edition. For the original edition see Jakob Wassermann, *Der Fall Maurizius* (Berlin: Fischer, 1928).

emotions. The narrator describes Andergast's attraction towards her as follows:

Sie bot ihm nichts, sie war ihm nichts, denn sie hatte nichts zu geben, sie war selber – nichts. Und eben dieses Nichts brauchte er. [...] Er lebte ja seit zehn Jahren ehelos, und er wußte, daß die Wünsche des Körpers sich auf die Dauer nicht ersticken lassen ohne Gefährdung des geistigen Gleichgewichts. (FM, 218)

Even sexuality is therefore nothing but an inevitable physical urge that one has to satisfy like hunger or thirst and it does not allow people to connect with each other. Andergast would be unable to share any kind of intimacy with an actual person and therefore he refuses to acknowledge Violet as an individual human being. To him she is nothing but a body fulfilling a function. This also becomes apparent as they only have meaningless conversations about objects of everyday use. Her stupid blue eyes remind him of nothing which becomes a source of comfort for Andergast as he has to offer nothing in return. In this version human relationships are therefore reduced to their physical minimum.

One of the characters in Klaus Mann's novel *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (1932), which is set at around the same time as *Maurizius*, makes an observation regarding people's emotional isolation that seems to correspond to the description of the phenomenon in Wassermann's novel:

[W]ir könnten uns überhaupt nicht vorstellen, daß der andere wirklich lebt, daß er seinerseits auch ein Ich ist. So gründlich sind wir von einander getrennt. Ich finde, das wäre ja nicht so schlimm, wenn nicht gleichzeitig der eine so auf den anderen angewiesen wäre, zu dem er doch keinen Zugang hat, er kann ihn sich nicht einmal vorstellen, genaugenommen existiert er also gar nicht für ihn. Er braucht etwas, das gar nicht für ihn existiert. So isoliert und dabei so hilfbedürftig zu sein – das ist doch gräßlich; ganz trostlos ist das doch einfach.³⁴

Andergast therefore only physically lives in the world but without being a part of it through relations with others. Even what would have seemed like inevitable spaces for more profound relationships, namely the space of the family and that of sexuality, do not prompt Andergast to go beyond his usual reserve.

³⁴ Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1981), p. 144.

Following on from the role of perception in *Wahnschaffe*, Andergast's state of isolation is emphasised by his inhibited perception. When he has to greet people in the street he does so with a 'blicklosem Nicken' as he simply refuses to see the world around him: 'Sein steif voran gerichteter Blick nahm an den Bildern der Straße keinen Anteil. Nicht nur das, seine Miene leugnete gleichsam ihre Wirklichkeit...' (FM, 25) Just as he refuses to acknowledge Violet as an individual human being, Andergast also refuses to accept any reality outside himself. In many ways, Andergast is therefore unable to see.

Instead of relating to other people Andergast prefers to control them and thus turn them into a part of his own reality in which he is in charge. As a result, Andergast becomes the representative of two systems of oppression: that of law and punishment, affecting the prisoner Maurizius, and that of surveillance and control surrounding Etzel. The analysis of the two systems will show how they both have the same effect: Etzel and Maurizius both lose their freedom as they become Andergast's prisoners. This also offers a first significant overlap between the situations of two characters. The narrator even refers to Andergast as Etzel's 'Gefangenenwärter' (FM, 36) and the world the boy lives in is described as follows:

Er lebte zwischen gläsernen Wänden. [...] Es war ein schweigsames System. In der kritischen Lage schienen dann alle Bewohner des Hauses freiwilligen Spionagedienst zu verrichten. Auch Lieferanten, Boten, Briefträger, Amtsdienere waren dem überall spürbaren obersten Willen untertan (FM, 13)

This system, with its totalitarian structure in which people cannot trust each other, does not differ significantly from the world Maurizius is confined to, for he also lives under constant surveillance and has limited personal freedom.

The other interesting aspect of these systems is their association with specific rooms and in turn the relationship between Andergast and these rooms. In the case of the prisoner Maurizius the system of law and punishment is obviously associated with the prison he finds himself in. Yet

the significance of the image of the prison does not end there. As can partly be deduced from the above quoted passage, Etzel not only associates the system of surveillance that surrounds him with the house he lives in, but also associates the house with his father. In Etzel's view Andergast almost becomes indistinguishable from his house as his presence is perceptible through every object in it: 'Seine [Andergast's] Energien strahlen auf die Sachen über.' (FM, 14) Kaspar Schnetzler has also drawn our attention to this relationship between people and rooms in the novel:

Es besteht eine fließende Korrespondenz zwischen Mensch, Raum und Ding. Denn nicht nur prägt der Mensch den Raum, sondern der Raum und das Ding prägen den Menschen. Die Lebensräume geben demnach Auskunft über die Personen, die in ihnen wohnen.³⁵

Tellingly, Etzel even looks at his father as if he was 'ein Turm, der keinen Zugang hat, keine Türen, keine Fenster' (FM, 33). In his son's imagination, Andergast has therefore become a kind of prison tower.

Moreover, Andergast is described as having a hesitant and halting gait which is characteristic of people who spend a lot of their time in closed rooms. As a representative of these systems of control Andergast has become the prisoner of these systems as he is confined to the rooms in which he works in order to deprive others of their freedom. Andergast has spent most of his life locked up in his office and his study at home, from where he has managed these systems of control. His study is described as 'nüchtern und trostlos', a room of which there are thousands in every city, and they all have the same impact on the men who spend their time in them: 'Sie prägen die Gesichter der Männer, die sich während eines großen Teils ihres Lebens darin aufhalten, sie hauchen ihnen ihre Nüchternheit und Trostlosigkeit ein.' (FM, 227) Andergast's case is therefore not unique but he is part of a system in which those who imprison and those who are imprisoned are equally without freedom: 'Zuletzt hat der Hüter selbst keine Freiheit mehr' (FM, 36). And yet this offers an overlap between Andergast and Maurizius as they have become each other's prisoners. At

³⁵ Schnetzler, *Kunst*, p. 60.

the same time, the similarity of their situation may also be a reason for Etzel's strong desire to free Maurizius, as they are both victims of his father.

When Etzel secretly runs away to Berlin in order to solve the crime and free Maurizius, of whose innocence he is immediately convinced once he hears about the case, Andergast's two systems of control begin to fall apart. For Etzel does not merely break out of a system of obsessive parental control but he also aims to destroy one of his father's greatest achievements as a prosecutor, namely the Maurizius case. As Henry Miller points out: Etzel's 'chivalrous deed is prompted by a spirit of vengeance: he wants to destroy his father's work.'³⁶ While Jütten arrives at the conclusion that 'Etzels Motivationslage ist zweideutig'³⁷, Shaked even claims that the wish to free himself from his father's authority is indeed Etzel's main source of motivation.³⁸ Etzel will ultimately reject his father as a parent and as a prosecutor. The consequences of this initial act of rebellion are immediately observable with Andergast, as it is Etzel's disobedience that prompts him to re-engage with the Maurizius case. In the end Etzel not only succeeds in destroying the system of control that surrounded him for so many years, but his father, too, is left destroyed. Their relationship therefore offers a direct link to the Weimar years during which, according to Peukert, the battle between the generations was particularly severe and the overall diagnosis was a considerable loss of parental authority, especially among the bourgeoisie.³⁹

The transformation Andergast undergoes throughout the novel, ending in his collapse, begins with a radical change in his perception. However, contrary to the case of Christian Wahnschaffe, his altered perception will prove to have detrimental consequences. Before Etzel left, Andergast was without compassion and with no interest in his fellow human beings.

³⁶ Henry Miller, *Maurizius Forever* (Michigan City, Indiana: Fridtjof-Karla Publications, 1959), p.6.

³⁷ Jütten, *Diskurse*, p. 275.

³⁸ See Shaked, *Macht*, p. 101.

³⁹ See Peukert, *Weimar*, p. 92 and p. 97.

Situated comfortably within the system, locked up in his office, Andergast was blind to the consequences of his ruthless activity. All he could see in another person was a potential criminal. Yet when the system that he considered invincible is dealt a first blow by Etzel's disappearance, his perception begins to change. As with Christian Wahnschaffe, Andergast's altered perception is initially inspired by several moments of *mémoires involontaires*. Images of Etzel as a young boy keep appearing in front of his inner eye. Most importantly, though, these images are intertwined with material from the Maurizius case, thus confirming the parallel status that Etzel and the prisoner have for Andergast:

Es wurde nach und nach angreifend lästig, wie sich die Bilder und Gesichter, die sich aus der Beschäftigung mit dem Proceß ergaben, mit denen aus Etzel's Kindheit vermengten. Es war als hätte er eines jener Opiate eingenommen, die den Willen aufheben und den Geist in zuchtlose Phantasien stürzen. (FM, 165)

These recurring images of Etzel gradually turn into an obsession (Zwangsvorstellung), especially as their theme is always the same: the little child is at a loss to understand why his father does not want to spend time with him and thus rejects his son's love. This image of Etzel becomes a symbol of the life Andergast could have had, if he had not refused to encounter other people as well as himself.

Andergast chose to replace any emotional attachment with a sense of control which has resulted in a severely limited perception. He comes to understand these limits, and even his own lack of perception, in the course of his transformation:

Niemals in seiner ganzen Praxis war es ihm vorgekommen, daß er die Dinge und Personen sah. Trug vielleicht jener quasi-opiumisierte Zustand daran Schuld, durch den er auch gezwungen war, das vergangene Leben seines Kindes zu sehen, statt, wie er getan, es bloß zu wissen? (FM, 166)

Through the constant confrontation with this 'film' from Etzel's childhood, Andergast becomes conscious of the extent of his own loneliness, as he does not even know his own son. The implications of "sehen" here are well brought out by Jütten, who says that Andergast begins 'die Dinge nicht nur zu wissen, sondern zu sehen, d. h. sie in subjektiv-lebendiger Weise zu

erfassen.⁴⁰ And yet, as we will see later, Andergast is the first of Wassermann's characters to undergo this process of a changing perception with the result that he has to accept that his life is beyond the possibility of change and that it has been wasted. An altered perception therefore no longer necessarily leads to redemption.

In the final scene of the novel Andergast makes a last and desperate attempt to regain control over Etzel as he literally chases his son through the house. Yet Etzel violently rejects any bond with his father and thus deals him the final blow: 'Ich will nicht dein Sohn sein.' (FM, 603) Classen has mentioned that this complicated father-son-relationship as well as Andergast's insanity are typical Expressionist themes, a point that would be worth exploring in further research.⁴¹ Moreover, this scene also offers a point of comparison to Werfel's *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig* in which the reader is also confronted with son and father chasing each other around a table, ending in the latter's collapse.⁴²

In our context this scene is significant for two reasons. It adds a physical aspect to the disappearance of Andergast's character through the depiction of his final breakdown. The narrator informs us that there is nothing left but a guilty human being. Moreover, Etzel stands and gazes at his father's 'sich förmlich zersetzende Gesicht' (FM, 605). His father's face is thus almost literally disintegrating. Even Andergast's face therefore disappears and is replaced by a staring mask unable to produce any facial expressions. Neither Andergast nor his prisoner survives the revelation of Maurizius's innocence, though only the latter actually dies while Andergast breaks down into insanity. Andergast's altered perception, his ability to empathise with the people around him and the subsequent disappearance of his old character have led, contrary to the case of Christian Wahnschaffe, to nothing but insanity. This can be seen as a radical

⁴⁰ Jütten, *Diskurse*, p. 273.

⁴¹ Classen, 'Todesstrafe', p. 40.

⁴² See Franz Werfel, *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig: Eine Novelle* (Munich: K. Wolff, 1920).

departure by Wassermann, expressing his loss of faith in the ability to see as a means to a better world. The notion of Wassermann's break with the idea of an altered perception as means to transforming character will be discussed further in relation to the character of Waremme.

In addition the scene is revealing because of its depiction of Etzel. After he finds out that he has fought in vain because Maurizius has already accepted his pardon without demanding a rehabilitation, Etzel is in a frenzy, and the narrator describes him as follows: 'Das ist nicht mehr der scharmante, beherrschte vernünftige besonnene kleine Etzel, das ist ein Teufel.' (FM, 603) This other and potentially violent side to Etzel's character is underlined further when he destroys all the furniture in his room and is left with blood streaming down his face: 'Tobsüchtiger Zerstörungstrieb. Raserei der Seele. Von den Schläfen, Wangen, Nase rieselte das Blut.' (FM, 604) This depiction of an aggressive and uncontrolled Etzel could be understood as a first foreboding of Etzel's later development and his eventual fall in *Andergast*. Moreover, Garrin's view that 'Etzel wins his struggle: his father must yield and the prisoner is pardoned' seems to miss the actual reasons for the final conflict between father and son.⁴³

At this point it also becomes clear that Etzel differs considerably from Wassermann's other childlike or adolescent heroes such as Agathon Geyer or Caspar Hauser, as it is indeed hard to imagine them portrayed in such a way. The other important feature of this depiction is the fact that Etzel is without compassion. Even when his father breaks down in front of him, lying helpless on the floor, he merely watches him instead of trying to help. It is this lack of compassion that separates him more than anything else from Wassermann's previous heroes. As a result the end of the novel offers no space for reconciliation, as most of the author's previous works would have done.

⁴³ Garrin, *Concept*, p. 48.

5.2 Andergast and his other prisoner

According to the novel, therefore, a life that has been spent in social isolation is a life that has been wasted. This insight allows us to pursue another overlap between two characters, namely between Andergast and his prisoner Maurizius. As a part of his changing perception Andergast comes to understand, in the course of his visits, that he and Maurizius have essentially been living the same life for the last nineteen years. During their conversations the two characters undergo a process of becoming interchangeable at times which eventually leads to the disintegration of Andergast's personality. When Andergast visits the prisoner Maurizius in his cell, he is seemingly confronted with another version of his own life and the prisoner could be seen as serving as a mirroring image. The most significant moment in this process is probably when Maurizius recites the speech that Andergast gave at his trial nineteen years ago, a speech that Andergast always considered a masterpiece, yet when he hears it from the lips of the prisoner he suddenly finds it repellent:

Während er auf den zusammengebückten Sträfling niederschaute, wuchs die Abneigung gegen die eigene, eben aus anderm Mund vernommene Suada bis zu körperlichem Ekel, so daß er schließlich sogar mit einem Brechreiz zu kämpfen hatte und die Zähne konvulsivisch aufeinanderbiß. (FM, 308)

Andergast, the control freak, has suddenly lost control over his body. Another parallel between the two characters is the fact that Maurizius too has a child he knows hardly anything about and one cannot be sure that he has actually ever seen his daughter.

Through this confrontation with Maurizius and thus with his own life, Andergast gradually becomes estranged from his own character until the blurring of the two characters leads to the disappearance of his self. It is therefore in the prisoner's presence that Andergast begins to doubt the stability of his self: 'Oder war nur in ihm etwas morsch, das Gefüge seines Ich geborsten?' (FM, 308) As a side effect of this process, Andergast even begins to use the same gestures as Maurizius (FM, 469) and soon after he

begins to feel as if 'der feste Kern seiner Persönlichkeit [...] auseinander geronnen [wäre]' (FM, 470) Through this process, the agony of the prisoner has become his own as a consequence of which he decides to free him immediately. Yet at the same time, his own character has disappeared and agony is all that Andergast is left with: he has alienated even his closest family members (his son and his own mother) and his work as a prosecutor now strikes him as meaningless. Just before his final breakdown and his subsequent insanity, Andergast exists only in relation to Maurizius. He searches the streets at night filled with the desire to run into him, as if he was trying to get his personality back that way. Andergast has in fact ceased to exist in any other way: 'Es hat Abende und Nächte gegeben, in denen sich Herr von Andergast wie ein alter ego des Sträflings Maurizius erschienen ist. Eingemauert im Haus der Erinnerungen' (FM, 591). He has thus become the prisoner's second self.

5.3 Etzel and Warschauer – father and son revisited

The other key relationship portrayed in the novel is that between Etzel and Gregor Waremmé alias Georg Warschauer. Like no other character in the novel, Waremmé embodies the instability of character in a modern world with all its possibilities and downsides, as he comprises various lives, characters and names in one person. By constantly putting on an act or performing, Warschauer challenges Etzel to do the same and thus lures him into a game of false identities that remains ultimately unsolvable, thus confirming one of the main assertions of the novel, namely that truth can never be unearthed. And even when Etzel has his final moment of 'success', i.e. Warschauer's confession, it is undermined by the fact that it seems largely to have been motivated not by Etzel's arguments but by the love of a middle-aged man for a teenage boy. This constellation seems to have been prefigured in Wassermann's novella *Aufbruch um den Junker*

Ernst (1926) in which the Erzbischof falls in love with his young adversary Ernst.⁴⁴

When Etzel finally meets Georg Warschauer in Berlin, the character of Gregor Waremme has long disappeared and lives only in the memory of others. Through the accounts of characters involved in the Maurizius case, Etzel and the reader have been made familiar with a character that is not the same as the man he now encounters in Berlin. 'Nicht zu glauben, wenn man denkt, was er damals war und was er heute ist' (FM, 108) are the words Maurizius senior uses when he talks about Warschauer. Most characters in the novel are indeed at a loss to grasp the character of Waremme fully, for Waremme is not a real character but a persona, created by Warschauer in order to hide his Jewishness. The character of Waremme thus becomes a fictitious construct invented by a character in a novel. This is not only an intensely complex structure but it also makes room for seemingly endless possibilities: 'Alles, was über ihn ausgesagt wurde, war genau so richtig wie das Gegenteil davon' (FM, 180-81). Warschauer is thus given the chance to constantly re-invent himself, which makes him Wassermann's most modern character in the sense that identity here has become nothing more than a performance. Elizabeth Boa has argued that it is a characteristic of the post-modern that 'the gap between being and performing disappears,' which, as we will see in the following, can equally be applied to the character of Warschauer. Moreover, with him we also find that 'behind the mask there is only another mask as identities are constantly re-negotiated within the field of power.'⁴⁵

Acting therefore also becomes the key to the relationship between Warschauer and Etzel, offering a first parallel to the relationship with his father. In order to be able to confront his adversary, Etzel thus also creates

⁴⁴ See Jakob Wassermann, *Aufbruch um den Junker Ernst* (Berlin: Fischer, 1926).

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Boa, 'Aping and Parroting: Imitative Performance in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*' in *Performance and Performativity in German Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lucia Ruprecht and others (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 21-41 (pp. 24-5).

a new identity for himself. On arriving in Berlin he changes his name to Edgar Mohl and soon after he discovers that these new surroundings allow for a new identity. However, this soon seems to be becoming more than just a game:

Er war ja ohnehin ein Doppelter, Edgar Mohl und Etzel Andergast, und er spielte Doppeltsein, um sich bei der strengen Verrichtung, der er sich unterzogen, ein bisschen mit sich selber zu amüsieren, den einen gegen den anderen zu hetzen, den einen am anderen zu messen, allein immer ferner rückte E. Andergast, der doch der eigentliche Körper war, indes E. Mohl, der Schatten, an prahlerischer Leiblichkeit zunahm und auf seinen gefährlichen Wegen keine Einrede duldete. (FM, 251-52)

The notion that Edgar Mohl becomes a dominant, other self is confirmed later, when Etzel realises that Etzel Andergast would never have been able to confront Warschauer (FM, 341). Through his relationship with Warschauer, Etzel thus experiences this modern uncertainty of character as he goes through a process of losing his initial self. At the same time he also sees the advantages of a different identity as it allows him to behave in ways that Etzel Andergast, despite his putting on an act for his own benefit, would never have dared to do. The way he behaves towards his father in the final scene can be understood as proof that he finds himself unable to fully return to the character of Etzel once he leaves Berlin. As Etzel tries to fight Warschauer with his own weapons, the latter inevitably becomes his teacher, as he cannot help but learn from this master in the art of deception.

Etzel's relationship with Warschauer strongly resembles that with his own father as it is also characterised by a lack of honesty and the desire to control and dominate each other. Moreover, Etzel and Warschauer are both aware that what they see of each other is always a most questionable performance. However, whilst it is relatively easy to distinguish between Etzel's two identities, it is impossible to discern anything like the 'real' Warschauer, for he always plays 'Komödie' and comes across as an exaggerated figure, like an actor on stage. This means that he does not even pretend to make his performance a credible one but rather creates another level of uncertainty by acting openly. This is underlined further by

his frequently referring to himself as an actor which brings us to the question of their intentions. Whilst Etzel's intention is clear from the beginning, namely to get Warschauer to confess his perjury and prove that Maurizius is innocent, that of his opponent is at first less obvious. As will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, Warschauer becomes a spokesman for a destructive critique of civilisation, a negative version of Christian Wahnschaffe, which is why he can only laugh at Etzel's hot-headed pursuit of justice. Yet if Etzel's ideas and struggles are merely ridiculous to him, why does he spend all this time with Etzel and eventually makes his confession and admits his own guilt? Why does Etzel have a certain power over a man who is depicted as intimidating and in that sense strongly resembles the double-character of Coppilius from Hoffmann's story *Der Sandmann*?

