The Portrayal and Function of Relationships between Women in Selected *Erzählungen* by Ingeborg Bachmann

by

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Abstract

This thesis provides an analysis of the portrayal and function of relationships between women in the following *Erzählungen* by Ingeborg Bachmann: "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha," "Das Gebell," and "Drei Wege zum See." The major research questions include whether there is a similar representation of female-female interactions and a common conception of gender and identity construction arising from these interactions. In addition to offering a unique perspective on relationships between women, this analysis presents "Das Gebell" as the story of two women, rather than one that focuses on the relationship between a mother and her son, which has predominately been the interpretation in the previous literature. Findings indicate that parallels exist in the way women are portrayed in the above three *Erzählungen* and that the female-female interactions serve certain common narrative functions in each of these texts.

Résumé

Ce mémoire présente l'analyse des interactions féminines telles que représentées dans les *Erzählungen* de Ingeborg Bachmann: "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha," "Das Gebell," et "Drei Wege zum See." Les questions de recherche principales supposent l'existence d'un portrait similaire des interactions femme-femme et d'une conception commune du genre et de la construction de l'identité résultant de ces interactions. En plus d'offrir une perspective unique des relations entre les femmes, l'analyse, contrairement à l'interprétation que fait la littérature jusqu'à ce jour, conçoit l'œuvre "Das Gebell" comme étant l'histoire de deux femmes plutôt qu'un texte mettant l'emphase sur la relation entre une mère et son fils. Les résultats de cette analyse indiquent qu'il existe un parallèle dans la façonde représenter les femmes dans ces trois *Erzählungen* et que les interactions femme-femme servent les mêmes fonctions narratives dans chacun de ces écrits.

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Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the portrayal and function of relationships between women in Ingeborg Bachmann's *Erzählungen*. Although there has been much scholarship dedicated to the portrayal of women and their relationships with men in Bachmann's *Erzählungen*, there has been comparatively little attention paid to how women interact with each other. This may be due partly to the fact that most of Bachmann's *Erzählungen* do not appear to focus upon women interacting with each other. There are, however, some notable exceptions. One such exception is Bachmann's "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" in *Das dreißigste Jahr* (1961), which clearly features two women in close interaction with one another and it has been analyzed as such by critics. There are other *Erzählungen*, however, such as "Das Gebell" and "Drei Wege zum See" in *Simultan* (1972), which also contain a significant amount of interaction between women, but which have been largely analyzed in terms of male-female dynamics. This is unfortunate given that there appear to be certain parallels in terms of the way women are portrayed in the three aforementioned texts that have not been previously examined. This thesis endeavours to address this neglected area of study.

In the *Erzählungen* "Gomorrha," "Das Gebell," and "Drei Wege," a central female protagonist encounters one or more female characters, who in turn facilitate a certain kind of self-reflection on the part of the protagonist upon a series of issues associated with female identity against the backdrop of postwar Austria. Arguably there is a causal relationship between the female-female interactions in these *Erzählungen* and

a conscious or semi-conscious exploration of questions of identity, gender, and power. In other words, the women in each of these *Erzählungen* appear to reach new heights of self-examination as they encounter other women.

Insights derived from investigating the way in which Bachmann represents female-female interactions and issues of gender and identity construction are significant to an overall greater appreciation of Bachmann's creative project as a writer. Furthermore, this analysis serves to elucidate themes that may lead to a greater understanding of other works by Bachmann, such as the *Todesarten* novel cycle. Bachmann, who was born in Klagenfurt, Austria, in 1926, grew up under the spectre of fascism and later emerged as one of the leading Austrian postwar literary voices of her generation. One of the few female members of the avant-garde *Gruppe 47*, Bachmann was initially celebrated as a lyric poet, but was also appreciated for her prose and critical writings towards the end of her relatively short life.[1] Her chief literary works apart from the two volumes of *Erzählungen* listed above include two volumes of poetry: *Die gestundete Zeit: Gedichte* (1953), *Anrufung des Großen Bären* (1957); a series of Hörspiele: *Der gute Gott von Manhattan* (1958), *Ein Geschäft mit Träumen* (first aired 1952; published 1976), *Die Zikaden* (first aired 1955; published 1976); a collection of published lectures on poetics given in 1959-60 at the University of Frankfurt: *Frankfurter Vorlesungen: Probleme zeitgenössischer Dichtung* (1980), and the *Todesarten* novel cycle, which consists of the completed novel, *Malina* (1971), and two novel fragments: *Der Fall Franza* and *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann* (written in early 1970s; published 1978).

Bachmann's work underwent a radical re-evaluation in the late 1970s, when her work was read and interpreted by critics with feminist interests. A leading Bachmann

scholar, Sara Lennox, claims that the feminist reassessment of Bachmann's work led to a "renaissance in Bachmann scholarship," which firmly placed Bachmann's work at the centre of the "German feminist literary canon" (74). Despite the fact that Bachmann's work has long been heralded as feminist in scope and content, there has scarcely ever been a consensus on how Bachmann's work should be read or indeed whether her work could be considered to constitute a unified feminist position. Some critics have, for example, argued that Bachmann's work is essentially utopian in thrust, whilst others have considered it to represent a dystopian vision.

Bachmann's *Erzählungen* have also been subject to varying interpretations since their initial publication. Early critics (Baden; Beckmann; Pausch; Reich-Ranicki et al.) writing in the 1960s and early 1970s tended to view Bachmann texts such as "Gomorrha" in purely literal terms. Heinz Beckmann, for example, even went as far as to consider "Gomorrha" to be cautionary about pursuing non-heterosexual relationships. Subsequent critics writing from a feminist perspective contradicted such early interpretations and examined the text in terms of gender and female identity. Most critics have read "Gomorrha" as ultimately representing a failure on the part of the protagonist, Charlotte, and in some cases even Bachmann herself to project a positive, autonomous female self. Other critics, most notably Karen Achberger, have challenged this position and have argued that the text represents a utopian rebuilding of female identity. Although the relationship that develops between the women in "Gomorrha" has been addressed by critics, there has not been a sustained comparative analysis between the relationship that unfolds in "Gomorrha" and female-female interactions in other *Erzählungen* by Bachmann.

"Das Gebell" has been a largely neglected text compared to "Gomorrha," which

has been the subject of a number of scholarly articles and book chapters. Critics analyzing "Das Gebell" have generally focused exclusively on the oppressive mother-son relationship that figures prominently in the text. Much less attention has been paid to the relationship between "die alte Frau Jordan" and her daughter-in-law, "die junge Frau Jordan" or Franziska, who is a character Bachmann later revisits in her unfinished novel, *Der Fall Franza*.[2] This thesis will put forward the contention that "Das Gebell" is as much Franziska's story as it is the story of "die alte Frau Jordan." For the first time, this thesis will also present a comparison between Charlotte of "Gomorrha" and Franziska of "Das Gebell" – two women who appear to be on a similar trajectory when it comes to their marital discontent.

Although some critics (Achberger; Schmid-Bortenschlager; Weigel et al.) have addressed issues of gender in the context of "Drei Wege," most critics (Dollenmayer; Gluscevic; Lensing; West-Nutting; Omelaniuk et al.) have interpreted the text in terms of its historical context and its intertextuality with the novels of Joseph Roth. There has also been a considerable amount of discussion surrounding the so-called biographical parallels between Elisabeth Matrei, the protagonist of "Drei Wege," and Bachmann herself. Less attention has been paid to the three women Elisabeth Matrei encounters and who cause her to examine the choices she has made in life.

The question this thesis will seek to answer is whether or not there are similarities in the representation of female-female interactions in the three selected *Erzählungen*, and whether the way in which the women interact with each other reveals a common conception of gender and identity construction. Chapter one will consist of a comprehensive review of the previous secondary literature and a close-reading of Bachmann's "Gomorrha" from the perspective of female-female interaction. Chapters

two and three will examine "Das Gebell" and "Drei Wege" in similar fashion. The conclusion will, apart from comparing and contrasting the above three texts, contextualize the findings within Bachmann's work as a whole and propose new research questions and directions for future scholarship.

Notes: Introduction

[1] Bachmann died on October 17th, 1973 in Rome at the age of 47. Her death was the result of first-degree burns sustained the previous month in an accidental house fire.

[2] Franziska of "Das Gebell" and Franza of *Der Fall Franza* are generally considered to be one and the same. In both "Das Gebell" and *Der Fall Franza*, Franziska and Franza are married to the sadistic Viennese psychiatrist, Dr. Leopold Jordan, and they share what appears to be the same fate.

Chapter One

"Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha": The Seduction of the Self

1.1: Introduction

"Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" is the fifth of seven *Erzählungen* in Ingeborg Bachmann's first collection of *Erzählungen*, *Das dreißigste Jahr*, written between 1956-57 and first published in 1961. Of all the texts in the *Das dreißigste Jahr* collection, "Gomorrha" has perhaps most often been the subject of scholarly interest, especially since the early 1980s and the establishment of a feminist literary discourse. "Gomorrha" is indeed only one of two *Erzählungen* in *Das dreißigste Jahr* to assume a female narrative perspective. The other text to do so is the prose monologue and final *Erzählung* in *Das dreißigste Jahr*, "Undine geht." "Gomorrha" is therefore not only Bachmann's first prose text to be written from a female viewpoint, but it is also the sole text in *Das dreißigste Jahr* to feature interaction between women.

The two women, Charlotte and Mara, who come to know one another in "Gomorrha" are both in search of the elusive fulfillment of certain wishes. Mara lingers at the end of Charlotte's party and refuses to leave until she has had a chance to speak to Charlotte. Although it is not clear at the beginning of the text what Mara's intentions might be and indeed whether she wishes to relate a "Geschichte," as Charlotte suspects, it soon becomes clear that she is interested in propositioning Charlotte. Charlotte is not easily seduced, however, and maintains an apparent aloofness that infuriates and frustrates Mara. Charlotte eventually does fantasize about a life with Mara as well as an end to her oppressive marriage and patriarchy in general. She can only conceive,

however, of a relationship which mirrors the kind of dominant-submissive patterns she is accustomed to experiencing in heterosexual relationships. As is expected, Charlotte ends up abandoning her fantasy to return to her bourgeois life with her husband, Franz, and a relationship between the two women never materializes.

What is significant about the interaction between Charlotte and Mara is that Mara precipitates a certain kind of "existential crisis" within Charlotte, which in turn forces Charlotte to question her marriage, her previous relationships with men, and to consider the possibility of beginning a relationship with a woman. Mara acts as a kind of "catalyst," enabling Charlotte to question at least some of her bourgeois assumptions for a few hours. Indeed at the beginning of the text, it seems scarcely imaginable that Charlotte would later go off in the middle of the night to a sleazy bar with the much younger Mara and indulge in the kind of flirtation that does ensue. Of course, Charlotte's transformation is short-lived and superficial. Even in a fictionalized relationship with Mara, Charlotte is unable to "free" herself from her urge to dominate Mara and the desire to retain polarized gender roles.

Dominance pervades the text and it is not only Charlotte who seeks to dominate. Mara initially wishes to dominate Charlotte as she aggressively pursues her, and Charlotte's husband, Franz remains a dominating force even in his absence. Franz, who serves to represent patriarchy in general, asserts his power and the two women are very much aware of this and are, in a sense, held captive by it. While contemplating a relationship with Mara, Charlotte becomes aware that she has always existed in environments dictated by men and that even if she were to leave Franz, "so ginge sie [Charlotte] in eine andere Ordnung [...] in eine Ordnung jedenfalls, die nicht die ihre war – das würde sich nie ändern" (123). Mara, similarly, appears to be aware of Franz's

"omnipresence," despite his physical absence. The encounter that unfolds between Charlotte and Mara could seemingly only take place in Franz's absence and in a "space" outside of what Charlotte considers "unsere Wohnung" (118), although it becomes apparent that the "Wohnung" belongs to Franz and that he is very much still "present." Charlotte's nervousness surrounding Franz's impending arrival and her accompanying "Pflichten" (111) is communicated to Mara and serves to reinforce that by the following day all must return to "normal" when Franz returns and the established "Ordnung" is to be resumed.

Once approached by Mara, Charlotte reveals herself to be far from the happy and dutiful wife she appears to be and is prepared to acknowledge that her marriage is stifling. Mara offers Charlotte a tantalizing means of escape, but instead of taking up Mara's offer and/or deciding to leave her marriage, Charlotte favours temporary escape through fantasy. This chapter will explore how Mara functions as a "catalyst" in "Gomorrha," capable of bringing about Charlotte's dramatic "existential crisis." Why does Mara, another woman, serve as an effective "catalyst," but remains powerless in bringing about anything but temporary change? There will also be a discussion of how, despite her obvious desire to escape her marital circumstances, Charlotte decides to go no further than experiencing momentary escape through fantasy. Charlotte's fantasy of constructing an alternative identity fails as the fantasy merely serves to perpetuate the kind of inequality Charlotte wishes to reject. This apparent contradiction will be addressed in this chapter. First of all, however, the reception to Bachmann's "Gomorrha" will be discussed. The criticism concerning Charlotte's identity and concept of gender will serve as a starting point for this analysis.

1.2: Reception

There was considerable excitement surrounding the publication of Bachmann's first work of prose fiction, *Das dreißigste Jahr*, in June 1961. Bachmann was already established as one of the leading postwar German-speaking poets of her day, and the public and critics alike eagerly anticipated her first volume of *Erzählungen*. One journalist at the time pointed out that "die ersten *Erzählungen* von Ingeborg Bachmann waren so lange angekündigt, daß ihr endliches Erscheinen [...] fast eine Sensation bedeutete (qtd. in Hotz 100)," another echoed this sentiment claiming that "es gibt nicht viele Bücher unter den ungezählten Neuerscheinungen einer Saison, die erwartet werden und denen ein gewisser Ruf vorauseilt. Zu diesen Büchern gehören die *Erzählungen* der Lyrikerin und Hörspielautorin Ingeborg Bachmann" (qtd. in Hotz 99-100).

When Bachmann's long-awaited *Das dreißigste Jahr* was eventually released after several years of revisions and delays, the reception was rather mixed. Although hailed as a brilliant piece of work and the fulfillment of all possible expectations by some critics, the volume was also sharply criticized by others (qtd. in Hotz 100-01). For example, one critic suggested that "[d]ie Geschichten pendeln zwischen Poesie und Kitsch [...]" (qtd. in Hotz 101), another writing for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* explained that Bachmann failed to realize the "Sprachlosen in Sprache" (qtd. in Hotz 101), something she apparently so deftly achieved in her poetry, that the stories unfortunately ended up descending into banal sentimentality and "haben keine eigentliche Handlung, keinen Ablauf, keine Charaktere – dies vor allem" (qtd. in Hotz 99). Despite the harsh criticism, Bachmann's image as "Dichterin" did not seem to be challenged, many critics claimed that her prose at the very least reflected her poetry, and as one critic wrote "hier verwandelt sich Prosa in Poesie" (qtd. in O'Regan 7). Despite initially mixed reviews,

Bachmann was nonetheless awarded the annual literary prize of the "Verband der Deutschen Kritiker" five months after the volume's publication.

Early critics (Baden; Beckmann; Pausch; Reich-Ranicki et al.) writing specifically about "Gomorrha" during the 1960s and 1970s tended to view the piece as reflecting literal, lesbian seduction. Beckmann claims that Charlotte is somehow tired "nach Abenteuern mit Männern" (48), and is quite receptive towards "eine Lesbierin" (Mara), who is intent on seducing her. The affair between the two never materializes argue these critics, because a same-sex relationship is shown to not be a viable alternative to the heterosexual norm. Early critics seem oblivious to the critically feminist elements of "Gomorrha," preferring to interpret the text along rather homophobic lines.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s criticism dealing with "Gomorrha" became decidedly feminist in character. In 1980, Ritta Jo Horsley published an article claiming that "Gomorrha" offers a critique of heterosexual relationships and that the text itself constitutes an "early effort" (292) on Bachmann's part to deal with the issue of female identity – albeit an effort she considers "unresolved and contradictory" (292). Charlotte's identity and autonomy, argues Horsley, are contingent upon her being able to subjugate Mara. As a result of this, Horsley is disappointed with the failure of "Gomorrha" to construct a positive, autonomous female self and/or allow for a relationship between Charlotte and Mara. In another 1980 article specifically dedicated to "Gomorrha," Dinah Dodds claims that although Bachmann critiques heterosexual relationships, she also characterizes lesbian relationships negatively. Like Horsley, Dodds erroneously ascribes the narrative voice of "Gomorrha" to that of Bachmann herself. Dodds is the first critic to explore the biblical allusions in "Gomorrha" and

concludes that they contribute to the overall pessimism of the piece.[1] According to Dodds, "Gomorrha" reveals that "conventional expectations determine our behaviour" (436), and that gender roles and expectations are arbitrary, given how easily they can be reversed (436). Charlotte adopts what she considers the "male role" and chooses to feminize Mara. Ultimately, Dodds concludes that "Gomorrha" poses the question of whether or not all human relationships are "damned to inequality" (436).

