Writing Motherhood in Weimar Germany: Politics, Psychology and Literary Representations

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Abstract

This thesis examines discourses of motherhood in women's left-wing political and popular writing from the Weimar Republic. I ask how motherhood is politicised and consider the extent to which young women envision new models of mothering, enquiring whether a figurative break with their mothers' generation is necessary for them to do so. My approach bridges literary, intellectual, and cultural history to argue that women's writing across a range of genres represents a means to reimagine motherhood in line with women's changed circumstances and increasingly modern lifestyles after the First World War.

My corpus comprises four groups of primary sources. In Chapter One, I discuss theoretical works that combine socialist and psychological perspectives. I demonstrate that these texts anticipate post-World War Two feminist theory and reveal that radical rejection of gender essentialism was possible during the Weimar period. Yet, as other sources illustrate, such radicalism did not resonate with mainstream audiences in Weimar Germany. In Chapter Two, I turn to the socialist women's press and left-wing non-fiction writing to analyse the tensions between progressive attempts to modernise women's mothering practices and acceptance of essentialist notions of women's inherent desire to mother. In Chapters Three and Four, I examine works of socialist and popular fiction respectively to argue that, through the portrayal of relatable characters, these texts individualise discourses of mothering and reproductive rights. The trope of the absent mother found in Weimar-era fiction by women exposes young women's desire to differentiate their generation from that of their mothers and enables the emergence of new models of motherhood. This thesis argues that, while they leave assumptions of women's innate desire to mother largely unchallenged, women writers in Weimar Germany advocate increasing women's choices about when and how they mother and offer their readers the means to imagine different ways of mothering.

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Abbreviations and References

Political Parties and Organisations

Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – SPD

Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands – KPD

Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – USPD

Bund deutscher Frauenvereine – BDF

Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform – BfM

Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller – BPRS

Primary Texts

The first reference to primary texts in each chapter will appear in full in a footnote. Subsequent references will follow citations in parentheses and be identified by the following abbreviations.

Alice Rühle-Gerstel, *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (1932) – ARG

Elfriede Brüning, *Kleine Leute* (written 1932-33, first published 1970) – EB

Else Kienle, *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin* (1932) – EK

Gabriele Tergit, *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* (1931) – GT

Helene Overlach, *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute* (1931) – HO

Henny Schumacher, *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* (1929) – HS

Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *Lina: Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens* (1924) – HZM(a)

Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *Kleine Leute* (1925) – HZM(b)

Irmgard Keun, *Gilgi – eine von uns* (1931) – IK

Maria Leitner, *Mädchen mit drei Namen* (1932) – ML

Vicki Baum, *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (1928) – VB

The following magazines and journals are also cited as primary sources:

Die Gleichheit (1892-1923)

Die neue Generation (1905-1932)

Frauenwelt (1924-1933)

Der Weg der Frau (1931-1933)

Articles from these publications will be referenced in footnotes. Where no precise date of publication is available, issue numbers are also included. Page numbers are included only where the original pagination is available.

References to the advice column 'Wer weiss Rat?' in *Frauenwelt* follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the shortened title 'Rat' and the date of publication.

Declaration

I, the author, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

Introduction

'Jedes erwachsene Mädchen, jede Frau mit fühlendem Herzen spurt wohl ein heißes Verlangen, eine unstillbare Sehnsucht in sich nach der Mutterschaft, nach dem Kinde',[1] declared an article entitled 'Mutterpflichten', which appeared in the Social Democratic women's newspaper, *Die Gleichheit*, in 1921. This assertion is typical of the gender essentialism that went largely unchallenged by the women's movement and parties across the political spectrum throughout the years of the Weimar Republic, limiting women's opportunities to forge a new social role, and leaving the disunified branches of the women's movement ill-equipped to challenge effectively the erosion of women's rights when the National Socialists seized power in 1933. The Weimar Republic was established as a modern parliamentary democracy in the wake of the First World War and Article 109 of the Weimar constitution guaranteed women and men 'grundsätzlich dieselben staatsbürgerlichen Rechte und Pflichten'.[2] Yet, as indicated by the controversial inclusion of the word 'grundsätzlich' in Article 109, assumptions of gender difference and women's innate desire to mother remained deep-rooted. These widely held expectations of women's mothering were, however, at odds with the image of the independent, unmarried, and childless new woman that dominated both contemporary popular cultural production and later scholarship examining women's role in Weimar Germany. This thesis explores the tensions between these two discourses. I argue that socialist and feminist authors referenced normative ideas of gender difference to advocate progressive advances in access to birth control and the rights of single mothers in terms considered more socially palatable, and I examine how women writers of fiction call into question the presumption of new women's childlessness.

This thesis bridges literary studies and cultural and feminist intellectual history to consider how socialist, left-leaning, and socially liberal women writers in Weimar Germany engaged with and sought to shape discourses of motherhood in the first German Republic.[3] The primary sources discussed in this thesis incorporate Marxist psychological perspectives, the socialist women's press, left-wing didactic fiction, and mainstream popular fiction. I consider left-wing perspectives in order to uncover the tensions and contradictions present in works

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[1] Cl., 'Mutterpflichten', *Die Gleichheit*, 15 March 1921.
[2] Fritz Stier-Somlo, *Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reichs vom 11. August 1919: Ein systematischer Überblick* (Bonn: A. Marcus & E. Webers, 1925), p. 223.
[3] I use the terms socialist and socialism in their broad sense to encompass views represented within the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), Communist Party (KPD), and by independent left-wing intellectuals. These terms will be capitalised when referring to specific policies or party political positions.

which seek to present themselves as socially progressive while simultaneously leaving assumptions of female particularity and notions of maternal duty unchallenged. Although the political right in Weimar Germany also encompassed a range of different positions and priorities, the right-wing parties and conservative women's organisations, many organised within the *Bund deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF), did present a more unified stance on women's motherhood. For the right, women's primary social duty was as mothers, both biological and, as Christiane Streubel explains, as 'Mütter des Volkes'.[4] Right-wing women were often strongly influenced by religious perspectives that reflected idealised notions of motherhood,[5] and opposition to the liberalisation of laws restricting access to abortion and contraception remained fierce.[6] There was little appetite among the right-wing groups in Weimar Germany to contemplate a version of women's social role that did not revolve around women's perceived natural maternal qualities and duty towards the family and nation as a mother.[7]

Socialist women, on the other hand, sought to present their stance as progressive, rejecting, for example, the notion that women's mothering must occur within marriage. Tensions emerged, however, as they emphasised women's inherent maternal qualities while advocating their right to terminate pregnancies and limit family size. Studying left-wing sources provides greater insight into the extent to which women's social role changed during the Weimar era, as socialist authors grappled with implementing their calls for greater equality between men and women, and attracting support in a context in which conservative ideas of gender were widely accepted.[8] I also study examples of popular fiction writing by, and primarily for, women in order to examine whether the more radical or theoretical elements of political writing were circulating in mainstream discourses. The range of perspectives included in these