To begin with, Warschauer knows that his perjury is no longer punishable. However, more importantly, it seems that his homosexuality has come between him and the role he is acting out in front of Etzel. Whilst Warschauer's violent infatuation with Anna Jahn could be understood as part of his identity as Waremme, his homosexuality seems to be the only genuine trait of his character. After all, heterosexuality is a standard part of social performance whereas homosexuality, at the time, was not conventional, even punishable and therefore not something that he would have deliberately made a part of his identity. James W. Jones informs us:

Until 1851, Prussian law punished "widernatürliche Unzucht" between two males, or between man and animal, with a prison sentence of from six months to four years and "zeitige Untersagung der Ausübung bürgerlichen Ehrenrechte." By the time of German unification, when Prussian law was extended to all German states, this prohibition, codified in Paragraph 175, spoke of a prison sentence, without specifying a length of time, and stated "auch kann Verlust der bürgerlichen Ehrenrechte erkannt werden."⁴⁶

The negative attitude towards his homosexuality seems to be corroborated by the fact that as Waremme, he was involved in 'eine homosexuelle Affäre, in die einige junge Adelige eines vornehmen Korps verstrickt sind' (FM, 192) but that he was very keen to hide it. It seems

⁴⁶ Jones, " *Third Sex*", p. 45.

therefore that his sexuality is the only aspect of his life that is beyond his control and that it is this infatuation with young men that ties him to Etzel. This aspect of Warschauer's character is therefore of a far greater significance than Schäfer's description of it as a 'fragwürdig-trübe, homoerotisch geprägte Faszination eines finsternen Charakters' would suggest.⁴⁷

In the course of their relationship, Warschauer finds himself increasingly attracted towards Etzel. Their relationship in many ways resembles the male-male bonds between an adolescent boy and an adult man that had allegedly⁴⁸ formed in ancient Greece and became a standard prop in the depiction of homosexuality during the first decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁹ Moreover, the adult man often takes on the role of the mentor, which could also be applied to the relationship between Warschauer and Etzel. There are numerous references to his 'Betastungsversuche' (FM, 268), his caressing and kissing Etzel, and how the boy, acting the part of Edgar Mohl, tolerates them in order to achieve his aims. In a rare moment we are given access to Warschauer's feelings towards Etzel; they are described as follows:

Wahrhaftig, der Gedanke eines Verrückten oder eines Teufels, im Hinblick darauf, daß die bloße physische Nähe des Knaben ihm manchmal eine ähnlich zwitterhafte Empfindung verursachte wie die Berührung eines Pfirsichs, der in der Sonne gelegen hat. (FM, 337)

The image of the peach is clearly eroticised as the skin of a peach is, more generally, often compared to particularly beautiful and young human skin, and that it is described as warm in this example further emphasises its association with a human being and thus with Etzel. Moreover, it also symbolises the temptation of the 'forbidden fruit'. The word 'zwitterhaft' could either point to a bisexual tendency within Warschauer or, more likely, refer to the twofold nature of his feelings for Etzel. On the one hand,

⁴⁷ Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 150.

⁴⁸ W. Daniel Wilson has recently informed us that the idea of 'Knabenliebe' is indeed one of the biggest modern misunderstandings since the Greeks only had sexual relationships with men of at least 18. See W. Daniel Wilson, *Goethe Männer Knabe*, trans. by Angela Steidele (Berlin: Insel, 2012), pp. 14 – 39.

⁴⁹ Jones, "Third Sex", p. 193.

he feels a strong sexual attraction towards him, whilst on the other he has paternal feelings for him and will on occasion refer to him as the son he never had.

From Etzel's perspective there can hardly be a doubt about Warschauer's sexual feelings for him, as the latter openly talks about his 'Passion' for his young friend. Moreover, Warschauer sometimes almost woos Etzel as one might do with a potential lover, for instance, when he treats him to hot chocolate or takes him out to concerts. In their final scene together, it is therefore the unexpected sight of Etzel's body that prompts Warschauer to admit his perjury rather than the boy's insistence on the importance of justice. Besides, it seems as if Etzel, aware of Warschauer's infatuation, stages things accordingly. He makes Warschauer visit him at home in his bedroom because he is ill. When he finds himself unable to convince his adversary with his arguments he takes to pretending to have a fever attack in the course of which Warschauer undresses him in order to apply a wet pack. Warschauer's reaction is described as follows:

Als er den nackten Jünglingsleib vor sich sah, versank Warschauer in starre Betrachtung. [...] Er sah aus wie ein Verhexter, der ein Gebet angefangen hat und nicht weiter weiß. [...] Er streichelte die Schulter, den Rücken, die Hüfte des schönen, schlanken Körpers, dabei klapperten ihm die Zähne. (FM, 548)

For Warschauer this is undoubtedly a moment of sexual fulfilment and the description of him as bewitched is another hint that his sexuality is the only aspect of his personality that is beyond his control. Even the description of Etzel's feelings points towards a kind of climax that he experiences after Warschauer has made his confession:

Etzel umkrampfte mit beiden Händen Warschauers Rechte. Er glitt auf das Bett zurück, ohne die Hand des Mannes loszulassen. Es war wie eine Glücksbetäubung. In leidenschaftlicher Begierde bohrte er den Blick in die wasserblassen Augen. (FM, 549)

In this scene Etzel is described as unsure whether or not he is acting but from the quotation above it becomes clear that the sexual satisfaction that both characters derive from this scene is mutual. For a moment they both have lost control over their constructed identities and, at least partly,

given in to their sexual urges. This final scene adds another layer of ambiguity to the state of Etzel's feelings for Warschauer. Hitherto, he has accepted previous moments of tenderness in a cold and reserved manner, as though he considered them a necessary sacrifice, whereas in the final scene he seems to reciprocate Warschauer's feelings. In any case, it shows that Warschauer remains unconcerned by Etzel's political claims and that the boy only reaches his heart in a sense that the older man develops romantic feelings for him. In his interpretation of their relationship, Garrin is clearly unaware of these subtleties: 'That Waremmé is also capable of human feelings, we see in his relation to Etzel. Despite the fact that the boy is his adversary, he likes him and cares for him when he is ill. Moreover, he respects his youthful idealism.'⁵⁰

At the same time Etzel cannot help being influenced by Warschauer's misanthropic way of seeing the world. This clearly manifests itself in the boy's lack of compassion as he even wishes that he could torture Warschauer in order to get his answers from him:

denn nichts ist ihm geheuer an Waremmé, nichts liebt er an ihm, nichts macht ihn weich, stimmt ihn versöhnlich, am liebsten möchte er ihn gebunden vor sich sehen und ihn mit glühenden Eisen in der Hand zwingen zu gestehen: Ja oder nein. (FM, 352)

Despite the erotic connotations of this fantasy it is the fact that Etzel would accept this violation of basic human rights that makes the initial motivation behind his quest for justice and a better world appear questionable. It actually seems to confirm one of Warschauer's pessimistic views, namely, that fighting for justice can never be anything but an egoistic pursuit (FM, 543). To him Etzel is merely one of many rebellious run-away boys and thus nothing but a 'Modeerscheinung'.

This element of selfishness in Etzel's undertaking receives further confirmation when he admits that he never cared about the suffering of Maurizius senior: 'Der Alte, an dem lag mir nichts, der ließ mich eigentlich kalt, eigentlich haßte ich ihn sogar mit seinem Begnadigungsgesuch.' (FM,

⁵⁰ Garrin, *Concept*, p. 40.

540) All of this conveys the impression that Etzel is to a considerable extent fighting for his own satisfaction which is mainly derived from the destruction of his father's work. Even more so when he is in a frenzy at finding out that his father has essentially made the same discovery as he has: Waremmé's perjury. He has thus not been able to defeat his father. As Edgar Mohl, Etzel has developed a demonic element within himself in order to confront Warschauer, whom he refers to as Satan. Yet he is unable to free himself entirely of this other self and in the final scene he himself is referred to as the devil by the narrator.

Etzel is therefore a more complex, less likeable figure than some of Wassermann's previous adolescent figures, yet it remains doubtful whether this justifies Miller's view:

There is something monstrous about Etzel Andergast: he is fascinatingly attractive and repellent at the same time. He stands for the new type of youth which made possible the advent and sway of an Adolf Hitler. He might even be regarded as an embryonic Hitler. He is the "murderer of the soul," to use the language of his victims.⁵¹

While Etzel certainly stands for a 'new type of youth,' the idea of comparing him to Hitler seems at first absurd, especially as he is, for instance, shown to be helping his Jewish fellow-pupil Rosenau and his teacher Raff wonders at some point whether Etzel himself is Jewish. Moreover, Etzel has a very critical mind and seems to be a loner which hardly predestines him to become a member of a mass movement such as the 'Hitlerjugend'. And yet in *Andergast* we are presented with a different Etzel who lacks a sense of direction in his life, becomes a member of various youth movements, and is, at least for a while, a passionate follower of the radical political leader Jürgen Lorriner. Etzel is also repeatedly shown to express the longing for a 'Führer' in his life. Nevertheless, it would certainly be reading too much into this character if one were to understand him as a foreshadowing of the horrors of the Third Reich. Rather, it could

⁵¹ Miller, *Maurizius*, p. 11.

be said that through his engagement with this 'new type' Wassermann could not help but create a more ambiguous figure and that Etzel is a more appropriate expression of the reality the author was confronted with.

5.4 The Return of the Outsider

In the final part of this chapter we will look at how in one of his final novels Wassermann stages the return of the outsider in order to arrive at an almost overwhelming critique of Western values and civilisation. Moreover, Georg Warschauer, the outsider he presents us with, is a double outsider. Following Hans Mayer's arguments put forward in *Außenseiter* (1975), Warschauer can be understood as an existential outsider because of his Jewishness and as a sexual outsider because of his homosexuality. Mayer defines the difference between the two as follows:

Die jüdische Identitätskrise inmitten der aufklärerischen bürgerlichen Gesellschaft befällt den einzelnen als Teil einer Gemeinsamkeit. Das Außenseitertum wird nicht individuell begründet wie beim Homosexuellen, sondern generell: durch das Judesein. [...] Der angebliche "Selbsthaß" beweist bloß, daß Aufklärung gescheitert ist und daß man es erkannt hat.⁵²

Warschauer's pessimism and his misanthropy can therefore be seen as the result of his failure to leave behind the state of living forever in-between and his realisation that it will be forever impossible to do so. In what follows we will see how Warschauer's attempts to change his status in society can be regarded as almost 'classical' tales or performances by an outsider which will allow us to link his to other such performances.

After the analysis of Warschauer's status as a double outsider we will move on to Wassermann's failure to provide any opposition to this character and how he instead makes the 'negative' character the most intriguing figure of the entire novel, which is a surprising development in his writing. Eventually it will become apparent how this new empathy with the unlikable outsider comes to symbolise a new level of resignation on the part of the author who has lost all faith in ever ceasing to be an outsider

⁵² Mayer, *Außenseiter*, p. 421.

himself. Towards the end of his life he writes about his failure to become an accepted member of society: 'Ich war eine sogenannte umstrittene Erscheinung, und für viele bin ich es geblieben.'⁵³

It seems appropriate to begin the discussion of Warschauer's way of dealing with his Jewishness with a quotation from Elizabeth Boa informing us about one crucial function of performance in modern society:

In modernising society, performance no longer showed forth a divinely sanctioned order but conveyed rather the divide between the projected role and marked players mimicking their unmarked betters. Bourgeois pretending to be gentilhommes are joined in the nation state by Jews pretending to be German[...].⁵⁴

One of these Jews pretending to be German is Warschauer. By becoming the Catholic nationalist Gregor Waremme he fulfils his most ardent wish: in the eyes of the world he ceases to be a Jew. From an early point onwards he has understood that if he continues to live life as an Eastern European Jew, he will never be able to make use of his extraordinary intellectual potential. Or at least that is his version of it, for it never becomes quite clear whether he is really that gifted or whether this is what he makes people believe. In any case, he embraces the possibilities that performance offers in order to change his life, no matter how challenging it might be:

Aber ich [Warschauer] war ein Schauspieler, ich mußte spielen, und wenn ich nicht mit vollendeter Kunst, mit der letzten Hingabe spielte, so konnt ich einpacken [...] Jede ungewöhnliche Geistes- und Charakterleistung beruht auf einer sublimierten Verwandlungskunst [...] halten Sie [Mohl] sich doch vor Augen, welche Wissensgebiete ich zu beherrschen hatte (FM, 356 - 57).

At this point one cannot avoid briefly discussing the concept of Jewish self-hatred, as defined by Theodor Lessing, in relation to the depiction of Warschauer. In *Der jüdische Selbsthaß* (1930) Lessing mentions that he could also trace Jewish self-hatred in the works of Wassermann but refrains from doing so.⁵⁵ According to Lessing this form of self-hatred can be found with any minority but the Jewish people serves as the perfect

⁵³ Wassermann, *Selbstbetrachtungen*, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Boa, 'Aping', p. 24.

⁵⁵ See Theodor Lessing, *Der Jüdische Selbsthass* (Munich: Matthes und Seitz, 1984), p. 42.

example to develop his theory.⁵⁶ Lessing argues that the Jewish people was the first in the history of mankind to always blame itself: 'Auf die Frage: "Warum liebt man uns nicht?" antwortete seit alters die jüdische Lehre: "*Weil wir schuldig sind.*"'⁵⁷ This strong sense of guilt was combined with the sheer endless suffering of the Jewish people, which had two significant consequences: Jews began to think of themselves as inferior and at the same time they thought of their oppressors as superior and tried to be like them:

Denn der in Kampf und Leid gestellte Mensch wird die Tat und den Täter, das Handeln und den Händler immer für *höher* erachten, denn alle Seher und Träumer. Und der Jude war immer in den Kampf gestellt. Er kann nicht wie Blume und Kind Dankbarkeit fordern schon dafür, daß er da ist und schön ist. Er muß "*Werte*" schaffen, um vor sich und anderen gerechtfertigt dazustehen. Und so über sich hinausgetrieben und aus sich herausgefallen, wurde er sich selber wertlos, bis ein grauenhaftes Zerrbild entstand, jenem Händler gleich, der, verdorbene Ware verkaufend, seiner Kundschaft zuruft: "Glauben Sie mir, meine *Ware* ist gut; *ich* stinke."⁵⁸

Lessing goes on to show the different possible reactions that are available to the Jew who is forced to hate his origins, his parents and himself. They all prove to be self-destructive, yet one of them, namely assimilation, offers a description of Warschauer's fate. The assimilated Jew succeeds at every mimicry and eventually becomes 'one of the others'. In fact he becomes even more of a German and a Christian than most German people. Yet Lessing considers this a form of suicide: 'Du gingst den Weg des Selbstmordes zu Glück und Ruhm.'⁵⁹ The Jew who tries to cease being a Jew can never be himself and is forced to put on an act: 'Er wirbt um Achtung, er bittet um Liebe. Er offenbart sich nicht, sondern verummmt sich. Er gibt sich nicht, sondern schauspielert.'⁶⁰ Warschauer thus chooses performance as a means to overcome his Jewishness, which makes his case a typical example of Jewish self-hatred as described by Lessing.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 36-7.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 117.

Yet what seems most interesting is that the character of Warschauer strongly resembles one of Lessing's showcases, namely Maximilian Harden.⁶¹ Lessing informs us that Maximilian Harden was the pseudonym of Felix Ernst Witkowski, the son of a Jewish silk merchant from Berlin. As a young man Harden joined a group of actors and was, among other things, known for his good looks: 'Er hatte strahlende blaue Augen und ein mädchenhaftes Köpfchen in blonden Locken.'⁶² Similarly, Warschauer is described as having been 'blessed' with hair that is 'germanisch blond' and a face that is indeed 'unorientalisch' (FM, 349). Warschauer also used to be an actor on stage. Warschauer and Harden are both described as fervent nationalist and patriots. While Warschauer acts the role of the devoted Catholic Waremme who dreams of a 'Europa [...] unter deutscher Hegemonie' (FM, 351) and organises a 'Konferenz der Vaterlandsfreunde', Harden is referred to as the 'gehätschelte Publizist des alten konservativen Preußen.'⁶³ Both figures are shown to be hugely influential: Waremme is in touch with the Kaiser and the Vatican and Harden is considered one of the most powerful figures of Wilhelmine Germany:

Harden schloß sich nie einer Partei an, aber alle Parteien umwarben ihn. Er hatte kein Amt, aber alle Ämter lauschten auf ihn. Er verschmähte Titel und Orden, aber die Träger der besten Namen und Titel zitterten vor seinem Urteil.⁶⁴

Warschauer also never accepts titles and positions.

The fact that the figure of Warschauer is revealed to be homosexual while Harden was the one who (as we shall see later) famously accused Eulenburg and Moltke of being homosexual could indeed be read as a critique of Harden's behaviour at the time. After World War One the previous fame of both figures is forgotten and they both return to their Jewish identity. Yet while Warschauer does so by his own accord, Harden is made a Jew once more by the rise of racial anti-Semitism in Germany. The

⁶¹ On Harden see also Helga Neumann, *Maximilian Harden (1861-1927) : Ein unerschrockener deutsch-jüdischer Kritiker und Publizist* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2003).

⁶² Lessing, *Selbsthass*, p. 171.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

actual extent of Warschauer's return to his Jewishness, however, remains unclear. Moreover, his eventual plan of returning to the East seems more like a moment of defeat than a positive moment of reconciliation with his roots, as portrayed by Jütten.⁶⁵

While Warschauer therefore succeeds in turning most of his character into a performance he struggles to do so when it comes to his sexuality. Throughout the novel it seems that sexuality is the one urge that defies all performance as even a character like Andergast cannot help but follow his sexual urges. As part of his identity as Waremme, Warschauer is keen to create the image of the 'Weiberheld' and, as we can deduce from the accounts of other characters, he makes most people believe that he is just that. However, the two sexual encounters of his that are described in the novel seem to tell a rather different story.

The first of Warschauer's sexual encounters that must be discussed is his alleged rape of Anna Jahn. By creating the identity of the German patriot Waremme who supports the idea of a war against France, Warschauer is also trying to conform to a certain kind of masculinity. David Prickett informs us that there was a

more general crisis of masculinity (including hetero- and homosexual, and anything in between these polarities) with the rise of modernism at the turn of the century. As early as Germany's victory over France in 1871, the ideal male is the strong male, who is pure, hardened, and uniformed. The new German Empire defines itself vis-à-vis these strong young men; indeed, it is suggested that Germany's victory over France as well as its very existence depends solely on such men.⁶⁶

In order to make his performance as Waremme complete, Warschauer therefore needed to emphasise his manliness. Apart from disseminating the image of himself as a 'Weiberheld', he also felt that to have a woman permanently by his side would make things even more complete. It is no surprise therefore that he chose Anna Jahn for this role, a woman he refers

⁶⁵ See Jütten, *Diskurse*, p. 287.

⁶⁶ David James Prickett, 'Envisioning the Homosexual: Gender Performance, Photography, and the Modernist Homosexual Aesthetic' in *Performance and Performativity*, pp. 177-201 (p. 181).

to as the 'deutsche Helena'. By choosing a 'Helena', he is identifying with the archetypally German figure of Faust. But Anna refuses him because, as Waremmé puts it, 'Sie spürte das fremde Blut' (FM, 367). This means that apart from being xenophobic she is also, to a certain extent, aware of his performance which seems to indicate that Warschauer's other identity is not credible enough to allow him to engage in a genuine relationship.

However, apparently Warschauer's desire to possess Anna does not stop there. During one of his conversations with Andergast, Maurizio claims that Waremmé confessed to him that he raped Anna when she was seventeen years old. And yet, this allegation is never actually confirmed by Warschauer or Anna. Moreover, the scene of the confession is staged in a most theatrical way and we cannot be sure whether or not it is simply a part of the invented character of Waremmé. To be sure, though, the image he creates for himself as a womanizer is of a far greater significance than Och allows for when he describes it as among Warschauer's 'dämonisch-diabolische Züge'.⁶⁷

In any case, the surrounding circumstances of this rape are of interest. Anna and Waremmé both participated in a theatre production in Cologne. After the performance Waremmé brings her the news that her brother Erwin died 'in einem Gefecht in Südfrankreich' (FM, 434).⁶⁸ While Waremmé tries to comfort her, he becomes 'stürmisch' and subsequently rapes her. The rape thus takes place in a theatre, a space of false identities where things happen without actually happening in reality. The theatrical aspect of this rape is further emphasised when for his first 'confession' of it Waremmé recites Shakespeare's *Measure to Measure*, Act II, scene 4, in which Angelo tries to force Isabella to sleep with him. Isabella is a nun and she has taken a vow of chastity. Therefore there is a barrier between her

⁶⁷ Och, 'Ahasver', p. 120.

⁶⁸ In the original edition it reads 'Südwestafrika' which is the only difference between the editions, the 'Südfrankreich' in the later editions might therefore just be a mistake and not a change Wassermann made himself. See Wassermann, *Der Fall Maurizio* (Berlin: Fischer, 1928), p. 414.

and Angelo which could be understood as analogous to the racial barrier between Waremme and Anna.

The other interesting aspect of this rape is that it takes place immediately after the news of her brother's death as a German soldier which following the ideal of masculinity at the time would have been considered most manly and heroic. In this light it almost seems as if the rape was less an expression of his desire for Anna but rather a desperate attempt to complete the image of himself as strong and manly. Besides, Gilman informs us that towards the end of the nineteenth century there was an 'increasingly intense anti-Semitic critique of the Jewish body as inherently unfit for military service.'⁶⁹ At the same time the rape can also be understood as the desire of the Jewish man for an Aryan woman as well as an attempt to defy the image of the effeminate Jewish body. In his analysis of their relationship, Henry Regensteiner fails to draw the conclusion, that Waremme's attraction to Anna Jahn is in fact an essential part of what he refers to as the outsider's 'tortured quest for complete acceptance in the German cultural orbit.'⁷⁰

The other sexual encounter involving Warschauer that is talked about in the novel is the previously mentioned homosexual affair involving young aristocrats which brings us to the idea of understanding the character of Warschauer as an almost classical tale of a homosexual double life. According to Mayer the desire of the homosexual man to appear very manly was a reaction to being forced to hide his true desires from the world:

Die sodomitische Diaspora [lebt] im Zustand der Nichtidentität [...] Dem jüdischen Selbsthaß korrespondiert der Selbsthaß des Homosexuellen [...] Der Sodomit im Zwang des Doppellebens wendet sich angewidert ab von den „Tunten“.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York, London: Routledge, 1991), p. 42.