In 1982 Achberger published an influential article claiming that Bachmann's "Gomorrha" represents a "weibliche Schöpfungsgeschichte" ("Bachmann" 97). In 1995 Achberger published a book entitled *Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann*, in which she reiterates the position she takes in her 1982 article. Unlike earlier critics, who focused upon the lesbian encounter between Charlotte and Mara in literal terms, and feminist critics, who read the text as a critique of heterosexual relationships, marriage, and/or unequal partnerships, Achberger reads the text in purely allegorical terms. Achberger argues that the biblical allusions present in "Gomorrha" reveal the text to be one of destruction, creation, death and then salvation.[2] She claims that "Gomorrha" represents a "new genesis, the creation of a new female self, a 'counter-image' out of the ashes of a male-centered world," as Charlotte creates Mara in her own image and likeness and then endeavours to exist without Franz (*Understanding* 101). What is problematic with Achberger's conclusions, however, is that Charlotte is arguably not "reborn," as she apparently returns to her bourgeois life with Franz and no relationship with Mara is realized.

In his 1988 book, Peter Beicken wrote that instead of considering "Gomorrha" a utopian "weibliche Schöpfungsgeschichte" as Achberger does, one could argue that "Gomorrha" represents an "androgyne Sehnsucht" (178). Beicken cites Charlotte's

statement: "komm, daß ich [Charlotte] erwache, wenn dies nicht mehr gilt - Mann und Frau" (125), as evidence that she seeks an androgynous alternative. Although an intriguing reading of the text, it is not without its problems. Charlotte seems far too intent on adopting the "male role" and dominating the "feminized" Mara to opt for an androgynous alternative, although perhaps if she had conceived of less polarized gender roles, the thought of an androgynous ideal might have presented itself as a possible solution.

In a 1990 article, Gerhard Neumann argues that, above all else, "Gomorrha" represents a "Dialektik von Krise und Identität" (58). Such a dialectic is inherently part of the *Novelle*, Neumann argues, and in terms of structure and theme, "Gomorrha" is no different. Neumann points out that "das Fest" is an "Identitätsritual im ausgezeichneten Sinne" (58), precipitating a kind of self-reflection that is realized in "Gomorrha." Of course, it seems that self-reflection is only the starting point and that given its thematic material, "Gomorrha" is quite a departure from the 19th century German-language *Novellen* that Neumann considers Bachmann to have potentially drawn upon.

In 1992 Madeleine Marti published the first study to undertake a sustained analysis of lesbian representation and experience in postwar German literature. In her book, Marti dedicates a chapter to Bachmann's "Gomorrha." She discusses the possibility that Charlotte represses her lesbian feelings because of societal expectations and points out that "Sprachlosigkeit" (98) is a "leitmotiv" throughout "Gomorrha" - just as it is generally seen as a theme throughout Bachmann's work. Marti explores "die spezifische Sprachlosigkeit lesbischen Begehrens" (98), as opposed to simply the notion of the silencing of women in general. Certainly, what becomes clear in "Gomorrha" is that Charlotte and Mara have difficulty communicating with one another in an honest

and direct fashion. Charlotte is also apt to dismiss whatever Mara says *because* she is a woman and believes that women communicate in an ineffectual and indirect manner.

Karin Bauer wrote an article dealing with "Gomorrha" in a 1998 anthology that offers queer readings of canonical works of German literature. Bauer points out that Mara's proposition does not so much send Charlotte headlong into a critique of her marriage or to ponder the possibly of a life with Mara, but rather "one of gender identification bringing to consciousness latent conflicts and resentments" (222). What is presented in "Gomorrha," writes Bauer, is a "brief fantasy of power" (223), not a transformative "rebirth" as critics, such as Achberger, contend. Bauer emphasizes that Charlotte's "journey" is not progressive (225). Key to the understanding of the "Gomorrha" text, writes Bauer, is the realization that the text is actually void of eroticism on Charlotte's part. Charlotte fails to create "an erotic space in her fantasies which could prefigure a sexual encounter with Mara" (230) and as a result the encounter between the two women is defined by the opportunity Charlotte "sees" in being able to wield power over Mara.

Anca-Elena Luca wrote an article on "Gomorrha" in 2001 that offers a post-colonial reading of the text. Luca argues that the Viennese Charlotte "colonizes" the Slovenian Mara in a manner reminiscent of Hapsburg Austria's conquests (53). Luca's parallel is an intriguing one and no doubt there is significance in the fact that the protagonist, Charlotte, encounters Mara, whom one learns is "von der Grenze" (111) in more ways than one. Luca's analysis establishes that Charlotte and Mara represent two very disparate cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and that their encounter is destined to be one of potential conflict and discord, defined by unequal power relations and domination.

Most recently in 2002, an analysis of "Gomorrha" was written by Kirsten Krick-Aigner that appears in her book, *Ingeborg Bachmann's Telling Stories: Fairy-Tale Beginnings and Holocaust Endings*. Krick-Aigner discusses the centrality of fairy tale allusions in "Gomorrha," most notably the tale of "Bluebeard's Castle" and how it serves to elucidate issues of gender, language and female identity. "It is a power issue" (146), Krick-Aigner argues, who reads Charlotte's desire to play the masculine role of "Bluebeard," and at least metaphorically imprison her seven male ex-lovers, as motivated by a desire to exert power. She not only wants to dominate Mara, but she wants to dominate her past male lovers as well. Charlotte wants to be all-powerful it seems, not just in her dealings with Mara. Krick-Aigner argues that in Charlotte's adoption of the "male role" of "Bluebeard" it is revealed that "Bluebeard is not necessarily male, but rather [represents] a figure or a group which dominates and destroys those defined as 'Other'" (152).

1.3: Analysis

Bachmann's "Gomorrha" begins with a dramatic scene in which the two women, Charlotte and Mara, face one another in an empty room after a party has long come to an end. There seems to be no question that what will develop will be centred upon these two women in the wake of something that has already come and gone. As the reader progresses through the text, of course, it becomes clear that it is not only the party that has come to an end, but also the opportunity for Charlotte to start afresh in her own life. At the outset of the text, an impatient and "todmüde" (110) Charlotte tries to induce Mara to leave after her party, but Mara insists on staying. Charlotte is far too polite to ask Mara to leave directly and only after some effort on her part is finally able to suggest

that she will call a taxi after she makes some coffee. Charlotte is anxious, because she knows that she must rise early the following morning in order that she fulfil her "Pflichten" (111), namely "morgen früh Franz abholen, den Wecker stellen, frisch sein, ausgeschlafen sein, einen erfreuten Eindruck machen" (111). Charlotte seems quite automaton-like in the way she lists off her duties and anticipates having to give the impression that she is well-rested and pleased to see her husband, Franz. Although it is perhaps not immediately obvious at the beginning of the text, the reader soon realizes that Charlotte's weariness and impatience is indicative of her inability to speak her own mind, as well as the disillusionment she feels towards her marriage.

Mara is described as having "herabhängendes Haar, das rötlich glänzte, auf den roten Rock, der, wie eine Capa ausgebreitet, über die Beine des Mädchens fiel" (110), and the light in the room makes it seem that "ein einziges Mal war die Welt in Rot" (110). Previous critics have made much of this initial intense moment, in which Charlotte and Mara first notice one another, and Charlotte is overcome by a cacophony of intrusive, red tones. Dodds argues that Mara emerges from the very beginning of the story as an "Eve figure" (432), a "temptress in red [...] leading Charlotte towards Gomorrha, towards the sin of homosexual love" (432). On a purely visual level it seems that Mara's crimson cape-like skirt seems to resemble a "bullfighter's cape" (Dodds 432) and in turn her very unwelcome presence seems to offer a challenge to Charlotte. Certainly, Mara's presence makes Charlotte feel uncomfortable in her own apartment and "space." Krick-Aigner claims that Mara's red skirt conjures up feelings of anger and rage within Charlotte, which foreshadow Charlotte's later crisis (144). Charlotte "sees" red as she is exasperated by Mara's refusal to leave, but she is also upset on a more personal level about her disappointing marriage. Mara remains silent until she

questions Charlotte about Franz. Mara quite impudently asks Charlotte about Franz's absence and suggests to her that she is fully aware that "[e]r ist oft verreist. Da sind Sie [Charlotte] viel allein" (112). Charlotte is offended by the comment and Mara's presumed familiarity but "es war zu spät" (111) to respond with a suitable comeback The reader suspects that Mara may very well be correct in her assumption and that she has managed to touch upon that which troubles Charlotte most.

Mara, although female, is associated with the masculine trappings of bullfighting, as well as the image of the seductive "femme fatale." In a sense, Mara seems to simultaneously embody both masculine and feminine characteristics. The "femme fatale" characterization is largely negative, in that it essentially relegates Mara to the status of "object" and/or seductive, whore-like temptress. It is nonetheless significant that it is not a man who remains after the party and ends up propositioning Charlotte while her husband is out of town. Instead, it is another woman who takes on this role and in turn seems to be able to profoundly unnerve the highly composed Charlotte. Of course, the idea of pursuing a same-sex relationship itself is something which would have been largely taboo at the time of "Gomorrha's" publication and it contributes to the drama and intensity of the female-female encounter. It would likely not prove to be such an explosive encounter if the two women were to be merely friends.

What the reader learns of Charlotte is that she is by no means a "traditional" sort of woman, but rather a successful concert pianist. She is not a housewife and mother, who might be limited to the domestic realm, but yet even in having her own career, Charlotte remains discontented. Mara, on the other hand, emerges as a much more shadowy figure. Charlotte is not even quite sure who she might be. Charlotte assumes that she must be a student and is likely "eine Slowenin, halbe Slowenin, von der Grenze"

(111) - someone who represents something foreign and unknown to the respectable, Viennese Charlotte. The women contrast each other in terms of age, background and culture, one Viennese, the other from Eastern Europe, one middle-aged, the other a young student referred to as "ein Mädchen." They also likely differ from one another in terms of language and ethnicity. Although not mentioned in the text, it is probable that Mara is not a native German speaker. Mara represents the "Other" in this sense (Horsley 281), not only because of her cultural and likely ethnic and linguistic differences, but also because she is representative of the feminine "Other," the "femme fatale," and ultimately an "object" as Charlotte later "feminizes" the younger Mara.

Horsley argues that although Charlotte and Mara seem to be each other's antithesis, the absence of quotation marks for dialogue blurs distinctions between the two women, leading one to believe that Mara is not a "fully realized character" (280). Certainly it seems that when Charlotte first notices Mara across the empty room she could have been looking at her own image in the mirror. Charlotte initially notices Mara and believes that Mara "wird mir eine Geschichte erzählen" (111), only to realize as Bauer points out that "[i]t is Charlotte who has a story with which she cheats herself of her sleep" (222). In this sense, Mara could be seen as an image invented by Charlotte and posing the questions that Charlotte really wishes to ask herself. Later in the text, Charlotte realizes in listening to Mara that "[s]ie [Charlotte] hatte das schon einmal gehört – nicht die Worte, aber den Tonfall" (122). In other words, Charlotte "sees" and/or "hears" herself in Mara, someone she considers is "aus dem Stoff, aus dem ich gemacht bin" (117). Achberger goes even further with the theory that Mara is not a "self-sufficient" character, writing that Mara "exists only within the context of Charlotte's mind, has no space or existence of her own" (*Understanding* 84). At one

point in the text, Charlotte thinks that if she can prevent Mara from following her back into the apartment when they return from the bar and "wenn Mara nun wie durch ein Wunder verschwand oder plötzlich doch fortging, dann würde morgen alles nur wie ein Spuk erscheinen, es würde wie nie gewesen sein" (118). Clearly, there is a suggestion that the evening that Charlotte and Mara spend together could be considered nothing more than "ein Spuk" if Mara were to make her exit soon enough.

It is significant that the figural perspective in "Gomorrha" serves to reveal Charlotte's views, while Mara's remain largely unknown. One is led to wonder if indeed the two women are not simply one and the same, and Mara is nothing more than an imaginary construct invented by an exhausted and possibly intoxicated Charlotte. What emerges as a result of this uncertainty about Mara's status as a "self-sufficient" character is a certain kind of interplay between sameness and difference. Furthermore, there is a possibility of the "Other" being the same as oneself. Mara may appear to personify all that which differs from Charlotte, however, there is an inescapable sameness between the two women. Mara is revealed, in this sense, to function at least in part as an alter-ego as well as a foil to Charlotte. Horsley contends that Mara creates an "alienation effect" in that through her presence Charlotte is able to recognize "aspects of her role [as a woman] previously invisible to her" (283).

Charlotte's attempts to induce Mara to leave fail and Charlotte eventually, and quite surprisingly, accepts Mara's rather bold invitation to accompany her to a bar. It is not quite clear what prompts Charlotte to abandon her worries and accept Mara's invitation. Charlotte is relieved, however, that Mara is finally leaving the apartment and she quite forcefully "schob das Mädchen zur Tür hinaus" (112). Ultimately Mara succeeds in manipulating Charlotte, as it is she who decides where they will go. At this

point, Mara takes the upper hand and adopts what could be construed as an assertive, traditionally "male role." This is made even clearer when en route to the bar, Mara grasps at Charlotte, forcing her bracelet to cut into Charlotte's wrist, and willing Charlotte onward. Luca contends this is indicative of Mara's dominance over Charlotte. Despite being described as a "furchtsames Kind" (113), Mara takes the lead and puts her hands upon Charlotte –something that could be seen as symbolizing dominance. The pair is described as resembling "zwei Schulmädchen" (113) as they race across the Franziskanerplatz, which appears to be more a deserted "Dorfplatz" (112) as they make their way to the bar. An image of a simpler, more innocent, and perhaps "freer" time is evoked as the two women seem like young girls and Vienna is more like a village. This moment of "freedom" foreshadows Charlotte's later crisis in which she "sie ließ ihren Gefühlen und Gedanken freien Lauf" (121).

At the bar, Charlotte feels she has entered into a "Höllenraum" (113), as she is once again confronted by the ubiquitous colour red. At this point in the text, argues Dodds, it is clear that Mara, the temptress, is now an "Eve figure" or perhaps the red apple itself, trying to lead Charlotte astray (432). As one might expect, the somewhat restrained Charlotte is "von Unsicherheit befallen" (113), as she feels alienated in a world far from her own, and is afraid she might meet someone she knows. Sitting in the bar, Charlotte senses that "[d]ie Zeit ging nicht aus" (115), nor the wine, which seems endless. This "leitmotiv" of endlessness suggests the weight of Charlotte's disgruntlement and the inescapability of her negative feelings. After a few drinks, an invitation to dance from two men, which they decline, and what might be construed as flirtation on the part of Mara directed towards Charlotte, they leave and return to Charlotte's apartment.