[4] Christiane Streubel, *Radikale Nationalistinnen: Agitation und Programmatik rechter Frauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2006), p. 286.
[5] See, for example: Raffael Scheck, 'Women in the Non-Nazi Right during the Weimar Republic: The German Nationalist People's Party (DNVP)', in *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World*, ed. by Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 141-53 (p. 150). ProQuest Ebook; Elizabeth Harvey, 'Gender, Generation and Politics: Young Protestant Women in the Final Years of the Weimar Republic', in *Generations in Conflict,* ed. by Mark Roseman, pp. 184-209.
[6] Richard J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933* (London: Sage, 1976), p. 237.
[7] Further discussion of right-wing women's groups and activities can be found in: Streubel, *Radikale Nationalistinnen*; Scheck, 'Women in the Non-Nazi Right'; Harvey, 'Gender, Generation and Politics'; Evans, *The Feminist Movement*; Raffael Scheck, 'Women against Versailles: Maternalism and Nationalism of Female Bourgeois Politicians in the Early Weimar Republic', *German Studies Review*, 22.1 (1999), 21-42; Julie V. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement, 1923-1945* (London: Tauris, 2000). VL Ebook.
[8] I use the term conservative in relation to gender to refer to traditional divisions of labour and social structures that excluded women from positions of power outside the domestic sphere. I also refer to conservative notions of motherhood in relation to the idealisation of a model of mothering predicated on selflessness, nurturing, and the subordination of women's needs to those of the family. I do not refer to any specific party political position in my use of the term conservative.

primary texts reveals how socialist and socially liberal women writers attempted to model a modern motherhood that incorporated emerging psychoanalytic theories, was compatible with their professional lives, and, particularly in the case of the socialist women's press, enabled women to position themselves as authorities on reproductive choice and childcare.

The central question asked in this research is: how do women writers publishing in a variety of genres and subject areas, including psychological and political writing, seek to shape public discourses around motherhood in the Weimar Republic? Despite scholarly interest in women's writing from the Weimar era, motherhood, which featured as a prominent theme in fiction and non-fiction texts, has been critically neglected to date. I build on cultural historical studies, such as Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan's edited volume *When Biology Became Destiny* (1984) and Renate Pore's *A Conflict of Interest* (1981), that have highlighted the continuity in discourses of gender roles before and during the Weimar era, as well as literary scholarship, including Kerstin Barndt's *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit* (2003), which has considered how female authors explored through fiction the new, if still somewhat limited, opportunities available to women in the Weimar Republic. By uncovering the extent to which female writers in Weimar Germany challenge dominant discourses to propose new models of mothering, my research offers fresh insights into women's experiences during this period of rapid social and political change. Through discussion of a range of primary sources, introduced below, this thesis provides a new understanding of how essentialist ideas that persisted throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century were reinforced in the Weimar-era discourse of groups that positioned themselves as progressive.

Two further key lines of enquiry emerge from my central research question. First, I ask how motherhood and reproductive choice are politicised in left-wing and popular women's writing. With reference to the policies and priorities of both the left-wing political parties and the left-wing branches of the Weimar-era women's movements, my analysis explores the extent to which perspectives that advocate the notion of motherhood, whether biological or social, as women's primary contribution to society are adopted or resisted by women writers. I foreground the ways in which social factors such as the stated political affiliation of the authors or the class of the characters they depict impact the presentation of reproductive choices and motherhood. In answering this question, my research offers a deeper understanding of women's priorities and motivations in their interventions in public conversations about women's social role.

Second, I ask how and why left-wing and popular women's writing depicts generational tensions between the women who came of age in the Weimar period and their mothers. I explore the ways in which writing offers a space for women to imagine new models of motherhood that are informed by developments in psychological theory and social modernity. I

argue that the generation of women born around 1900, who came of age in the Weimar Republic, broke the continuity with their mothers' generation in order to develop new mothering practices and that this break becomes apparent in the trope of the absent mother in women's fiction writing.

My analysis shows that neither the contemporary claims, by cultural commentators including Hans Morek and Felix Holländer,[9] that young women in the Weimar Republic were rejecting motherhood, nor the identification by scholars including Richard J. Evans, Renate Pore and Christiane Eifert of the Weimar period as one of conservative continuity in terms of gender roles, capture the full picture.[10] Rather, women's relationship to motherhood and their reproductive choices was more nuanced. I argue that, while essentialist assumptions of women's natural desire to mother remained widespread across the political spectrum, women who came of age in the Weimar Republic sought to embrace their new opportunities in the public sphere and, instead of unquestioningly accepting the model of motherhood represented by their mothers' generation, they sought to remodel motherhood, incorporating developments in psychoanalytic theory and the consequences of social and political changes in the post-World War One period. In doing so, as my analysis shows, women's writing about motherhood produced during the Weimar period anticipates post-World War Two developments in feminist thought.[11]

I view literature as a means for women writers to envision new models of motherhood that were compatible with their modern lifestyles. Literature presented a privileged site for the development of these discourses. Women's participation in literary production had been pioneered before the Weimar period and had become increasingly established since the early nineteenth century, granting women easier access to discursive space in comparison to, for example, film. As Charlotte Woodford notes, before women's suffrage, 'fiction was an important way for women to gain a campaigning voice in the extra-parliamentary realm.'[12] Furthermore, as reading was a major leisure time activity in Weimar Germany,[13] this medium also reached a

[9] Carol Schmid, 'The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism in Interwar Berlin and Shanghai', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 15.1 (2014), 1-16 (p. 11); Vibeke Rützou Petersen, *Women and Modernity in Weimar Germany: Reality and Representation in Popular Fiction* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2001), p. 20.

[10] I explore the arguments presented in existing scholarship in greater detail in the literature review below.

[11] I elaborate the ways in which Weimar-era writing anticipates later developments in feminist theoretical writing in Chapter One.

[12] Charlotte Woodford, *Women, Emancipation and the German Novel 1871-1910: Protest Fiction in its Cultural Context*, (London: Legenda, 2014), p. 2.

[13] W. L. Guttman, *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany: Between Tradition and Commitment*, (New York: Berg, 1990), p. 274; Bernhard Fulda, 'Industries of Sensationalism: German Tabloids in Weimar Berlin', in

wide audience and enabled greater exchange of ideas. I therefore regard the models of motherhood presented in women's writing as discursive constructions and examine how the authors of my primary texts both reflected women's attitudes and concerns about their motherhood and proposed alternative mothering practices. I treat discourse as a process of construction and a 'site of constant contestation of meaning'.[14] Following a critical discourse analysis approach, I probe the relationship between discourse and ideology,[15] underscoring in my discussion how the authors of my primary texts sought to influence public opinion on matters relating to women's rights as mothers and their reproductive choices. By foregrounding writing by women and including authors who have typically been excluded from survey studies seeking to provide an introductory overview of Weimar-era women's writing, such as Walter Fähnders and Helga Karrenbrock's *Autorinnen der Weimarer Republik* or Jo Catling's *A History of Women's Writing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland*, I centre women's voices in the public debates around reproduction and motherhood taking place during the Weimar period and reveal how women contributed to shaping this discourse.