⁷⁰ Henry Regensteiner, 'The Obsessive Personality in Jakob Wassermann's Novel *Der Fall Maurizius*', in *Literature and Psychology*, 14 (1964), 106 – 16 (p. 114).

⁷¹ Mayer, *Außenseiter*, pp. 182-3.

The reason why it would have been so crucial for a man like Waremmé, who was pursuing a partly political career, to pass as heterosexual was that the revelation of a man's homosexuality 'was likely to ruin one's career and the possibilities of a prison term were nothing less than real in the Germany of the early 1900s.'⁷² Moreover, the public exposure of homosexuals was a prominent tool for the elimination of an (political) opponent. Or as Mayer puts it: 'Päderastie war stets ein polemisches Argument.'⁷³

The discovery of a man's homosexuality was a tool that was exploited for political purposes by the bourgeoisie in their fight against the aristocracy and likewise by the socialists against the bourgeoisie. The case of Philipp zu Eulenburg was probably the most famous of these cases during the Wilhelmine era. Moreover, ever since the exposure of Europe's richest man at the time, Friedrich Alfred Krupp, as a homosexual in 1902 by the Social Democratic Party newspaper *Vorwärts*, the public greatly enjoyed reading about such stories in the press which means that there was an actual market for them.

Wassermann tells a similar story of a homosexuality that had to be hidden at all costs for political reasons:

[K]ürzlich [hat sich] wiederum eine neue Skandalgeschichte an seinen Namen geheftet, eine homosexuelle Affäre, in die einige junge Adelige eines vornehmen Korps verstrickt sind und die zu unterdrücken seine Gönner sich mit allen Kräften bemühen. (Es gelang ihnen aber doch nicht ganz, ein sozialistisches Blatt brachte, vorläufig ohne Namensnennung, einen ziemlich alarmierenden Artikel[...]) (FM, 192)

In *Maurizius* Wassermann thus portrays a scenario that comes very close to the events that actually took place by showing how the socialist press would use the disclosure of their opponent's sexual preferences as a political weapon. Even though Warschauer's homosexuality also functions as a metaphor for his otherness, Wassermann offers an insight into the lives of homosexuals before 1914. In this context it seems noteworthy that

⁷² Jones, "Third Sex", p. 272.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 182.

Magnus Hirschfeld, a prominent advocate for the rights of homosexuals, was among Wassermann's acquaintances in Berlin.⁷⁴

The depiction of Warschauer's desperate desire to hide his homosexuality can be linked to the atmosphere of constant fear in which homosexuals were forced to live, and even more so to the witch-hunt that followed the Harden-Eulenburg-Moltke trials in the course of which the number of 'arrests for acts against Paragraph 175 doubled from 1907 – 1912 in Germany.'⁷⁵ Moreover, there is a long list of homosexuals who committed suicide due to blackmail or fear of discovery. Warschauer's emigration to the USA can ultimately also be linked to his homosexuality, for as Jones informs us, fictional homosexual characters would frequently be portrayed as leaving for the New World in order to find freedom from persecution.⁷⁶ It would therefore be mistaken to consider Warschauer's homosexuality as a mere device to underline the monstrosity of his character, as in the studies by Blankenagel and Landscheidt.⁷⁷

Warschauer thus lives in constant fear of either his Jewishness or his homosexuality being discovered and it is only in his relationship with Etzel that he reveals these two aspects of his identity. Etzel is the only character in the novel Warschauer talks to openly about his Jewishness, but only after first making sure that he is not an anti-Semite:

"Haben Sie mit Juden verkehrt, Mohl?" – "Und ob. Bei uns gibt's Juden die Menge." – "Hatten Sie jüdische Kameraden?" – "Auch." – "Also keine prinzipielle Gegnerschaft?" [...] "Schön. Das wollt ich wissen." (FM, 344)

The notion of Warschauer's confession can thus be understood to go beyond the mere confession of his perjury. In fact, his relationship with Etzel can be seen as a continuing process of confession during which he admits to being Jewish as well as indirectly owning up to the fact that he is homosexual. This idea of a multilayered confession also allows us to attribute another motive to Warschauer's prolonged interest in Etzel,

⁷⁴ See Müller-Kampel, *Collage*, p. 213.

⁷⁵ Jones, *"Third Sex"*, p. 107.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁷⁷ See Blankenagel, *Writings*, p. 276 and Landscheidt, 'Mutmassungen', p. 22.

namely, that a confession always offers a moment of relief and liberation. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes that 'Western man has become a confessing animal.' This means that since the Middle Ages the confession has become 'one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth.'⁷⁸ For our context it is important that he describes the confession as

a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises salvation.⁷⁹

Moreover, Foucault sheds light on the power relationship between the confessing subject and the listener and comes to the conclusion that 'the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing.'⁸⁰ The confessing subject depends on the listener for his or her confession, which when applied to the relationship between Warschauer and Etzel makes the attachment of the middle-aged man to the teenage boy even more plausible: Warschauer depends on Etzel for his confession. Not so much, though, it seems, for the confession of his perjury, but for that of his Jewishness as well as indirectly that of his homosexuality.

And yet, despite this eventual confession, Warschauer's failure to become an accepted member of society has left him an unalterable misanthropist. The following claim by Classen seems therefore mistaken: 'Etzel erweckt den verlogenen Waremme schließlich durch das Geständnis der Wahrheit zu neuem Leben und setzt Gefühle und Verantwortungsbewußtsein in ihm frei.'⁸¹ Warschauer is in many ways a negative version of Christian Wahnschaffe, as he undergoes similar experiences but with a very different outcome. Most importantly, Warschauer represents a reversal of the idea of perception as a means to

⁷⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality, Volume One*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 59.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁸¹ Classen, 'Todesstrafe', p. 37.

transform a character as it was portrayed in *Wahnschaffe*. Whilst being able to see and understand the suffering of the people around him led to insanity in the case of Andergast, it has led to utter indifference and egocentrism in the case of Warschauer. His refusal to engage with his perception finds an expression in the dark glasses he wears almost constantly; moreover, his eyes are frequently referred to as pale or even dead. Lindemann-Luiken's interpretation of these glasses as a symbol of coldness therefore does not take the importance of perception into consideration.⁸²

However, unlike with any of Wassermann's previous characters, this state of not seeing the world around him is based on a conscious decision. Like Christian Wahnschaffe, Warschauer has seen it all: he has spent ten years in America, mostly in Chicago and mostly among the poor and deprived masses. He has witnessed the horrors of the abattoirs, people's domestic misery, the injustice of the judicial system and the racist treatment of immigrants and of Black Americans, as exemplified in the account of the violent death of his friend Joshua Cooper. Warschauer therefore becomes, as Bing rightly observed, a representative of contemporary America.⁸³

The fact that Warschauer spent most of his time in Chicago is not only significant because Wassermann himself visited the city during his trip to America in 1928 but also because of its cultural significance. At the time Chicago was considered by many to be a low point of ruthless capitalism because its wealth was based on a gigantic meat industry and thus the slaughter of animals on a hitherto unknown scale. As a consequence, Warschauer confronts Etzel with a drastic description of the life in this city:

Bedrängte Gegenwart, so dicht beim Sterben zahlloser Kreatur [...] aus den riesigen Hallen und Speichern schwelt der süßliche Blutdunst auf, ständiges Blutgewölk brütet über der ganzen Stadt, die Kleider der Menschen riechen nach Blut, ihre Betten und ihre Kirchen, ihre Stuben, nach Blut schmecken ihre Speisen, ihre Weine, ihre Küsse (FM, 379)

⁸² See Lindemann-Luiken, *Auswirkungen*, p. 147.

⁸³ See Bing, *Wassermann*, p. 266.

By using Chicago as one of the symbols of the horrors embedded in modern life, Wassermann can be placed in the context of authors such as Upton Sinclair and his novel *The Jungle* (1906) or Brecht and his play *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* (1929) for which Sinclair's novel was a source. Blankenagel takes offence at this depiction of America as prejudiced and narrow-minded thus failing to see the further discourse Wassermann was engaging in.⁸⁴ Moreover, his horrifying experiences in the New World not only make Warschauer one of Wassermann's most modern characters but they also come across as a bleak vision of Europe's future. Tellingly, only a few years later Wassermann himself refers to Europe as a 'von Menschenblut triefendes Schlachthaus' and declares that the idea of Europe has become a 'unhaltbar gewordene Fiktion.'⁸⁵

Warschauer's experiences have not led, as in the case of Christian Wahnschaffe, to an altered perception and thus to desire to bring about change. Instead they have led to a refusal on the part of Warschauer to engage with the world around him:

Das Auge, das sieht, ist ein Regulativ für das Herz, das leidet. Da die meisten Menschen mit Blindheit geschlagen sind, leiden sie desto mehr. Der Sehende wird kalt. Eine grausame Wahrheit, aber wärs keine, wie könnten wir, Sie und ich, jeden Morgen aus dem Bett steigen und wieder das Hemd und die Strümpfe anziehen und wieder die Zeitung lesen und wieder zu Frau Bobike wandeln? Wie wäre das möglich? Und was mich betrifft, ich leide ausschließlich an mir selber. An andern leiden, das ist Schwindel. (FM, 382)

Warschauer has seen the world and recognised it for what it is and as a result arrives at a rejection of Western civilisation. Full of contempt, he considers it to be beyond change and all the big words, such as religion, humanity, charity are nothing but the 'aufgeklebten Zettel in einer Kurpfuscher-Apotheke' (FM, 335). In his opinion stupidity and greed are the only motives that actually prompt human beings to act, and once he had realised that, he chose a life of utter solitude which prevented him from being afflicted with this unpleasant human condition. He shows a strong disbelief in compassion or even the idea of justice, claiming that

⁸⁴ See Blankenagel, *Writings*, . 276.

⁸⁵ Wassermann, *Selbstbetrachtungen*, p. 100 and p. 107.

justice can never be possible because human beings are neither interested in it nor capable of it.

Schneider-Handschin argues that Warschauer fails to draw further conclusions from his experiences: 'Mit dem Aufzählen von Beispielen endet Warschauer-Waremmes Kritik und Auflehnung.'⁸⁶ While this is certainly true it seems unfair to go on and accuse Wassermann for not providing concrete solutions for the social problems of his time as it is indeed not a novelist's task to do so. It seems that critics have failed to understand the significance of the mere existence of a character like Warschauer in one of Wassermann's novels. Probably the most fascinating aspect of this character is the fact that his pessimism and his misanthropy remain largely unrefuted. Not only is there no moment of reconciliation or optimism in the end but Etzel's opposition to Warschauer's views is of no consequence. Wassermann seems to have found no way of countering his own creation, instead he seems overwhelmed as well as intrigued by this outburst of pessimism, which, given his previous works, can be seen as the strongest indicator that Wassermann had lost faith in his previous sense of mission. Only a year later, in his biography of Christopher Columbus, Wassermann even reiterates the idea that the project of human civilisation has in many ways been a failure:

Ohne einen gewissen Mut und ohne Resignation kann man die Vergangenheit des menschlichen Geschlechts nicht als das erkennen, was sie ist: eine ununterbrochene Kette von Unrecht, Übervorteilung, Diebstahl, Gewalttat und Morde. Dies sind nur vierhundert und etliche Jahre [since Columbus' discovery of the New World and the ensuing atrocities]. Ich kann mir eine Geistesstimmung denken, die seufzend zu dem Schluß gelangt: es könnte, mit nur geringen Variationen, auch gestern gewesen sein.⁸⁷

At this point the connection between Warschauer's criticism and the novel as a whole becomes clear. As we have seen, the novel offers a depiction of society as composed of isolated individuals who are no longer capable of forming genuine relationships with each other. Society has ultimately become dysfunctional with its individual members left fighting

⁸⁶ Schneider-Handschin, *Bild des Bürgertums*, p. 52.

⁸⁷ Wassermann, *Columbus*, p. 114.

for themselves. In this context the function of Warschauer's critique seems to be that of showing how this state of injustice is the result of this utter lack of empathy and thus an innate human condition. Moreover, by referring to injustices that took place in the past, such as crimes committed by European colonisers in Africa, he reveals the hypocrisy behind the idea of a positive development that is the result of human civilisation. Instead he demonstrates that a constant line of misery and inequality can be traced from the beginnings of Western civilisation up to the present. Yet most importantly, the figure of Warschauer not only shows that the current state of society is more than just a momentary phase but he also crushes all hopes for a better future. Warschauer has lived in the New World for ten years and arrives at the conclusion that life over there is even worse than in Europe. The state of affairs in America here functions as an indicator for negative developments that will affect Europe with a delay of a few years. With his description of the living conditions and the general state of emotional depletion in America, Warschauer arrives at a bleak vision of Europe's future. Unlike the other characters in the novel, Warschauer is therefore fully aware of the state society finds itself in as well as the future that lies ahead. It could be said that Warschauer and the narrator both arrive at the same conclusions, the former by analysing society and the other by depicting it. Yet Warschauer's reaction to this knowledge is one of passive acceptance, or as he puts it: 'Der Sehende wird kalt' (FM, 382). And when he, as a negative mirror-image of Christian Wahnschaffe, also disappears at the end of the novel it is not accompanied by an air of optimism and self-sacrifice. Instead it is, so far, the greatest moment of defeat in Wassermann's writing

6. A man's world – male-male relationships in *Etzel Andergast* and *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz*

6.1 Introduction

The analysis of the two remaining novels of the so-called 'Andergast Trilogy', *Etzel Andergast* (1931) and *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* (1934), is intended to show how, in their depiction of male-male relationships, these two novels can be understood as a continuation of *Maurizius*. At first sight the two latter novels do not seem to have much in common with *Maurizius* since there is no continuous narrative apart from the reappearance of its protagonist Etzel Andergast, who is, however, several years older and in many ways a different character. Garrin's view that Etzel's reappearance alone 'ties the three works together' does not seem satisfactory.¹ It is therefore necessary to illustrate how these three novels are linked thematically in order to determine that the term trilogy is indeed suitable, a notion that has been vehemently rejected by Peter de Mendelssohn.² This question is even more important in the light of Wassermann's tendency to have characters reappear in novels that are otherwise unrelated, as with Eva Sorel who is portrayed as a child in *Das Gänsemännchen* and reappears as an adult in *Christian Wahnschaffe*. To enable a comparison to the findings from the previous chapter, the depiction and development of character will stand at the centre of the analysis again. Analysis will show how Wassermann started off with a negative version of the disappearance of character in *Maurizius* but arrives, just before the end of his own life, at a most remarkable statement at the end of *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz*, namely the demand for the disappearance of the text. In a similar vein to *Wahnschaffe*, where the disappearance of character carried positive connotations, Wassermann

¹ Garrin, *Concept*, p. 14.

² See Peter de Mendelssohn, 'Jakob Wassermanns letztes Werk', in *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* (Munich: DTV, 1989), pp. 531 – 59 (p. 531).

now depicts the disappearance of Kerkhoven's precious manuscript as a necessary sacrifice for the benefit of humanity.

Even though the two later novels confront us with stronger female characters than *Maurizius*, the analysis will nevertheless predominantly focus on the male-male relationships portrayed in the two novels. This focus seems justified, since feminist criticism has by now already dealt thoroughly with the female characters.³ The analysis will illustrate how through the depiction of these, by now symbolic, father-and-son relationships Wassermann arrives at various critical pictures of German society before World War One as well as during the Weimar Republic. Adopting the viewpoints of various characters, Wassermann keeps re-visiting those different periods thus allowing for very different perspectives on them. Moreover, linking those periods through these male-male relationships seems to correspond to the view expressed by Peukert that a lot of the things we are used to associate with the Weimar years, actually have their roots in the Wilhelmine era.⁴ While he is not interested in actual politics, Wassermann seems keen to explore the psychological forces at work through his analyses of different forms of, mostly failed, male bonding. This surveying of the same periods again and again from different perspectives can be understood as a link not only between the three novels but also between their individual parts. This will in particular help us to understand how the seemingly unconnected first part of *Andergast*, i.e. 'Joseph Kerkhoven – Die Vor-Welt', can indeed be linked to the rest of the novel through more than just the reappearance of characters.

This first part of *Andergast* tells the story of the homosexual industrialist and explorer Johann Irlen who witnesses the disintegration of character and thus of the world he used to know on the eve of the Great War. Through the actions of this outsider figure the question of what a human character actually is becomes the centre of attention, culminating

³ See Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*.

⁴ See Peukert, *Weimar*, p. 27 and p. 166.

in Irlen's attempt to make himself a part of Joseph Kerkhoven's character. At the same time the relationship between the two men serves as an illustration of a possible relationship between pre- and post-war Germany.

In the second part, Kerkhoven becomes the third father in Etzel's life and, as with his predecessors, Wolf von Andergast and Georg Warschauer, this 'son' will seek to destroy him. This time, however, Etzel himself is left destroyed by a life that does not allow him to reconcile his polar longings for order and rebellion, for a father and for the latter's destruction. Etzel refuses to give people more of himself than a mere superficial performance which eventually, with striking parallels to the case of his father, leads to his self-destruction. Garrin's claim that 'Etzel's personality differs substantially from that of his father' will therefore be proven wrong.⁵ At the same time, Etzel is shown to be a typical child of his time and thus a representative of the troubled youth of the Weimar Republic. This becomes most apparent when Etzel, who lacks a sense of direction in his life, falls into the trap of political radicalism and, for a short while, follows the radical political leader Jürgen Lorriner. Moreover, in his function as a representative of Weimar youth culture, the figure of Etzel can also be read as a 'kalte persona', as described by Helmut Lethen⁶, and thus as a critique of a certain understanding of 'Neue Sachlichkeit'.

Kerkhoven depicts Kerkhoven's life after the catastrophe of Etzel's betrayal. Even though the latter is absent from this novel, it remains a searching portrayal of the relationship between the old generation, now represented by Kerkhoven, and the contemporary one. Wassermann seems keen to investigate whether the destructive forces, as represented by Etzel and Herzog's first wife Ganna, that he considers 'zeittypisch' can be tamed via spiritual means. Moreover, we are confronted with the question whether the previous generation already contains these destructive and anarchic forces, merely projecting them onto the younger

⁵ Garrin, *Concept*, p. 35.

⁶ See Helmut Lethen, *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1994).

generation. Geraint Vaughan Jones has therefore rightly pointed out that the character of Kerkhoven embodies Wassermann's 'philosophical search' once humanism has seemingly become insufficient.⁷ More generally, *Kerkhoven* is dominated by the characters of Kerkhoven and the novelist Alexander Herzog and, to an even stronger degree than Andergast and Maurizius in *Maurizius*, we see these two characters merge into one person. This construction is complicated even further by the fact that in the character of Herzog, Wassermann seemingly introduces himself into his own work, the implications of which will be part of the analysis. This is of particular importance since towards the end of the novel, Kerkhoven and Herzog, in what seems like a combined effort, eventually destroy the manuscript of the dying Kerkhoven which was to be his final masterpiece. The disappearance of the text, as well as Wassermann's own involvement in its destruction, will be discussed as the final moment in Wassermann's life as a writer.

6.2 Wassermann and his 'Gestalt'

Before discussing the relationship between the two characters of Kerkhoven and Irlen, it is necessary to give a brief account of Wassermann's notion of character and 'Gestalt'. Otherwise, the subsequent experiment of literally making Irlen a part of Kerkhoven's character might seem incomprehensible and even absurd. Moreover, Neubauer has rightly observed that 'Form und Gestalt' are essential for the understanding of Wassermann's work.⁸ In this context it is inevitable to refer to Wassermann's concept of 'Gestalt', as presented in his speech entitled 'Rede über die Gestalt' (1924), since it is inextricably linked with his conception of character.

⁷ Geraint Vaughan Jones, 'Jakob Wassermann's 'Joseph Kerkhovens Dritte Existenz': Its Philosophy and Structure', in *German Life and Letters*, 3 (1949 - 1950), 169 – 85 (p. 169 and p. 174).

⁸ See Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, p. 123.

Reaching far beyond being a mere question of style or narrative technique, the depiction of character is, for Wassermann, always also a depiction of the character's historical and social context. The state of a character therefore becomes a measure for the general state of society. According to Wassermann, a 'Gestalt' can have its origins in history, religion or any form of art, even music or architecture. These 'Gestalten', literary or historical examples of which would be Hamlet, Werther, Robespierre, or Richard the Lionheart, have over the centuries become independent of critique and opinions and live on as guiding authorities that we treasure. Charles Dickens was the last artist to create 'Gestalten' that could represent an entire epoch. As a myth the 'Gestalt' survives the passing of time and thus satisfies our 'Sehnsucht nach Gesetzmäßigkeit und nach dem Bilde'.⁹ Moreover, the 'Gestalt', through representing an entire epoch, transmits knowledge, that would otherwise require a lot of studying, to people and thus teaches them how to see. This is what Wassermann refers to as the transformation of people through fantasy. A life without these 'Gestalten' would lead to barbarism because people would be devoid of true guidance.

And yet the 'Gestalt' has become increasingly rare, without people noticing the danger that lies in this development. The state of society justifies Wassermann's opinion because nowadays the word, and thus the 'Gestalt's' worst enemy, holds sway. It is the word in its most negative form that

von Rednertribünen rast, die Völker in Parteien zersplittert, Meinung gegen Meinung peitscht, um jeden in seiner Meinung grausam und dünkelfhaft zu machen, Starre des Vorurteils zur Auszeichnung erhebt, Neid, Gier, Verkennung, Verbitterung, Ruhelosigkeit, ja Raub und Mord durch lügenhafte Manifeste legitimiert und Mißtrauen sät zwischen Stämmen, Brüdern und Freunden.¹⁰

And since the 'Gestalt' functions as a 'Spiegel und Deuter [der Zeit]'¹¹, the absence of this most complete form of character is alarming. Wassermann

⁹ Jakob Wassermann, 'Rede über die Gestalt', in *Lebensdienst*, pp. 347 - 83 (p. 363).