On the way back to the apartment, Charlotte keeps her hands in her pockets and does not allow Mara to touch her as before. Mara timidly clings, however, to Charlotte, and in turn, Charlotte starts to feel "größer und stärker" (116) than usual. This is the beginning of Charlotte's emerging realization that she might be able to dominate Mara in the way Franz has dominated her, although she does not immediately come to this conclusion. Once back at the apartment, Charlotte is still intent upon Mara leaving and fears that "diese Nacht kein Ende nehmen werde, daß diese Nacht ja erst im Anfang war und womöglich ohne Ende" (116). Charlotte wants the evening to come to an end and the morning to come and all to return to "normal." She is uncomfortable with the concept of endlessness and the possibility that something new could be emerging. Frustrated, Charlotte shouts at Mara: "Das ist Wahnsinn, du bist wahnsinnig" (116), as she realizes that Mara is keen on pursuing her and refuses to leave the apartment. Charlotte's harsh words bring Mara to tears and she claims that she was surely a guest and that "du [Charlotte] hast mich gerufen" (118). Again, there is the suggestion that Mara has been "called upon" by a troubled Charlotte. Charlotte is confused and thinks to herself: "wie aber kann ich Mara berühren? Sie ist aus dem Stoff, aus dem ich gemacht bin" (117). Charlotte cannot fathom a same-sex encounter at this stage, however, seems to surrender to some extent to Mara as Mara presses her tear-soaked face against Charlotte's and they finally kiss. Charlotte is surprised by how "alles war soviel kleiner, gebrechlicher, nichtiger als je ein Kopf, je Haar, je Küsse gewesen waren, die über Charlotte gekommen waren. Sie suchte in ihren Gefühlen nach einer Anweisung, in ihren Händen nach einem Instinkt, in ihrem Kopf nach einer Kundgebung. Sie blieb ohne Anweisung" (119). Charlotte compares the experience of Mara's kiss to that of the kisses she gave her pet cat on the nose as a child. It does not

seem particularly unpleasant, but it is for Charlotte unfamiliar, strange and not particularly erotic. This lack of eroticism, Bauer argues, is of great significance, in that there is no creation of an erotic "space," and the encounter between the two women is destined to be merely a struggle for power (223).

The kiss between the two women also reveals Charlotte's fundamental contempt for Mara. Charlotte condescendingly indulges in the kiss with Mara, whom she has come to believe represents that which is trivial, child-like, animal-like, and "ohne Muskel" (119) simply *because* she is a woman. What is most significant about the kiss, however, for Charlotte is that in experiencing Mara's kiss she comes to the realization that "so also waren ihre eigenen Lippen, so ähnlich begegneten sie einem Mann, schmal, fast widerstandlos, fast ohne Muskel – eine kleine Schnauze, nicht ernst zu nehmen" (119). At this point, Charlotte comes to an awareness that the way in which Mara kissed her was surely the way in which she herself had kissed men and she realizes that she has now just experienced what the men she had kissed had felt. She "sees" herself in Mara, and it is a self that is passive, weak, and not to be taken seriously. This unsettling awareness causes Charlotte to look at her watch and announce that it is four o'clock in the morning and Mara will have to leave. Mara begs only for Charlotte to kiss her, but when affection is denied, flies into a rage and questions Charlotte straight out: "Liebst du ihn [Franz]?" (120) and suggests that there is a certain amount of gossip surrounding Charlotte and Franz's marriage. The truth is, of course, that Charlotte *is* unhappy in her marriage and is simply continuing with it because she does not see an alternative way of being for herself. As stated later in the text, even if she were to leave her marriage, Charlotte feels that she would surely find herself "in eine andere Ordnung, [...] in eine Ordnung jedenfalls, die nicht die ihre war – das würde sich nie ändern" (123).

In a rage, Mara tells Charlotte that she hates everything about Vienna, including her studies, the academy and everyone she seems to meet. Seized with anger, she starts to smash the contents of Charlotte's apartment until she eventually stops and begs for forgiveness. Charlotte coolly observes the destruction taking place before her, and instead of reacting to what Mara has just done, she simply counts the things Mara has destroyed and bends down to pick up the remaining pieces. At this point, the narrator explains that "ihre [Charlottes] Gefühle, ihre Gedanken sprangen aus dem gewohnten Gleis, rasten ohne Bahn ins Freie. Sie ließ ihren Gefühlen und Gedanken freien Lauf. Sie war frei. Nichts mehr erschien ihr unmöglich" (121). This is a climactic moment of possibility for Charlotte as she feels no longer bound by societal expectations and the need for "Anweisungen" (119). Everything seems possible – a relationship with Mara and a new future without Franz. Charlotte asks herself why she should not in fact live "mit einem Wesen von gleicher Beschaffenheit" (121). Mara kneels down in front of Charlotte, asks for forgiveness, and tells Charlotte how she feels: "ich bin verrückt, nach dir verrückt, ich möchte, ich glaube, ich könnte..." (121). Charlotte decides that she has no idea what Mara is trying to say and thinks to herself: "Die Sprache der Männer war doch so gewesen in solchen Stunden, daß man sich daran hatte halten können" (121). It has method and "Muskel" (121). Again, Charlotte is portrayed as having contempt for what she considers typically female and inferior – necessitating her, it seems, to adhere to polarized gender roles.

Charlotte explains to Mara that they must discuss things reasonably and truthfully, however, she doubts this is even possible, as Mara seems to her far too vague and irrational. Mara tells Charlotte that she must stroke her head and tell it, the head, what to think. Mara seems to fulfill Charlotte's fantasy of physical dominance, by

insisting that her head be stroked: "Mein armer Kopf! Du mußt Mitleid mit ihm haben, mußt ihn streicheln, ihm sagen, was er denken soll" (122). Mara seeks direction, reassurance and acceptance from Charlotte, as she allows herself to be objectified. Charlotte begins to stroke Mara's head and then she stops. She realizes that she has heard Mara's pleas before, not the same words, but the same intonation and thinks "sie [Charlotte] selber hatte oft so dahingeredet, besonders in der ersten Zeit mit Franz, auch vor Milan war sie in diesen Ton verfallen, hatte sie Stimme zu Rüschen gezogen; diesen Singsang voll Unverstand hatte er sich anhören müssen, angeplappert hatte sie ihn, mit verzogenem Mund, ein Schwacher den Starken, eine Hilflose, Unverständige, ihn, den Verständigen" (121). Charlotte feels that she had played out the same weaknesses in order to get what she wanted, and now Mara is taking advantage of her in the same way. She realizes this and questions the way she reacts to it, and decides that "es sollte zu gelten anfangen, was sie dachte und meinte, und nicht mehr gelten sollte, was man sie angehalten hatte zu denken und was man ihr erlaubt hatte zu leben" (123). Charlotte recognizes that in her married life with Franz she has repressed what she has really thought and felt for Franz's benefit and has allowed herself to be subjugated. Charlotte "sees" her own self in Mara and she is met with feelings of embarrassment, shame, and anger; she wants to bring about her own revenge upon Franz and her ex-lovers who have seen her as a weak and ineffectual woman.

Charlotte considers a possible relationship and life with Mara. She thinks about how all the furniture in the apartment had been chosen by Franz, that it is really his environment, just as previous boyfriends had had their environments, and that she felt she could only accept it and dare not change nor contribute to it. If she were to live with Mara, Charlotte reasons, she could subjugate her: "Mara würde sich unterwerfen

können, sie lenken und schieben können" (124). She would have a "wife" - "das langhaarige schwache Geschöpf" (124) - who would do everything for her, support her, champion only her. She would be able to make all the decisions, just as Franz currently makes all the decisions. Charlotte even goes so far as to say that if only one could sleep for a thousand years and be awoken "von anderen Hand" (125) and the abolishment of "Mann und Frau. Wenn dies einmal zu Ende ist!" (125). Charlotte feels at this point that Franz is "dead." She mourns him as if he were really dead and decides that she was the one who carried out her own subjugation, not Franz, as "er gar nicht hatte wissen können, was an ihr zu unterwerfen war" (125).

Charlotte realizes, however, that there is little that can be done. She feels that the institution of marriage cannot tolerate change or innovation, and to enter into it means to assume its form. She then calls into question the reason why she even married Franz, and why she had ever been with men in the first place. "Es war zu absurd" (126), she thinks. While Mara sleeps, and Charlotte stays awake on "Nachtwache" (126), she contemplates a possible new beginning with Mara. If anything, this would be it – a new beginning. Charlotte bends down and kisses the sleeping Mara on the hand and on the lips. Charlotte ponders, quite philosophically, what might have happened if humanity could once more reach for the fruit, "noch einmal Zorn erregen, sich einmal noch entscheiden für seine Erde!" (127) If only humanity could experience another, different kind of awakening. If only the fruit had not been consumed at all. There would be endless possibilities and Charlotte imagines that she would be no one's wife, would not yet exist, and would be able to decide who she is, be able to have her creature (i.e. Mara).

Charlotte, however, feels: "Ich will Mara nicht, weil ich ihren Mund, ihr

Geschlecht – mein eigenes –will. Nichts dargleichen. Ich will mein Geschöpf, und ich werde es mir machen. Wir haben immer von unseren Ideen gelebt, und dies ist meine Idee" (128). Charlotte sees the opportunity in being in a position of domination and power by subjugating Mara, but she also realizes that her life would be much easier if she had Mara from whom she could expect loyalty. She realizes that "wenn sie Mara liebte, würde alles sich ändern" (128). She would have her creature to initiate into the world, would be able to choose how things would be run, what her home would look like, and she would be able to choose which language they would use to communicate. If only she *could* love Mara, then "wäre sie nicht mehr in dieser Stadt, in dem Land, bei einem Mann, in einer Sprache zu Hause, sondern bei sich - und dem Mädchen würde sie das Haus richten" (128). Charlotte, however, is not only incapable of creating any kind of erotic "space" in which she can exist with Mara, but also clings to the idea that in any relationship there must be an unequal exchange of power, wielded both physically and mentally. Even a relationship between two women it seems must adhere to polarized gender roles. Charlotte does not at any time consider the possibility of entering into an equal partnership with Mara.

Although she has loved men, Charlotte also believes that there has always remained "eine unbetretene Zone" (128). She could at least not in the past think of an alternative, a replacement to her life with men. She liked living in Franz's indulgence and accepted what she thought marriage inevitably meant. She considered herself indulgent towards him too, but doubted he noticed. She never complained, for example, that "[i]hre gute Ehe – das, was sie so nannte – gründete sich geradezu darauf, daß er von ihrem Körper nichts verstand" (130). The gap between men and women seems profound, as it is revealed that Franz has no concern for Charlotte's body and sexual

enjoyment. At this point, Mara, who has awoken, tries to touch Charlotte, but Charlotte does not reciprocate. Charlotte asks herself why she does not take Mara to bed with her, why she cannot go ahead and act on Mara's proposition. Mara assures Charlotte that she only wants to see her fall asleep, to comfort her; Charlotte, however, does nothing. Mara's reaction is to scream: "Du [Charlotte] hast ja bloß Angst vor mir, vor dir, vor ihm!" (131) and accuses Charlotte of being a coward.

Charlotte dreams of a new kingdom, her own kingdom, where she will no longer be defined by outside forces. She is frustrated with a language that endeavours to imprint certain limitations on her and which she then imprints on others. She calls it the "Mordversuch an der Wirklichkeit" (131). Charlotte considers the language of men "soweit sie auf die Frauen Anwendung fand, war schon schlimm genug gewesen und bezweifelbar" (131), yet she considers the language of women to be even worse – one that amounts to little more than endless clichés and maxims. Charlotte admits that she "sah Frauen gerne an" (132), yet she has never felt much desire to talk with women and in fact tries to avoid them. This is a significant statement, when one considers the negative way in which women are portrayed in "Gomorrha." Charlotte wishes to cast off her "femaleness," in order to assume a so-called autonomous male-role, and she sees Mara as a whiney, ineffectual woman who embodies all that which she considers "female." This is ironic given that Charlotte also momentarily meditates on the possibility of an existence free of patriarchy and pre-ordained traditions. What becomes clear is that Charlotte's ideas about gender, identity, and "femaleness" are essentially contradictory and rife with ambiguity.

If she were to live with Mara, Charlotte thinks, she would be able to educate her, and teach her how to communicate. Charlotte then shakes Mara awake, she is ready to

ask her what she wants. Mara is uncooperative, claims she has no interest in a successful music career, although she is considered talented. All that matters to her is love and loving as she says: "Lieben – lieben, das ist es. Lieben ist alles" (133). Mara is incredulous that Charlotte is so interested in her own music career. Mara asks Charlotte if she can stay with her and promises to do as Charlotte asks. She will cater to her every wish, support her, cook and clean for her, all on the condition that Charlotte love her and only her. Charlotte grabs Mara by the wrists, and as the narrator explains "sie schätzte ihre Beute ab, und die war brauchbar, war gut. Sie hatte ihr Geschöpf gefunden" (134). It appears that Charlotte has finally found her "Geschöpf" or creature that she can dominate in favour of winning her own autonomy from Franz. There is no eroticism or particular appreciation of Mara as an individual as she is simply referred to as a "Geschöpf" – a creature and object to be subjugated at will.

Ironically, despite Charlotte's wish to subjugate Mara, she decides that it is now time for a "Schichtwechsel" (134) and that she could "die Welt übernehmen, ihren Gefährten benennen, die Rechte und Pflichten festsetzen, die alten Bilder ungültig machen und das erste neue entwerfen" (134). Charlotte thinks of the "alte Bilder" of the "Jägerin, der großen Mutter und der großen Hure, der Samariterin, des Lockvogels aus der Tiefe und der unter die Sterne Versetzten" (134). Charlotte wishes to construct herself along her own lines, come up with a "Gegenbild" (134) and find herself in a kingdom of neither men nor women. Charlotte is exhausted, her eyelids drooping; she is hardly able to see Mara and the room in which she is sitting, which she calls her "letztes geheimes Zimmer" (135). In this room she wants to lock up forever her "dead" husband, Franz, and the other seven past male lovers she has had. Charlotte imagines that all the men are now present holding the flowers they have given her, which are now

all shriveled up. She decides that Mara would never be allowed to know about the room, and if she was to learn about it, she would surely join the "dead" lovers. Charlotte thinks that she could "geisterte um ihre Geister" (135). She would be in the position of power over her ex-lovers and would be able to exact her revenge upon them for the subjugation they expected from her.

Coincidently, Mara exclaims to Charlotte: "Ich bin tot" (135) and tells Charlotte that she no longer wishes to stay. Charlotte begs her to stay. As the sun begins to rise, the two women, both exhausted, head to the bedroom. Charlotte is described as knowing that "es zu spät war zu allem" (136). They both lie down on the bed, "zwei schöne Schläferinnen" (136), with what seems identical white slips. They are described as stroking each others shoulders, breasts. Charlotte weeps, yet turns over and winds up the alarm clock. Mara looks at Charlotte "gleichgültig" (136), they fall asleep, and then enter into "einen gewitterhaften Traum" (136). The once enticing red skirt lies crumpled and discarded on the ground, like a pool of blood.

What emerges in "Gomorrha" is a lengthy self-examination on the part of Charlotte, as precipitated by Mara's initially unwelcome presence. When faced with Mara's proposition, Charlotte considers a relationship with the younger woman but cannot transcend the kind of subject-object dichotomy she is accustomed to experiencing in heterosexual relationships. This is apparently contradictory, considering Charlotte is intent upon establishing a new "Schichtwechsel" (134) and "Gegenbild" (134), and yearns for what seems a feminist appropriation of traditionally patriarchal language and myths. She is unaware, however, that in wishing to dominate and subjugate Mara, she is simply furthering the kind of oppression she wishes to obliterate. Charlotte seeks temporary refuge from her stifling marriage as she encounters Mara one evening, and

although her world is apparently destroyed by the insights Mara allows her, she is unable and/or unwilling to actually conduct a relationship with Mara and the status quo is assumed to prevail.

The fantasy, of course, is only made possible by Mara's presence and in this sense Mara serves as a "catalyst," simultaneously depicted as Charlotte's "double" and antithesis, thus facilitating Charlotte's identification and objectification of the younger woman. Bachmann's portrayal of two women, intent on considering a relationship, is far more effective in revealing socially constructed gender expectations than if a man and a woman were to have considered beginning a relationship. As Horsley points out, Mara serves to create an "alienation effect" (283) within Charlotte that allows Charlotte to appreciate, for a time, that she has been submissive and undermined by Franz. In "Gomorrha" it becomes clear that even in the absence of men, women – knowingly or not – adhere to patriarchal principles.

Charlotte is unable to come up with a positive female identity. The only identity she seems to assert is one built upon male-identified domination over Mara. Mara, who initially appears single-minded and bold in her pursuit of Charlotte, ultimately is negatively fashioned into a weak, needful female who is to be subjugated by Charlotte and appears to agree to this objectification herself. Ironically, despite Charlotte's yearning for an end to the patriarchal status quo, she is unable to construct a possible relationship – real or imagined – with Mara that does not adhere strictly to patriarchal structures. As a result, although Mara precipitates Charlotte's lengthy self-examination that allows her to momentarily consider the idea of a relationship, Charlotte is not able to establish a positive identity for herself. Instead, she is intent upon perpetuating the patriarchal status quo through her domination of Mara. Mara may be an effective

"catalyst" in that she allows for Charlotte's self-reflection and brings certain resentments on the part of Charlotte to the surface, however, she is by no means Charlotte's "rescuer," as, for example, Achberger contends (80).