My primary sources, introduced in detail at the beginning of each chapter, are analysed in four groups. Alice Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (1932) and Henny Schumacher's *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* (1929), considered in Chapter One, represent a theoretical contribution to debates around women's motherhood that are informed both by the left-wing political convictions of the authors and advances in psychological research into childhood development that were taking place in the early twentieth century. Political and psychological ideas were, however, also packaged for a wider, non-specialist audience during the Weimar era, and, so, in Chapter Two, I analyse left-wing political non-fiction intended for a mainstream audience. The corpus includes: *Frauenwelt*, the women's magazine of the German Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) from 1924-1933, Else Kienle's *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin* (1932), and Helene Overlach's pamphlet for the Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD), *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute* (1931). Beyond non-fiction publications, progressive ideas were also promoted in left-wing fiction, with writers finding support in politically aligned groups such as the *Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller* (BPRS) during the Weimar period. While the emphasis on women's experiences and voices in this genre was less common than the focus on male political action, my third group of primary texts, which

is examined in Chapter Three, comprises Hermynia Zur Mühlen's *Lina: Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens* (1924) and *Kleine Leute* (1925), Maria Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen* (1932) and Elfriede Brüning's novel also entitled *Kleine Leute* (written 1932-1933, first published 1970), as examples of communist fiction written by and largely for a female audience. My final group of primary texts, discussed in Chapter Four, represents mainstream bestsellers. By analysing the popular fiction novels *Gilgi – eine von uns* by Irmgard Keun (1931), *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* by Vicki Baum (1928) and *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* by Gabriele Tergit (1931), I explore the interaction between mainstream discourses of motherhood and left-wing political writing evaluated in the preceding chapters. This analysis reveals the ways in which political affiliation influenced the portrayal of motherhood and further illuminates how women writers of political and popular fiction sought to shape conversations around the reproductive choices of women of their generation.

In studying these primary sources and addressing the research questions outlined above, this thesis responds to a striking gap in scholarship on women in Weimar Germany. As the following literature review reveals, attention has been paid to the figure of the new woman, to women's changing work opportunities, and to women's political participation in Weimar Germany. In-depth analysis of women's attitudes towards motherhood has, however, been lacking. The following literature review situates my research in the context of existing scholarship by tracing the research trends and historical approaches to studies of gender in Weimar Germany. Secondary literature discussing individual primary sources is surveyed in the relevant chapters, while an excursus on Weimar-era fiction follows Chapter Two to provide an overview of scholarship on *neue Sachlichkeit* and literary genre.

Literature Review

<u>The Weimar New Woman</u>

Both contemporary commentators and historical scholarship have debated extensively the influence of the new woman on Weimar society and culture. Depicted in popular culture as financially independent, sexually liberated, and sporting modern fashion trends, the new woman became a symbol of modernity, as Ingrid Sharp, Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., and Carol Schmid, among many others have noted.[16] The physical appearance of the new woman has been

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[16] Ingrid Sharp, 'Gender Relations in Weimar Berlin', in *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Christiane Schönfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), pp. 1-13 (pp. 2-3); *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. by Alys Eve Weinbaum and others (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Schmid, 'The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism', p. 4.

emphasised as central to the persona,[17] and, in *The Modern Girl Around the World*, Weinbaum et al. explore how the use of what they term 'Modern Girl commodities', which include primarily beauty products and fashionable clothing, was a sign of a woman's modern lifestyle.[18] Other commentators, including Cornelie Usborne, Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco, Sharp, and Katie Sutton have noted how the appearance of the new woman, whose hair, for example, was often worn in a bob and whose clothes were more casual and androgynous than those typically worn by women in the pre-World War One period, was considered by contemporaries, both male and female, to be more masculine.[19]

It was not only women's appearance, but also their behaviour, that was perceived as less 'feminine', as Sutton explains in *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*. Sutton cites as an example women's increased participation in sport, noting that '[w]omen's masculinization is posited [...] as directly related to increasing levels of physical – and by extension, political – equality with men.'[20] The political and social changes that followed the First World War gave women new political rights and social opportunities. Ute Frevert asserts that 'the lifestyles of the sexes were converging', with women seeking 'to assimilate male mores',[21] and Usborne highlights the concerns voice by social democrats and older feminists, as well as conservatives, about the sexual behaviour of new women.[22] My research seeks to broaden this discussion from the focus on women's presence in the public sphere to consider how younger women, in particular, redefined their domestic activities as they sought to integrate motherhood and familial responsibility into their increasingly liberated lifestyles.

Financial independence was central to the new woman's persona and women's paid work during the early twentieth century has been the subject of relatively extensive scholarship in German and English. Much of this scholarship appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, when historical work aimed to establish greater understanding of women's social role in the Weimar

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[17] For example, Alys Eve Weinbaum and others, 'The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective Comparison, Multidirectional Citation', in *The Modern Girl Around the World*, ed. by Alys Eve Weinbaum and others, pp. 1-24 (p. 2); Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco, 'Introduction: Imagining and Embodying New Womanhood', in *The New Woman International: Representations in Photography and Film from the 1870s through the 1960s*, ed. by Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2012), pp. 1-17 (p. 1).
[18] Weinbaum and others, 'The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device', p. 18.
[19] Cornelie Usborne, 'The New Woman and Generational Conflict: Perceptions of Young Women's Sexual Mores in the Weimar Republic', in *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany, 1770-1968*, ed. by Mark Roseman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 137-63 (p. 144); Otto and Rocco, 'Introduction', p. 1; Sharp, 'Gender Relations in Weimar Berlin', pp. 2-3; Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2011).
[20] Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, p. 66.
[21] Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. by Stuart McKinnon-Evans (Oxford: Berg, 1989), p. 176.
[22] Usborne, 'The New Woman and Generational Conflict', pp. 138, 146.

period. The consensus in this body of work is that women were perceived as more visible in public spaces during the Weimar period; however, there is less consensus over whether this perception reflected reality. Gabriele Wellner's article 'Industriearbeiterinnen in der Weimarer Republik', for instance, cites statistics demonstrating the increasing numbers of women employed during this period to argue that, despite gender-based workplace discrimination, women had greater opportunity for employment in the industrial sector during the Weimar period. She offers a cautiously positive assessment of women's growing opportunities but agrees with Reinhart Stockmann's conclusion in his article 'Gewerbliche Frauenarbeit in Deutschland 1875-1980'[23] to concede that this increase should be attributed to rationalisation leading to more unskilled posts in which women could be employed on a lower wage.[24]

Renate Bridenthal, on the other hand, considers women's employment by sector in her article 'Beyond *Kinder, Küche, Kirche:* Weimar Women at Work', and suggests that figures indicating women's greater representation in the workforce have been misinterpreted to overstate the increase in women's paid employment. According to Bridenthal, the type of paid work undertaken by women changed, making them more visible but not more numerous in the workforce. Like Wellner and Stockmann, Bridenthal suggests that rationalisation and technological advances transformed traditionally skilled jobs into unskilled work that employers saw as more suitable for women.[25] Bridenthal strikes a critical tone to argue that women's emancipation was a myth and, indeed, the evidence of women's increased employment in industrial work presented by Bridenthal, Wellner and Stockmann is at odds with cultural portrayals of independent new women working in white collar employment. Bridenthal identifies maternity related issues for women working in industrial sectors, suggesting that '[m]aternity-leave policy was consistently violated by women who could not afford six unpaid weeks. [...] There was also a high rate of miscarriages, as women girdled themselves in to conceal their condition.'[26] In her footnotes, Bridenthal does, however, note that suspiciously high numbers of miscarriage were reported, and indicates that this may reflect the fact that, while abortion remained unlawful in Weimar Germany, many pregnancies were illegally terminated. The implications of pregnancy and motherhood for women's professional prospects and their access to abortion are themes that recur in my primary texts and are discussed in detail in my analysis.

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[23] Reinhard Stockmann, 'Gewerbliche Frauenarbeit in Deutschland 1875-1980', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 11.4 (1985), 447-75 (p. 470).

[24] Gabriele Wellner, 'Industriearbeiterinnen in der Weimarer Republik: Arbeitsmarkt, Arbeit und Privatleben 1919-1933', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 7.3 (1981), 534-54 (pp. 540-41).