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 378.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 382.

is therefore aware that the distinct and rounded characters known from classical fiction are no longer feasible because the state of society does not allow them to be created or appreciated. Instead, the characters in his final novels have become more porous, which also means that they can influence each other in extraordinary ways. Poeschel has therefore rightly remarked that 'Die Flächen ihrer [Wassermann's Gestalten] Körperlichkeit sind nicht ihre Grenzen. Sie sind nicht in einem statuenhaften Umriß beschlossen.'¹²

Concerned with the difficulties of characterisation, Wassermann undertakes the experiment of making one character become part of another and thus stretches the boundaries of the concept of character in ways hitherto unprecedented in his writing. The curious incident of Irlen becoming a part of Kerkhoven, which will shortly be examined in detail, is therefore best understood as a reaction to a crisis of character as Wassermann perceived it and the subsequent search for a new form of 'Gestalt'. This development of character is also mirrored in the overall form of the three novels. Mendelssohn has shown that while *Maurizius* is still narrated in the traditional form of the novel, this form is already crumbling in *Andergast* only to fall apart completely in *Kerkhoven*:

Von einer Struktur, einer Komposition im herkömmlichen Sinn will der Dichter hier kaum mehr etwas wissen, sie ist ihm unwichtig, nebensächlich geworden. [...] Die Kunstform war zerbrochen, das Leben hatte sie ihm zerschlagen.¹³

The notion of Wassermann as a traditional narrator therefore cannot be applied to his late works. Just as with the traditional 'Gestalt', form has thus also become impossible for Wassermann. Mendelssohn uses these different stages of the development of form as an argument against the notion of the trilogy, yet seen in the context of the development of Wassermann's characters it seems more plausible to consider these changing narrative styles as part of one process rather than as a dividing

¹² Poeschel, *Wassermann*, p. 94.

¹³ Mendelssohn, 'Letztes Werk', p. 549.

line between the novels. Garrin's view that 'the last volume [of the trilogy] falls apart structurally' therefore also seems rather limited.¹⁴

6.3 Johann Irlen – the end of a generation

With Irlen, Wassermann has once again chosen the figure of a homosexual outsider who has travelled the world, to be a spokesman for the failure of Western civilisation. This time, however, in contrast to Warschauer, he is a member of the higher classes, a former officer, and the continent he has explored is Africa instead of America. And, what is more important, this failure of human civilisation is mainly pinned down to two concrete examples, namely the First World War and the history of colonisation.

The reasons given for the end of Irlen's career as an officer offer interesting parallels to the engagement with homosexuality during the Wilhelmine era in *Maurizius*. Irlen was forced to resign from his position in 1907, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was the year in which the Eulenburg-Moltke trials began. The narrator describes the incident as follows: 'Seine freundschaftlichen Beziehungen zu einem Prinzen des kaiserlichen Hauses lieferte einer Kamarilla, die schon längst auf der Lauer lag, die gewünschten Waffen. Er musste den Abschied nehmen.'¹⁵ Even though this is not a direct mention of his homosexuality, it strongly implies his involvement in an affair which, as James W. Jones tells us, turned into a 'massive anti-homosexual witchhunt throughout Germany in which aristocrats, government officials, and military officers all became suspect.'¹⁶ Many of them were then made to resign from their positions. As with Warschauer, Wassermann thus demonstrates once more how homosexuality was exploited as a tool to eliminate political opponents.

¹⁴ Garrin, *Concept*, p. 14.

¹⁵ Jakob Wassermann, *Etzel Andergast* (Munich: DTV, 1988), p. 14. Henceforth reference will be given in brackets with EA followed by page numbers. Quoting from this edition was considered more reader friendly since it is still in print. For the original edition see Jakob Wassermann, *Etzel Andergast* (Berlin: Fischer, 1931).

¹⁶ Jones, *"Third Sex"*, p. 104.

In this light another quotation seems to be revealing: 'Er [Irlen] gehörte zu der kleinen Zahl von Offizieren, die, voller Ahnung, vor dem Einbruch der schamlosen Phrase mit allen ihren Folgen in schmerzlichem Ekel zurückwichen.' (EA, 14) The fact that he could foretell the outcome of this affair could be read as another indicator of his own involvement. His career, similar to that of Warschauer, has thus been ruined by the involvement in a homosexual affair or the fear of its discovery. A further hint at his homosexuality can be seen in a reflexion made later in the novel by Marie, the wife of his nephew, who comes to understand that as a woman she is 'doppelt reizlos für ihn' (EA, 32).

The depiction of this affair is followed by an account of Irlen's relationship with Otto Kapeller, the son of an industrial tycoon. Otto is clearly rendered as a homosexual; Schneider-Handschin even compares him to Friedrich Alfred Krupp who was Europe's richest man at the time and committed suicide in 1902 over the public exposure of his homosexuality. There are obvious parallels between Krupp and Kapeller: the ancestors of both were simple blacksmiths, both of them chose a secret place where they could live their homosexuality and both of them were without mercy in the face of labour strikes.¹⁷ Moreover, Wassermann makes use of a common stereotype in the depiction of homosexuals by presenting Otto as an artistic figure.¹⁸ This becomes apparent in Irlen's report of his first encounter with the young man:

Er saß am Klavier und spielte Debussy. Ich habe nie einen jungen Menschen von einschmeichelerem Wesen gesehen. Schlank, mit einem stählernen Körper, lächerlich blond, lächerlich hübsch. Er gab sich ohne jedes Zaudern in meine Hand [...] Es überwältigte mich. Hauptsächlich das eine, daß er in mir immer das Gefühl zu erwecken verstand, ich hätte ihm bis jetzt gefehlt (EA, 121)

Irlen is obviously smitten with the young man, whom he also describes as a poet unaware of his gift. Otto soon becomes his favourite friend as a consequence of which Irlen eventually accepts the offer to work for the

¹⁷ See Schneider-Handschin, *Bild*, p. 94.

¹⁸ See Jones, *"Third Sex"*, p. 271.

company of Otto's father so that the young man could always have him by his side.

Yet after the sudden death of Otto's father their relationship is soon disrupted. Otto's character turns out to be unstable and he becomes a tyrant at home and indulges in the above-mentioned excesses. This development leads Irlen to the following observation: 'Ich erlebe eine Metamorphose, die meine Anschauungen über die Konstanz jener Summe von Eigenschaften, die wir Charakter nennen, gründlich über den Haufen wirft.' (EA, 17) Yet this disappointment not only has severe implications on a personal level, but gains a much wider significance, since Irlen considers Otto to be a representative of his generation. This generation, as Irlen comes to understand, is devoid of ideals and far removed from what he considers reality. Irlen's attempt to shape Otto according to his own ideas could in this context therefore be understood to symbolise how Irlen's generation has lost control over the younger. Otto is gradually revealed to be a figure without shape and substance and as another actor of everyday life. Once Otto is burdened with too much wealth and responsibility Irlen becomes aware how 'die Stützen seiner [Otto's] Persönlichkeit wankten wie Brückenpfeiler unter dem Druck von Treibeis' (EA, 125).

Otto thus plays a double role in Irlen's life as he represents the next generation that is decadent and out of control and he lets him down as a lover. This homoerotic attachment to Otto becomes clear during one of their final scenes when Otto, in a moment of jealousy, tearfully accuses Irlen of having an affair with his sister. Irlen's reply could not be more clear: '...absurd absurd...als wäre ich dem Edelsten meiner Natur untreu geworden und hätte ihn damit in heillose innere Verwirrung gestürzt. Absurd.' (EA, 133) This lover's tale that is at the same time a tale of two conflicting generations comes to an end when Irlen shoots Otto in a duel after the latter has insulted him in public. The duel, which the workers at Otto's factory aptly consider an 'in-die-Knie-Brechen vor den verknöcherten Ehrbegriffen seiner Kaste' (EA, 17), seems like an outdated

and desperate attempt by Irlen to re-establish a form of sense and order among a generation that, in his opinion, has long forgotten the way back 'aus dem Schein in die Wirklichkeit' (EA, 136).

The duel prompts Irlen to go on an expedition to the Congo and reconsider his entire existence. Life as he knew it has become questionable since he feels the significance of his generation to be fading. The description of his experiences in Africa strongly resembles those accounts given in Wassermann's biography of the explorer Henry Morton Stanley, which was published in 1932, only one year after *Etzel Andergast*. Among the many parallels between the two figures, the most striking are that both are depicted as outsiders and that both have homoerotic relationships with native African men. In Irlen's case it is his strong attachment to the figure of the handsome Ngaljema, while Stanley, according to Wassermann, 'periodenweise der Knabenliebe gehuldigt hat.'¹⁹

Yet most importantly, Wassermann arrives in both works at a fierce condemnation of European civilisation and its supposed merits by shedding a light on the agonies that Europe inflicted on the African continent. After a description of the cruelties committed by the Arab ivory traders in Africa, Irlen arrives at even more damning conclusions regarding Europe's involvement:

[D]as christliche Europa hat ihnen nichts vorzuwerfen, da es doch dreihundert Jahre lang mit schwarzem Menschenfleisch geschachtelt und sich bereichert hat, Europa und Amerika, das ihm über den Kopf gewachsen ist, sie sind eines Geistes. [...] Europa ist der Mord, seine Religion, seine Praktiken, seine Zivilisation, jedes für sich, alle zusammen. (EA, 168)

This critique is clearly referring to the slave trade in black Africans and to the notorious exploitation of the Belgian Congo which can be understood as a direct follow-up from *Maurizius* in which Warschauer utters similar views condemning Western civilisation. Through this direct confrontation of his civilised world with the "savage" surroundings of Africa, Irlen has come to see that Europe is sick and that the native Africans are in many

¹⁹ Jakob Wassermann, *Bula Matari: Das Leben Stanleys* (Berlin: Fischer, 1932), pp. 229-30.

ways superior to the so-called civilised Europeans. The views expressed here can be linked to an increasingly widespread critique of colonialism which, for example, can also be found with Wassermann's contemporary Ödön von Horváth who, even though in a more humorous tone, arrives at a similar critique in his novel *Der ewige Spießer* (1930):

“Und glaubens mir, wenn man die armen Neger nicht so schamlos ausbeuten tät, wäre das der Fall, denn dann wären ja alle Kolonialprodukte unerschwinglich teuer, weil dann halt die Plantagenbesitzer auch gleich das Tausendfache verdienen wollten - glaubens mir, mein sehr Verehrter, wir Weißen sind die größten Bestien.”²⁰ (Schmitz in conversation with Kobler)

A few years earlier and close to the time in which this part of *Andergast* is set, Thomas Mann, in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, also arrives at a fierce condemnation of the slave trade as well as the British involvement in India.²¹ Admittedly though Mann's main aim here is to denounce British hypocrisy.

On his return to Europe in 1913 Irlen immediately realises that Europe, with Germany as its 'Herzvolk', is confronted with the dangers of war. Unlike Warschauer, he decides to intervene, which cures him of his last remaining illusion: the importance of the individual in a growing mass society. Irlen describes the initial purpose of his expedition to Africa as follows:

Es handelte sich darum, einmal aus den sämtlichen Hüllen und Schalen herauszuschlüpfen, in die die Existenz innerhalb einer so tyrannisch-gleichmacherischen Lebensform wie die unsere uns einschnürt. Wir haben uns ja verloren. Einen großen Blickwinkel aus großer Weite zu finden, darum ging's. (EA, 169)

The experience makes him reconsider his views on Western civilisation as well as his former world with its ideals. His belief in human agency, however, remains firm, which characterises him, in the narrator's view, as belonging to the "old" Wilhelmine world. Even though he finds himself in

²⁰ Ödön von Horváth, *Der ewige Spießer*, ed. by Traugott Krischke (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 198.

²¹ See Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 366 – 369.

the final stages of the African sleeping sickness, Irlen decides to travel to London and thus sacrifice the remainder of his life in order to prevent the war. Yet he achieves nothing more than a few conversations in gentlemen's clubs. The narrator refers to this as a 'Akt stoischer Selbstverleugnung [...] [der] sich auf ein tiefes, bei einem solchen Kopf beinahe unbegreifliches Mißverstehen dessen gründete, was persönlicher Einsatz und private Initiative am Gang welthistorischer Geschehnisse zu ändern vermögen.' (EA, 209) This experience leads him to the conclusion that his entire life has been futile and that he lives in a society in which the impact of the individual does not matter: 'Aber eine Folge hätte sein müssen, irgendeine, die aller kleinste. Nein, keine.' (EA, 222) Unable to live in a society in which the individual must remain an outsider unless he or she becomes part of a bigger group or movement, Irlen decides to take his own life.

Irlen's world, his ideals and eventually his self are thus shown to be crumbling. This state is further emphasised by his suffering from the African sleeping sickness which affects his nervous system. His situation is described as follows:

Dadurch hörte das Leben auf, ein Gefüge zu sein, es zerstückt sich in eine Summe einzelner Sekunden und Augenblicke als wären sämtliche Buchstaben eines Dramas durcheinander geschüttelt und man hätte an Stelle einer geistbestimmten Form einen Haufen von hunderttausend Alphabeten vor sich. (EA, 101)

Irlen's life is losing its definite shape which marks the end not only of his character but also of his era, since in the two novels 'shapelessness' becomes one of the main characteristics of life in Germany after 1918. Goldmann seems to have captured this mood, when in 1929 he writes that life has become a 'zusammenhangloses Sein'.²²

In order to highlight Irlen's function as a representative of the Wilhelmine era, it seems important to point out some of the parallels between Irlen and Wassermann's friend, the industrialist, politician and writer Walther Rathenau. Elisabeth Albanis has argued that Irlen can in

²² Goldmann, *Wassermann*, p. 7.

many ways be understood as a fictional representation of Rathenau, who also served as the model for Paul Arnheim in Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Irlen can therefore be understood as a 'typical member of the industrial bourgeoisie'. Albanis, however, instead of understanding Irlen as a homosexual character, infers that his status 'as a lonely figure on the periphery of society [...] strongly suggests that he is supposed to be interpreted as having a Jewish identity.'²³ And yet, it seems more intriguing to understand this replacement of the originally Jewish figure with a homosexual one as another parallel that Wassermann draws between the status of Jews and homosexuals as both standing outside society.

Even though a lot of her interpretation is based on this aspect of Jewishness, Albanis nevertheless shows many other parallels between the two figures. Rathenau, like Irlen, travelled to Africa and both characters are described as 'exclusive, well-connected, a patron of the arts, easily infatuated with all things foreign, a man of political ambitions as well as a dangerous thinker.'²⁴ Irlen and Rathenau both suffer from their relationship to Germany as they are trying to save a nation that does not want to be saved by them. Another parallel can be seen in Rathenau's close friendship with Maximilian Harden which ended with Rathenau challenging the latter to a duel. The description of Irlen in the novel strongly resembles that of Rathenau which Wassermann published as an obituary in 1922.²⁵ Moreover, Lindemann-Luiken has rightly observed that for Wassermann the assassination of Rathenau equalled an 'emotionale Katastrophe'²⁶ which makes it even more plausible that he felt the need to write about it. In this light it seems difficult to accept Garrin's claim that the relationship between Irlen and Kerkhoven is 'a fictional account of the author and Hugo von Hofmannsthal.'²⁷

²³ Elisabeth Albanis, 'Jakob Wassermann's Memorial to Walther Rathenau in *Etzel Andergast*', in *German Life and Letters*, 50: 1 (1997), 18 – 35 (p. 19).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁵ See Jakob Wassermann, 'Zu Walther Rathenaus Tod' in *Lebensdienst*, pp. 23 – 30.

²⁶ Lindemann-Luiken, *Auswirkungen*, p. 29.

²⁷ Garrin, *Concept*, p. 65.

6.4 Irlen and Kerkhoven – generations unite

If Irlen can therefore be understood as a representative of the Wilhelmine era, then Kerkhoven has to be understood as a representative of the succeeding generation. With a life taken over by work, Kerkhoven becomes Wassermann's most archetypal representative of modern daily life. Stuck in a wearisome routine and an unhappy marriage, Kerkhoven lives in a state of 'Selbstausslöschung' (EA, 49) which means that in many ways he does not live at all. And it is only through his friendship with Irlen that he becomes aware of his loneliness which Irlen considers 'ein Merkmal der Zeit.' (EA, 45) Irlen thus also comes to see Kerkhoven, who lives a life devoid of love and friendship, as representing a new era and he cannot resist the temptation to try and shape Kerkhoven who inspires 'eine Art Lenker- und Entdeckerfreude' (EA, 58) in him. Convinced of Kerkhoven's talent, Irlen wants him to leave his old self and thus his unhappy existence behind in order to embrace his true vocation, namely to become a 'Seelenarzt'.

With the depiction of Kerkhoven's transformation in the first part of the novel, Wassermann goes far beyond the instability of character as shown in *Maurizius*. As already suggested by the title of his last novel, *Kerkhoven*, Wassermann here seems to advance a theory according to which each individual carries within her or himself various identities or existences that emerge at different points in their lives. The analysis of Kerkhoven's transformation will show that these existences are not to be understood as phases but as far more substantial changes in the life of an individual.

One of the difficulties in writing about the figure of Kerkhoven is that he seems to have become the narrator's primary example to illustrate his belief that 'die Fiktion eines fest umrissenen Charakters' (EA, 107) has become increasingly difficult to maintain. The character of Kerkhoven is

therefore notoriously difficult to grasp. In fact, this corresponds to the initial lines of *Andergast*, where the narrator admits that the characters he was trying to depict were indeed so complex that 'ich schlechterdings daran verzweifle, im einzelnen zu Bild und Figur zu gelangen. Ich muß mich damit abfinden, selbst auf die Gefahr hin, daß mir das Chaos über dem Kopf zusammenschlägt.' (EA, 9) Wassermann, who has repeatedly been criticised for creating dominant, even patronising narrators,²⁸ here presents us with a narrator who is uncertain of his own task. This signifies another radical departure in Wassermann's writing which is reflected throughout the novel.

The most important aspect of Kerkhoven's character in the first part of the novel, however, is his transformation from a mere physician into the 'Seelenarzt' the reader is confronted with throughout the rest of the trilogy. In a conversation with Irlen, Kerkhoven reveals why, so far, he has not been able to achieve any great results in the field of medicine:

"Es fehlt mir das Doppelte, das die großen Leute haben, der innere Dual. [...] wenn ich dich noch in mir hätte, Johann. Als Komplement sozusagen...Unser Herrgott hat mich nicht fertig gemacht. Was mir fehlt, das bist du." (EA, 110)

Kerkhoven's character is therefore incomplete, almost one-dimensional, and Irlen considers it a mere question of will power to change it.

The final scene between Irlen and Kerkhoven is the most significant one because Kerkhoven's transformation is described in very vivid terms with a strong magical element. Moreover, it marks the beginning of Wassermann's most significant approach towards a more synthetic understanding of spirituality. Kerkhoven is described as a person who 'durch eine Art Zauberei veranlaßt worden ist, aus dem Rahmen seiner Persönlichkeit herauszutreten und für eine Weile auch, halb körperlos gleichsam, in diesem Zustand zu verbleiben.' (EA, 220) Irlen has asked Kerkhoven to assist him with his suicide by providing him with a lethal mixture. For a while there are two Kerkhovens in the room, fighting over

²⁸ See Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, p. 179.

the 'right' decision: 'Ja, da sind sie also alle beide da, der Mann der Barmherzigkeit und der Mann der Gerechtigkeit. Sie liegen sich in den Haaren' (EA, 223). Since he finds himself unable to reach a decision, Irlen reminds him of his wish to possess 'das Doppelte', i. e. to make Irlen a part of himself.

Irlen eventually convinces Kerkhoven by telling him about the Parsis' belief in 'Fravashis':

Sie sind ein Teil der menschlichen Seele, doch vom Körper unabhängige Wesen. Es heißt, daß sie in einem der Vernichtung preisgegebenen Körper nicht verweilen können, sie gehen heraus. Sie sind nicht vernichtbar wie das Gewissen und das Bewußtsein [...] sie sind auch nicht auf ein und denselben Leib angewiesen, sie dürfen sich eine andere Behausung suchen, vorausgesetzt, daß sie einem Reinen gehört. Wenn sie das tun, ist es ein freiwilliges Opfer [...] So hat jedes lebende Wesen einen Fravashi, aber es gibt Auserwählte, die haben auch zwei, sogar drei. Merkwürdig, nicht? (EA, 225)

The 'Fravashis' are part of the novel's eclectic use of religious imagery which seems to indicate that any form of religiosity or spirituality is relevant in the search for a better future and will become even more apparent in Kerkhoven's final search for spiritual fulfilment. In this context Mendelssohn has come up with the useful term 'gesamtreligiöse Ebene' to describe Kerkhoven's later state of mind.²⁹ Joeris also observed that towards the end of his life, Wassermann was aiming for a 'übergeschichtliche Sicht der Dinge. [...] Die Werte der Humanität und der Liebe erlangen einen unbedingten Vorrang.'³⁰ The refusal to prioritise one particular religion is formulated around the same time and in much stronger terms in his 'Rede an die studentische Jugend' where Wassermann claims that:

Solcherart entstehen dann Kreuzzüge, Hexen- und Ketzergerichte, Bürgerkrieg und Terror, Chauvinismus und Nationalismus, immer mit der Berufung auf den Tempel, der die Stätte des einzigen wahren Gottes sei, während die Anhänger aller andern Götter erschlagen werden müßten.³¹

²⁹ Mendelssohn, 'Letztes Werk', p. 534.