Notes: Chapter One

[1] Achberger and Dodds both emphasize that the word Gomorrha refers to the Old Testament city of Gomorrha, which was supposedly destroyed along with the city of Sodom by God on account of the evil and depravity of their citizens. Both critics consider the word Gomorrha in the title of Bachmann's *Erzählung* to signal impending destruction and doom.

[2] Achberger claims that Charlotte is akin to the biblical Lot, who was the sole survivor following the destruction of Sodom. Mara on the other hand is read to be a "messenger," "destroyer," and "rescuer," personifying the Old Testament's Abraham or Abram (Achberger points out that Abram is Mara, save one letter, spelt backwards). Achberger claims that "Gomorrha" "depatriarchalizes" traditional mythic and biblical material to create a story of feminine rebirth (*Understanding* 80-81).

Chapter Two

"Das Gebell": Storytelling, Madness, and Escape

2.1: Introduction

"Das Gebell" is the fourth of five *Erzählungen* to appear in Ingeborg Bachmann's *Simultan* (1972). Although generally well-received, critics have focused less on *Simultan* compared to Bachmann's *Das dreißigste Jahr* (Dierick 73). Unlike "Gomorrha," which has been the focus of a relatively large number of articles and book chapters from the early 1980s on, there have not been any scholarly articles dedicated specifically to "Das Gebell." In this sense, "Das Gebell" has been a neglected text. It is surprising that this is the case, especially considering the similarities between "Gomorrha" and "Das Gebell," and that "Das Gebell" represents almost a continuation of what Bachmann first developed in "Gomorrha" in terms of how women deal with their oppressive marriages. The lack of criticism dealing with "Das Gebell" is even more astonishing when one considers that there has been a significant amount of critical attention paid to Bachmann's *Der Fall Franza*, which revisits the protagonist, "die junge Frau Jordan" or Franziska of "Das Gebell."

In "Gomorrha," Charlotte is in an unhappy marriage and frustrated by the constraints put upon her because she is a woman. Though she contemplates leaving her marriage and beginning a relationship with another woman, she merely undertakes a self-examination which ends up being nothing more than a fleeting fantasy. In "Das Gebell" Franziska Jordan realizes, in part through an unlikely association with her mother-in-law, the hopelessness of her marriage and goes on to commit what appears to

be suicide.[1] Both women, Charlotte and Franziska, seek to escape their marital circumstances, whether through fantasy or suicide. Franziska goes further than Charlotte in order to completely extricate herself from her marriage and unhappiness; Charlotte, of course, unlike Franziska, returns to her bourgeois life.

There are other parallels between "Gomorrha" and "Das Gebell." Both texts reveal, for example, an apparent "doubling" of female characters and both present physically absent yet "omnipresent" male characters who figure greatly in the interactions between the female characters. This chapter on "Das Gebell" will examine Franziska's confrontation of a crisis through her relationship with her mother-in-law, "die alte Frau Jordan," and how Bachmann creates a special kind of intensity between the women that precipitates Franziska's final decision to take her own life. There will also be a discussion of how her mostly "absent" husband, Leo, asserts his power throughout the text. Leo has minimal dialogue in the text, yet he remains the main subject of focus for the two women as they spend their time together primarily discussing him.

With the exception of Beicken, the few critics who have addressed this text have seen it largely in terms of the mother-son relationship and have asserted that "Das Gebell" is essentially the story of the eighty-five year old "alte Frau Jordan." This analysis suggests that "Das Gebell" focuses as much on Franziska, who wishes to escape her marriage and apparently commits suicide in order to do so, because she cannot possibly fathom being able to change the prevailing status quo. There is no particular decisive moment when Franziska comes to an understanding that she can no longer tolerate her life with Leo. Instead, Franziska arrives at a series of realizations as she gradually "develops" through the text, as facilitated by the experiences she shares with

her mother-in-law. This chapter will address the nature of Franziska's realizations and the consequences they have for her relationship with Leo, her marriage, and the text as a whole.

2.2: Reception

The initial critical reception to Bachmann's *Simultan* was mixed (Hotz 159-61). One critic claimed: "mit diesem Buch endlich hat sich die Erzählerin Ingeborg Bachmann ganz von der – bedeutenden – Lyrikerin emanzipiert" (qtd. in Hotz 159), and another critic wrote: "mit diesen fünf *Erzählungen* hat [Bachmann] eine Stufe sprachlicher und kompositorischer Kraft erreicht, die sie ohne Schwierigkeiten unter die besten Schriftsteller unserer Tage einordnen läßt" (qtd. in Hotz 160). Bachmann's *Simultan* was not met with anything close to the widespread acclaim of her previous work.

In an article appearing in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* in 1972, for example, Eckard Henscheid described the volume as containing nothing more than "leere, trübe Frauengeschichten" (qtd. in O'Regan 1). Clearly Henscheid's negative assessment arises from the fact that he regarded Bachmann's *Simultan* to be trivial specifically *because* it is so focused upon the lives of women. Reich-Ranicki was also unimpressed by Bachmann's *Simultan*, as he had been with *Das dreißigste Jahr*. In a 1972 article appearing in *Die Zeit,* Reich-Ranicki claims that Bachmann's latest work of prose reveals her to be a "gefallene Lyrikerin" (qtd. in O'Regan 1), and he laments that she abandoned writing poetry in favour of writing mediocre prose – a sentiment shared by a number of Bachmann critics in the 1960s and early 1970s.

In his 1975 overview of Bachmann's work, Holger Pausch claims that *Simultan* represents a considerable break from *Das dreißigste Jahr* in terms of how women are portrayed. He argues that "hier endlich werden die Möglichkeiten einer neuen Sittlichkeit praktiziert" (68), and that "abgesehen von Frau Jordan in 'Das Gebell' sind für alle Hauptpersonen Selbstbewußtsein und Unabhängigkeit Grundverhalten" (68). It is not clear whether Pausch refers to the "alte" or the "junge" Frau Jordan in his assessment, nor does he consider the relationship between the two Frau Jordans. Pausch also claims that "Das Gebell" represents, in essence, a "Wien transponierte King-Lear-Geschichte" that reveals the ungratefulness of children (73). "Die alte Frau Jordan" suffers from a serious lack of money while her successful son clearly enjoys a comfortable lifestyle. She is, however, much too afraid of her domineering son to admit to having so little money or to ask for his help. Although initially ignorant of her mother-in-law's situation, " die junge Frau Jordan" eventually becomes aware of Leo's selfishness. Pausch focuses almost exclusively upon the mother-son relationship in "Das Gebell," and does not explore the relationship between the "alte Frau Jordan" and her daughter-in-law, Franziska, which is the focus of the analysis here.

Sigrid Schmid-Bortenschlager argues in her 1982 book chapter dealing with women in *Simultan*, that the acceptance and non-acceptance of Leo's true self is explored. Schmid-Bortenschlager focuses on the relationships that exist between "die alte Frau Jordan," "die junge Frau Jordan," and Leo. While at the beginning of the text both women are intent on praising Leo as a loving son and husband, they both eventually come to know a very different Leo. Ultimately, Franziska manages to leave Leo, but "geht aber doch zugrunde" (88) writes Schmid-Bortenschlager. "Die alte Frau Jordan" on the other hand escapes into a "Wahnwelt" and dies alone (Schmid-

Bortenschlager 89).

Schmid-Bortenschlager claims that there is a "Schuldfrage" that plagues "die alte Frau Jordan" (89). As a much younger woman, "die alte Frau Jordan" had worked as a governess for a wealthy Greek family and grew immensely close to the young male child, Kiki, in her charge. During one of their lengthy conversations, Franziska suspects that Kiki may have meant more to her mother-in-law than her own son, Leo. It is because of this that Schmid-Bortenschlager argues that "die alte Frau Jordan" is ridden with guilt over the possibility that she may perhaps have never really loved her own son (89). In this sense, Schmid-Bortenschlager almost gives reason and justification for Leo's cold and domineering character. While Schmid-Bortenschlager's analysis is focused on the destructive relationship between "die alte Frau Jordan" and her son as well as Franziska's relationship to Leo and her eventual "Autodestruktion" (88), the dynamic that is developed between "die alte Frau Jordan" and Franziska is not addressed.

Beicken writes briefly about Bachmann's "Das Gebell" in his 1988 study entitled *Ingeborg Bachmann*. Beicken argues that "Das Gebell" shows "weibliche Flucht- und Schutznotwendigkeit vor der Macht eines selbstsüchtigen Mannes" (206). He points out that "im Zentrum der distanziert erzählten Geschichte steht die sich ergebende menschliche Nähe, Achtung und Solidarität zwischen den beiden Frauen" (207). A closeness and solidarity leads the two women to acknowledge Leo's arrogance and subtle domination in the face of their own selflessness and obedience. Beicken, however, does not develop the notion of a growing solidarity between the two women beyond mentioning that it is in visiting "die alte Frau Jordan" that Franziska comes to realize that Leo is a selfish and self-contained son and husband who cares only for his

own work. Beicken ultimately focuses his critique upon "die alte Frau Jordan" and Leo, and argues that their mother-son relationship is akin to a slave-master relationship (207).

In her 1994 study of Bachmann's *Simultan* volume, Ingeborg Dusar argues that "das 'Drama von Mutter und Sohn', das Franziska so behutsam aufdeckt, verdoppelt sich im Hintergrund zu einem tödlichen Kampf um ihr eigenes Überleben neben dem sadistischen Psychiater Jordan" (235). In a sense, the reader takes on the role of Franziska as she uncovers the truth about her husband – a truth that she has already partly deduced, but is reluctant to acknowledge. Dusar focuses on Franziska's realization of the kind of life that she has been living under Leo, something that only becomes clear to her when she witnesses the oppressive mother-son relationship between her husband and his mother. Dusar does not address something that follows from her assessment: Franziska "sees" herself in "die alte Frau Jordan." Franziska has erroneously thought Leo a generous and loving spouse, but in fact realizes how much she resents him and even fears him, just as her mother-in-law does. Unlike her mother-in-law, however, Franziska is not willing to live out her life descending into madness and being plagued by guilt and loneliness and so she decides to take her life instead. Of course, her desire to leave her marriage might have been prompted more by Leo's neglectful arrogance. The reader can only infer what leads Franziska to decide to completely extricate herself from her marriage.

In Achberger's 1995 *Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann*, there is a small discussion dedicated to "Das Gebell." Achberger claims that because the two women bear the same name, "Frau Jordan," one could see them as "two versions of the same woman" (154). Franziska learns that "die alte Frau Jordan" is afraid of her own son, and, in turn, she too becomes fearful of her moody husband. "Die alte Frau Jordan" is

never able to openly acknowledge her true feelings, and therefore "the truth she will not allow herself to speak expresses itself in hallucinations" (155). In other words, the auditory hallucinations of barking dogs serve to give "die alte Frau Jordan" an outlet for her fear and frustrations. Of course, "die alte Frau Jordan's" repressed feelings also have an affect on Franziska, whose resentment and fear of Leo grows as she develops a friendship with "die alte Frau Jordan." Achberger does not go on to examine the developing relationship between the two women, but instead focuses on "die alte Frau Jordan's" non-acknowledgement of Leo's tyrannical behaviour and her subsequent descent into madness.

In a brief analysis of "Das Gebell" published in 2000, Veronica O'Regan points out that the text explores the "hidden violence" in human relationships and contains a "fascist motif" (55). The two women, O'Regan argues, are "held captive through the weapon of fear" (55). She points out that it is significant that one of Leo's academic papers deals with the captivity of concentration camp victims, since on some level "die alte Frau Jordan" and Franziska are also being held captive by the oppressive Leo. Franziska comes to understand from her relationship with "die alte Frau Jordan" that the older woman has lived her entire life under a "pattern of delusion" (55) and a "regime of fear" (55). O'Regan "sees" that "die alte Frau Jordan" gives in to her fear and the result is madness. She is destroyed because she has failed to acknowledge the violence exercised by her son. O'Regan's analysis centres on the significance of "fascist" elements in everyday relationships. This theme has been discussed at length in light of Bachmann's *Todesarten*. O'Regan concludes that if one fails to recognize these "fascist" elements in everyday life, one is destined to self-destruction (56).

Critics have focused on the oppressive mother-son relationship between "die alte

Frau Jordan" and Leo. In most instances there has been little exploration of the relationship between "die alte Frau Jordan" and Franziska, although Beicken does note that the two women come to a better understanding of Leo's behaviour through their association with each other. What is not discussed at length, however, is how "die alte Frau Jordan" serves to "catalyze" Franziska's rebellion against the status quo. Previous critics have acknowledged the facilitating presence of "die alte Frau Jordan," but have not undertaken a detailed critique of "die alte Frau Jordan's" presence as a mechanism to Franziska's greater understanding of her own entanglements.

2.3: Analysis

"Das Gebell" begins with the narrator's description of the eighty-five year old "die alte Frau Jordan's" modest one-room apartment located in the well-off Viennese district of Hietzing. She is a widow and has been known as "die alte Frau Jordan" since her son, Dr. Leopold Jordan, a professor of psychiatry, married his first wife thirty years earlier. Now there is a second "junge Frau Jordan," Franziska, who is an orphan and is described by the narrator as "ein wirklich nettes sympathisches Mädchen" (97). While "die alte Frau Jordan" is clearly struggling to pay her bills, this does not prompt her apparently well-off son to provide her with any more than the meagre sum of one thousand Schillings a month. "Die alte Frau Jordan," however, gets by, does not seem to complain, and always puts a little money aside in order to buy Christmas presents for both Leo and her grandson by Leo's first marriage.

Leo never seems to have the time or desire to visit his mother, not even at Christmas time when it is a tradition that he come and collect his present. The narrator points out that "Leo wiederum hatte zuviel zu tun, um darauf zu achten, und seit er

berühmt war und sein Lokalruhm in einen internationalen Ruhm überging, hatte er noch mehr zu tun" (97). Leo's arrogant self-obsession with his own career and professional reputation as a respected psychiatrist makes him exclude everything and everyone else, including his ailing mother. He only visits her grudgingly, though it is not initially clear in the text if this is because he is too busy or if he simply does not care to be around his mother.

Leo's latest wife, Franziska, unlike her predecessor, decides to visit her mother-in-law as much as she can. "Die alte Frau Jordan" realizes that Franziska means well, but affectionately scolds her for visiting so often and always bringing along generous gifts of alcohol and food which she imagines would surely be expensive for Leo; nevertheless, she always concedes that "aber der Leo ist halt ein so guter Sohn!" (97). At this point in the text it is not clear whether it is indeed Leo who is behind the gift-giving and Franziska's frequent visits, or whether it is an initiative of Franziska's. It is soon, however, revealed by Franziska "daß sie ["die alte Frau Jordan"] großen Wert darauf legte, etwas zum 'Aufwarten' zu haben, denn Leo konnte doch vorbeikommen, und durfte nicht merken, daß sie nichts hatte" (98), and this confirms that it is Franziska and not Leo who is behind the gifts and frequent visits. It is also clear that Franziska's gestures of kindness are motivated, at least in the beginning of the text, by her desire to look good in her husband's eyes. Franziska knows, at this point, that he is unlikely to visit but she nevertheless wishes to impress him. The only time he did visit his mother with any kind of enthusiasm "soviel wußte Franziska" (98), was when he was having an affair with a married woman while married to his ex-wife.

Nevertheless, Franziska seems to want to be prepared for the possibility that Leo might come to visit his mother and judge the way in which she treats her. Interestingly,

Franziska realizes that her mother-in-law suffers from the fact that she "nichts hatte" (98), and yet Franziska does not seem to blame Leo for this. Although the text begins with a description of "die alte Frau Jordan's" domestic situation, it becomes clear as the text unfolds that it is largely Franziska's perspective that the reader assumes. Through the utilization of *erlebte Rede* the reader comes to uncover the truth about Leo at the same time that Franziska does, and this simultaneous realization reveals the fact that "Das Gebell" is as much the story of Franziska, as it is the story of her mother-in-law. Dusar discusses that the reader is able to identify with Franziska, however, she does not go as far as to say that "Das Gebell" centres on Franziska (235).