[25] Renate Bridenthal, 'Beyond *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*: Weimar Women at Work', *Central European History*, 6.2 (1973), 148-66 (p. 161).

[26] Ibid., p. 155.

The few women who had access to higher education were, as Bridenthal recognises, able to 'make some significant advances' during the Weimar period, with dramatic increases in the number of female doctors, dentists and lawyers.[27] Yet, concluding her article, Bridenthal argues that 'the traditional picture of [women's] economic liberation must be seriously modified.'[28] While women became more visible in the rationalised Weimar workplace, they were poorly paid and had limited career opportunities. This leads Bridenthal to infer that disappointing workplace experiences resulted in women's willingness to embrace a more conservative model of womanhood that centred around the domestic sphere. However, as has been shown in studies of the women's movement (discussed below), maternalist perspectives were also used by women during the Weimar period to make emancipatory arguments in favour of women's increasing role in the public sphere. Bridenthal offers a useful corrective to the declarations of women's emancipation in the Weimar period, however her conclusions about the political implications of continued gendered divisions of labour are not substantiated in the primary texts considered here, which draw on left-wing political and psychological ideas to advocate the creation of a more modern model for women's private lives.

Women's greater visibility in the public sphere and their apparent adoption of masculine behaviours led to the perception of new women as a threat. More recent scholarship has shifted the focus from historical examination of women in the workplace to cultural studies of the literary, filmic, and visual arts representation of women in Weimar Germany. Scholars including Rüdiger Graf, Carol Schmid, Atina Grossmann, and Ingrid Sharp, among others, have highlighted how the new woman's rejection of gender norms, embodied in her appearance, increasing social and financial independence, and overt sexuality, was seen as threatening.[29] Particularly relevant for my investigation is the contemporary concern expressed, as Schmid and Usborne note, about the new woman's apparent reluctance to mother.[30] New women's attempts to reconcile their modern lifestyles and motherhood are explored in the popular fiction texts analysed in Chapter Four. My analysis calls into question the perceived opposition

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[27] Bridenthal, 'Beyond *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*', p. 163.
[28] Ibid., p. 165.
[29] Rüdiger Graf, 'Anticipating the Future in the Present: "New Women" and Other Beings of the Future in Weimar Germany', *Central European History*, 42.4 (2009), 647-73 (p. 648); Schmid, 'The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism', pp. 9-11; Atina Grossmann, '*Girlkultur* or Thoroughly Rationalized Female: A New Woman in Weimar Germany?', in *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change*, ed. by Judith Friedlander and others (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 62-80 (p. 69); Sharp, 'Gender Relations in Weimar Berlin', p. 5; Ingrid Sharp, 'Riding the Tiger: Ambivalent Images of the New Woman in the Popular Press of the Weimar Republic', in *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism and International Consumer Culture 1880-1930*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 118-41 (pp. 121-22).
[30] Carol Schmid, 'The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism', p. 11; Usborne, 'The New Woman and Generational Conflict', p. 137.

between new women and mothering in fiction by showing how characters such as Keun's Gilgi plan to integrate motherhood into their new womanhood. My discussion demonstrates that, rather than simply rejecting motherhood, women writers of popular fiction offered models of mothering to complement the lifestyle of new women, while left-wing non-fiction proposed updated practices for raising children that incorporated the latest psychological and political theories.

Although the new woman was perceived as threatening in some media portrayals during the Weimar era, in others she was presented as an aspirational figure, whose image was used extensively in advertising as is shown in *The Modern Girl Around the World*. The prevalence of new woman images in advertising and mass media has led to substantial debate about the extent to which the new woman represented women's lived experiences during the Weimar period, with some scholars arguing that she was rather a media construct, designed to sell products and attract cinema audiences. The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group argue that 'advertising agencies played a central role as mediator of Modern Girl culture'.[31] They assert that the advertising agencies presented consumption as liberating for the new woman in contrast to, for example, Marxists, who suggested that 'commodities attach people to economic structures that create deprivation and dependency.'[32] The political element of this interpretation is important and explains the relative absence of the new woman figure in the left-wing texts discussed in Chapters Two and Three, which appeal to community spirit rather than an individualist version of modernity. As political works, these texts are hesitant to promote a model of womanhood so closely tied to capitalist consumption and a petit-bourgeois lifestyle.

The absence of the new woman figure from these works, which sought to present relatable female figures, can also be explained by von Ankum's assertion that the new woman was a cultural construct of 'limited reality'.[33] Von Ankum writes: 'the cultural construction of women embodies the projections of male hopes and anxieties',[34] while Schmid suggests that Weimar-era cultural discussions of the new women were led by men.[35] These analyses view the figure of the new woman as a construct who emerged from men's perceptions of women's changing social presence. I am, however, more inclined to agree with the view that women played an active role in constructing the image of the new woman and my study of texts by

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[31] Weinbaum and others, 'The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device', p. 20.
[32] Ibid., pp. 20-21.
[33] Katharina von Ankum, 'Introduction', in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 1-11 (p. 4).
[34] Ibid., p. 6.
[35] Schmid, 'The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism', p. 4.

women acts as a corrective to the privileging of male perspectives in discussions of women's place in Weimar society. Jochen Hung, for example, argues that the image of the new woman was 'co-constructed' by the media and consumers,[36] while Grossmann views 'the New Woman as producer [...] an agent constructing a new identity'.[37] Indeed, my primary texts all exemplify women writers engaging with and developing discourses around women's social role. While it was certainly the case that the new woman's greater economic freedom was inaccessible to many women, particularly those outside urban centres or from working-class backgrounds, who were among the intended readership of the primary texts I discuss in Chapters Two and Three, I approach these texts from the understanding that women sought to play a role in shaping the conversations around their opportunities and responsibilities in Weimar Germany and actually did so as journalists and fiction writers, in bestselling novels and via serialisation in newspapers, which increased their reach.

Building on the notion that images of modern women in Weimar Germany were shaped by multiple participants in public conversations, it should also be noted that the broad type of the 'new woman' has been broken down into subcategories by a number of contemporary commentators and historical scholars. Indicating again the influence of male constructs of women during this period, Hung cites a 1927 article by Manfred Georg which identified the types of 'Gretchen', 'Girl' and 'Garçonne'. Hung suggests that the characteristics of these three types 'highlight not only the different facets of the image of modern femininity in Weimar Germany, but also the contradictory situation in which many German women found themselves at the time.'[38] As Hung explains, the 'Gretchen' figure corresponded to a more traditional model of womanhood associated with marriage and motherhood, the 'Garçonne' represented a 'masculinized, rational and independent female', while the 'Girl' reflected mass culture and American influence.[39] The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group note that the English-language term 'Girl' was frequently used in Germany in the early twentieth century and suggest that their 'modern girl' subject was 'associated [...] with the "frivolous" pursuits of consumption, romance, and fashion.'[40] Graf similarly asserts that the use of the word 'Girl' contained judgement and argues that the employment of foreign-language terms implied that this modern woman was, for sceptics, alienated from German culture but, for supporters, associated with the modern societies found abroad.[41] Lynne Frame also references Georg's three types in her

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[36] Jochen Hung, 'The Modernized Gretchen: Transformations of the 'New Woman' in the late Weimar Republic', *German History*, 33.1 (2015), 52-79 (p. 52).
[37] Grossman, '*Girlkultur* or Thoroughly Rationalized Female', p. 64.
[38] Hung, 'The Modernized Gretchen', p. 55.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Weinbaum and others, 'The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device', p. 9.
[41] Graf, 'Anticipating the Future in the Present', p. 663.

analysis of the ways in which quasi-scientific language and ideas were adopted in Weimar popular culture. Frame argues that the circulation of 'types' promoted 'normative biological thinking'[42] that had been influential since the nineteenth century,[43] and highlights the role that fiction and the press, including female journalists writing in the women's press, played in propagating these ideas. Sharp connects the emergence of 'types' with the historical context, suggesting that, against the backdrop of disorienting rapid social change after the First World War, the press taught readers how to navigate modern society by identifying 'types'.[44] Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham also underscore the role of the press in both constructing and reflecting the image of the new woman.[45] Thus, while the new woman has become the dominant Weimar-era 'type' in scholarship, contemporary discourses recognised various models of womanhood. I return to the use of the Weimar press to spread cultural and political ideas in Chapter Two of this thesis.