³⁰ Joeris, *Aspekte*, 25.

³¹ Jakob Wassermann, 'Rede an die Studentische Jugend über das Leben im Geiste: Zum Goethetag 1932', in *Die Neue Rundschau*, XLIII (1932), 529 – 46 (p. 539).

This stands in strong opposition to Joeris's other claim, according to which Wassermann conceded the Jewish religion and people a 'Führungsanspruch' due to their long suffering and their messianism.³²

At this point Kerkhoven finally understands that Irlen is, at least partly, sacrificing himself for the physician's sake, thus becoming the complementary part of Kerkhoven's soul. The idea of sacrifice could be seen as standing at the centre of this transformation. Once implanted into Kerkhoven's system, it becomes the guiding principle of his life, in particular towards the end of *Kerkhoven*. In the five weeks between Irlen's death and the outbreak of World War One, Kerkhoven undergoes a development 'als erlösche in gewissen Abständen die Wirklichkeit in ihm' (EA, 226). Yet the narrator claims that the phenomenon cannot be explained in mere scientific terms, as the human soul is more than just a few chemical reactions. Instead, it is said that Kerkhoven embarks on a journey from which he returns a different man with almost supernatural powers. Wassermann is thus experimenting with the idea of allowing his otherwise realistic characters to experience supernatural influences as well as allowing them to have more than one existence. Moreover, in its strange spirituality this scene allows for another connection to Hesse's work as it is also reminiscent of the ending of *Demian*, where the dead Demian is said to have become a part of Emil Sinclair:

Aber wenn ich [Sinclair] manchmal den Schlüssel finde und ganz in mich selbst hinuntersteige, da wo im dunkeln Spiegel die Schicksalsbilder schlummern, dann brauche ich mich nur über den schwarzen Spiegel zu neigen und sehe mein eigenes Bild, das nun ganz Ihm [Demian] gleicht, Ihm, meinem Freund und Führer.³³

Following his final encounter with Irlen, Kerkhoven is thus endowed with a mysterious power over other people's souls that will soon turn him into one of the most sought-after doctors in Berlin. In his function as a 'Seelenarzt', Kerkhoven will attempt to counterbalance the effect that life in the city of Berlin has on many people whilst at the same time he is being devoured by the endless demands of the city's masses. Symbolically

³² See Joeris, *Aspekte*, p. 33.

³³ Hesse, 'Demian', p. 365.

speaking, the dying “old” age has thus left Kerkhoven with the task of shaping the new era after the collapse, which he will attempt, unsuccessfully, in his relationship with Etzel Andergast.

6.5 Etzel and Kerkhoven – the impossible son

The beginning of the second part of the novel, entitled ‘Etzel Andergast – Die Mit-Welt’, is set fourteen years later and thus in the later stages of the Weimar Republic. Tellingly, Kerkhoven has also moved to Berlin and thus to the centre of this new era. From this point onwards, the trilogy as a whole, yet especially the figure of Kerkhoven, can be understood as an attempt to come to terms with a world that ceased to make sense a long time ago. This becomes apparent in Kerkhoven’s relationship with Etzel Andergast but also in his function as a physician; even though he does not recount events in the first person, Kerkhoven becomes in many ways the focalizer of the novel. It is through the eyes of Kerkhoven that Wassermann draws his most intriguing picture of life in Germany towards the end of the Weimar Republic. However, in his review, Alfred Döblin makes the important remark that

es ist nicht seine [Wassermann’s] Art, über die Feststellung hinaus zu Entscheidungen und Entschlüssen vorzustossen, er liebt es Spannungen zu belassen, zu verschleiern und zu besänftigen. [...]Ist dies nun aber eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Zeit? Der „Politische“ von heute wird sagen: nein. Aber unter Zeit und Zeit ist Verschiedenes zu verstehen.³⁴

It would therefore indeed be a futile pursuit to look for solutions to specific political or social problems in these two novels, rather they ought to be understood as Wassermann’s version of the later stages of the Weimar Republic.

According to the narrator, the years between 1914 and 1928 have changed ‘das Bild der Menschheit’ (EA, 237) and the body of the individual, in this case Kerkhoven’s, would have changed accordingly. Hence, the

³⁴ Alfred Döblin, ‘Jakob Wassermanns letztes Buch’, *Die Sammlung*, 10 (1933/34), 517 – 23 (pp. 518-19).

narrator makes it clear that we are no longer dealing with the same person, after all, the 'I' can no longer be considered a stable entity:

Nur die Wand des Körpers macht, daß das Fließende nicht zerfließt, und auch sie ist nicht viel fester als der Schatten, den sie wirft, Membran, das sich hart wehren muß gegen den Andrang des Fließenden. Eigentlich ist es allein die Idee von Gesicht und Form, die dem Vergehen trotzt, deswegen bist du dir in jedem Spiegel einen Augenblick lang grausig unbekannt, und dein geheimnisvoller Schreck darüber ist nichts anderes als die jäh aufblitzende Erkenntnis der Illusion, der du dich über dein Ichsein unaufhörlich hingibst. (EA, 237)

This is probably one of Wassermann's most drastic statements to date, going far beyond his previously depicted instability of character. Wassermann thus seems to say not only that the body is in constant change but also that the self has become more unstable since 1914. The state of the self could therefore be understood as a mirror of the severe changes in society brought about by the Great War and thus as an illustration of Wassermann's theory concerning the 'Gestalt'.

This refutation of the concept of 'I', underlined even more by his directly addressing his reader, seems to correspond to views expressed by Ernst Mach in *Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis des Physischen zum Psychischen* (1886). Mach famously proclaimed 'Das Ich ist unrettbar'³⁵ and

maintained that consciousness consisted of sensations, and that the self which received these sensations was simply a complex of feelings, moods and memories, attached to a body. By changing only gradually, this complex gives the illusion of permanence; but in fact there is no permanent, substantial self underlying the flux of sensations.³⁶

These ideas were then developed further by Hermann Bahr who uses the notion that reality is in constant flux.³⁷ Wassermann can therefore be seen as responding to this important modern discourse. Franz Werfel's *Blasphemie eines Irren* (1914) serves as another example from literature in which a similar view is expressed: 'Ich zu sagen ist immer ein Versprechen,

³⁵ Ernst Mach, *Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis des Physischen zum Psychischen*, 2nd edn (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1900), p. 17.

³⁶ Robertson, 'Modernism', p. 163.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 163.

das man nicht halten kann.³⁸ The main characters in the trilogy are therefore constantly driven by a sense of having lost themselves and are, as a consequence, unable to establish who they really are. In this situation Kerkhoven comes to play a double role, since, as a physician, he diagnoses the maladies of the time he is living in, whilst at the same time he cannot help being affected by them.

In this context it is also important to consider the symbolic value of the figure of the physician who in modern fiction has in many ways replaced the figure of the priest.³⁹ Wassermann seems to emphasise this link through his choice of the name 'Kerkhoven' because in Dutch 'Kerk' means church. The physician as a witness of modern life is therefore not an arbitrary choice, throughout the novel Kerkhoven will therefore always fulfil several functions: observer, physician and 'Seelsorger'.

When Etzel and Kerkhoven finally meet in chapter nine of the novel, they are immediately drawn towards each other, even though with his reappearance Etzel has turned into an even more problematic character. This time the relationship between the younger man and the older mentor figure is free from the homoerotic tendencies that dominated the relationship between Etzel and Warschauer. At the centre of the relationship between Etzel and Kerkhoven stands the wish to overcome their individual forms of isolation: Kerkhoven, as a mirror image of his time, is a modern workaholic and thus finds himself isolated from his private self, while Etzel, as another mirror image of the same time, suffers from a form of deliberate emotional isolation brought about by the traumatic events of his youth: 'Er konnte keinen brauchen, der den eisernen Tresor aufsprengte, um die unter Verschuß gesetzte Seele zu beäugen.' (EA, 255) Etzel is therefore characterised as a representative of a time in which, as

³⁸ Franz Werfel, 'Blasphemie eines Irren' in *Die Schwarze Messe – Erzählungen*, ed. by Knut Beck (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1989), pp. 99 – 107 (p. 101).

³⁹ For other examples see Franz Kafka's *Ein Landarzt* (1917), Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* (1884) and Arthur Schnitzler's *Paracelsus* (1898).

Helmut Lethen puts it, 'Entfremdungs-Kälte der „Gesellschaft“ als Lebenselixier denkbar wird.'⁴⁰

With Kerkhoven as a member of his father's generation, it is therefore even more surprising that he immediately inspires the following thoughts and feelings in Etzel:

Sich ihm [Kerkhoven] anzuvertrauen war ein Gedanke, der nicht ohne weiteres von der Hand zu weisen war [...] Nicht ausgeschlossen, daß er, mit diesen Hexenmeister-Augen, zu sehen imstande war, was keiner sah, wenigstens keiner von denen, die, jenseits der Wendekreise, in der verderblichen Zone des Erfolgs und der Geschäfte wohnten: die Fetten, die Beruhigten, die Aktionäre, die Gesetzeshüter. (EA, 278)

For Etzel, Kerkhoven thus becomes an alternative father figure, embodying the possibility of a reconciliation with the generation of his own father Wolf von Andergast with whom he had lived in a state of constant confrontation. This is also the first indicator of the view, propounded throughout the novel, that underneath the rebellion of the younger generation lies the unfulfillable longing for order and reconciliation. Here, Hofmannsthal's influence, which Wassermann acknowledges in his 'Rede an die studentische Jugend', becomes palpable. In 'Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation' Hofmannsthal writes: 'Denn nicht Freiheit ist es, was sie [youth] zu suchen aus sind, sondern Bindung.'⁴¹ At the same time, Etzel assumes the role of a son for Kerkhoven in a sense that the latter hopes that by curing Etzel he will be able to have a positive impact on this lost generation of German youths:

In den Raum der bedrohten Vitalität und des zynischen Sterbens, in dem Kerkhoven bisweilen zumute war, als sei alle Jugend von einem Wundmal gezeichnet und wehre sich immer weniger gegen den Tod und immer mehr gegen das Leben, das heißt gegen das Leben-Sollen, gegen das Sein als solches (vielleicht kennt die Geschichte kein schwereres Verhängnis, sagte er sich), trat nun mit einem Mal dieser Etzel Andergast. (EA, 283)

The story of Etzel and Kerkhoven can thus be understood as the story of two conflicting generations whose failure to be reunited ends in a catastrophe. It is at the same time an investigation into the limits of

⁴⁰ Lethen, *Verhaltenslehren*, p. 9.

⁴¹ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation', in *Die Berührung der Sphären* (Berlin: Fischer, 1931), pp. 422 – 43 (p. 438).

paternal authority as well as an attempt at understanding the paradox surrounding the figure of the son, namely the desire and the inability to be led.

Etzel, whom the narrator refers to as a child of his time, thus stands at the centre of Kerkhoven's endeavours to come to terms with the fate of Germany's youth. In the course of his analysis of Etzel's character, Kerkhoven may not always draw a favourable picture of him but he is never without sympathy. This means that even though Wassermann's depiction of Germany's youth can at times be drastic it is never condemning and therefore reflects his own engagement with that youth. On Wassermann's importance amongst the younger generation Leydecker remarks: 'Wassermann's global appeal seems to have been particularly strong to young people, with the effect he had on the younger generation of the 1920s being likened to Hermann Hesse's significance for the hippy generation of the 1960s.'⁴²

Towards the end of his life, as mentioned in his 'Rede an die Studentische Jugend', Wassermann received and replied to numerous letters from distressed young people seeking advice.⁴³ He was thus highly aware of their severe crisis: 'In Deutschland allein gibt es momentan ungefähr sechs Millionen junge Menschen ohne jede tragfähige Lebensgrundlage. [...] ich spreche von Hoffnungslosen [...] Das Dasein bietet ihnen überhaupt keinen Anreiz mehr.'⁴⁴ Yet despite this awareness of their plight, Wassermann refuses to lend them his unbridled sympathies. Instead he seeks to explore the tensions between the two generations at conflict without necessarily taking sides:

Nicht jeder Vierzigjährige ist schon darum ein Verbrecher und Idiot, weil er zwanzig Jahre älter ist als du, nicht jeder Fünfzig- und Sechzigjährige ein Rückschrittler und Feind, nicht jeder Vater ein Narr und jeder Sohn ein Held und Märtyrer.⁴⁵

⁴² Leydecker, 'Case', p. 85.

⁴³ See Wassermann, 'Rede an die Studentische Jugend', p. 534.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 530.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 544.

This approach is also reflected in *Andergast*. In the course of the trilogy, Wassermann therefore moves from a rather classical father-son conflict with the father as a predominantly negative figure in *Maurizius* to a more complex and searching portrayal of it in *Andergast*. This strong interest shown in the fate of the younger generation as embodied in the character of Etzel stands in strong opposition to Mendelssohn's claim that *Andergast* is really only concerned with Kerkhoven's personal development.⁴⁶

Apart from another way of looking at the father-son dynamic, the figure of Etzel also seems to embody a critique of the 'neusachliche' concept of character, especially since the novel was written at a time when writers and intellectuals had largely begun to reject 'Neue Sachlichkeit'. Even though, as David Midgley has shown, 'Neue Sachlichkeit' is a term that is notoriously difficult to use,⁴⁷ it seems nevertheless rewarding to point out some of the parallels between the figure of Etzel and the figure of the 'kalte persona' as presented by Lethen. Lethen argues that between 1910 and 1930 avant-garde movements were fascinated by the 'Gestalt mit der einfachen Kontur'⁴⁸ and thus with the 'Gestalt eines morbiden Subjekts ohne seelische Tiefengliederung, dessen Bewegungsraum weder durch Interventionen der Moral noch durch die Stimme des Gewissens eingeschränkt wird.'⁴⁹ In strong opposition to Expressionism this 'kalte persona' refrains from any form of radical expression, makes no confessions and rejects the idea of authenticity. Rather, this 'Kult der Sachlichkeit' finds itself in favour of the idea of acting as the basis for a character: '[...] die Stimme des Schauspielers tönt durch die vors Gesicht gehaltene Scheibe, das Ich ist selbstmächtig erst im Bewußtsein dessen, was nach außen tritt.'⁵⁰ This concept of character denies the existence of a significant inner life and thus the need for psychological insights which stands in strong opposition to Wassermann's psychological approach.

⁴⁶ See Mendelssohn, 'Letztes Werk', pp. 531 – 532.

⁴⁷ See David Midgley, *Writing Weimar: Critical Realism in German Literature 1918 - 1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 14 – 59.

⁴⁸ Lethen, *Verhaltenslehren*, p. 53.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

Tellingly, Kerkhoven's initial impression of Etzel strongly resembles the depiction of Etzel as an actor of everyday life in *Maurizius*:

Allmählich kam er zur Vorstellung eines Menschen mit zwei oder drei Existenzen, der in jeder Umgebung sogleich deren Farbe annimmt, sich wie alle andern äußert und es in der Kunst der Anähnlichung bis zur Vollendung gebracht hat, ohne den Selbstwillen zu verlieren und auf Entschlußfreiheit zu verzichten.' (EA, 289)

Etzel thus continues to live the life he first led during his time in Berlin as a teenager. He spends time in all sorts of social circles thanks to his various identities without, however, revealing anything about himself and thus shows himself to be following in Warschauer's footsteps. And it is Kerkhoven's fatal wish to discover the soul behind this facade. Only when it is too late are they both compelled to realise that there is no such thing. Etzel's stubborn refusal to talk about his inner self will eventually be explained by the lack of it. This can be read as a critique of the kind of 'neusachliche' literature showing a subject that is 'bis zu dem Punkt gepanzert, wo es nur noch Leere birgt.'⁵¹

In the course of a long conversation with Kerkhoven, Etzel's biography is revealed to be a typical one for a member of his generation. And yet, Etzel's uncommonly high level of self-awareness as well as self-analysis prevents his story from turning into a somewhat naive or innocent account of the life of a young man. He begins the story of his life after the *Maurizius* case by talking about the broken relationship with his parents. His reasons for failing to build up a relationship with his mother are most revealing:

Die Mutter war ihm zu sehr Fleisch damals. Sie roch nach Fleisch und Blut. Sie hatte Haare in den Achselhöhlen. Es war aus seinem Hirn nicht wegzudenken, daß sie mit ihm geschlafen hatte, mit ihm, dem Vater, Trismegistos, vor achtzehn Jahren, vielleicht an einem genau zu bestimmenden Tag. (EA, 320)

Apart from the obvious oedipal connotations, which have been pointed out by Regina Schäfer⁵², this quotation is particularly interesting as a means of characterising Etzel's perception. He is unable to see anything above and beyond the actual object in front of him. Consequently his mother is not

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 42.

⁵² See Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, pp. 79 – 124.

idealised in any way, she is nothing but a human being made of flesh who slept with his father in order to conceive him. Since Etzel's perception is limited to an unfeeling realism he is unable to see anything else in her and he refers to himself as a 'fühlloses Mißgebilde' (EA, 320). This means that Etzel is able to see and analyse the world in great detail but he is unable to feel it. In Wassermann's view therefore the dilemma of Etzel and his generation seems to be linked to an over-analytical and unfeeling perception. This description of Etzel could be read as a further attack on a certain outlook associated with 'Neue Sachlichkeit', whose

unifying feature, in the German context, is not so much a new style as a way of looking at things which [...] vehemently repudiates the theoretical, intellectual, holistic pretensions of Expressionism.⁵³

It is therefore this 'new perception of the human environment'⁵⁴ that Wassermann seems to be criticising with the figure of Etzel.

As before with Christian Wahnschaffe, in *Andergast* Wassermann therefore sends another protagonist, who breaks with his upper-class family and whose perception of the world is problematic, off to Berlin. For a while Etzel also lives among the poor and deprived in Berlin. On the comparison between those two protagonists Schäfer writes: 'Der Preis für den Schritt von symbolischer Überhöhung zur Authentizität ist das folgerichtige Scheitern einer nur mehr menschlichen Mission.'⁵⁵ The experience therefore only adds to Etzel's general state of disillusionment since it is no longer clear where victims and guilt are to be found in this society:

Er hat sich gewissenhaft bemüht, sie zu ergründen, all diese Existenz außerhalb des Gesetzes und am Rande der bürgerlichen Welt. Er hat keine klare Scheidung gefunden. Wo endet Verhängnis, Mißwirtschaft, Schwäche des Systems, und wo beginnt die Verantwortlichkeit derer, die die Opfer sind? [...] Überall Schuld; bedenkt man's genau, wird die Schuld Allschuld, ist also nicht mehr zu fassen und zerstiebt. [...] Hier ist nichts zu holen für dich [...] es ist ein abfaulendes Stück der Welt, da vergeudest du nur die Zeit (EA, 340)

⁵³ Midgley, *Weimar*, p. 26.

⁵⁴ *Idib.*, p. 30.

⁵⁵ Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 310.

This quotation signifies another important development in Wassermann's writing and thought: not only is his protagonist without hope and illusions, but the world around him is seemingly moving towards a state of chaos in which victims can no longer be told apart from perpetrators. Even with Warschauer this division was still intact and enabled him to position himself outside society. For Etzel such a positioning is no longer possible as he struggles to form an opinion about the world around him, let alone find a place in it. As a consequence, he finds it impossible to dedicate himself to a regular job or to pursue his education: 'ein Ganzes wird nicht verlangt, ein Ganzes kann nicht geleistet werden.' (EA, 334)

In this state of self-loss and chaos, in a world where paternal authority has seemingly broken down, Etzel will try out two different solutions at the heart of which stands the same desire. He becomes entangled with various youth movements and he devotes himself to his master Kerkhoven. Both times his motivation is the same:

Wie sollte er, Etzel Andergast, führen, der selber so dringend der Führung bedarf, der geradezu *der* Mensch ist, der ohne Führer verloren ist? Träumt er sich doch zuzeiten einen imaginären Wächter oder Lenker an seine Seite, einen herrlich-überlegenen und unvergleichlich weisen, wie ihm zu Sinn ist. Als müsse er sich ohne den glatt hinlegen und seine Adern in den Erdboden verströmen lassen, als Zeichen nur, als Opfer. Wie in so vielen ist auch in ihm die verzehrende Sehnsucht nach Führerschaft (EA, 348)

Or, as Lethen puts it: 'Das desorientierte Subjekt bedurfte der "äußeren Stimme", die sagte, wo es langging.'⁵⁶ Given the quotation above it is obviously tempting to draw a connection to the events that immediately followed the time the novel is set in, namely the Third Reich and the role that youth movements played in it. However, it seems more rewarding to analyse Etzel's relationship with his 'Meister' and show how he is indeed beyond any 'Führerschaft' that he so strongly desires. Etzel's attempt to destroy his 'Meister' and thus his 'Führer' contradicts Miller's view that young people like Etzel made possible the rise of fascism in Germany.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Lethen, *Verhaltenslehren*, p. 64.

⁵⁷ See Miller, *Maurizius*, p. 11.

6.6 Etzel and Lorriner – the plight of the leader

At this point it is necessary to briefly discuss Etzel's involvement with these youth movements by looking at his relationship with the young political leader Jürgen Lorriner. Both of them can be seen as typical representatives of the Weimar youth, or as Peukert has described it, the 'überflüssige Generation' who were particularly prone to political radicalisation.⁵⁸

At the centre of the portrayal of the relationship between Etzel and Lorriner stands the complex power structure that evolves between the admirer and the admired as well as Wassermann's general rejection of utopian 'Gemeinschaftsideale' that do not take human nature into account. The story of their relationship seems like an illustration of Wassermann's insight 'daß man mit Menschen kein Paradies errichten kann.'⁵⁹ With the depiction of Etzel's increasing and potentially unsatisfiable demands and Lorriner's despair at being unable to meet them, Wassermann offers a sympathetic insight into the trials and tribulations of the young demagogue. Tellingly, the story of Lorriner ends with his final breakdown into insanity.