Whenever Franziska visits her mother-in-law, the pair "sprachen fast nur von Leo, da er das einzige Thema zwischen ihnen sein konnte" (98) and "die alte Frau Jordan" proudly brings out all of Leo's childhood photographs for Franziska to see. Franziska realizes that her mother-in-law has come to live vicariously through Leo and believes that "Akademikerfamilie und Akademiker waren für [sie] einer großen Wichtigkeit" (98), although she admittedly "nie unter Leute kam und nur von ihnen erzählen hörte" (98). In this sense, "die alte Frau Jordan" appears to be proud of her son, but essentially takes no part in his life; she only hears of people like her son, i.e. academics, from other people. "Die alte Frau Jordan's" belief that academic families and academics are somehow better than everyone else is exemplified when she tells Franziska later in the text that she does not wish to speak to her neighbour, Frau Schönthal, because afterall "der Mann ist nicht Akademiker" (108). "Die alte Frau Jordan" herself comes from a petit bourgeois background and it is only through her connection to Leo that she comes to believe, or at least thinks others might believe, that she has managed in part to transcend her social class. Clearly, one's social class is of

great importance to "die alte Frau Jordan," and like any proud mother, she tries to make the most of her son's achievements, although she cannot help being somewhat snobbish and closed-minded about it all. What is ironic, is that Leo proves to be far from the "model" son that "die alte Frau Jordan" characterizes him to be. It seems that "die alte Frau Jordan" is desperately concerned about what other people think, and as a result does not want to be seen to openly criticize Leo in any way. She may very well be living close to or below the so-called "poverty line," but she still lives in a well-to-do district of the city, and at least on the surface seems to keep up the pretense that she is comfortable and well cared for by her son. Of course, Franziska is not necessarily aware that "die alte Frau Jordan" considers non-academics of lesser importance or that her mother-in-law is more accepting of her because her brother is an academic.

What emerges for Franziska after visiting her mother-in-law, speaking of Leo, and looking at his childhood pictures, is "ein ganz anderer Leo, den sie durch die alte Frau kennenlernte, als den, mit dem sie verheiratet war " (98). Leo suddenly becomes more than simply a husband and the venerable professor in Franziska's eyes; she sees him for the first time as a son and child and becomes conscious of how his own life has unfolded. Franziska's attitude changes at this point, and it is not disclosed in the text how long it takes her or how many times she visits her mother-in-law before she comes to this initial realization that she fears her son: "[sie] hörte eine Zeitlang diese Beteuerungen mit Freunde an, auch daß Leo so gut zu seiner Mutter war und ihr immer aufs Erdenklichste geholfen hatte, bis sie merkte, daß etwas nicht stimmte, und sie fand bestürzt heraus, was nicht stimmte: Die alte Frau fürchtete sich vor ihrem Sohn" (99). Franziska becomes irritated with her mother-in-law's endless praise of her son and soon comes to realize that the old woman cannot possibly be so blind as to not be aware that

Leo keeps her on such a tight budget and never wishes to visit her. What Franziska deduces is that if her mother-in-law is not blindly unaware of Leo's obvious shortcomings as a son, she must be maintaining the pretense that he is such a good son because she is afraid of him. Franziska comes to believe that it is fear, rather than a blind stoicism on her mother-in-law's part, when the old woman begins to warn Franziska not to trouble Leo with her problems, such as her bad knee, because she thinks it will only worry him and make him anxious. It seems likely that "die alte Frau Jordan," although not willing to voice her concerns, is fearful that with all her problems, Leo will put her into a nursing home. Of course, it is later revealed in the text that Leo has no plans to put his mother into a nursing home, as it would prove too bothersome and expensive (110).

Franziska comes to learn that "Leo sich doch überhaupt nie aufregte, jedenfalls nicht seiner Mutter wegen, und ihren Berichten daher abwesend zuhörte, aber sie unterdrückte ihr erstes Begreifen" (99). When Franziska tells Leo about his mother's bad knee, despite her mother-in-law's protestations, Leo does not appear to worry at all about his mother, much it would seem to Franziska's surprise. It becomes obvious to Franziska that Leo does not visit his mother because he is especially busy with his work, but because he is simply unconcerned about his mother. When Franziska discusses her mother-in-law's worrisome knee, "Leo hatte sowieso ärgerlich reagiert" (99), and says he could not possibly go all the way down to Hiezting for such a trivial matter. He then condescendingly throws around a few medical terms and tells Franziska to tell his mother "sie soll sich das und das kaufen und möglichst wenig tun und herumgehen" (99). Franziska obeys her husband, but then goes and buys the suggested medication herself, because, as she now well knows, her mother-in-law probably does not have the

means to do so herself.

When she arrives at her mother-in-law's, Franziska concocts a story, claiming that she had asked a colleague of Leo's about the knee without disclosing about whom she was referring. What worries Franziska, however, is how her practically immobile mother-in-law will be able to cope without a nurse. She is caught, because she knows her mother-in-law will not allow her to say anything about it to Leo, and knows that Leo will surely only be annoyed by the suggestion and do nothing about it. Franziska has "keine Courage mehr" (99), with which to tackle Leo on the subject of getting a nurse for his mother. Clearly, Franziska is becoming tired of having to make excuses and deceive Leo, but she sees no other alternative. She knows she cannot possibly contemplate having a frank discussion on the subject with her husband, whom she suspects would scarcely even enter into a serious conversation with her on the matter. Ultimately, Franziska decides that she will have to deceive Leo. She tells Leo that she is off to the hairdresser when she is actually going to visit his mother, so that she can tidy the apartment and do some shopping. She even buys a radio for the old woman, although she must doctor the accounts so that Leo is unaware of the purchase, which he would surely condemn. At this stage, Franziska has become aware of what Leo will and will not tolerate when it comes to his mother, and she realizes that she must deceive him. Although apparently still dutiful in Leo's presence, it becomes increasingly clear that Franziska is not the woman she was at the beginning of the text. Now someone who clearly fears her husband, she is willing to go to great lengths to aid Leo's mother without his knowledge. In other words, Franziska realizes that she will have to orchestrate a kind of cover-up. Just in the way that "die alte Frau Jordan" functions as a "storyteller," passing on stories of Leo, she is also indirectly passing on her fear of Leo

and facilitates Franziska adopting her cover-up strategy. It seems that history is doomed to repeat itself as the older woman passes on the legacy of feeling powerless in the face of Leo's control. In a sense, however, Franziska also comes to adopt the so-called "male role" as she makes decisions about money and how to care for her mother-in-law. Leo is not willing to participate as a son, so Franziska seems to fill his place. Franziska realizes, however, that it will neither be possible to truly fill his place nor continue in her newly appropriated "male role." This seems to prefigure her eventual break-down.

Franziska wants to make up for Leo's lack of interest in and neglect of his mother. At this point in the text she does not openly criticize Leo for what he fails to do and his reaction towards his mother's knee. Franziska understands that she must circumvent Leo if "die alte Frau Jordan" is to receive the kind of care and attention she needs. Franziska finally enlists the help of a local physician and, of course, is silent about who the old woman is as Franziska is well aware that it would mean that "denn es hätte Leos Ruf nur geschadet, und Leos Ruf lag auch im Interesse von Franziska" (100). Franziska knows that Leo's attitude and lack of concern would be negatively perceived by others, and such a negative perception would be harmful, not only for Leo, but also for Franziska, who is surely perceived as the extension of her "larger than life" husband, Leo. She asserts no autonomous identity in the face of a husband and society that dictates she is nothing more than Leo's "appendage."

Franziska accepts that like her mother-in-law, she will have to maintain the pretense that Leo is a benevolent, successful man, so that not only his reputation remains intact, but also her own. At first, Franziska visited her mother-in-law largely in an effort to impress her husband, but now clearly knowing that he is unhappy with her visits, she continues to visit "die alte Frau Jordan." This is perhaps motivated by her desire to look

good in the eyes of everyone else. That is not to say, of course, that Franziska's motivations are completely selfish. The two women seem to establish a certain bond as the older woman serves as a kind of "story-teller," imparting her wisdom to the much younger Franziska. Franziska feels pity and sympathy for her mother-in-law, and ultimately it is in identifying with her mother-in-law that she comes to face up to the dysfunctional nature of her own relationship with Leo.

Franziska goes shopping with her mother-in-law and in one troubling scene "die alte Frau Jordan" makes an embarrassing display in one of the shops about the cost of a comb she wants to buy. This scene reinforces for the reader that "die alte Frau Jordan" is quite poor and that Leo's one thousand Schillings a month is not an appropriate allowance given recent inflation. In the end, Franziska buys the comb and says that it is an early Christmas present, because the old woman would not accept the gift otherwise. "Die alte Frau Jordan's" reaction to whole ordeal is: "gab es für sie nicht mehr viel zu verstehen in dieser Welt" (101). This could be read as "die alte Frau Jordan's" bewilderment towards her own son's lack of concern and apparent stinginess in a world in which she feels vulnerable and powerless. It is also evidence that the older woman feels she is a relic, and yearns for a time, perhaps when she was still caring for Kiki, when her own love and affection was reciprocated.

Shortly after this episode when "das Thema 'guter Sohn' erschöpft war, lenkte Franziska die Unterhaltung öfter auf die alte Frau selbst" (101). Franziska becomes curious about her mother-in-law's life, and encourages her to go beyond merely speaking of Leo. "Die alte Frau Jordan" tells Franziska that she was widowed about fifty years earlier, that Leo's father had died of a heart attack or stroke at a fairly young age and that Leo had grown up fatherless. The narrator points out that "die alte Frau

Jordan" had started off "zuerest noch Jahre beschäftigt, ihr einziges Kind großzuziehen, und dann eine alte Frau, um die sich niemand mehr kümmerte" (101). This is not Franziska's opinion, but rather that of the narrator, still it seems that by this point in the text, Franziska would hardly challenge this statement. Franziska, in her growing identification with her mother-in-law, seems to feel that she too will share her fate. In all likelihood she will also grow to be old, and feel "discarded" and irrelevant. Thus is revealed the so-called traditional "life cycle" of a woman who finds limited purpose in being a mother and a wife, but only as long as the child is needful of the mother and the husband is attracted to the wife. The two women share the same name, both fear either the son or the husband, who dominates their lives. It seems, for a moment, that Franziska is about to face up to what she might consider the inevitable unfolding of her life and the "doubling" of two separate but connected lives. Despite her momentary realization, however, Franziska remains unable to give any voice to her repressed resentment for Leo. Of course, Franziska is not a mother herself, but the relationship of fear that emerges between her and Leo closely parallels that between Leo and his mother. What is significant is that the dominance asserted by Leo is not dictated by the nature of the relationship (i.e mother-son, husband-wife), but rather gender.

"Die alte Frau Jordan" never speaks of her own husband, only Leo, and how it was unfortunate that he never knew his father. There is never any attention paid to Franziska's background and that as an orphan, she had surely a much more difficult childhood than Leo. This sentiment is not voiced by Franziska, but rather the narrator, however, again it seems that Franziska would surely be aware of this and is perhaps somewhat irritated by her mother-in-law's constant desire to make excuses for Leo. What is also revealed through her conversations with her mother-in-law, is that Leo's

childhood was not as difficult as he would lead others to believe. Franziska, for example, learns that his schooling was fully paid for by his distant cousin, Johannes. Franziska had already been aware of the shadowy Johannes, but had no idea that he had financed Leo's education; she had only heard "abfällige, kritische Sätze über diesen Verwandten, der im Geld schwimme und das Leben eines ewigen Müßiggängers führe" (101). Franziska was also aware that Johannes was gay, and that this was something of which Leo disapproved. Franziska is apparently distressed by Leo's homophobic attitude and thinks: "war nur etwas scharf verwundert, daß jemand wie Leo, der schon durch seinen Beruf angehalten war, Homosexualität und noch ganz andere Phänomene neutral und wissenschaftlich zu sehen" (102). Franziska has developed from the apparently dutiful wife into a critic of Leo's, even questioning his professional stance as a psychiatrist. She is surprised by Leo's pettiness towards Johannes, who had made his career possible in the first place. Of course, when it is revealed later that Johannes spent time in a concentration camp during WWII, presumably owing to his homosexuality, it becomes clear that Leo not only dislikes Johannes because of his sexual orientation, but also he wishes to distance himself from someone who might in some way taint his image. This proves quite ironic when it is revealed that Leo is consumed with writing the so-called definitive book on the abnormal psychology of former concentration camp victims. Franziska comes to understand that Leo abhors having any kind of "Verpflichtung" (103) and considers Johannes, his mother and his ex-wife to be nothing more than a "Konspiration von Gläubigern" (103).

By this stage in the text, however, despite her growing annoyance with Leo, "bewunderte Franziska ihren Mann noch so sehr, um mehr als irritiert und verletzt zu sein" (102). She still remains the dutiful wife and represses her discontent.

Unfortunately, like her mother-in-law, Franziska's seems to also live a life defined by Leo. Franziska is increasingly frustrated with Leo's outbursts, moods, and disapproval, however it is said that: "Der dornenenreiche, leidvolle Aufstieg eines genialen Arztes war schon Franziskas Religion zu der Zeit, und immer wieder hielt sie sich vor, wie er, unter unsäglichen Mühen und trotz dem Hindernis dieser furchtbaren Ehe, seinen Weg nach oben gemacht hatte" (103). In other words, Franziska remains committed to living vicariously through Leo and to tolerate the neglect and work pressures to support and make excuses for Leo. It appears to be her duty and also a kind of "Religion" (150), in which she champions Leo above all else and represses what she really thinks and feels.

Although her resentment of her husband is growing as she witnesses her mother-in-law's loneliness and feigned approval of her son, Franziska is ready to make excuses for Leo at every opportunity. She becomes increasingly fearful and frustrated with having to deceive her husband about the money and care she is giving his mother without his knowledge. Surely, no son can be so uninterested in his own mother, especially one who professes to be a leading psychiatrist who is continually sought out in order to treat the disturbed and troubled. Franziska may fool herself into believing that she is relieving Leo of his familial duties, but she is only growing weary of his apathy and coldness. "Die alte Frau Jordan" tells Franziska that if she becomes sick and is unable to pay her bills she will sell the precious brooch she received as a gift from Kiki's mother when she left her service many years beforehand. She tells Franziska that she does not after all want to be a burden and could not possibly ask Leo to pay for everything. Franziska reacts very emotionally and immediately embraces her mother-in-law, forbidding her to sell her beloved brooch and promising her that Leo would not possibly want to see her suffer. Of course, the brooch is a gift from "die alte Frau

Jordan's" former employer many years beforehand, who had let her go from her position as governess, suspects "die alte Frau Jordan," because she had become too close to her employer's son, Kiki. This was a tremendous blow to "die alte Frau Jordan," who seems to suspect that she may well have loved Kiki more than her own son, Leo. This may trigger guilt within her, but it also allows her to distance herself from Leo somewhat, in the sense that he may not be the sole recipient of his mother's affection and love. It appears that "die alte Frau Jordan" idealizes Kiki, who remains forever a loving child in her memory. Perhaps Kiki represents the loving son that Leo never was.

Although something that is never voiced, the two women seem quite aware that Leo would see his mother suffer if he could get away with it. Franziska knows she has money with which to buy things, entertain guests, and to travel and although she suspects that her mother-in-law might exaggerate the desperateness of her situation, "etwas warnte sie, es war ein erster leiser Alarm in ihr, denn in irgend etwas, auch wenn sie schrullig war und übertrieb, mußte die alte Frau recht haben" (106). This appears to be the most pivotal moment of realization for Franziska who faces the possibility that her husband is capable of willfully neglecting his own mother. Though Franziska seems disturbed by Leo's neglect, she is by no means prompted to act. Franziska still deceives her husband, and sees to organizing a taxi to be at hand for her mother-in-law so that she can go downtown and shop by herself.

Eventually "die alte Frau Jordan" ceases to speak of either Leo or Kiki, and begins to hallucinate the incessant barking of dogs. "Die alte Frau Jordan" becomes withdrawn and in time it is said that: "nur fing gerade damals etwas an, kompliziert zwischen Leo und ihr werden, und sie entdeckte, dass er sie schon dermaßen eingeschüchtert hatte, daß sie sich fürchtete vor ihm, aber wenigstens einmal, in einem

Anfall von ihrem alten Mut, ihre unbegreifliche Furcht überwindend" (109). It is through her association with her mother-in-law that an "old self" is displaced by this "new self" – a self that is paralyzed by fear of her husband and yet feels her fear somehow irrational.