While the role of the media in constructing images of modernity has been emphasised, Helmut Lethen looks to philosophical and literary sources in *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen*, which appeared in English translation as *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, to uncover the codes of conduct associated with the modern figures he identifies as the 'cool persona', the 'radar type' and the 'creature'. According to Lethen, the cool persona, identified in his study of texts by authors including Max Weber and Helmuth Plessner, is associated with movement and accepts alienation in modern society.[46] Lethen's identification of these 'types' recognises the significance of the historical context of Weimar Germany, referring to the impact of the First World War particularly in his description of the 'creature', who, Lethen claims, features in Weimar-era cultural production frequently as a 'war cripple'.[47] The creature is, for Lethen, a 'pitiful' figure, 'in need of mercy'.[48] The 'radar type', by contrast, embraces the mass culture of modernity and possesses a 'consumerist attitude'.[49] Although Lethen cites the title character from Irmgard Keun's first novel *Gilgi*, which will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, as an example of the radar type, he acknowledges that the cool persona appears as a more masculine figure and, indeed, many of the examples

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[42] Lynne Frame, 'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne? Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman', in *Women in the Metropolis*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum, pp. 12-40 (p. 14).
[43] For example, see: Ernst Haeckel, *Die Welträthsel* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1899).
[44] Sharp, 'Riding the Tiger', p. 120.
[45] Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham, 'Introduction', in *New Woman Hybridities*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham, pp. 1-14 (pp. 2, 4-5).
[46] Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. by Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 32, 47.
[47] Ibid., p. 196.
[48] Ibid., pp. 204-05.
[49] Ibid., p. 189.

presented by Lethen are of male figures and male authors,[50] underscoring the dominance of male voices in cultural discourse during the Weimar era. The typology identified by Lethen is therefore limited in what it reveals about the perception of women during the Weimar era or the ways in which women sought to engage in discourses of motherhood. My project considers how 'types' feature as shorthand in women's writing from the era and the extent to which women reshape these cultural 'types' through political and socially critical writing. I revisit Lethen's analysis of the manifestation of cool codes of conduct in literature and the masculinity of objectivity in the excursus that follows Chapter Two.

The Women's Movements and Women's Political Activism

While the figure of the new woman has dominated cultural studies of women in Weimar Germany, a further body of historical scholarship has considered women's political activism, both within the women's movements and within parliamentary politics. This thesis explores the relationship between political perspectives and attitudes towards women's changing reproductive rights and choices through the study of women's writing. A historical examination of the connection between politics and reproduction has been conducted in *When Biology Became Destiny*, edited by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan. This text provides an insightful contribution to analyses of women's continued association with domestic duties in interwar Germany. The work in this study, which appeared in 1984, has remained largely unrevised by more recent Weimar scholarship, which has tended to examine other aspects of gender and female sexuality.[51] *When Biology Became Destiny* provides helpful contextual background for the circumstances in which the authors of my primary sources write about family and motherhood.

Drawing on cultural perceptions that were shaped by the prevalence of the new woman image, Bridenthal, Grossmann and Kaplan declare in their introduction to *When Biology Became Destiny* that 'women stood at the nexus of the "morality question." They were simultaneously seen as guardians of morality and as the chief agents of a "culture of decadence."'[52] The authors characterise the Weimar period as one of ambivalence, with limited gains in women's

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[50] Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, p. 73.

[51] For example: Kirsten Leng, *Sexual Politics and Feminist Science: Women Sexologists in Germany, 1900-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); Katie Sutton, '"We Too Deserve a Place in the Sun": The Politics of Transvestite Identity in Weimar Germany', *German Studies Review*, 35.2 (2012), 335-354; Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

[52] Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, Marion Kaplan, 'Introduction', in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), pp. 1-22 (p. 13).

reproductive and maternity rights, enduring conservative attitudes towards gender and tensions within the women's movements. These tensions are illustrated in the chapters by Atina Grossmann and Karin Hausen which discuss the 1931 campaign for the legalisation of abortion and the establishment of an annual Mother's Day respectively. Hausen notes that, while initial promoters of Mother's Day saw an economic opportunity in the sale of gifts, the foundation of a conservative-led task force for the recovery of the *Volk* introduced more overtly political propaganda to the day. Hausen writes: 'These self-appointed "educators of the *Volk*" were not interested in mothers as persons in distinct social and economic relationships, but rather in *the* mother as the embodiment of ideal virtue and behavior.'[53] Hausen's article focuses on right-wing political support for Mother's Day and notes that contemporary women's groups and socialists were sceptical about the introduction of such annual celebrations.[54] Nevertheless, as I discuss in Chapter Two, the glorification of maternal duty and sacrifice was not entirely absent from left-wing publications of this period.

Securing the liberalisation of abortion laws was a priority of socialist women, as well as members of the Sexual Reform movement, during the Weimar period. Opposition to Paragraph 218 of the penal code, which outlawed abortion, was first raised in the Reichstag in 1920 by women representatives of the Independent Social Democratic Party (*Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, USPD),[55] and campaigners succeeded in obtaining changes to the law in 1926 and 1927 that reduced the penalty for aborting women and legislated for abortion on medical grounds respectively.[56] Public campaigns against Paragraph 218, however, came to a head in 1931, as Grossmann discusses in her essay 'Abortion and Economic Crisis: The 1931 Campaign Against Paragraph 218'. Grossmann highlights how prevalent abortion was during the Weimar period, citing particularly economic hardship as a cause of increasing abortion rates,[57] and raises a number of themes, such as class and the activities and attitudes of doctors, which Cornelie Usborne further elaborates in *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany*. Usborne considers a range of sources, including cultural production and court records, to uncover the perception and practice of abortion during the Weimar period. She argues that abortion was commonplace and that women were often, in fact,

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[53] Karin Hausen, 'Mother's Day in the Weimar Republic', in *When Biology Became Destiny*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, Marion Kaplan, pp. 131-52 (p. 140).
[54] Ibid., p. 146.
[55] Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), p. 167.
[56] Eva Kolinsky, *Women in 20th-century Germany: A Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 282.
[57] Atina Grossmann, 'Abortion and Economic Crisis: The 1931 Campaign Against Paragraph 218', in *When Biology Became Destiny*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, Marion Kaplan, pp. 66-86 (p. 70).

well informed about, and took control of, their reproductive choices.[58] Usborne suggests that the presentation of working-class women as victims of unscrupulous, dangerous backstreet abortion providers, exhibited in the non-fiction and fiction analysed in this thesis, as well as other well-known examples of left-wing cultural production such as Käthe Kollwitz's poster 'Nieder mit den Abtreibungsparagraphen!' (1923) and Friedrich Wolf's play *Cyankali* (1930), was politically useful to the left.[59] I analyse the language and ideology present in the left-wing campaign against Paragraph 218 in Chapter Two, which substantiates Usborne's assertion that socialists did indeed link limited access to abortion provision to wider political criticism of economic hardship and social inequality. However, the fact that safe abortion services remained inaccessible to many women who could not afford the fees charged by doctors willing to break the law should not be disregarded. The stark differences in conditions and costs of abortion providers of varying professionalism is portrayed in the works of fiction analysed in Chapters Three and Four.