An entire chapter is dedicated to Lorriner's story and the narrator seems very conscious of the ways in which he wants to tell it. He refuses to offer an account of Lorriner's gradual development but rather wants to show how the two destinies of Lorriner and Etzel are linked:

Ich müßte mich sonst in einem nur seelisch und geistig vorhandenen Raum ohne alle anschaulichen Elemente mit den Bedingtheiten und schwankenden Ergebnisse [sic] psychologischer Untersuchung begnügen. Entwicklung, was ist das überhaupt; erschöpfte Form, jeder Aufriß ist wesentlicher, nichts wird Gleichnis in ihr, eine scheinbare Breite der Welt soll das Bild der Welt ersetzen, und an Stelle der lebendigen Figur, die rund ist und etwas bedeutet, tritt das lähmende Nacheinander in der Zeit. Das hört sich an wie eine Ästhetik, ist aber nur die einfache Erfahrung von der geschehenen Veränderung unserer aufnehmenden Sinne. (EA, 360)

⁵⁸ See Peukert, *Weimar*, p. 30 and p. 100.

⁵⁹ Wassermann, 'Rede an die studentische Jugend', p. 539.

The narrator thus consciously tries to adapt to the altered perception of his readers by refraining from using psychological insights into his characters or narrating events chronologically. The refusal to talk about a character's development can be linked back to the refusal to believe in human character as one clear and identifiable entity. The narrator here seems to suggest that since characters are unstable and constantly changing, with people having several existences, it would be a futile pursuit to trace their developments. Instead, one could gain more insights into a character and the world around him or her by showing some of their significant moments or 'Bilder'.

After having been disappointed by his father as well as another important father figure, Lorriner begins to seek power over other people as a compensation for the love he never received at home. Lorriner serves as another illustration for Wassermann's above-mentioned theory that the young people's revolt is an expression of their natural longing for a 'Lebensmitte' (EA, 371). Lorriner participates in various revolutions at home and abroad. His good looks, his coldness and his fanaticism seem to make him the ideal demagogue and he soon becomes a leader of the young masses. Any idealist pretensions are immediately defeated by the fact that to him it does not matter much whether he is planning a revolt in the name of communism or fascism since his main source of motivation is his personal hatred of the world. The narrator makes it clear that Lorriner is not an original thinker or a modern saint but merely the product of the general despair around him.

When Lorriner meets Etzel, he at first enjoys the feeling of being needed by him but soon feels overwhelmed:

Das Merkwürdige ist nur, daß sich der Gefundene dann als der Gesuchte fühlt und mit all seinen Kräften bestrebt ist, das ideale Bild zu sein und den Rahmen auszufüllen, der gewöhnlich zu groß für ihn ist; er reckt und streckt sich, und manchmal wächst er in der Tat über sich hinaus, bis er unter der seelischen Anstrengung zusammenbricht. In der Gläubigkeit der Jünger liegt eine gewaltige Tyrannei. (EA, 370)

Wassermann is therefore not interested in portraying the radical leader as a 'seducer' but, on the contrary, he intends to show how he has to serve as the foil for his followers' personal projections. This is exemplified in his relationship with Etzel, who for a long time refuses to give Lorriner up even though he knows that the latter has betrayed his cause and is altogether a rather deplorable human being. Etzel makes a mistake that is typical of young people: 'daß sie ihr Wunschbild so leidenschaftlich in sich verwirklichen, daß sie die äußere Wirklichkeit fast nicht mehr sehen.' (EA, 380) It gets even worse when Etzel finally has to realize that Lorriner is not who he wanted him to be and he seeks to punish him for it.

At this point his 'love' for Lorriner becomes comparable to his later obsession with Kerkhoven's wife Marie since he makes both of them suffer for not conforming to the image he had of them. And Etzel's expectations are high as he is looking for someone to be like the three men in the fiery furnace (Daniel, 1-3) who sang hymns while they were being burnt to death. Etzel is thus revealed to be every bit as extreme as his leader. When Etzel finds out that Lorriner is involved in the loss of important documents he pursues him with a relentlessness, comparable to that of his father, until Lorriner finally admits it.

When Lorriner unsuccessfully tries to start another revolt in Berlin it seems that it is Etzel's personal disappointment that provokes Lorriner into assaulting him.

"Also den feurigen Ofen, das ist ein unbrauchbares Möbel, den wollen wir jetzt mal in die Rumpelkammer stellen, Lorriner. [...] Sehe ein, daß es schlauer ist, in der Direktionskanzlei zu hocken und mit dem Federhalter zu kämpfen als selber auf die Barrikaden zu steigen. Eklige Sache. Kann dir das nachfühlen. Blumen sollen die anderen." (EA, 402)

After these words Lorriner almost kills Etzel with a knuckleduster, and when this last desperate attempt to regain control fails and Etzel once again confronts him with his inauthenticity as a leader, he breaks down into insanity. Etzel has thus at least contributed to the destruction of yet another father figure whose eventual breakdown strongly resembles that of his own father. The youth movements are thus shown to be rebelling

against paternal authority of any kind, even against their own leaders. Moreover, the depiction of this form of violence corresponds to Peukert's findings according to which for some young people it served as a means to compensate for their 'Ohnmachtserfahrungen'.⁶⁰

It is therefore Etzel's disappointment with these various youth movements around him, political as well as non-political ones, and in particular his relationship with Lorriner that drives him into the arms of Kerkhoven and prompts him even to start living with the 'Seelenarzt', the only person Etzel can still believe in:

Es gibt nicht soviel verehrensvalue Leute. Kerkhoven, ja der. Aber Kerkhoven war der Meister, die große Ausnahme, an ihm konnte überhaupt nichts und niemand gemessen werden. Er konnte aber nicht der einzige sein [...] es mußten doch ein paar übrigbleiben, an die man sich außerdem halten konnte, die nicht versagten, sich nicht untreu wurden, deren Sein und Tun sich nicht als Humbug herausstellte, wenn man es unter die Lupe nahm. (EA, 429)

Wassermann thus portrays a conscious return to the father figure in a world where any attempts at creating an urban family made up of other young people have failed.

6.7 Etzel and Kerkhoven – the catastrophe

In the course of their relationship Kerkhoven will be shown to be unable to act according to his main assumption about the younger generation:

Kerkhoven glaubte erkannt zu haben, daß das, was die Psychologen und Zeitkritiker Krankheit der Jugend nannten, verschlagene Sehnsucht nach Gehorsam und Befehl war [...] In ihrem Innern haßten und fürchteten sie eine Freiheit, die sie zu einer erbarmungslosen Einsamkeit verurteilte. (EA, 465-66)

His experiment to provide Etzel with regular employment as his assistant and to offer him a home fails when Etzel embarks on an affair with Marie and afterwards disappears. It remains unclear why Etzel would in the long run refuse this offer and in addition betray his master. The main reason

⁶⁰ See Peukert, *Weimar*, p. 100.

seems to be that despite his great concern for Etzel, Kerkhoven never ceases to see some kind of guinea-pig in him:

Wenn er dieses außergewöhnliche Individuum quasi sicherstellte; es [...] dem blinden Zugriff des Schicksals entzog [...] hatte er dann nicht Ersprießlicheres geleistet als wenn er Hunderten und Hunderten von bereits Gebrochenen und zu Boden Getretenen half (EA, 462)

The fact that even the narrator refuses to comment on this line of thought indicates his disapproval.

Kerkhoven, who lives estranged from his own two sons – he often does not see them for many weeks – fails, like Etzel's own father, to establish an emotional bond with him. There are even parallels in the names Etzel has chosen for them: Trismegistos as well as Meister both seem to describe a superior being to which Etzel owes respect but not necessarily love. Even though Kerkhoven nevertheless could be described as a father figure to Etzel, it would still be mistaken to see Etzel as occupying the place of a son in Kerkhoven's life since Kerkhoven's attachment to Etzel was always driven by a clear purpose. Etzel was to become his means to reform the younger generation since he was going to turn Etzel into the heir of his own thoughts, a 'Spiegel [...] für das eigene Ich' (EA, 462). And it is this lack of emotional commitment on Kerkhoven's side that prevents the reconciliation between the two generations. The father is therefore shown to be as cold as the son. Moreover, this coldness also stands at the centre of Etzel's affair with Marie as they give to each other what they could not have from Kerkhoven. Etzel even admits in a conversation with Marie: "manchmal glaub' ich fast, ich hab' dich ihm nur weggenommen, um herauszubringen, ob er ein Herz hat wie andere Menschen" (EA, 582).

Etzel's affair with Marie helps to illustrate how Kerkhoven has been isolated by the demands of his profession. In this context Etzel functions as a peculiar mirror image since he begins to fulfil his master's marital duties based on what seems like an order from Kerkhoven himself. Tellingly, it is the fact that Etzel always has time for Marie that initially makes him

attractive in her eyes. Kerkhoven's relationship with time, on the contrary, is rather different:

Dann hat ihn allmählich die Zeit verschluckt, denselben Mann, aufgefressen Glied für Glied hat ihn die Zeit, deren Herr und Gebieter er war, fort ist er, zum Schatten ist er geworden. (EA, 507)

Kerkhoven, now the slave of his watch, had previously also wooed Marie with the free gift of his time whereas now he can only dedicate ten minutes of his day to her. In order to find relief from his guilty conscience, he more or less orders Etzel to look after Marie in order for her to be 'betreut' (EA, 510). From this point onwards, Etzel becomes Kerkhoven's fulltime replacement as he now engages in a sexual relationship with the latter's wife. This rather uncanny exchange of character is completed when Etzel immediately takes to Marie's children and quickly becomes a father figure to them. At first he feels no remorse because, in his understanding, Kerkhoven has long thought of this option and hovers above them as the 'gewährende Gottheit' (EA, 539).

At first glance, the outcome of Etzel's final attempt to destroy yet another father figure, his beloved master, looks very similar to the last scene between Etzel and his father in *Maurizius*: Kerkhoven breaks down in tears and Etzel simply disappears. And yet this time it is the father figure who survives and the son who in many ways wipes himself out. Moreover, this time his attack is also aimed at the mother figure. At the beginning of the penultimate chapter the narrator prepares the reader for the 'new' Etzel s/he will be confronted with:

Es ist ein anderer Etzel, der uns entgegentritt, nicht mehr der Freundesfreund, nicht mehr der erglühte Jünger, nicht mehr der Gerechtigkeitssucher,[...] ein anderes Bild ist es, ein anderer Mensch, und der Weg, den er geht, ist so finster, wie ein Menschenweg nur sein kann.' (EA, 543)

In addition the narrator suggests 'der Sturz der Engel' (EA, 542) as an alternative title for the chapter which seems to imply that with Etzel all his hopes attached to that new generation have come to an end. And yet, Etzel and Kerkhoven are both granted a moment of vital insight into their lives.

They are both made to experience a clash of realities which means that they both have to realise that their reality is at odds with the reality they suddenly notice around them. The theme of conflicting realities is continued into the final novel with the depiction of the relationship of Ganna and Alexander Herzog.

Etzel's moment of insight makes him understand that his second existence has been dominated by his own guilt since he underwent a metamorphosis: the former seeker of justice has been perverted in a world where guilt seems inevitable:

auf einmal verwandelt sich das Unrecht, das vor seinen Augen geschieht und das aus der Welt zu schaffen er sich geboren wähnte, in Unrecht, das er selbst begeht [...] er begreift die Unabwendbarkeit der Schuld. (EA, 601)

Given Etzel's previous identity this is a major insight and this process is intensified even further when he comes to understand the nature of his own guilt. Like his father he has refused to acknowledge any reality but his own and like him he has almost destroyed the woman he loved. When Marie finally agrees to marry Etzel in a moment of great despair he suddenly comes to see his own guilt. Tellingly, only a few moments before he disappears forever from Marie's life, Etzel's face, like that of his father, seems to disappear and she screams: "'Was ist? Ich seh dein Gesicht nicht!'" (EA, 587) The voice Etzel hears inside could have been heard by his father, too, who was equally driven by the desire to control others:

Das Licht einer Blendlaterne blitzt auf und erleuchtet die Tiefen. Der ungeheure Schatten steht da und spricht: Eine Menschenseele so weit treiben heißt sich in die Verdammnis stürzen, Etzel Andergast. (EA, 587)

The 'Blendlaterne' is significant here because in *Maurizius* it used to be the symbol of the young Etzel's endeavours to find justice by bringing light into the dark. At the same time it seems to refer to the hypocrisy of an avant-garde that, according to Lethen, identifies with the fallen angel Lucifer (in the novel Etzel is frequently referred to as a devil) yet 'der wie ein Blitz aus dem Himmel gefallene Engel erhebt auch als Fürst der

Finsternis immer noch den Anspruch, „Lichtbringer“ zu sein.⁶¹ Moreover, this strong resemblance to his own father as well as his attempt to replace Kerkhoven seems to correspond to the view that the concept of ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ signified in many ways a return of the father. Lethen informs us that many critics consider the “Kult der Sachlichkeit” und “Kälte” eine Kompensation der verlorenen Vaterinstanz und in den Verhaltenslehren der Diskretion die Arbeitsteilung der patriarchalischen Gesellschaft.⁶² Wassermann therefore seems to suggest that this concept of ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ had to fail as a revolution because it is just another mirror image of and therefore not radically different from the world of the father.

Yet Etzel’s guilt does not end there since he feels equally responsible for the ensuing breakdown of his master. Wassermann makes Etzel witness the collapse of another ‘father’ but this time with a very different outcome. After a long phase of denial, Kerkhoven finally has to accept that his reality has also been at odds with the reality around him and that Etzel and Marie have indeed betrayed him: ‘Endlich weiß Kerkhoven. Endlich sieht er. [...] daß es [Marie’s affair with Etzel] eine geile und verräterische Wirklichkeit war, indes er blind vertrauensvoll daneben gelebt hat.’ (EA, 599) Once again Etzel stands there and watches the breakdown of a mighty father figure: ‘Er muß zusehen, wie der Meister hinsinkt. Zusehen, wie er den Kopf auf einen Stuhl legt und heult. Der Meister heult.’ (EA, 599) But this time, his habitual coldness fails him and Etzel is unable to re-experience the moment of triumph at his own father’s downfall: ‘Kalt überläuft es den Etzel Andergast. So kalt wie er gewesen ist, so kalt überläuft es ihn.’ (EA, p. 599) Etzel is thus made to experience the coldness that he has hitherto shown to others in order to demonstrate how the ideal of a cold conduct cannot or should not be lived.

After a short period of aimless wandering Etzel returns to the house of his mother in whose company he had also spent the transitional phase

⁶¹ Lethen, *Verhaltenslehren*, p. 122.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

between his first and his second existences. As an apparent result of his experiences with Kerkhoven and Marie, Etzel seems to be reunited with his mother and the two live in perfect harmony. Moreover, Garrin's claim that the novel ends 'on a negative note'⁶³ seems misleading as it is clearly optimistic about Etzel's future: 'Das Haus ist ein Grab im Schnee. Mit einer abgelebten Wirklichkeit ist er [Etzel] in das Grab hineingestorben, mit einer neuen wird er aus ihm auferstehen.' (EA, 608) So far so good. These final words of the novel not only seem to suggest a kind of happy ending but also – since he will be resurrected – hint at Etzel's positive development in the near future. Most importantly, however, it seems that the younger generation, even though damaged in the process, has triumphed over the father. After all, the reader is at this point provided with no further information regarding Kerkhoven's destiny. It is only at the beginning of *Kerkhoven* that we find out that Etzel has disappeared to Moscow and that Kerkhoven has recovered from his breakdown. The figure representing the younger generation has therefore been more or less annihilated whilst the father figure is about to enter his third existence. In his final novel Wassermann thus abandons his initial attempt of presenting the reader with a reformed representative of the younger generation and instead focuses predominantly on the destiny of the older and thus his own generation. Döblin's interpretation of this step is of great interest:

Wassermann lässt es sich nicht nehmen, sich mit etwas auseinander zu setzen, womit er täglich umgeht, nämlich: mit sich. Keine schlechte Aufgabe, und sie wäre manchem der Herren, die sich mit den Weltideen beschäftigen, zu wünschen. Die Zeit, das bin zunächst einmal „ich“.⁶⁴

Wassermann's subsequent concern with himself is therefore best understood as a concern with the times he lived in.

⁶³ Garrin, *Concept*, p. 61.

⁶⁴ Döblin, 'Letztes Buch', p. 519.

6.8 Kerkhovens dritte Existenz

Wassermann's final novel is a most curious piece of work and since he died before he could subject it to a final revision, it is probably best understood as a final draft rather than the actual finished novel, especially because Wassermann was a notorious editor of his own work. Neubauer tells us: ‚Was auf ihn [Wassermann] oberflächlich oder unfertig wirkte, wurde eliminiert – selbst nach aufwendigster Arbeit.‘⁶⁵ Published posthumously by Querido in 1934, the work has received very little critical attention. The middle section of the novel has, however, recently been translated into English by Michael Hofmann and was published under the title *My First Wife*.⁶⁶ This middle section, which can be understood as a novel within a novel, adds to the curious nature of the work as a whole. With this novel Wassermann retreats to a concern, not only with his own generation but with himself in a most literal way: the depiction of the marriage and divorce of Ganna and Alexander Herzog in the middle section, entitled ‘Ganna oder die Wahnwelt’, is a detailed description of Wassermann's own marriage with his first wife Julie Speyer. Schäfer has shown that with the exception of a few variations it is indeed a very accurate and easily recognizable part of the author's own life.⁶⁷ Wassermann thus introduces himself, only very thinly disguised, into his own novel. Yet he does not stop there since towards the end of the novel Alexander Herzog and Joseph Kerkhoven at times become indistinguishable from each other. He thus becomes one with his fictional creation. Most importantly, however, it is Herzog who loses Kerkhoven's manuscript and thus brings about the most significant disappearance of the text with which the novel ends. For the final part of this chapter we will therefore also consider the implications of Wassermann's decision to introduce himself in this way into his final novel.

⁶⁵ Neubauer, *Schriftsteller*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ See Jakob Wassermann, *My First Wife*, trans. by Michael Hofmann (London: Penguin, 2012).

⁶⁷ See Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*.

In order to create a situation in which characters can function as mirroring images, the first part of the novel is mostly concerned with the depiction of Kerkhoven and Marie's marriage after the catastrophe, that is her affair with Etzel. The marriage of Kerkhoven and Marie has been disrupted by Etzel whilst that of Alexander and Bettina has been disrupted by Herzog's first wife Ganna. In both cases we are therefore dealing with a third, obsessive character as the intruder. If we accept that the middle section of the novel is an account of Wassermann's own marriages then Herzog represents Wassermann, Ganna represents Julie Speyer and Bettina Herzog represents Marta Karlweis.

And yet we can see a first and significant blurring of boundaries between the 'real' and the fictional in the depiction of Marie's affair with Etzel. For it was Wassermann's second wife Marta Karlweis who apparently had an affair with her husband's assistant Hans Aufricht,⁶⁸ a man Schnitzler referred to as Wassermann's 'Eckermännchen'.⁶⁹ In the novel Wassermann's private experience is thus dealt with in two different narrative strands.⁷⁰ In addition to this, one could add that this affair was certainly standing in the way of Wassermann's idealised depiction of Herzog's second wife Bettina and that is was therefore more convenient to burden Marie and thus an entirely fictional character with it. In the same way Herzog, according to his own account, has affairs with numerous women except for the one that Wassermann had with his sister-in-law Agnes Speyer.⁷¹ Instead it is depicted as a close friendship that could have turned into a love affair. By referring to such details I do not seek to contest the view that 'Ganna oder die Wahnwelt' is largely based on Wassermann's own life. But it is important to bear in mind that he was nevertheless driven by narrative as well as moral considerations (after all

⁶⁸ According to Mendelssohn there can be hardly any doubt regarding this affair, especially since Karlweis and Aufricht emigrated together to the USA. See Mendelssohn 'Letztes Werk', p. 545.

⁶⁹ Schnitzler, Tagebuch, 21 / 12 / 1924.

⁷⁰ Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 251.

⁷¹ Schnitzler's diaries are a valuable source of documentation for the development of this relationship.

his two wives were still alive at the time) and that we have to accept his version of events as slightly polished. Wassermann is thus drawing on his own life for material, but adapts it in accordance with aesthetic and narrative considerations. However, Mendelssohn's view according to which *Kerkhoven* is not even to be called a novel but a piece of autobiographical writing seems to be going a step too far.⁷²

The topic of delusion (Wahn) stands at the centre of *Kerkhoven* and will prove to be one of the main links between the lives and works of Kerkhoven and Herzog. As it turns out both men are writing a book about this topic: a scientific account in Kerkhoven's case and a form of autobiography in that of Herzog. However, only Herzog's account becomes part of the novel, a fact which will be discussed in more detail in the course of this chapter. From the title of Kerkhoven's book, *Pathologie der Wahnvorstellungen und ihr Einfluß auf Religion, Gesellschaftsform und Gesetzgebung*, it can be inferred that delusion is here thought of as a universal pathology and thus another negative diagnosis regarding the times and the state of society as a whole.