Franziska eventually asks Leo if he would be willing to have his mother move in with them. He rejects this suggestion, claiming that old people need their "Freiheit" (110), which of course is ironic considering how subtlety controlling he is of his mother. "Die alte Frau Jordan" has hardly enough money to survive, but she says nothing, being far too fearful of her son's wrath. Of course, Franziska has become in many ways like her mother-in-law. She has come to fear her husband and survives by concocting a kind of parallel life with that of her mother-in-law. She does not have the freedom to spend her money at will; Leo is always scrutinizing her accounts and disapproving of her purchases. Franziska learns of her mother-in-law's dog, Nuri, whom her mother-in-law had given away because it disliked Leo and would bark whenever he appeared. In what seems to be tongue-in-cheek, "die alte Frau Jordan" says that "was ich mir nicht erklären kann, er konnte Leo nicht leiden" (111). Franziska's response to learning that "die alte Frau Jordan" had to give up the dog is dramatic and she thinks to herself: "Was sind wir für Menschen!" (112), and "denn sie war unfähig zu denken, was ist mein Mann für ein Mensch!" (113). At least on a subconscious level, Franziska appears to question her husband's humanity. Still, she is never able to verbalize it and would not dream of openly voicing her disgust for him. Franziska simply continues repressing her feelings, perhaps even seemingly equating "Mann" with "Mensch." The next turning point in the text is described by the narrator: "andere Geschehnisse kamen und von einer so orkanartigen Stärke, dass sie beinahe die alte Frau vergaß und vieles andre mehr" (113).

Franziska, quite inexplicably, withdraws from visiting her mother-in-law just as the old woman is suffering most severely from auditory hallucinations. Franziska appears to isolate herself from her mother-in-law, as well as Leo and apparently goes on to commit what appears to be suicide. The reason for her sudden disappearance and apparent suicide is not explicitly discussed in the text. This parallels Franziska's apparent inability to envision any kind of critical female consciousness that would seem necessary to facilitate a productive alternative to suicide. Clearly, however, it is through getting to know her mother-in-law that she starts to think differently about Leo.

Like Charlotte of "Gomorrha," Franziska comes to eventually feel oppressed under her hardly present but all-controlling husband, who not only denies her freedom and independence, but also withholds any kind of genuine affection. "Das Gebell" maps Franziska's unmasking of the reality behind the façade of her bourgeois life. Just as Mara serves as a vehicle for Charlotte's greater realization and moment of possibility in "Gomorrha," "die alte Frau Jordan" serves as something of a "catalyst" to Franziska's emerging awareness of her marital circumstances. Before Franziska encounters her mother-in-law, it seems as if she had no complaints about her relationship with Leo. It is only through listening to her mother-in-law that Franziska is forced to understand that Leo is not only apathetic towards his own mother but also dominates her as well. What emerges is a relationship between two women from two separate generations who are "trapped" and controlled by the same man, Leo. The neglect and subservience that "die alte Frau Jordan" experiences is "inherited" by Franziska. The power relations and gender expectations remain unchanged form one generation to the next. The individual nature of the relationships (i.e. mother-son; husband-wife) seems irrelevant in the face of the male-female divide. The "doubling" of female figures – the old and current Frau

Jordan – exemplifies the continuity of the oppression they encounter. It undermines their individuality in that there seems to always be another "Frau Jordan" that can replace the last one. Indeed, "Das Gebell" refers to four "Frau Jordans" – Leo's mother, Leo's first wife, Leo's second wife, Franziska, and Leo's third wife.

Franziska, the apparently compliant wife, is unable to ever voice her dismay even though she has become aware of Leo's controlling influence. Her repression, just like that of her mother-in-law, is deep-seated and in the end consumes her to the point where she apparently considers suicide the only reasonable alternative to life with Leo. There is no positive, autonomous identity that exists for Franziska. She is Leo's wife and she realizes that like her mother-in-law, she is an "appendage" of Leo's, who fails to forge a separate identity. Franziska appears to decide to take her own life because she cannot create a more positive means of escape. The only other means of escape with which she is acquainted is the madness and hallucinations of her mother-in-law.

Notes: Chapter Two

[1] It is not explicitly stated in "Das Gebell" that Franziska commits suicide, although it is inferred and most critics have assumed that this is what Franziska does. In Bachmann's *Der Fall Franza*, Franza is driven to the point of madness by her husband, Leo, and ultimately is thought to take her own life.

Chapter Three

"Drei Wege zum See": Paths and Possibilities

3.1: Introduction

"Drei Wege zum See" is Bachmann's fifth and final *Erzählung* in her *Simultan* (1972) volume. Unlike the largely neglected "Das Gebell," "Drei Wege" has been the subject of several scholarly articles and book chapters from the late 1970s on. Indeed, it appears that most critics assess "Drei Wege" to be the most important *Erzählung* in *Simultan*. This importance is likely attributable to the large number of intertextual allusions in "Drei Wege" to other *Erzählungen* in *Simultan*, the *Todesarten* novel cycle, and 20th century Austrian history and literature. Achberger and Dollenmayer, for example, claim that "Drei Wege" serves to frame and recapitulate the themes of *Simultan* as well as anticipate those of the *Todesarten* novel cycle (*Understanding* Achberger 156; Dollenmayer 68). It is interesting to note that in the English translation of the text, not only is the individual story "Drei Wege" translated as "Three Paths to the Lake" (1989), but the same title is also used for the *Simultan* volume as a whole.

In "Drei Wege," the protagonist, Elisabeth Matrei, returns to her hometown of Klagenfurt for her annual visit with her father, following the wedding of her younger brother, Robert, in London. An international photo-journalist about to turn fifty, Elisabeth returns home in order to "catch-up" with her aging father, and to attain a certain peace of mind by walking the nearby wooded paths to the *Wörthersee*. In walking these paths she simultaneously reflects upon her career, former lovers, and indeed "paths" taken in life, in what amounts to be a lengthy self-examination. Critics (Achberger; Brokoph-Mauch; Dollenmayer; West-Nutting et al.) consider Robert's

wedding and Elisabeth's subsequent feelings of loss as evidenced by comments such as: "ohne Verstand dachte, sie habe jetzt Robert verloren" (131), as precipitating her existential crisis and ensuing self-examination. This analysis, however, will put forward the contention that Elisabeth's panic and self-examination is not only prompted by her fear of "losing" Robert, but also in encountering her new sister-in-law, Liz. It is argued that Liz, a figure who serves simultaneously as Elisabeth's antithesis and "double," sufficiently unnerves Elisabeth to the point of aiding in triggering that which unfolds in the text.

Elisabeth discovers while walking the nearby paths of the *Kreuzberglgebiet* that there is no path that actually leads to the *Wörthersee*. Contrary to what is indicated on the local hiking map, all paths leading to the lake are blocked by a massive construction site. This discovery parallels Elisabeth's realization that all her relationships with men, especially her relationships with Franz Joseph Eugen Trotta, Manes, and Hugh, have proven disastrous and have undermined her self-confidence. Trotta, who even in death is at the centre of Elisabeth's retrospection, is particularly significant in that Elisabeth remains haunted by his criticisms of her work; he claimed that her war photo-journalism indirectly glorified suffering and was fundamentally immoral. A number of critics (Achberger; Bannasch; Bartsch; Gluscevic; Omelaniuk et al.) argue that the three "paths" in "Drei Wege" correspond to Trotta, Manes, and Branco, however, it seems that Elisabeth is confronted with many more "paths" and that these "paths" need not necessarily be limited to men. One such "path" is personified by Elisabeth Mihailovics, whom Elisabeth encounters while seeking refreshment at the EINSIEDLER Inn. Mihailovics, who shares Elisabeth's name and initials, functions as a "double" and represents a "what if" scenario for Elisabeth within the text. Like Liz, she is able to

disturb Elisabeth to such an extent that it seems that news of her brutal murder at the hands of her husband hastens Elisabeth's departure from Klagenfurt. Similarly, Elisabeth's encounter with her ex-schoolmate Linde (or Gerlinde), brings about a distinct uneasiness that precipitates Elisabeth's desire to leave Klagenfurt, thus at least on a metaphoric level allowing her to leave the so-called "paths" to the lake.[1]

Instead of reaching a specific and/or startling realization about her life while in Klagenfurt, Elisabeth instead comes to a series of more subtle insights. She reasons that she has not been able to form "normal" relationships with men, because "bei ihr alles verkehrt gegangen, sie hätte nämlich zuerst ein Kind [Robert] geliebt und erst sehr viel später einen Mann" (167). It is her complex familial, maternal and possibly subconsciously incestuous bond with Robert that she believes is partly to blame for her dysfunction. In attempting to come to terms with her previous broken relationships, Elisabeth concludes that "[i]hre zunehmenden Erfolge bei den Männern hatten mit ihrer zunehmenden Gleichgültigkeit zu tun" (174). It is realizing this, coupled with her agitation as precipitated by the women she meets that drives Elisabeth from Klagenfurt back to Paris where she learns that her current lover, Philippe, is about to leave her following his affair with a younger woman. Elisabeth's reaction to this news is to accept an assignment to cover the Vietnam War.

There has been little consensus among critics as to the interpretation of the ending of "Drei Wege" and whether Elisabeth's self-examination is progressive or not. Certain critics (Achberger; Höller; Lensing; Omelaniuk et al.) claim that Elisabeth accepts to what amounts to be a "suicide mission" in going to Saigon and that she inevitably literally and/or allegorically follows her ex-lover, Trotta, in taking her own life. These critics argue that Elisabeth's trip home and lengthy self-examination

intensifies her feelings of alienation and estrangement as she comes to a heightened awareness of her broken relationships and lack of fulfillment in life. David Dollenmayer and Peter West-Nutting disagree, interpreting the ending of "Drei Wege" as reflecting Elisabeth's defiance in disregarding all that which Trotta had said about her work. This analysis will argue that the ending of "Drei Wege" is more ambiguous than previously thought and that one cannot assess it to be wholly negative nor positive. This chapter will examine how the female-female relationships contribute to the ultimate ambiguity of this text and impact Elisabeth's own sense of self.

3.2: Reception

Scholarship dealing with "Drei Wege" has for the most part dealt with Elisabeth's relationships with her various ex-lovers, most notably Trotta, as well as the intertextuality between "Drei Wege" and the novels of Austrian writer, Joseph Roth. Little critical attention has been paid to the secondary female characters in "Drei Wege" and how they impact the narrative, although there have been several important insights forwarded by critics concerning the significance of the profusion of the "Elisabeths" in "Drei Wege."

Schmid-Bortenschlager discusses "Drei Wege" in the context of *Simultan* as a whole. She argues that like the other five *Erzählungen* in *Simultan*, "Drei Wege" presents "konkrete Möglichkeiten weiblicher Existenz in den sechziger Jahren dieses Jahrhunderts" (85). The possibilities offered Elisabeth in "Drei Wege" include marriage or a so-called "freer" life of taking lovers at will. Elisabeth's different male lovers represent different possibilities and choices to Elisabeth, but so do the women. This is something that is not acknowledged by Schmid-Bortenschlager, who confines her

analysis to the men in Elisabeth's life. Schmid-Bortenschlager concludes that the mysterious Branco, who represents the "path" not taken, would have been Elisabeth's ideal match (92). Unlike Trotta, who Schmid-Bortenschlager argues is more of a mentor and father-figure to Elisabeth, Branco is Elisabeth's contemporary and the one who loved her most deeply (92). It is important to note that Schmid-Bortenschlager considers Trotta a father-figure, furthering the notion that Elisabeth is unable to relate to her lovers as equals and that she has either played the mother and/or daughter role in her relationships with men.

In a 1983 article, Irena Omelaniuk discusses "Drei Wege" in light of its intertexuality with Roth's "patriotic" novels: *Radetzkymarsch* (1932) and *Die Kapuzinergruft* (1938). She points out that the characters of Trotta, Manes, and Branco, are all appropriated from Roth and serve to represent a kind of Austrian "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" in "Drei Wege" (247). Omelaniuk claims that "Drei Wege" reveals the struggle to come to terms with the idea of a "Greater Austria" or the "Hapsburg Empire" in retrospect. Trotta, argues Omelaniuk, precipitates Elisabeth's "awareness that one's identity is embedded in a cultural and ethnic tradition [...] even if [...] that tradition is a broken one" (257). This is vitally important to understanding Elisabeth's sense of alienation and homelessness. Omelaniuk's analysis, however, does not address how the role gender expectations, as well as other women, might play with respect to Elisabeth's identity.

In 1985, Leo A. Lensing published an article addressing the revising of Roth's characters in "Drei Wege" and the inspiration behind Bachmann writing such a work. Lensing interprets Bachmann's "Drei Wege" to be revealingly autobiographical and he explains that by alluding to "Der Autor" in the text's epigraph, Bachmann signals her

own "presence" within the text. Although, there are inescapable parallels between Elisabeth Matrei and Bachmann herself, one cannot assume them to be one and the same when considering "Drei Wege" as a work of fiction.

Lensing is the first critic to write about the female-female interactions in "Drei Wege." He claims that Elisabeth is uncomfortable in encountering the other "Elisabeths," because they reveal "a sad awareness that her [Elisabeth's] close relationship with Robert, which is depicted as latently incestuous, will have to change" (64). It seems that every time Elisabeth encounters another Elisabeth, she is reminded of "losing" Robert. Although this is certainly the case when it comes to Liz, it is less obvious with respect to Elisabeth Mihailovics. Lensing argues that Bachmann may have borrowed the idea of the complex Robert-Elisabeth relationship from Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, which depicts a similar relationship between the siblings Ulrich and Agathe.

Also in 1985, West-Nutting published an article that discusses Roth and narrative "topography" in the context of "Drei Wege." West-Nutting reads Elisabeth's excursions in Klagenfurt as facilitating her becoming "a changed and more conscious woman" (81). He claims that Elisabeth does not choose suicide at the end of the text, but rather is defiant and successful in exorcizing Trotta from her life. Apart from the text itself, West-Nutting draws upon Bachmann's *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* to support his reading of "Drei Wege" and puts forward the argument that Bachmann's literary mission was essentially utopian (77). West-Nutting concludes that Elisabeth undergoes a "transformation" (77) in "Drei Wege" and that the result is a positive, empowering resolution at the end of the text. Although his is a possible reading of "Drei Wege," the analysis contained in this chapter points out that "Drei Wege" is more open-ended and

does not project a utopian ending.

Dollenmayer wrote a 1993 article further discussing intertextual parallels in "Drei Wege," but also touching upon the significance of the secondary female characters. He claims that not only are the names Trotta, Manes, and Branco adopted from Roth, but so is the name of Elisabeth itself. Dollenmayer explains that the name "Elisabeth" is derived from Elisabeth Kovacs of Roth's *Die Kapuzinergruft*. In Roth's novel, Elisabeth Kovacs is Trotta's mother. She is similar to Elisabeth Matrei in terms of having a relatively unconventional approach to life as well as failing to negotiate a positive relationship with Trotta. Dollenmayer does not discuss, however, what parallels might exist between Elisabeth Kovacs, Liz, and Elisabeth Mihailovics. Dollenmayer's claim that the various "Elisabeths" in "Drei Wege" offer different "paths" to Elisabeth Matrei and that "[t]he three possibilities are inherent in the life of any woman; since all women in the story are named Elisabeth, the name becomes a cipher for 'everywoman'"(66) is significant to the understanding of the text. There is no mention, however, of how the character Linde functions in the text.

Achberger's 1995 *Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann* dedicates a considerable discussion to "Drei Wege." Achberger argues that Elisabeth comes to the realization that her life has consisted of "a hectic and unsatisfying string of affairs and meaningless journalistic assignments" (158). Just as the paths that are supposed to lead to the lake have been destroyed by a construction site, Elisabeth's relationships have been defined by "death and destruction" (157). Achberger considers the lake to personify "salvation," something that proves elusive, just as the three "dead-end" paths to the lake correspond to her equally frustrating relationships with the men: Trotta, Manes, and Branco (157).

Achberger writes that Elisabeth undergoes a crisis precipitated by Robert's

wedding to Liz that results in her grappling with the realization that her "inner landscape" has been destroyed (158). This certainly appears to be the case, however, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, this analysis claims that Liz herself also has a precipitating effect in bringing about Elisabeth's crisis.