Access to abortion and birth control is a recurring theme in both the fiction and non-fiction texts analysed in this thesis and, indeed, Paragraph 218 of the penal code has been the subject of a body of scholarship that offers political and historical contextualisation for the discussions of abortion in my primary texts. Paragraph 218 outlawed abortion in Germany from the Imperial era, throughout the Weimar period, and, although the law was modified on several occasions during the twentieth century, [60] most recently in 1995, it continues to limit access to abortion services in Germany today, where abortion remains illegal, even if exempt from prosecution under certain conditions during the first trimester of a pregnancy.[61] Among the studies focusing on the Weimar period, including Katja Patzel-Mattern's 'Das »Gesetz der Frauenwürde«'[62] and Atina Grossmann's 'German Women Doctors from Berlin to New York: Maternity and Modernity in Weimar and in Exile',[63] Else Kienle's name is frequently mentioned in relation to her 1931 arrest, which is considered a catalyst for the subsequent demonstrations against Paragraph 218. Kienle's ongoing contribution to this public debate, via her speaking engagements and the publication of her 1932 text *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin* is,

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[58] Cornelie Usborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), pp. 17, 23-25.
[59] Ibid., p. 17.
[60] For a chronology of the changing abortion laws in Germany, see: Kolinsky, *Women in 20th-century Germany*, pp. 282-83.
[61] Franz Hanschmidt and others, 'The Change in Attitudes Towards Abortion in Former West and East Germany After Reunification: A Latent Class Analysis and Implications for Abortion Access', *Geburtshilfe und Frauenheilkunde*, 80:1 (2020), 84-94 <http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1055/a-0981-6286>
[62] Katja Patzel-Mattern, 'Das »Gesetz der Frauenwürde« Else Kienle und der Kampf um den Paragrafen 218 in der Weimarer Republik' in *Bad Girls: Unangepasste Frauen von der Antike bis heute*, ed. by Anke Väth (Konstanz: UVK, 2003), pp. 177-99 (p. 189).
[63] Atina Grossmann, 'German Women Doctors from Berlin to New York: Maternity and Modernity in Weimar and in Exile', *Feminist Studies*, 19.1 (1993), 65-88 (p. 74).

however, rarely discussed. Chapter Two of this thesis addresses this oversight by analysing in detail Kienle's portrayal of abortion and reproductive choice in *Frauen*.

In addition to exploring the impact of reproductive policies on women's lives during the Weimar period, scholars have also investigated women's attempts to influence policy via the organised women's movements. The Weimar-era women's movement is typically considered to be divided, with severely limited cooperation between the activities of the bourgeois women's movement, largely under the umbrella of the BDF, and the socialist women's movement, to which both SPD- and KPD-affiliated groups belonged. My analysis will foreground primarily the perspectives represented within the socialist branches of the women's movement as I discuss texts written by left-wing writers. The conservative groups who dominated the BDF were reluctant to reimagine women's lives without motherhood as their primary social role. It is nevertheless productive to consider briefly the work of both strands of the Weimar-era women's movement to identify the differences and similarities in their priorities and approaches.

Richard Evans's *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933*, published in 1976, is among the first detailed historical studies of the German women's movement and focuses particularly on the BDF. This work has been influential and widely cited in subsequent scholarship. More recent studies have, however, called into question some of the assertions in Evans's book. Evans argues that the development of the BDF, particularly during the Weimar period, was conservative,[64] citing traditional ideas about sexual morality and an ongoing acceptance of marriage and motherhood as women's social duty, that also found support even among more radical factions of the women's movement that were not affiliated to the BDF such as the *Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform* (BfM), led by Helene Stöcker.[65] Later scholarship has, however, illuminated the range of perspectives present within the Weimar-era women's movements.[66] Following the introduction of the Weimar political system, the BDF became, according to Evans, less politically effective and struggled to attract younger women.[67] Generational differences were the subject of contemporary discourses, with, for instance, the 1928 work of sociologist Karl Mannheim theorising 'Das Problem der Generationen'. As Christine Thon explains, Mannheim viewed membership of a particular generation and class as

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[64] Evans, *The Feminist Movement*, p. x.
[65] Ibid., pp. 137, 236.
[66] For example: Anna Dünnebier and Ursula Scheu, *Die Rebellion ist eine Frau: Anita Augspurg und Lida Heymann: das schillerndste Paar der Frauenbewegung* (Munich: Hugendubel, 2002); Susanne Kinnebrock, *Anita Augspurg (1857-1943): Feministin und Pazifistin zwischen Jouranlismus und Politik. Eine kommunikationshistorische Biographie* (Herbolzheim: Centaurus, 2005); Christl Wickert, *Helene Stöcker 1869-1943: Frauenrechtlerin, Sexualreformerin und Pazifistin. Eine Biographie* (Bonn: Dietz, 1991).
[67] Evans, *The Feminist Movement*, pp. 244-45, 249.

comparable: both dictate the individual's position within the 'ökonomisch-machtmäßigen Gefüge der jeweiligen Gesellschaft'.[68] The divergent experiences the pre- and post-World War One generations are addressed in my analysis of the portrayal of intergenerational tensions in the works of fiction discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

The different attitudes and priorities of generations of women in Weimar Germany has also been the subject of historical analysis. Elizabeth Harvey, for example, has discussed the BDF's difficulty in attracting younger members during the Weimar period. She contrasts the promotion of 'social motherhood' by the BDF with the 'cult of biological motherhood' propagated by the *Bünde* (German Youth Organisations), which Harvey suggests stems from the youth movement's social conservatism, manifested in 'celebration of nature, its hostility to modern civilization and intellectualism, and its hankerings after the simple, healthy life'.[69] Harvey further underscores the importance of biological motherhood in conservative youth groups in her study of Protestant women's youth groups. She notes that National Socialists appealed to this demographic via their 'promise to enhance the status of women in the home and to make it easier for women to marry and have children'.[70] The distinction between attitudes towards social and biological mothering is worth noting. The German feminist movement, as will be shown below, had a long history of appealing to women's maternal nature as a strategy for gaining greater access to the public sphere and the notion of 'spiritual motherhood' was widely evoked by women seeking to underline the unique contribution that they could make to society. My analysis examines whether and how assumptions of women's mothering are challenged in my primary texts and sheds new light on women's voices that advocated an alternative attitude towards motherhood.