Kerkhoven himself is no exception to this general delusion since he is initially obsessed with the idea of seeking revenge on his rival Etzel:

Bemüht, das Wesen der Wahnvorstellungen zu erforschen und sie tiefer zu erfassen, als es bis jetzt geschehen war, stieß er auf eine verderbliche, an der sein eigenes Gehirn erkrankt war. [...] Er lechzte nach Genugtuung in irgendeiner Form.⁷³

He follows his urge to find Etzel only to discover that the latter has disappeared without a trace to Russia and that he finds himself on a futile odyssey: 'Jagd nach einem Schatten. [...] Er ist vor Dir bis ans Ende der Welt geflohen.' (JK, 39) It is, however, not the insight into Etzel's defeat that

⁷² See Mendelssohn, 'Wassermanns letztes Werk', p. 532.

⁷³ Jakob Wassermann, *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* (Munich: DTV, 1989), p. 35.

Henceforth reference will

be given in brackets with page numbers preceded by JK. The DTV edition was again considered to be more

reader friendly. For the original edition see Jakob Wassermann, *Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz* (Amsterdam:

Querido, 1934)

frees Kerkhoven from his delusion but the sight of Etzel's mother Sophia, whom Kerkhoven watches secretly as she is praying in a church. It is this image of the kneeling mother that enables him to grant Etzel the absolution and thus free himself from his delusion. 'Die kniende Mutter hatte ihn entsühnt.' (JK, 41) This unscientific solution to a seemingly scientific problem paves the way for the question as to whether destructive forces can be tamed by spiritual means.

With the disappearance of Kerkhoven's manuscript at the end of the novel, the scientific approach will ultimately in some ways be rejected in favour of a more spiritual or even mystical way of looking at the problem. According to Schneider-Handschin this eventual rejection of the scientific method forms part of Wassermann's cultural pessimism:

Es ist unverkennbar, dass Wassermann auf die konservative Kulturkritik, die sich Modernisierungsprozessen in Wissenschaft, Technik und politischer Organisation widersetzte, fixiert blieb, was ihn von realistischen, zukunftsweisenden Lösungen abschnitt und zumindest teilweise, seine als persönliches Scheitern empfundene Wirkungslosigkeit erklärt.⁷⁴

While there is beyond doubt an element of cultural pessimism in Wassermann's late writing, it would be unfair not to look beyond that, especially since a pessimistic outlook seemed almost inevitable for him in the early 1930s. It is therefore important to examine what Wassermann is trying to achieve with his depiction of character in this novel, regardless of whether or not he succeeds in providing a convincing result. Mendelssohn agrees with the view of the novel as an imperfect yet intriguing piece of art.⁷⁵ With his depiction of Kerkhoven's gradual loss of faith in modern medical science as well as his gradually merging with Herzog's character, Wassermann seemingly attempts to depict a fusion of science and literature. Even though this attempt might at times appear to be flawed, I think looking at the ways in which he is trying to achieve this is a more fruitful approach to the novel than dismissing it as the work of a frustrated

⁷⁴ Schneider-Handschin, *Bild*, p. 212.

⁷⁵ See Mendelssohn, 'Letztes Werk', p. 531.

‘Bildungsbürger’ or, as Schäfer did, to dismiss it as a ‘mißglückte Synthese von Ratio, Wissenschaft, Unfug und Glauben’.⁷⁶

The idea of mirroring images and situations is crucial for the idea of a fusion of science and literature that dominates the novel. It also allows us to link it back to *Maurizius*, where the idea of mirroring images was equally important. In order to prepare for his merging with another character and as a solution to his personal crisis, Kerkhoven decides to join an excursion to the island of Java. After Warschauer in *Maurizius* and Irlen in *Andergast*, we are confronted with yet another European man in crisis who travels overseas with the aim of resolving his issues. The insights Kerkhoven gains on the tropical island regarding the self strongly resemble those expressed by Irlen: ‘Der europäische Mensch des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts ist in sein Ich hineinerstarrt wie die Spinne in den Bernstein.’ (JK, 43) And similar to Warschauer, Kerkhoven arrives at the conclusion that the state of European civilisation is deplorable with its people largely unhappy. Yet even though his stay on the island encourages him even more to abandon the concept of a fixed human personality, his altered understanding of western civilisation does not, as with Warschauer, lead to a state of misanthropic nihilism. Instead, Kerkhoven is fuelled with the desire to change the way we look at science and medicine in particular. Once again, Wassermann therefore lets a character undergo a similar experience yet with a very different outcome. The fact that this time he has chosen the figure of a scientist is highly significant and can in some ways be understood as a departure from the radical pessimism expressed in *Maurizius*.

6.8 Mirroring images and their function

After Kerkhoven’s return from Java, he settles with his family in the south of Germany where he opens his small sanatorium. This farewell to Berlin as the capital of modern Germany is obviously significant. In the

⁷⁶ Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 306.

context of the novel it symbolises a retreat from the overwhelming masses in the city to a renewed concern with the individual. The endless number of patients in Berlin did not allow Kerkhoven to actually help a single one of them, something which he hopes to achieve now. The episodes following his return until he starts to focus mainly on Herzog can easily seem arbitrary and irrelevant to the rest of the plot. They could, however, also be understood as further mirroring images that help to connect *Kerkhoven* to the other two novels of the trilogy as well as a means of preparing the reader for the Ganna episode and the idea of a fusion of rational and more irrational elements. Moreover, Döblin found a convincing image to describe the function of these episodes:

Die Nebenfiguren, die scheinbar von außen hereinschneien, werden instinktiv mit größter Sicherheit an ihren Ort gebracht. Und da sind sie auf einmal keine Anekdoten, Episoden, sondern lösen sich von einer Phrase des Hauptthemas ab und umspielen das Hauptthema in einer charakteristischen Weise.⁷⁷

The first episode in question is that of Kerkhoven's patient Martin Mordann, who, as it seems, has been modelled on the real life character of Maximilian Harden.⁷⁸ The earlier claim that the character of Warschauer in *Maurizius* can be understood as a reaction to the Harden trials is not diminished by this second representation. It rather seems to confirm Wassermann's prolonged interest in this figure, especially since this depiction of Harden cannot be called accurate either.⁷⁹ In the novel the character of Mordann, who is mortally ill when he arrives at the sanatorium, serves two discernible purposes. As a former celebrity, Mordann is an easily recognizable representative of pre-war Wilhelmine Germany, even if now people have forgotten about him: 'nur noch die Maske von ihm [war] vorhanden, das Gespenst von ihm' (JK, 89) By now

⁷⁷ Döblin, 'Letztes Buch', p. 522.

⁷⁸ See Harry F. Young, *Maximilian Harden, Censor Germaniae: The Critic in Opposition from Bismarck to the Rise of Nazism* (The Hague: Nijhoff 1959), p. 2.

⁷⁹ See Mendelssohn, 'Letztes Werk', p. 551.

Mordann is nothing but a self-obsessed anachronism who therefore helps to contrast his 'old' views with Kerkhoven's new ones. Mordann is not only an obvious representation of the figure of the 'Literat', a figure Wassermann has a long history of criticising.⁸⁰ But he is also shown to be a purely rational figure who is so ignorant of the divine that Kerkhoven refers to him as the 'Gottesfeind' (JK, 133) and arrives at the conclusion that this is not a life worth saving.

As a rational thinker Mordann wants to hear nothing about Kerkhoven's unconventional or even mystical thoughts and experiments:

Ich [Mordann] höre ordentlich, wie sich der heilige Darwin und der heilige Häckel im Grab umdrehen. Hochmoderne Nebelfabrikation der mystisch erleuchteten Wissenschaftler, die auf das Göttliche schlagen und ihre Zauberkunststückchen meinen[.] (JK, 128)

He also refers to the sanatorium as a 'metaphysischen Luftkurort' and to Kerkhoven's work as 'Hokuspokus' (JK, 128) In this context it is most significant that Kerkhoven claims in conversation with Mordann: "'Wir stehen in verschiedenen Zeitaltern und sprechen verschiedene Sprachen zueinander.'" (JK, 128) Mordann's derogatory rational and secular views are thus dismissed as belonging to a former era which ended in a human catastrophe, namely the First World War. At this point the novel seems to suggest that these views have been tried and failed which is why new views and solutions are necessary.

The other and even more significant aspect of Mordann's character is his obsession with the idea of completing his autobiography before his death in order to clear his reputation. Kerkhoven shows himself to be highly critical of this desire, which he identifies as a delusion:

Diese gellenden Worte [...] sie enthüllten ihm [...] den Wahn des Tributs; den Wahn von papierener Unsterblichkeit; den Wahn von der Dauer des gedruckten Worts, von der Dauer des bloßen Namens, als stünde dahinter wirkliches Werk und wirkliche Tat und nicht leerer Schall, nicht eitler Machtrausch [...] Denkwürdige Zeit, die ein solches Menschengebilde hervorgebracht hatte. (JK, 135)

⁸⁰ See Wassermann, 'Der Literat'.

The idea of a lasting fame based on written words thus seems to be set aside in favour of the deed or other more palpable achievements. Since Kerkhoven fails or refuses to prolong Mordann's life, the latter dies without having written his book and the reader is thus confronted with the first failure of the text. Moreover, Mordann burns one of his most treasured possessions, the compromising letters of an aristocrat (presumably another reference to the Eulenburg affair) that he had been meaning to publish, and thus destroys a significant set of texts before they could be used. The figure of Mordann therefore prepares the reader for the idea that some texts are better left unwritten as well as for the failure and disappearance of a text that will dominate the end of the novel.

The other episode dominating the interval between Kerkhoven's return and the Ganna chapter is the story of Selma and Karl Imst, his lover Jeanne Mallery and Kerkhoven's patient Emilie Thirriot, who is a psychic medium. Imst and Jeanne have been sentenced to a life behind bars for poisoning his wife Selma with arsenic. One of Kerkhoven's employees, the nurse Wys-Wiggers, happens to be related to Karl Imst and informs Kerkhoven and Marie about the case. Marie is immediately convinced of the couple's innocence which again reminds Kerkhoven of a similar case: 'In gewisser Weise erinnerte es ihn an die erstaunliche Entschleierung der Unschuld jenes Leonhart Maurizius, der neunzehn Jahre im Zuchthaus gesessen und dem der sechzehnjährige Andergast zum Befreier geworden war' (JK, 102) And even more importantly, Marie, who from now on devotes all her time to the case, experiences in that way a connection with her former lover Etzel:

Dabei empfand sie es als eine schier unheimliche Fügung, daß sie gleichsam das Kernerlebnis des Menschen übernahm, der ihr einst zum Schicksal geworden war und sie aus einer Träumerin zu einer Wachen gemacht hatte [...] Ohne daß er es gewollt und gemeint freilich, aber als Träger der Bestimmung. (JK, 110)

Thus Wassermann not only establishes a clear link with the previous two novels but he also adds another layer of meaning to the catastrophe that Marie's adulterous affair has turned out to be.

This episode serves in two more ways as a mirroring image. To begin with we are confronted with yet another marriage that has been destroyed by an adulterous love affair. Moreover, we are confronted with a wife who is in many ways comparable to Ganna Herzog. Selma is described as equally demonic, destructive and deluded as Ganna, and she even stages her own suicide in a way that makes it look as if her husband and his lover had murdered her. What matters most, though, seems to be Kerkhoven's reaction to this case since it paves the way to how we are to read and understand the story of Ganna and her husband. Asked by Jeanne whether Selma's deed would still allow people to think of Selma as a human being, Kerkhoven replies:

[I]n der Hinsicht darf man nicht knausern. Sehen Sie, meine Liebe, jeder von uns ist in jedem Augenblick gleich fähig zum Guten und zum Schlechten. Wir wissen nicht einmal immer, ob es gut oder schlecht war, was wir getan haben. (JK, 418)

In conversation with Marie, Kerkhoven even considers Selma's suicide an act of greatness that he marvels at. The depiction of human delusion, even in its wildest and most damaging forms, is therefore not aimed at a condemnation of those people. Instead, Wassermann seems keen on exploring their world without necessarily passing a judgement on them. This becomes even more noteworthy when we take Joseph Roth's interpretation of the novel into account. According to Roth, Wassermann's depiction of delusion is not just about exploring psychological issues but is also to be understood as a critique of his time.⁸¹ The idea of delusion therefore becomes a means for Wassermann to understand and explore the world he lived in. This notion will be discussed in more detail in connection with the Ganna section.

The other way in which the Imst episode serves as a mirroring image is in its inclusion of a fusion of rational and irrational elements. That is because the case is eventually solved by means of the visions of a 'fünfundvierzigjährige, schwer irritierte, beinahe unzurechnungsfähige

⁸¹Joseph Roth, 'Wassermanns letzter Roman', in *Joseph Roth Werke*, ed. by Klaus Westermann (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1991), pp. 553 - 57.

Frau' (JK, 102), that is Emilie Thirriot. Her visions enable her to see what actually happened on the night before Selma died, namely that Selma poisoned herself. The mistake made by a flawed legal system is thus set right by the visions of a psychic medium. Strange as it might seem, this case is used as another example to dismiss a rational approach to life, since only a narrowly rational person would consider this a supernatural phenomenon:

übernatürlich im Sinn der Ratio-Menschen und der Zwei-mal-zwei-ist-vier-Leute, die noch immer in banaler Zweifelsucht belächeln und zu leugnen bestrebt sind, was ein Mann wie Kerkhoven, zur Genüge belehrt über die Ausweitbarkeit der menschlichen Seelenkräfte, längst nicht mehr zu den Wundern rechnete. (JK, 114)

For Wassermann, the patron saint of the idea of a fusion of scientific and more spiritual beliefs – in the novel as well as in real life – was the Swiss-Russian neuropathologist Constantin von Monakow (1853 – 1930).⁸² Several of Monakow's publications can be found in Wassermann's private library.⁸³ Moreover, Schneider-Handschin tells us that Wassermann met Monakow in Zurich just before the latter's death.⁸⁴ Wassermann therefore aptly begins his chapter on 'Wahn' with a reference to the death of Kerkhoven's friend in Zurich, the 'große Gelehrte' and director of the brain anatomy institute which makes him easily identifiable as Monakow. The narrator even offers a summary of the scientist's view of the human body:

Da war denn der menschliche Leib, bewegt und regiert von einem allbeständigen, im wahrsten Sinne oberen Geist oder Organwesen, keine mehr oder minder vollkommene Maschine mehr, kein vitalistischer Automat, kein bloßes Produkt chemischer Bindungen und Reaktionen, sondern weit darüber hinaus [...] ein in das große All-Leben gewobenes und der Ewigkeit angehörendes, ja von ihr unzertrennliches Kräftezentrum, das [...] zusammengehalten wurde durch die Liebe. (JK, 140)

In his essay, Jones has clearly shown further parallels between Monakow's writings and Kerkhoven's spiritual search. Moreover, Jones has also in some detail explained Monakow's theory of which a brief summary at this point will therefore be sufficient. In his later years Monakow became increasingly interested in biological philosophy, as a part of which

⁸² For a short biography of Monakow see Jones, *Kerkhoven*, p. 180.

⁸³ See Wassermann's private library, Stadtbibliothek Nuremberg.

⁸⁴ Schneider-Handschin, *Bild*, p. 141.

he had come up with the theory of the toxic origin of mental disorder. At the centre of Monakow's later theory stands 'syneidesis or 'biological conscience'' which Jones describes as

the automatic principle of regulation in the biological world protecting the organism from danger and constituting the urge towards wholeness and balance and the restoration when damaged. [...] This urge towards self-perpetuation is perceived at every level of life, physical and psychical, and has its source in the hormé or basic urge which gives unity and purpose to the organism.⁸⁵

This hormic urge therefore stands at the centre of all individual and collective life, as it is the only protection against disintegration. Religion is a necessary part of this urge, which also means that it derives from the biopsychological structure of the organism. In the context of the novel it is important that Monakow believed his theories to be metaphysical rather than merely scientific and that he used them in the treatment of mental illnesses. Monakow considered them to be the result of a 'failure of syneidetic action'.⁸⁶

This serves as an important preparation for Kerkhoven's attempt to link not only the body and the soul but biology and the divine in search of a higher order. The overarching message seems to be that science on its own will not be sufficient to solve the ongoing human crisis. Moreover, this understanding of mental illness as part of a wider problem permits it to be explored in an open rather than a judgmental way, which is crucial for the understanding of the character of Ganna.

6.9 Geliebter Wahn

Kerkhoven meets Bettina Herzog on the day of his great friend's funeral in Zurich and is thus left to carry on with his legacy on his own. The case she confronts him with is that of her husband Alexander Herzog and therefore the writer in crisis. Before looking at Kerkhoven's cure, the story of the writer in crisis needs to be explored further, for it can also be

⁸⁵ Jones, *Kerkhoven*, pp. 180 – 81.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

understood as a reflection on the function of the text. After a long and successful career as a writer, Alexander Herzog now finds himself in a state that he describes as follows: 'Mein ganzes Ich, der geistige, seelische und physische Teil, ist in einer heillosen Unordnung.' (JK, 147) The reason for this crisis is the realization that his work, that is his writing, has not brought about any change and that he is no longer in touch with the real world. In fact, he now considers his creation as part of the 'Wahnwelt' and he feels as if his self has been taken away from him as he has lost all sense of reality, including a sense of time. Herzog has arrived at the conclusion that his writing is nothing but a form of escapism from a life that has long become unbearable. He has been living outside himself for a considerable period of time but eventually he has to realise that it is not possible 'lebendigen Leibes aus der Welt herauszukommen' (JK, 153).

Wassermann thus confronts us with a fictional version of himself looking for his long-lost self in a piece of writing that has, among many others, brought about this loss in the first place. At first this might seem absurd, and yet it can be understood as an altered attitude towards the idea of writing since Kerkhoven introduces the idea of writing not as a form of escapism but as a 'Befreiungsschlag [...] eine seelische Selbstbefreiung' (JK, 163 -64). According to Kerkhoven, Herzog is befallen by a sick reality and has to find his way back into a different reality. We are thus presented with a fictional character who is trying to be a little less fictional. In a similar vein, the novel as a whole can be understood as Wassermann's break with escapist writing and an attempt on his part to return to the reality of his own life.

The final outcome of 'Ganna oder die Wahnwelt' is that Herzog, with the help of Kerkhoven, comes to understand how the Ganna he described in his text is his own mirroring image. And, even more importantly, she is at the same time a part of his fictional, or as Kerkhoven has called it, sick reality. The Ganna he depicts is therefore no less deluded than Herzog himself. In other words, the Ganna we encounter in Herzog's account is a

product of his own delusion. The destructive force is therefore coming from within himself and is projected onto his first wife. This result, which Kerkhoven arrives at towards the end of the novel, can already be traced throughout the 'Ganna' text, which is the aim of the following analysis.

In the first part of his book entitled 'Spiegel der Jugend', Herzog portrays his time with Ganna up to their wedding day. In this section he already makes it clear that Ganna's reality is in conflict with that shared by most other people: 'Sie lebte in einer Sonderwelt, die eigens für sie gezimmert schien.' (JK, 175) and he entitles one of his paragraphs about her 'Sie dichtet sich ihre Welt' (JK, 178). The reasons he gives for her behaviour are most significant:

[Sie] suchte vor allem einen Spiegel. Menschen konnten nicht ihr Spiegel sein, die Wirklichkeitswelt konnte es auch nicht sein, nur aus den Büchern kam ihr ein Wesen ihresgleichen entgegen, so wähnte sie, ein Dämmerwesen voll Begeisterung, Zutraulichkeit und Aufrichtigkeit. Das Bild entzückte sie, es war ja ihr eigenes Gedicht, ihre eigene Schöpfung, sie verliebte sich in es, es machte sie in ihren Augen wahr und gut. (JK, 178 – 79)

Ganna thus falls in love with her own fictional creation which serves her as a mirroring image. As a poet, Herzog becomes the perfect foil onto which to project this vision of hers. Ganna's concept of reality is thus mostly derived from books and Herzog becomes another character in her fictional world. It is most striking, however, that Herzog does the same with her. And on the day of their engagement he refuses to see what he sees:

[Ich] sah nicht ein blaurot erhitztes Gesicht, eine schweißdurchnässte Bluse, einen verworrenen, beinahe fieberkranken Blick; das zu sehen wäre mir widrig gewesen, es hätte mich abgestoßen für lange. Ich sah ein Geschöpf meiner eigenen Form und Vision. (JK, 189)

The subsequent failure to make each other conform to their respective realities and thus serve as mirroring images to each other will lead to the catastrophe that Herzog describes in his book. This catastrophe will be accompanied by a loss of any sense of self or reality on Herzog's part which is already indicated in the depiction of his wedding day:

Freilich hatte ich nicht die Empfindung von Wirklichkeit. Was war mir denn wirklich? Nicht einmal mein Hemd, nicht einmal meine Schreibfeder. Die beständige schweigende Übereinkunft mit jenen, die das bloß Scheinende als Wahres nahmen, war ungeheuer anstrengend. (JK, 208)

The second part of the Ganna section, entitled 'Das Zeitalter der Sicherheiten', seems like an illustration of an insight Herzog proclaims on its very first pages:

Mir ahnt alsbald, daß ich sie formen müßte. Ich müßte ihr eine Gestalt geben, denn sie hat noch keine. Es hat lange, sehr lange gedauert, bis ich dahinterkam, daß man sie nicht formen konnte. (JK, 211 -12)

This insight eventually compels Herzog to choose another path, namely that of fiction. In the course of their marriage he therefore creates a fictional Ganna that has nothing to do with the actual person. As a result he grows more and more estranged from the actual person which finds a strong expression in his numerous affairs with other women. As a consequence, Ganna is equally obliged to start living in her own piece of fiction, which is that of an intellectual marriage standing above erotic matters.