O'Regan discusses "Drei Wege" in her 2000 book that presents the thesis that *Simultan* is essentially utopian in thrust. O'Regan argues that the "central concern [in "Drei Wege"] is to portray a gradual process of growth in the consciousness of the main protagonist" (59). Although arguably Elisabeth comes to some insights about the state of dysfunction of her relationships with men, it does not seem that she necessarily experiences "growth" in "Drei Wege." There is a rather ambiguous conclusion to the text. O'Regan argues that in "Drei Wege," Elisabeth experiences "a dissolution of boundaries between past and present, and as a result experiences a new perspective on life and the ability to continue on her own path" (74).

In a 2002 article written by Zorana Gluscevic, the novels of Roth are revisited once again as well as the connections between Elisabeth Matrei and Bachmann herself. Pertinent to this analysis is Gluscevic's claim that Elisabeth is "in search for her own self-identity, negotiates Austrianness against or with others – (West) Germans, non-Europeans, and peoples of the (former) Habsburg subject nations..." (346). Gluscevic argues that Elisabeth is not so much in search of "salvation," as Achberger contends, but is in search of an identity in a world in which she has come to feel "homeless" (346). This "homelessness" is arguably left unresolved by the end of the text, as Elisabeth embarks on yet another journey.

3.3: Analysis

"Drei Wege" is prefaced by an epigraph indicating that of the ten hiking paths of the *Kreuzberglgebiet*, three of them, namely Trails 1, 7, and 8, lead to the lake. It also states that "[d]er Ursprung dieser Geschichte liegt im Topographischen, da der Autor dieser Wanderkarte Glauben schenkte" (119). The "topography," of course, is revealed to not only refer to the physical landscape Elisabeth encounters as she walks the paths in "Drei Wege," but also to the psychic landscape with which she attempts to come to terms. Sigrid Weigel has written at length about the significance of "female topography" and the fact that in "Drei Wege" the outward topography and terrain facilitates Elisabeth's "Errinerungsarbeit" (3).

The narrative of "Drei Wege" begins with Elisabeth Matrei emerging from the train in her native Klagenfurt and greeting her father, Herr Matrei, in apparently routine fashion. Elisabeth is struck, however, by how old her father looks – something she had "nie bemerkt" (119). This discomforting realization indirectly suggests Elisabeth's own "mid-life crisis" and a sharpened awareness of her own mortality. Although it is not clear at the outset of the text, Elisabeth is already in "crisis" as personified by the sickness that plagues her from London to Klagenfurt. By the time Elisabeth arrives in Klagenfurt she is on the verge of the kind of self-reflection that will later dominate the text.

Upon arriving at her father's house on *Laubenweg*, Elisabeth and her father begin to "schimpften beide ein wenig auf die jungen Leute [Liz u. Robert]" (120-21). Herr Matrei is surprised that Robert and Liz decided to spend their honeymoon in Morocco instead of Klagenfurt, especially considering that Liz is an orphan and surely a visit to Klagenfurt would have given her the chance to achieve some sense of family and

belonging. This possibility seems doubtful, however, when the reader later learns that even Elisabeth herself does not feel at home in Klagenfurt and considers the *Laubenweg* a place she once "in dem sie zuhause gewesen war" (120). Elisabeth, who claims to know her brother well, is not surprised that Robert and Liz decided upon Morocco as Robert is full of "angestauten Unternehmungslust" (121), and Liz "brannte ja noch wie ein Kind darauf, etwas von der Welt zu sehen" (121). Right from the beginning of the text it becomes clear that Elisabeth infantilizes her new sister-in-law by condescendingly referring to her as "ein Kind" (121), a term that she does not use in reference to her sixteen years younger brother, Robert.

Elisabeth proceeds to show her father Robert and Liz's wedding pictures. She considers them rather conventional and "dilettanische Fotos" (122), which all feature:

> Robert mit Liz immer in der Mitte, Robert lächelnd zu Liz heruntergebeugt, Liz zu ihm lächelnd aufsehend, Elisabeth an der Seite von Liz, beinahe so gross wie ihr Bruder, schmal, fast schmäler als die junge zarte Liz. Einen Augenblick kam ihr wieder der Einfall, daß bei einer kleinen Umgruppierung, man eher Robert und sie für das Paar halten konnte. (122-23)

Elisabeth notes that there is a power differential between Robert and Liz: Robert smiles and looks down at his wife, Liz, and Liz in turn matches Robert's smile and looks up at her husband. Liz, who is fourteen years Robert's junior, appears to occupy a position of subservience with respect to her husband. Elisabeth, on the other hand, is almost as tall as Robert, but slender like Liz. Elisabeth thinks that with a mere re-arrangement it might seem that it is she and Robert who are the couple in the pictures. In assuming the position of the "bride" in the pictures, the thirty years younger Liz is relegated to the

status of child and Robert consequently becomes her "father" in Elisabeth's mental re-arrangement. In this sense, the relationship between Robert and Liz could be seen as paralleling that between Elisabeth and Trotta, in that as Schmid-Bortenschlager contends, the latter relationship was more of a father-daughter, mentor-student one (92).

This mental re-arranging of the wedding party betrays something of the nature of the relationship between Elisabeth and Robert as well as the similarity between Elisabeth and Liz. Although the text remains ambiguous on the matter, there is a suggestion that there may be subconscious incestuous longings between Elisabeth and Robert. Much later in the text, for example, Elisabeth remembers inviting the then teenaged Robert to visit her in Paris where: "warf sie [Elisabeth] Robert aus ihrem Bett, der etwas benebelt vom ersten Pernod seines Lebens, anfing, ihre Haare und ihr Gesicht zu streicheln, denn das musste nun endgültig aufhören, oder es durfte vielmehr gar nicht erst beginnen" (182). It is Robert, it seems, who might harbour incestuous feelings, rather than Elisabeth, who seems to have always been careful that Robert not have a chance to "play out" his possible fantasies in the first place.

More significant perhaps than possible subconscious incestuous feelings between siblings, is the maternal role that Elisabeth has played in her relationship with Robert since they were children. As a result of Frau Matrei's illness and premature death, Elisabeth was expected to take on the role of mother and care for Robert as if he were her own. After a great deal of retrospection while later walking the paths, Elisabeth claims that "bei ihr sei alles verkehrt gegangen, sie hätte nämlich zuerst ein Kind [Robert] geliebt und erst sehr viel später einen Mann. Und wenn bei einer Frau das eine vor dem anderen kam, dann könne man wohl kaum erwarten, daß sie ganz normal sei" (167). Elisabeth feels that she might not be quite "normal," because of being forced to

adopt the maternal role at such a young age. Her resentment, however, does not seem to be so much directed at Robert, but rather her own mother, "Mama," whom she reports as hating (167), for burdening her with being responsible for Robert. Nonetheless, Elisabeth now feels that she "loses" Robert and that "sie habe jetzt Robert verloren" (131), upon his wedding, thus aiding in sending her into a panic and partly facilitating her crisis.

Elisabeth identifies with Liz in that she is able to interchange herself with Liz in the wedding pictures. The two women in fact appear to be "doubles," similar to Charlotte and Mara in "Gomorrha" and "die alte Frau Jordan" and Franziska in "Das Gebell." The power differential established between Robert and Liz is consequently transferred to the fictional couple Robert-Elisabeth. Robert not only dominates Liz, but is also capable of dominating Elisabeth. This inequality between Robert and Liz is exemplified by Robert inheriting the Matrei home in Klagenfurt and Liz being able to marry into the family and supersede Elisabeth as the new Frau Matrei. As was reported to be said in London at the wedding: "Es gibt wieder eine Frau Matrei [...], und sie würden nicht aussterben" (124). Herr Matrei also appears to favour Robert, being apparently more concerned about his welfare, while being quite disinterested in Elisabeth's personal life and work. Elisabeth, despite her attempts at infantilizing Liz, doubts that one could see her as Liz's mother. She thinks that she is rather "undefinierbar [...], wie eine Frau Ende Dreißig" (123). This indicates Elisabeth's self-consciousness concerning her age, but also solidifies the assertion that Elisabeth does indeed identify to a certain extent with Liz.

The unmarried and childless Elisabeth appears to feel "replaced" by Liz, and on some level is made to feel irrelevant herself in not being a wife and wanting to have a

family. Elisabeth explains that she "hatte darüber [children] nachzudenken gelernt" (124), as is persuambly expected of a woman, but that she has never actually seriously contemplated motherhood. Robert would surely have never given it a thought, imagines Elisabeth, as his "Instinkt war besser und stärker" (124). Elisabeth claims that she has "learnt" to be expected to want children, suggesting that her instincts might be otherwise, but somehow weaker and lesser than Robert's instincts. Elisabeth explains that "Robert und sie sich zwar in die Fremde gerettet hatten und tätig waren wie tätige Menschen in wichtigen Ländern, und Robert würde durch Liz noch sicherer in der Distanz werden" (124). Elisabeth and Robert are alike, both working far from home, having "escaped" from Klagenfurt, and making a life for themselves elsewhere. Again, it is Liz who is seen as being responsible for creating an anticipated greater "distance" between Elisabeth and Robert. Unlike Robert, Elisabeth shows no inclination to "settle down," although she regrets her father is not more concerned about this. Instead of entering into a long-term commitment, she has had a number of lovers, mostly younger men, and by and large she considers them to have been: "gescheiterte Existenzen waren und sie brauchten, als Halt, auch für Empfehlungen, und mit Philippe [her current lover] war es natürlich wieder einmal so" (125). In other words, Elisabeth seems to have asserted a fairly powerful role in her relationships with men. She has perhaps most often played the "mother" role, just as she has to some extent in her relationship with Robert. Even during her short marriage to the American, Hugh, who was openly gay from the beginning of their relationship, Elisabeth had the upper hand, or so she thought.

Liz, on the other hand, appears to be the dutiful and obedient wife – all that which Elisabeth is not – who appears to have little in her own life and "sie war nirgend herumgewirbelt und kannte nur das Vergnügen, mit Robert zu sein" (127). Elisabeth

expected Liz to be a young and adventurous young woman, but she learns that she hardly personifies "swinging London" (127), as she might have expected, but is instead quite conventional. She is still, however, childishly exuberant and intent on seeing the world, as Elisabeth notes earlier in the text. Elisabeth recalls Liz's unbridled excitement upon visiting Paris – a city she found "super" (130), and this prompts Elisabeth to realize that she cannot think of a time when she felt such enthusiasm for Paris, or any place for that matter. The narrator concludes that "es gab überhaupt keine Orte mehr für Elisabeth, die ihr nicht wehtaten, aber diese liebe kleine Person hatte noch einige Städte vor sich zum Bestaunen" (130). Elisabeth, in referring to Liz as "eine kleine liebe Person," betrays a certain condescension and reluctance to acknowledge Liz as an individual. Perhaps, if Liz remains a child, Elisabeth will not have to "give up" Robert. Elisabeth's condescension also suggests her contempt for other women and her jealously of Liz in particular. Elisabeth is weary and tired both physically and figuratively and is envious of Liz's youthful optimism and excitement. Perhaps Elisabeth momentarily regrets not having married an appropriate man and opted for something of the so-called bourgeois ideal. Later in the text, however, Elisabeth claims she believes even "Robert und Liz hatten keine Zukunft" (166), perhaps predicting that the enthusiasm will wear off and Liz will come to regret marrying Robert as the marriage will prove stifling. Just as her own optimism was quelled by Trotta, Elisabeth predicts that perhaps Liz will also come to feel undermined and limited in her relationship with Robert.

Most significant is Elisabeth's description of her shopping trip to Harrod's with Liz while in London. Far from enjoying the outing, Elisabeth was struck with nausea and panic and these feelings followed her all the way to Klagenfurt. As stated earlier, the panic and nausea is symbolic of Elisabeth's crisis. Elisabeth was once excited by

traveling and seeing new places, and now, she only feels uninterested and exhausted by them. Achberger sums up Elisabeth Matrei's life as being nothing but a "hectic and unsatisfying string of affairs and meaningless journalistic assignments" (*Understanding* 158). Elisabeth never quite verbalizes it this way. However, it becomes clear as the reader progresses through the text that she suffers from a series of disappointments and regrets and the double blow of "losing" Robert and gaining a "double" reflector figure in Liz causes her to enter into a crisis.

On the first day in Klagenfurt, Elisabeth sets out on a walk with her father in search of the lake. The narrator points out that Elisabeth has never particularly been interested in nature or in walking for that matter, but "am meisten interessierten sie noch die Wegmöglichkeiten, die Kreuzungen, die Abzweigungen und die Angabe der Stunden" (135). As alluded to in the epigraph, it appears that on a more metaphoric level, Elisabeth not only encounters the so-called paths to the lake, but confronts "paths" taken in her own life. Returning to Klagenfurt in crisis leads Elisabeth to the point of self-analysis once she encounters the paths.

Elisabeth recounts and analyzes her life in almost chronological fashion. The reader learns that Elisabeth had arrived from Klagenfurt in Vienna some thirty years earlier as a naïve and uneducated young woman. Through lucky circumstances she was able to get taken on by a series of well-known (male) photographers. She became the well-known photographer, Duvalier's assistant and gained entrance into a high-profile world of artists, intellectuals and celebrities. It was in many ways an unhappy time in retrospect, however, because Elisabeth feels she was essentially exploited by the much older Duvalier. She was the young, inexperienced "flunky," who was something of a joke and never an object of jealousy on the part of the wives of the men on the Vienna

scene she knew, because she was largely considered "ein Neutrum" (139). Perhaps, in part owing to this, she felt motivated to meet a suitable man and begin a relationship. Elisabeth essentially had to will herself to find a man. All the men she considered were older, established and of a certain social standing. The whole process of dating and conducting a relationship with a man seemed somewhat awkward and unpleasant and Elisabeth remembers equating going to bed with a man as being like entering into "einen Operationssaal" (139).

This sense of dread, however, dissipated when Elisabeth met Trotta, her first serious love interest. Trotta, also expatriated, shared Elisabeth's feelings of alienation and awkwardness in a society in which he did not feel at ease. More than anything else, Elisabeth recalls Trotta as being a significant influence upon her life because "er sie zum Bewußtstein vieler Dinge brachte, seiner Herkunft wegen, und er, ein wirklich Exilierter und Verlorener, sie, eine Abenteurerin, die sich weiß Gott was für ihr Leben von der Welt erhoffte" (140). Despite the certain solidarity Elisabeth felt with Trotta, she recalls how he undermined her work and shook her confidence by accusing her that her work was morally flawed and pointless. Elisabeth, who was once idealistic and excited about her work, started to have doubts and regrets and Trotta's suicide only served to intensify these uneasy feelings and leave them unresolved.

It is in thinking about Trotta that Elisabeth decides to temporarily postpone her search for the lake, and seek some refreshment at the nearby EINSIEDLER Inn. Here she encounters the second Elisabeth: Elisabeth Mihailovics. Mihailovics, whom Elisabeth first notices standing by a run-down old Volkswagen, approaches Elisabeth and introduces herself in a highly familiar manner. Elisabeth is confused, does not immediately recognize the other woman, but later recalls her from her Vienna days.

Mihailovics explains that like Elisabeth she is visiting relatives in Klagenfurt. Elisabeth is polite, but has no desire to chat with the other woman and talk of mutual friends in Vienna. What puzzles Elisabeth is the rather rough-looking young man at the back of the car whom Mihailovics makes no effort to introduce to Elisabeth. After getting a beer inside the inn, Elisabeth emerges, is ready to wave at Mihailovics, but decides not to, "weil die andere Elisabeth ostensiv vor sich hinsah, und tat, als bemerkte sie sie gar nicht" (149).

Later, over dinner, Elisabeth discusses the somewhat strange encounter with her father. Elisabeth describes Mihailovics as "eine ganz nette Person, etwas farblos [...] und warum die hier mit einen Bauernburschen herumfuhr, sei ihr nicht klar, denn das Mädchen war ihr ganz anders vorgekommen in Wien, eher eine Intellektuelle, aber die Zusammenhänge fielen ihr nicht ein" (149). Again, Elisabeth is somewhat patronizing towards the other woman, referring to her sarcastically as "eine ganz nette Person" (149), and "ein Mädchen" (149) – essentially infantilizing and/or neutralizing her contemporary as she does with Liz. Once again, both women function as "doubles." They are both intellectually inclined, lived in Vienna, have relatives in Klagenfurt, and have a preference for younger men. The reader must surely "see" the protagonist Elisabeth in Mihailovics, however, this does not seem to be the case for Elisabeth herself. She is far too apt to dismiss the other woman as "farblos" and criticize her for having a much younger lover, thus revealing indirect criticism of herself, as Mihailovics functions as a reflector figure.