While Harvey considers the reasons for young women's rejection of the BDF, Sharp's article 'Overcoming Inner Division' focuses on the strategy of the BDF leadership. Referencing the maternalist perspectives of the organisation, Sharp notes that the BDF saw it as 'women's mission to heal their broken nation'[71] and that women who entered the Weimar parliament tended to concentrate on social and welfare policy.[72] Harvey and Sharp both argue that the leadership decisions of the BDF and the attitudes of young women must be seen within their

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[68] Karl Mannheim, 'Das Problem der Generationen', cited in *Frauenbewegung im Wandel der Generationen: Eine Studie über Geschlechterkonstruktionen in biographischen Erzählungen*, ed. by Christine Thon (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), p. 77.
[69] Elizabeth Harvey, 'The Failure of Feminism? Young Women and the Bourgeois Feminist Movement in Weimar Germany 1918-1933', *Central European History*, 28.1 (1995), 1-28 (p. 18).
[70] Harvey, 'Gender, Generation and Politics', p. 204.
[71] Ingrid Sharp, 'Overcoming Inner Division: Post-Suffrage Strategies in the Organised German Women's Movement', *Women's History Review*, 23.3 (2014), 347-64 (p. 359).
[72] Ibid., p. 357.

historical context,[73] and I follow their approach in my discussion, avoiding the pitfalls of some Weimar scholarship, including for example Bridenthal's article on women's work and Julia Roos's assertion that the rise in antidemocratic views in the early 1930s can be connected to liberal prostitution reform,[74] which seeks explanations for the National Socialist seizure of power by reading history 'backwards'.

Maternalist views were exhibited by women across the political spectrum in Weimar Germany. Focusing on the early Weimar period, Raffael Scheck explores the response to the Treaty of Versailles by moderate and right-wing women activists. Scheck highlights how maternalist perspectives were foregrounded by women seeking to legitimise their access to the public sphere and add weight to their objections to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.[75] Scheck's article, while highlighting the collaboration between women's organisations in their opposition to the Treaty of Versailles, also emphasises the range of perspectives present within the women's movement during this period. He calls into question the claim that the maternalist and nationalist perspectives of the bourgeois women's movement made it susceptible to the political offering of the National Socialists by noting that the notions of nationalism and maternalism were understood differently by the various political parties and women's groups.[76] For example, Harvey notes that, among Protestant young women, '[t]he connection between Christianity and patriotism was taken as read',[77] while some women within the pacifist movement, who tended to adopt a more internationalist perspective, cited women's maternal nature as a reason for their pacifist stance.[78] Radical nationalists, meanwhile, understood women's role as protectors and creators the German *Volk* and state.[79] The range of positions on nationalism and maternalism taken by various women's groups during the Weimar era illustrates why co-operation between different branches of the women's movement during the Weimar period remained elusive.

Looking beyond the women's movements, women's role and activities within the socialist movement has been the focus of a body of scholarship, which emerged in the 1980s with Renate Pore's *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919-1933*. Pore contrasts the women's branch of the SPD under the pre-war leadership of Clara Zetkin, who left the SPD in 1917 to join first the USPD then the KPD, and post-war leadership of Marie Juchacz.

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[73] Harvey, 'The Failure of Feminism?', pp. 26-28; Sharp, 'Overcoming Inner Division', p. 359.

[74] Julia Roos, *Weimar through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Woman's Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919-33* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 4, 8.

[75] Scheck, 'Women against Versailles', pp. 22, 26.

[76] Ibid., pp. 30, 33.

[77] Harvey, 'Gender, Generation and Politics', p. 193.

[78] Gerhard, *Unerhört*, pp. 350-57.

[79] Streubel, *Radikale Nationalistinnen*, p. 280.

Pore argues that Zetkin balanced the tensions between class and gender struggles: 'she carried on the struggle on two levels: together with men for the cause of the socialist future and against men in the party for autonomy and power',[80] while Juchacz preferred to avoid controversy, which Pore implies resulted in women's issues receiving less attention than class issues.[81] The privileging of gender issues over class issues within the Social Democratic movement is discussed also in Adelheid von Saldern's chapter 'Modernization as Challenge'[82] and, with a focus on the pre-war period, Jean H. Quataert's *Reluctuant Feminists: Socialst Women in Imperial Germany, 1885-1917*.[83] Pore cites Juchacz's creation of the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* as an example of Juchacz's conformity to the SPD's authority structures. Pore is critical of this approach, observing that through welfare work 'women could be politically active and useful, without challenging the power of men.'[84]

Looking at the activities and attitudes within the socialist women's movement, Pore suggests that, during the Weimar period, the working-class women's movement adopted 'the bourgeois ideal of womanhood, which proclaimed motherhood as women's highest calling and the key to her self-fulfilment.'[85] While Pore recognises that the SPD adopted a progressive stance towards women's reproductive rights and women's rights within marriage and divorce, she argues that their idealisation of mothering contradicted the socialist commitment to women's emancipation: '[a] woman's movement that failed to question and confront the idealization of motherhood prevalent in modern bourgeois society was bound to flounder on such contradictions.'[86] Similarly, in *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism and Pacifism in Europe 1870-1945*, Richard Evans notes that, despite the hostility to the family institution in nineteenth-century theoretical writing by socialist intellectuals, in practice the Social Democratic movement preserved the integrity of the family and, Evans suggests, appeals to women based on their roles as wives and mothers were most successful.[87] Roos likewise observes that, across the political spectrum, 'images of womanhood in 1920s election propaganda generally remained traditional, depicting women primarily as mothers and

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[80] Renate Pore, *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919-1933* (London: Greenwood, 1981), p. 28.
[81] Ibid., p. 34.
[82] Adelheid von Saldern, 'Modernization as Challenge: Perceptions and Reactions of German Social Democratic Women' in *Women and Socialism – Socialism and Women: Europe Between the Two World Wars*, ed. by Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves (New York: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 95-134 (p. 98).
[83] Jean H. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists: Socialist Women in Imperial Germany, 1885-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
[84] Pore, *A Conflict of Interest*, p. 34.
[85] Ibid., pp. 76-77
[86] Ibid., p. 77.
[87] Richard J. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism and Pacifism in Europe 1870-1945* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1987), pp. 93-94, 100, 104.

guardians of culture'.[88] While discussion of visual art falls beyond the scope of this thesis, the imagery described by Roos is indeed exemplified in *Frauenwelt*, the women's magazine of the SPD that I discuss in Chapter Two. The prevalence of maternalist perspectives and conservative attitudes towards gender roles among the political left is apparent in the primary texts I analyse in this thesis. Yet, my discussion also complicates this narrative by considering attempts by women writers to construct new models of motherhood, which are overlooked in previous studies of the women's movements that tend to emphasise the continuity in ideas about women's maternal nature and duty. My analysis elaborates, for example, how women integrated developments in child psychology into their parenting.

In keeping with the maternalist perspectives in the Weimar-era women's movements was a focus on social welfare work. The establishment of a welfare state in Weimar Germany, as well as women's involvement in political and charitable welfare work, is explored by Christoph Sachße in his chapter 'Social Mothers: The Bourgeois Women's Movement and German Welfare-State Formation, 1890-1929' and Young-Sun Hong in her article 'Gender, Citizenship, and the Welfare State: Social Work and the Politics of Femininity in the Weimar Republic'. Both Sachße and Hong highlight the issues for women involved in these activities that arose from the state assuming responsibility for welfare work. Sachße suggests that '[t]he new demands confronting state welfare generated momentum for intensified bureaucratization and standardization',[89] while Hong notes that women participating in Weimar-era welfare work felt that bureaucratisation 'denatured their own intensely personal work.'[90] Hong suggests that the increasing clerical tasks associated with welfare work formed part of a strategy by male political leaders 'to prevent welfare activity from becoming a channel for advancing bourgeois women's interests'.[91] The gendered division of political issues was, indeed, preserved throughout the Weimar period. Hong's article focuses on the work of the bourgeois women's movement but in the socialist fiction and non-fiction I analyse, childcare and welfare issues are evoked as a means to win women's support, demonstrating the acceptance of essentialist ideas of gender across the political spectrum.