Yet according to Alexander this loss of reality extends beyond her marriage: 'vom Leben hat sie keinen Dunst' (JK, 221). Ganna does not know how to talk to her servants or how to handle financial matters, which plays a substantial part in her chaotic lifestyle. Alexander nevertheless talks himself into the delusion that Ganna is an indispensable part of himself. He is not ready to admit that their whole marriage is based on 'Irrtum und Täuschung' (JK, 225) nor is he able to face the guilt of having married a woman he never loved. As Ganna is more and more losing her self-control and shows sign of a mental disturbance he finds relief in creating an image of her as demonic and thus avoids a confrontation with reality:

Manchmal schloß ich einfach die Augen, wenn ich sah, was zu sehen mich nicht freute. Ich bemühte mich, das Erlebnis Ganna als meine Bestimmung hinzunehmen. Je mehr die Wirklichkeit auf mir lastete, je mehr entlastete mich das Bild, das ich mir von Ganna schuf. Es war wie aus Erz, unzerstörbar für lange. Ein dämonischer Mensch, sagte ich mir.' (JK, 229)

For Herzog's sister-in-law Irmgard it shows that he knows nothing about reality when he simply accepts Ganna as a 'unbändige Natur' (JK, 232) instead of seeing beneath the surface. This indifference towards the actual person becomes most apparent in the context of his affairs which she desperately tries to integrate into her fictional reality while he never finds out how she actually feels about them: 'Was aber in ihrem tiefsten Innern dabei vorging, habe ich nie ganz erfahren können.' (JK, 241)

Instead, Herzog chooses to live in his 'Sonderwelt' (JK, 240), a word which he, not long ago, used to describe Ganna's world. Despite all the predicaments, Ganna therefore remains a mirroring image for him and a necessary one, too. This could also explain what he means by the alleged 'mystisches Band' (JK, 240) connecting the two and why a divorce remains for a long time out of the question. In this context, Döblin therefore aptly refers to the 'Strindberghaften Verkrampfung zweier Menschen',⁸⁷ probably a reference to Strindberg's play *Totentanz* which depicts a couple unable to separate despite their mutual hatred. In the play Alice says about her unfortunate marriage to Kurt: „[...] aber wir sind zusammengeschweißt und kommen nicht voneinander los! [...] Jetzt kann nur noch der Tod uns trennen[...].“⁸⁸

Alexander does not even shy away from idealising his fictional construction as he dedicates one of his books to Ganna and even sends her wistful letters. The absurdity of the situation is increased further by his awareness of living with a fictional creation: 'Die Ganna in meinem Leben und die Ganna meiner Phantasie waren zwei grundverschiedene Wesen.' (JK, 244) They are only linked by a strong sense of guilt that he feels towards both of them. Since he finds himself unable to love Ganna, Herzog invents other ways of being connected to her:

Ich erdichtete eine schier überweltliche Bindung an sie und übersah, daß der irdische Mensch Alexander Herzog keinen festen Boden mehr unter den Füßen hatte. Ich erhob

⁸⁷ Döblin, 'Letztes Buch', p. 521.

⁸⁸ August Strindberg, *Totentanz*, trans. by Christel Hildebrandt (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2011), p. 29.

Ganna zu einem Prinzip, zu einer Idee, sie und die Kinder waren eins, drei Herzen [...] denen ich dienstbar zu sein hatte [...] Das wußte Ganna. (JK, 244)

The two characters therefore find themselves in a situation of denying each other their reality which leads to a loss of control over their lives on both sides. At one point Ganna suffers a form of nervous breakdown and Alexander sees no other way of controlling her than to beat her up: 'Schlage auf sie ein wie ein Wirtshäusler. Wie ein Fuhrknecht. Ich.' (JK, 264) This drastic climax of their inability to communicate or even reach each other marks the end of their life as a couple, for soon after Herzog meets his second wife-to-be, Bettina Merk.

With the introduction of the Ganna section, Wassermann has therefore added another layer to his depiction of character. While previously he seemed concerned with the metamorphosis of one character and his or her individual response to it, he now explores the instability of the perception of character and the consequences this has for the observer.

Despite their separation and eventual divorce, Ganna and Herzog continue to depend on their delusions since without them their lives would be empty and insignificant. The final part of Herzog's manuscript, aptly entitled 'Das Zeitalter der Auflösung', therefore shows how they are both brought to the verge of destruction through their refusal to acknowledge each other's true realities. This inability to free themselves from their illusions as well as their dependence on them is expressed, for instance, when Herzog refers to Ganna's 'Ganna-Fiktionen, mit deren Hilfe sie sich immer eine Weile seelisch über Wasser hielt.' (JK, 278), or when Herzog comes to the conclusion that 'Ganna richten hieß mich selber richten' (JK, 287). As a consequence, Herzog finds it more than difficult to go through with a divorce which he experiences as a 'brutaler Eingriff in meine Existenz' (JK, 293). Herzog prefers to attribute this reluctance to actually leave Ganna to his general passivity and phlegm and thus proves himself to be unaware of the true reasons for his behaviour.

At the same time, however, he is clearly aware of Ganna's loss of reality and of her growing mental problems. This can be inferred from several passages in the text, for instance when he writes: 'Die Wirklichkeit war ihr unter den Füßen weggeglitten, doch sie bedurfte ihrer auch nicht mehr: Alles war so, wie sie es weltabgewandt imaginierte.' (JK, 301) Or when he describes how she would react to a given situation with various different personalities (JK, 295). Moreover, he also understands that most of their dilemma is caused by Ganna's increasingly desperate attempts to make her 'Wahnwelt' real, but he fails to understand that his own behaviour could be described in much the same way. In this respect their situation becomes comparable to that of Kerkhoven and Etzel, especially to Etzel's violent attempts to make people conform to his view of them. The only glimpse of an awareness of the fictionality of his situation can be found when Herzog is confronted with the peaceful divorce of Bettina and her first husband. He comes up with a rather uncanny line: 'Also, das ist möglich, so geht es unter wirklichen Menschen zu, war mein Gedanke.' (JK, 299)

The insight that he and Ganna are not 'wirkliche Menschen', however, does not come to Herzog through writing this text. Even though he claims that it felt liberating, he arrives at the rather sobering conclusion that it is nevertheless nothing more than paper (JK, 387). On its own, the text is therefore denied a key function, namely that of having a real impact on Herzog's life. Following the idea of a fusion, it will take the combination of the figure of the scientist and the literary text to open Herzog's eyes.

The final section of the novel, entitled 'Joseph und Marie oder die Glaubenswelt', deals with Herzog's struggle to overcome his delusion and the loss of Kerkhoven's manuscript. At the same time this leads to a fusion of their characters. As Mendelssohn has shown, the idea of the mirroring image is taken a step further in *Kerkhoven* because eventually Kerkhoven and Herzog will no longer be mirroring images but merge to the point of

becoming identical.⁸⁹ Both men have, even though in different ways, dedicated their lives to the idea of delusion which also becomes their meeting point: "Merkwürdig, daß wir uns so oft an einem Kreuzweg treffen. [...] In die Wahnwelt rüst' ich [Kerkhoven] seit Jahr und Tag meine Expeditionen aus." (JK, 412) Going back to the idea that for Wassermann the notion of 'Wahn' becomes a metaphor for describing the time and society he lives in, Herzog, in a similar vein, becomes for Kerkhoven a 'sprechendes Instrument im Strom des Geschehens' (JK, 413). Kerkhoven therefore arrives at the important conclusion that Herzog's case is no exception but that he suffers from a 'zeitbedingte Erkrankung', namely the 'Einsturz des Identitätsbewußtseins' (JK, 421). Similarly, Ganna becomes for Kerkhoven the 'Zeitgebundene, der Zeit Entsprössene, Exponent der bürgerlichen Ära' (JK, 457), which would even allow a comparison between Ganna's individual downfall and that of her class after the Great War.⁹⁰ This also enables another comparison between Ganna and Etzel since they are both described as the product of the seeming collapse of bourgeois paternal authority – Ganna's father was also an authoritarian patriarch. An understanding of Ganna's madness as 'zeittypisch' could be understood as another indicator for a sympathetic reading of this character. If her madness is the product of the surrounding circumstances and the distressing times she is living in then it would not be justifiable to attribute any evil intentions to her behaviour. Leydecker is therefore right to conclude that

these marriage crises [a recurring theme in Wassermann's works] become vehicles to convey Wassermann's ever sharper sense of a wider social, psychological and even metaphysical malaise, which becomes all-pervading by the last novel.⁹¹

Herzog's identity crisis means that he is unable to determine who he really is and that he has lost himself in a world he struggles to recognise. At times he is even unsure whether or not he really exists, which marks an unprecedented level of identity crisis in Wassermann's writing: Herzog's

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 554.

⁹⁰ On the situation of the bourgeoisie after the war see also Peukert, *Weimar*, p. 60.

⁹¹ Leydecker, 'The Case', p. 94.

identity is not just unstable but he cannot convince himself of his own existence and finds himself lost in fiction.

In order to improve Herzog's situation, Kerkhoven needs to free him from his delusion, yet he soon realises that the confession alone will not do the trick. Moreover, it is not a scientific method that will eventually provide the deciding insight but a vision. The reader would already be accustomed to the idea of a vision from the previously mentioned Imst case which can be understood as another mirroring image. On a train, Kerkhoven sees Ganna Herzog entering his compartment, ironically the only encounter they will ever have. Aware that he is confronted with a phantasm, Kerkhoven defeats it the moment he understands her true nature:

Als er den Blick zu dem Gesicht der Frau erhob, sah er ein eigentümlich verblasenes Lächeln auf ihren Lippen, wie bei einem Kind, das schmolzt, ja, dieses Lächeln gemahnte auf irgendeine Art an das eines wahnsinnigen Kindes; von diesem Augenblick an wich die alldruckhafte Beklemmung von Kerkhoven, er atmete auf wie ein Mensch, der sich von einer leeren Drohung hat einschüchtern lassen (JK, 444)

The insights that Kerkhoven gains during this encounter lead to a complete re-evaluation of the entire Ganna story. Hitherto this piece of 'autobiography' could be read as a realistic account of Herzog's divorce; only now he is revealed to be as deluded as his first wife, leaving the manuscript in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Kerkhoven therefore seems to speak for the reader when he says: "Sie haben es fertiggebracht, mich vollständig mit Ganna und der Ganna-Atmosphäre zu durchtränken." (JK, 445)

Kerkhoven therefore now proposes a different cure:

"Ich werde Ihnen beweisen, daß das schauerlich Überlebensgroße, das hexenhaft Abstruse nur in ihrer Einbildung vorhanden ist, daß es keine Wirklichkeit besitzt, daß es nichts weiter ist als Wahn, Alexander Herzogs ureigenster, geliebter Wahn." (JK, 446)

As it turns out, Ganna is nothing but a harmless, even pitiable woman who suffers from some minor and rather ordinary mental problems.⁹²

⁹² Schäfer has shown how this attempt to do Ganna justice is mirrored in the text's genesis, as Wassermann decided to leave out passages depicting Ganna at her most negative in his final manuscript. See Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 194.

Moreover, Kerkhoven claims that many of Ganna's actions are the result of 'korrespondierende Seelenbewegungen' (JK, 451) which makes her even more the product of her husband's delusion. His destruction therefore came from within. In this rather extraordinary turn of events, Wassermann not only radically changes the reader's perception of a text that initially had seemed like an act of revenge against his first wife. He also makes it questionable how much of it is actually true and thus rather skilfully plays with the idea of the reliability of text. To a certain extent, the reader is made to experience Herzog's own insecurity regarding the borders between fiction and reality for it has simply become impossible for him to tell them apart: 'ich [habe] fast keine Gewißheiten.[...] Nicht einmal, ob ich wirklich *bin*, ist mir gewiß' (JK, 463).

The final aspect of the novel to be discussed is the loss of Kerkhoven's manuscript. The mirroring aspect of the fact that Herzog and Kerkhoven both write a book on the question of 'Wahn' is emphasised further in the final part of the novel. One day, Herzog happens to see Kerkhoven writing at his desk: 'Es war, als erblicke Alexander Herzog sich selbst in den edelsten, besten, hingegebensten Stunden seines Lebens.' (JK, 482) In accordance with the idea of the two characters merging towards the end of the novel, Schneider-Handschin claims that they become congruent to the extent that it becomes difficult to tell which of the two is speaking during their dialogues.⁹³

Herzog is supposed to take Kerkhoven's manuscript to Basel where the latter wants to sell it to a publisher. However, Herzog forgets it on a train and it is lost forever, disappeared into nothingness. Despite his attempts to recover the text, it is as if 'sich das dickleibige Konvolut in seine Bestandteile aufgelöst [hätte]' (JK, 505). This life's work was an attempt to establish a link between delusion, faith, biology and the divine and it can never be rewritten because Kerkhoven suffers from a terminal illness that leaves him with only a few months to live. His reaction to the loss of the

⁹³ Schneider-Handschin, *Bild*, p. 144.

manuscript is therefore of interest because even though it upsets him there is also an element of deliberateness in this loss. It is the idea of the sacrifice that returns at the end of the novel. This becomes clear in a remark to Herzog, if we accept the characters' partial merging which enables Herzog to receive telepathic orders from Kerkhoven: "Sie haben in der Tat unschuldig eine Schuld auf sich geladen. Vielleicht nicht einmal so ganz unschuldig. Vielleicht..." (JK, 520) Moreover, this ties in well with the consequences of the loss because it allows Kerkhoven a return to his local community. Hitherto Kerkhoven has led the life of an outsider as he was ostracised by the community he lived in on the basis of being a mysterious eccentric. With the loss of his manuscript he returns to the simple tasks of an ordinary doctor and suddenly enjoys a great popularity among the ordinary people. At the end of his life, Wassermann therefore seems to be willing to sacrifice the text that has been revealed to be the product of a delusion as well as essentially without consequences. Schäfer's interpretation of this loss as retrospectively diminishing the importance of the manuscript seems to miss the significance of the idea of sacrifice.⁹⁴ In the end it is the simple deed that has triumphed over the work of art and that allows the outsider to return to his community; however, it comes at a high cost.

While this renunciation of the text certainly carries strong pessimistic connotations, the novel itself ends in a moment of optimism. Moreover, with the ending of *Kerkhoven* Wassermann comes full circle and ends where he began, namely with a child born from a Gentile mother and a Jewish father. In the final scene, Kerkhoven's stepdaughter Aleid, an otherwise rather minor character, gives birth to the child she initially wanted to abort yet Kerkhoven teaches her to consider it an act of grace:

"Du mußt es als eine Gnade ansehen, Aleid," sagte Kerkhoven; "fühlst du, daß es die Gnade ist?" – "Ja...ich fühls" war die Antwort, "ich fühls..." (JK, 526).

⁹⁴ See Schäfer, *Plaidoyer*, p. 304.

In this final moment of his writing, Wassermann, in a highly symbolic manner, returns to the vision of a new-born child that will overcome the outsider status of his parents. Kerkhoven, the outsider by choice, was enabled to return to his community via a sacrifice. The outsiders by birth, however, in this case the woman and the Jew, still depend on a moment of grace to be freed from their status as outsiders

7. So what?

So what was it good for, this journey that has lasted for just over three years? What has been achieved? Above all, I hope to have shown new ways of looking at Wassermann and thus to have opened new routes for future Wassermann scholarship. The initial plan of looking at Romantic and Expressionist themes in Wassermann's novels has never been realised. Instead, in the process of engaging with his work I came across questions that seemed to be of a far wider significance. Rather than imposing a set of questions and theories from outside onto the work I have therefore let it guide me towards its own set of thoughts and theories. This approach, even though lacking a lot of the usual or even expected theoretical framework, has allowed me to begin discovering what could be thought of as Wassermann's own vocabulary. In addition and as a pre-requisite for this approach the common assumptions about him as a person and as a writer have been cast aside in order to take a fresh look at things. As a frequent victim of negative criticism Wassermann has proven to be a most valuable subject to demonstrate how fragile and actually irrelevant an author's reputation really is. I therefore hope that I have given a fair account of Wassermann's works without being influenced by the negative reputation he holds among critics.

Used to the understanding of Wassermann as a writer more or less stuck in the forms and traditions of the nineteenth century, I never gave the idea of looking at his narrative techniques much thought. What was there to be found after all that was new and revelatory? It was only the lengthy engagement with *Wahnschaffe* that brought about the realisation that there was something exciting about the ways in which Wassermann was doing character. Keen to explore what was going on, I revisited his earlier works under this aspect and began to see that there was a traceable development to be analysed. It soon became apparent how the concept of character increasingly took centre stage in Wassermann's portrayals of

society. While it is of less importance in his earlier works, that is those written before the Great War, it becomes more and more pronounced in his later writing until eventually character and society will be shown to crumble and fall apart. Moreover, this new interest in Wassermann's characters also paved the way for establishing a link between them and the author's attempts to portray German society at different historical stages. The idea of character as a mirror of the state society finds itself in has to be seen as one of the most important new insights into Wassermann's work. This link between his narrative technique and the critique of society he utters in his novels has not been established so far, which is why it opens up a new space for discussion. Amongst other things it allows for Wassermann's outsider figures to be seen in a new and altogether more productive light.

Regarding his outsider figures, the discovery of the role that the homosexual man plays in Wassermann's writing is among the most significant. Given the continuous interest in this figure from his early novels up to the trilogy it is hopefully clear by now that it goes far beyond any mere sensationalist concerns. Rather it seems that Wassermann increasingly came to think of the place of the homosexual in society as one worth exploring alongside that of the Jew. It could even be said that after an initial interest in the status of woman as an outsider, as portrayed in *Renate Fuchs*, the concern with the figure of the homosexual was eventually going to receive considerable more attention. So far no validation of this interest has been unearthed from the mass of Wassermann's unpublished fragments and letters and no homoerotic fantasies have been recorded in his diaries. Given the strong interest in Wassermann's biography also in connection with the interpretation of his works, this might at least in part account for the neglect of the figure of the homosexual in his writing up to the present day. The concern with Wassermann's biography, though certainly useful and indispensable in some respects, therefore seems to have prevented some critics from considering these significant aspects of his writing. My research in this area

is therefore just the beginning of what could be a starting point for further fruitful research. It would certainly be of interest to compare Wassermann's depictions of homosexuals to that of other writers of his time thus adding another layer of relevance to his work.

The conscious move away from his biography also allowed for a new way of looking at the Jew as an outsider figure in Wassermann's works. The plight of Wassermann's Jewish figures has naturally been dwelled upon by critics and sometimes lured them into making him a little bit more Jewish than he actually was. After three years in close company I think it is fair to say that Wassermann's sense of his Jewish identity, similar to so many other cases, was largely triggered by the growing anti-Semitism around him. Wassermann himself drew this conclusion in *Mein Weg*: 'Genau betrachtet war man Jude nur dem Namen nach und durch die Feindseligkeit, Fremdheit oder Ablehnung der christlichen Umwelt...'¹ It would therefore be mistaken to see Wassermann's work in close proximity to any significant Jewish thought or mythology. For his background remained that of an assimilated Jew with no clear religious pretensions, as his later quest for spirituality seems to belong to an altogether different category. However, his Jewish characters are nevertheless of great interest to my argument because their function as counterparts in the construction of parallels has so far not been given much critical attention. And yet the discovery of the links and parallels between the outsiders portrayed by Wassermann offers further new insights. Moreover, it also helps to see how Wassermann is not solely concerned with his own status in society but rather how it has enabled him to develop an understanding of the trials and tribulations of the other Other. In this version his Jewishness has therefore become a space in which communication with other outsiders is made possible.

¹ Jakob Wassermann, 'Mein Weg', p. 41.

Engaging with these outsider figures inevitably always includes a closer examination of the society around them. As we have seen in Wassermann's early novels, this has led to intriguing portrayals of Biedermeier and Wilhelmine Germany establishing a clear link between those two key elements in Wassermann's writing. However, it is only in Wassermann's later novels, in particular in *Maurizius*, that we are finally confronted with a clear link between the figure of the outsider and the concept of character. Most notably with Warschauer, Wassermann seems to have found a way of presenting the parallels between the different outsiders in one character alone by use of the technique of double-identities. Warschauer is therefore of a twofold significance: not only does he combine the Jew and the homosexual man and thus Wassermann's two most important outsider figures in one person. But he has also lost control over his identity, making him the product of the modern condition as well as the society around him. In the society Wassermann confronts us with in his later writing, character is no longer possible, which therefore makes for a connection between character, the outsider and Wassermann's depiction and critique of society. The trilogy therefore marks the point in Wassermann's writing when all of those three elements are at last brought together in a meaningful way. Meaningful here means that there is a system to Wassermann's apparent madness or his increasing lack of structure. Towards the end of his life chaos had become an inevitable part of Wassermann's everyday experience and therefore also found expression in his later writing. A different approach to Wassermann's 'bad' structure has proven to be most fruitful in the course of this thesis. What is more, the trilogy has to be seen not only as a recapitulation of some of the concerns that occupied Wassermann throughout his life as a writer but also as their fusion. The idea of fusion stands at the centre of *Kerkhoven* as well as characterising the trilogy as a whole. These three novels are therefore indispensable in a discussion of the developments of Wassermann's writing for it is here that they reach their climax.

I hope to have helped to restore Wassermann's standing as a major and accomplished novelist who was more than just a helpless amateur. On the basis of this future research will hopefully approach him with a more positive understanding as there are many topics that still need to be addressed. Wassermann's relationship with Expressionism still deserves closer analysis as does his relationship with Vienna, his 'Wahlheimat' of many years. Some of his lesser known works, in particular his novellas, have not received enough attention so far. Wassermann's concern with the figure of the child and childhood offers another overarching topic for the analysis of his entire oeuvre. And finally, there is a lot of archived material that has not been published yet, above all Wassermann's rich correspondence deserves to be published.

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