Elisabeth feels exhausted after meeting Mihailovics and thinks to herself "daß es etwas viel war, jetzt noch eine Elisabeth zu treffen" (149). This statement reinforces the impression that there is a distinct narrative strategy to Elisabeth encountering these

women who share her name and that it serves to unnerve her. The significance of these female-female encounters is that they conjure up the past in some way or another and Elisabeth is in turn forced to think about herself once again and to reflect upon the choices she has made. These women propel her self-analysis onward, when she might well have ceased thinking about her past. Elisabeth's judgemental attitude towards Liz and Mihailovics indicates how she is critical and disapproving of herself on at least a subconscious and/or semi-conscious level.

The following day Elisabeth continues her search for the lake and reflects on her short-lived marriage to Hugh and on Trotta's suicide. Elisabeth Matrei is said to believe that New York and Paris represent nothing more than a series of "Feindschaften" (156) to her now. She thinks of Manes, the so-called stranger from Zlotogrod, with whom she had had a passionate affair following Trotta's untimely suicide. Manes had served as a Trotta substitute, however, it is only later that she learns that she had erroneously connected him to Trotta. Manes left her inexplicably, resulting in a great deal of confusion and unhappiness. As stated earlier, Elisabeth considers that the dysfunctional relationships she has formed with men may be the result of having played the maternal role with respect to Robert (167). In retrospect, she thinks that "[i]hre zunehmenden Erfolge bei den Männern hatten mit ihrer zunehmenden Gleichgültigkeit zu tun" (174). She realizes that she will probably have to break up with Philippe, her current lover, and that despite moments of happiness, "es sollten die Frauen und die Männer am besten Abstand halten, nichts zu tun haben miteinander, bis beide herausgefunden hatten aus einer Verwirrung und der Verstörung, der Unstimmigkeit aller Beziehungen" (175). Like Charlotte of "Gomorrha," Elisabeth yearns for an imposed, temporary "distance" between men and women. Of course, "Drei Wege" shows that there is hardly solidarity

within the sexes, given Elisabeth's tendency to trivialize and infantilize the women she encounters, despite her inevitable identification with these other women.

Several days later, after further walking the paths alone and with her father, and discussing the various people in the town in a somewhat nostalgic moment between father and daughter, Elisabeth announces that "[sie] wollte tags darauf das Einkaufen versuchen, um die Veränderung zu sehen, sah sich gleich erkannt von den neuen Leuten, die sie gar nicht kannte" (184). In an attempt to revisit her past once again, Elisabeth is met instead with embarrassment and unease. Elisabeth visits the local stationary shop, only to meet another woman from her past. This woman, Linde represents an almost grotesque example of bourgeois womanhood that Elisabeth Matrei would rather not confront. Linde, who works in a small stationary shop, recognizes Elisabeth from her schooldays and "die Frau stöhnte: Ein Leben, sag ich dir, ein ganzer Roman, aber kein schöner, und du? Ich hoff [sic], daß dir so was erspart geblieben ist" (185). Elisabeth is embarrassed by this exchange and by the rather crude Linde. She recalls that Linde was forced to marry the lecherous stationary shop owner after he had impregnated her, while she was still a minor. She was by no means the only minor that this man had molested, as he was said at the time to have had a "Harem von Minderjährigen" (185). Perhaps Elisabeth feels she too could have fallen victim to this man – a fate surely much worse than her own. Feeling somewhat guilty and confused by this unwelcome encounter and confrontation with her past, Elisabeth leaves the shop, vowing that "sie würde bestimmt nie mehr in dieses Geschäft gehen" (184). Of course, this statement suggests Elisabeth's desire to leave Klagenfurt and the unsettling contact with her past.

Following the encounter with Linde (or Gerlinde), Elisabeth begins to voice certain regrets: "der größte Fehler war wahrscheinlich gewesen, daß sie in New York so

schnell aufgeben hatte, denn als sie Hugh heiratete, hatte sie nicht mehr geglaubt, daß sie Trotta liebe" (187). Although it is not quite clear that there is a causal link between meeting Linde and such "second thoughts." It appears in meeting Linde that Elisabeth is prompted to leave Klagenfurt and in turn her introspection as well. She continues at first, however, to walk the paths to the lake and think about her past, only to ultimately find that the paths to the lake are blocked by a massive construction site. On a metaphoric level, of course, it is clear that Elisabeth's relationships have also impeded her and filled her with self-doubt. Elisabeth ends up reaching the lake with her father by bus, and while swimming together, she calls out to her father "Daddy, I love you" (190). Herr Matrei, who only has a limited knowledge of English, has no idea what she is saying and the non-communication that exists between father and daughter prevails. It is shortly after this that Elisabeth learns of Mihailovics' or Dr. Elisabeth Rapatz's death at the hands of her husband, the wealthy tycoon, Bertold Rapatz, after being caught in bed with her younger lover. This revelation seems to be an indictment of bourgeois married life, and evidence that the "path" taken by Mihailovics was indeed a disastrous one. Perhaps Elisabeth "sees" her own death, literally and/or figuratively, when she learns of Mihailovics' murder. The news of Mihailovics' death shakes Elisabeth to the point of wishing to leave Klagenfurt early.

Following this Elisabeth orchestrates an early departure, only to be confronted by a further "path" untaken in the form of the previously admiring Branco at the Vienna airport. Elisabeth is forced to realize that perhaps she should have given Branco a chance. Returning to Paris, Elisabeth learns of Philippe's betrayal and intention to leave and she is quite emotionless in the face of this crisis. She thinks only of her work, and as it is summed up at the end of the text, "[s]ie [Elisabeth] dachte trotzdem noch: Es ist

nichts, es ist nichts, es kann mir doch gar nichts mehr geschehen. Es kann mir etwas geschehen, aber es muß mir nichts geschehen" (211). Elisabeth accepts an assignment in Saigon to cover the Vietnam War and the ending is left open. It is not clear that she perceives this trip to be a "suicide mission" as some critics have claimed (Achberger; Lensing; Omelaniuk et al.) and yet Elisabeth never explicitly voices hope for her future. She ends her crisis and self-examination by beginning yet another journey.

The female-female interactions in "Drei Wege" are significant to the overall narrative and the outcome of the text. Elisabeth arrives in a crisis after "losing" Robert to Liz, but also in seeing herself potentially projected and reflected in her "double," Liz. In this sense, Liz is not only instrumental in "catalyzing" Elisabeth's crisis, but also her subsequent self-examination, in a fashion similar to that which is portrayed in "Gomorrha." Elisabeth's introspection is further punctuated by encountering Mihailovics and Linde, who both unnerve Elisabeth and apparently hasten her departure from Klagenfurt. Mihailovics and Linde both represent Elisabeth's past, potential "paths" to be taken in life, and function as reflector figures for Elisabeth.

It may be the men who dominate Elisabeth's self-examination and, as Schmid-Bortenschlager argues, play "eine weitaus größere Rolle als ihr Beruf" (90), but it is the women she encounters who arguably aid in setting her on the "path" to self-examination and unsettling and confusing her even more once she is on this/these "path(s)." It is not clear that Elisabeth's self-examination is progressive or transformative, as she does not seem to transcend that which troubles her. However, she clearly undertakes a significant and perhaps even unprecedented amount of self-reflection while in Klagenfurt.

Notes: Chapter Three

[1] Elisabeth Matrei is unsure if the third woman she encounters, an ex-schoolmate in Klagenfurt, is named Linde or Gerlinde. Elisabeth's uncertainty about the woman's name betrays something of her dismissive attitude towards this other woman. For the sake of brevity, this woman will be referred to from now on as Linde in this analysis.

Conclusion

In the *Erzählungen* "Gomorrha," "Das Gebell," and "Drei Wege," three female protagonists encounter one or more female characters. These secondary female characters seem to be able to bring about a profound kind of self-examination on the part of the protagonists, Charlotte, Franziska, and Elisabeth, on issues relating to life choices, gender, and identity. Although it may be the men who dominate their respective lives, it is the women the protagonists encounter who appear to trigger and/or aid in triggering the reflection they undertake concerning their lives.

In "Gomorrha," Charlotte is prompted to examine her relationships with men, especially her relationship with her husband, Franz, when she is confronted by Mara's "catalyzing" presence and proposition that they begin a relationship. Mara, who functions as Charlotte's "double" as well as antithesis within the text, facilitates a kind of "alienation effect" (Horsley 283) within Charlotte which allows her to see herself in the younger woman. Of course later when Charlotte fantasizes about a relationship with Mara, she "feminizes" Mara and fashions her as a child and object in an attempt to subjugate her and create distance between the two of them. This interplay of sameness and difference facilitates Mara's dualistic role within "Gomorrha," but also personifies Charlotte's strict adherence to polarized gender roles.

In "Das Gebell," the once dutiful and obedient Franziska comes to identify with her similarly oppressed mother-in-law, "die alte Frau Jordan," as she uncovers the truth about her husband, Leo. "Die alte Frau Jordan" functions as a "story-teller" within the text, passing down her "cover-up" strategies and fear of Leo to the younger generation,

represented by Franziska. The two "Frau Jordans" are in effect "doubles," as they share the same oppressor, Leo, and are both ultimately destroyed by him.

Elisabeth, the protagonist of "Drei Wege" is catapulted into a crisis following Robert's wedding and her interaction with her new sister-in-law, Liz. The youthful and optimistic Liz unnerves Elisabeth, who comes to experience something of a "mid-life crisis" as a result. Liz, who shares Elisabeth's name and close connection to Robert, also functions as a "double," and is someone with whom Elisabeth identifies. Liz also represents a "what if" "path" and/or scenario for the unmarried and childless Elisabeth, who is unsure about the "paths" she has taken in her own life. Finally, in trivializing and infantilizing Liz, Elisabeth is able to visualize herself as Robert's bride, thus temporarily preventing her from "losing" Robert. Two further secondary characters in "Drei Wege," Elisabeth Mihailovics and Linde, similarly function as reflector figures for Elisabeth, intensifying her self-examination and in the end contributing to her hastened departure from Klagenfurt.

Constant throughout these three *Erzählungen* is the "omnipresence" but physical absence of the dominating male figures. In "Gomorrha," Franz never makes an appearance, although as a representation of patriarchy, his presence is felt throughout the text. Leo of "Das Gebell" has minimal dialogue in the text, but dominates the entire interaction between Franziska and "die alte Frau Jordan." In "Drei Wege" Elisabeth is haunted by the critical and dominating presence of her dead ex-lover, Trotta, who is obviously absent from the text but nonetheless is the focal point of Elisabeth's introspection. This juxtaposition of absence and presence with respect to the men in these *Erzählungen* emphasizes the inescapability of the patriarchal order the women in each of the analyzed *Erzählungen* face.

The patriarchal order or status quo ultimately prevails in "Gomorrha," as Charlotte envisions subjugating Mara, despite her re-thinking of traditional language and myths. Herein lies the contradiction that limits Charlotte to creating an inevitably superficial fantasy and/or escape that is ineffective in bringing about any kind of productive change. Mara may prove effective in "catalyzing" Charlotte's self-examination, but she is powerless in convincing Charlotte that a relationship based on equality might be possible. Despite momentarily "seeing" herself in Mara, Charlotte is unable to assert a positive, autonomous identity that is not dictated by traditional notions of polarized gender roles and dominance over a submissive.

In "Das Gebell," Franziska is unable to confront her mother-in-law or Leo about how she feels and, unlike Charlotte, never undertakes a sustained analysis of her subjugation under Leo. She never explores the possibility of an alternative way of being or a life apart from Leo, but rather is assumed to commit suicide like Franza of *Der Fall Franza*. Arguably, Franziska goes further than Charlotte in order to extricate herself from her marriage, but albeit in highly negative fashion. She sees no alternative way of being for herself, cannot envision existing apart from Leo, and yet perhaps fears that like "die alte Frau Jordan" she too might succumb to madness if she remains. For Franziska, who is clearly an "appendage" of Leo's, there is no autonomous, positive identity to be claimed.

Elisabeth, who is arguably by far the most outwardly emancipated of the three women, comes to a greater awareness of the dysfunctional nature of her relationships and Trotta's dominance while in Klagenfurt. Her self-examination, however, does not necessarily prove progressive or transformative, as some critics (Dollenmayer; West-Nutting et al.) contend. At the end of the text, Elisabeth leaves for Saigon in what could

be construed as an act of defiance, but also desperation. Despite building a successful career in the male-dominated field of photo-journalism and admitting to mostly taking on insecure, younger men as lovers, Elisabeth remains confused and disturbed by the subtle control men have asserted in her life. She "plays" with identities and simultaneously takes on a number of different roles in her relationships with men as well as women in what could be interpreted as her own elusive search for a positive, affirming identity.

Significant to this analysis is the negative portrayal of women on the part of the protagonists in "Gomorrha" and "Drei Wege." Both Charlotte and Elisabeth betray a certain degree of contempt towards their own sex in their insistence on trivializing and infantilizing the women they encounter. This reflects an internalizing of patriarchal principles, which indicates that the protagonists, Charlotte, Franziska, and Elisabeth, are not only oppressed by the prevailing social order, but also prove themselves to varying degrees to be complicit with it. Franziska of "Das Gebell" is somewhat different than Charlotte and Elisabeth, in that she appears to establish a certain rapport and solidarity with her mother-in-law. This closeness, however, proves superficial in that like Charlotte and Elisabeth, Franziska is unable to communicate openly with her mother-in-law and although the women seem close, they continue to repress what they both think and feel with each other.

This analysis is the first of its kind to offer a sustained and/or comparative examination of the role of secondary female characters in Bachmann's *Erzählungen* and the ensuing female-female interactions. It is surprising that these relationships have been neglected given the arguably central role female-female interactions play in each of these texts. What this analysis reveals, apart from the specific narrative function and

portrayal of the female-female interactions in the three specific analyzed texts, is the common struggle on the part of three female protagonists to construct positive and autonomous female identities. Even the apparently successful protagonist, Elisabeth of "Drei Wege," is unable to "free" herself from a profound sense of insecurity about the "paths" she has taken in life, even though she has remained unmarried and less encumbered by men than Charlotte and Franziska, who clearly seek a means with which to temporarily and/or permanently exit their marriages.

This analysis confirms that there are parallels that exist between the three analyzed *Erzählungen* and Bachmann's *Todesarten*. Both the analyzed *Erzählungen* and the *Todesarten* present women who are subtly destroyed by men and to some extent are complicit in this destruction. "Gomorrha" represents a very early attempt on Bachmann's part to grapple with the notion of a female "ich" – something that Bachmann revisits in *Simultan* and the *Todesarten*. Charlotte adopts a masculine stance in her interaction with Mara as she comes to recognize her previously subjugated female self in Mara, casting off what she considered her once ineffectual, female self. In *Malina* of the *Todesarten*, Bachmann further develops the notion of a "Doppelgänger-ich" divided into masculine and feminine halves. Similarly, the later *Erzählungen*, "Das Gebell," and "Drei Wege" of *Simultan*, closely parallel the unfinished *Todesarten* fragments, *Der Fall Franza* and *Gier*, in terms of theme and characters.

The insights presented in this analysis dealing with the function and portrayal of female-female interactions serve to provide a more informed reading of the *Todesarten*, where women are similarly shown to be "trapped" in oppressive relationships with men in what has been argued in the context of the *Todesarten* to be "fascism in interpersonal relationships" (1 Costabile-Heming; Karandrikas).

Further research questions and directions arising from this analysis include: What is the role of secondary female characters in the *Todesarten*? Do they parallel those of the above analyzed *Erzählungen*? What further thematic parallels exist between the analyzed *Erzählungen* and the *Todesarten*? How do other *Erzählungen* by Bachmann that feature much less and/or no female-female interaction differ thematically from the *Erzählungen* of this analysis? Finally, what parallels might exist between the portrayal and function of female-female interactions in Bachmann's oeuvre as compared to Bachmann's postwar German-speaking contemporaries?

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