With the establishment of the Weimar Republic, German women were able to vote and stand for election for the first time. Following their entrance into the Reichstag, women carried the priorities of the women's movement into their party political activities. Primarily, welfare

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[88] Roos, *Weimar through the Lens of Gender*, p. 6.
[89] Christoph Sachße, 'Social Mothers: The Bourgeois Women's Movement and German Welfare-State Formation, 1890-1929', in *Mothers of a New World*, ed. by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 136-58, (p. 151).
[90] Young-Sun Hong, 'Gender, Citizenship, and the Welfare State: Social Work and the Politics of Femininity in the Weimar Republic', *Central European History*, 30.1 (1997), 1-24, (p. 12).
[91] Ibid., p. 11.

work was identified as a focus of women's political activity and, as Pore has discussed, the women's branch of the SPD adopted maternalist policies under the leadership of Marie Juchacz. Christiane Eifert's article 'Coming to Terms with the State: Maternalist Politics and the Development of the Welfare State in Weimar Germany' similarly considers the welfare work organised by female members of the SPD and comments on the difficulty that women experienced in gaining political recognition. She suggests that women's political engagement was limited by men's redefinition of spaces that women entered as 'private': 'Defining and redefining space according to the gender of the activists entering those spaces was at the very center of male defence strategies, and it proved an effective instrument for excluding women from the political arena.'[92] Eifert argues that maternalism was an ineffective approach for women to increase their access to the public sphere.[93] Eifert's analysis of the limitations of this strategy is helpful and, indeed, an example of the barriers women faced in contributing to other areas of policy can be found in the case of Toni Sender, editor of *Frauenwelt* from 1928. Sender specialised in economic and foreign policy but, despite displaying little interest in the areas identified as women's concerns, the male party leadership nevertheless decided she was well suited to edit the women's magazine, thus taking actions that side-lined her contributions to male-dominated political topics. Sender, however, remained true to her principals and accepted the editorship only after receiving assurances of her 'intellectual freedom' and the allocation of a sufficient budget to secure her desired collaborators.[94] Feminist appeals to maternalism as a means to increase women's political influence had limitations and contributed to continued gendered divisions of political, and by extension, domestic labour during the Weimar period. This strategy must, however, be viewed within its historical context to underscore that maternalism was accompanied by simultaneous attempts to redefine motherhood and update maternal practices to suit women's changing priorities and lifestyles.

The centrality of maternalist perspectives and welfare activities originated in the pre-World War One women's movements, which developed in parallel bourgeois and socialist branches. Given the continuity between the activities and values of pre- and post-World War One activism, the history of the nineteenth and early twentieth century women's movements can provide helpful contextualisation of the perspectives that carried forward into my primary texts. Evans's *The Feminist Movement in Germany* offers an overview of the policy developments and activities conducted by members of the late nineteenth-century bourgeois women's

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[92] Christiane Eifert, 'Coming to Terms with the State: Maternalist Politics and the Development of the Welfare State in Weimar Germany', trans. by Pamela E. Selwyn, *Central European History*, 30.1 (1997), 25-47, (p. 36).
[93] Ibid., p. 46.
[94] Toni Sender, *The Autobiography of a German Rebel* (London: Routledge, 1940), p. 250.

movement, while Ann Taylor Allen's *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* explores the development and application of maternalist perspectives within the early German women's movement. She advocates a reading of the early women's movement that is rooted in the historical context of the nineteenth century, criticising scholarship, including Evans's *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, for viewing the development of feminist organisations through the lens of National Socialism or later twentieth-century feminism.[95] Much of Taylor Allen's historical analysis focuses on women's engagement with questions of child raising and childcare, and she shows how, for example, the Kindergarten movement, influenced heavily by Friedrich Froebel, was used by women as a means to access education, professional opportunities, and emphasise the importance of women's social role as 'spiritual mothers'.[96] Taylor Allen argues that equal-rights and maternal ideologies co-existed within the early women's movement and were not considered contradictory.[97] She demonstrates how notions of spiritual motherhood were presented in support of extending citizenship rights to women in the nineteenth century,[98] and, in contrast to Eifert, Taylor Allen views maternalism as a timely and effective approach. Similarly, Woodford notes that maternalist ideology enabled women to make the case for their increased access to public space without diminishing their 'feminine identity', and, by maintaining women's association with domesticity and mothering, 'allowed women to distance themselves from the origins of many of the problems of urban life.'[99] Taylor Allen stresses that maternalist feminist ideology was 'based on a familial culture that originated with the upper and middle classes. The ascendancy of this ideology resulted from the ascendancy of middle-class women within the feminist movement.'[100] Taylor Allen nevertheless asserts that these ideas resonated with socialist feminists,[101] and Woodford exhibits the presence of maternalist perspectives in the works of radical and socialist women writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Renate Pore has explained that maternalism later came to be central to the priorities of the Weimar-era Social Democratic women's movement,[102] and, indeed, my analysis confirms that such ideas persisted among socialist women writers in the Weimar era. Taylor Allen's thorough, historical analysis explains the emergence of and adherence to notions of gender difference and female particularity which were inherited by the

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[95] Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 5.
[96] Ibid., pp. 70-71, 105.
[97] Ibid., p. 4.
[98] Ibid., p. 102.
[99] Woodford, *Women, Emancipation and the German Novel*, p. 91.
[100] Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, p. 12.
[101] Ibid., p. 196.
[102] Pore, *A Conflict of Interest*, pp. 71, 81.

Weimar-era women's movements. The primary sources analysed in this thesis evidence the continued assumption of women's maternal nature and employment of essentialist arguments by women in support of their demands for greater political power and social opportunities.

Maternalist perspectives within the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women's movement are also considered by Catherine Dollard in her monograph *The Surplus Woman: Unmarried in Imperial Germany, 1871-1918*. Dollard argues that the image of the surplus woman, who was seen to have emerged as a result of the social changes caused by industrialisation,[103] was deployed by bourgeois feminists to make the case for women's training and employment as well as by socialist feminists,[104] including Clara Zetkin, to demonstrate the flaws of capitalist society.[105] The relationship between class inequality and women's status appears as a recurring theme in the primary texts discussed in Chapters One to Three of this thesis; my primary texts provide examples of the subordination of gender issues to questions of class but also disrupt this conclusion by revealing women's subtle challenges to the priorities of the SPD and KPD leadership during the Weimar years as they gained new voting rights and played a more publicly visible role in society. The number of so-called 'surplus women' increased dramatically following the high death toll among men during the First World War, with estimates in 1918 suggesting that 2.7 million German women would be unable to marry.[106] Yet, as Sharp explains, the women's movements 'adapted their rhetoric to suit the climate of the time' and, in the post-war period, largely abandoned the use of the term 'surplus woman' in favour of 'the language of patriotism, nationalism, service, gratitude for the soldiers' sacrifice, [and] the cultural mission of women to imbue public life with motherly values'.[107] Thus, maternalism remained central to the strategy of the women's movements after the First World War but was, as Sharp has shown, expressed using terminology tailored to the context of the Weimar Republic.

The integration of pseudo-scientific and psychoanalytic terminology into discourses of motherhood is a recurring theme in this thesis. Indeed, lay engagement with scientific ideas extended beyond discussion of motherhood, as Sharp notes in her explanation of the reasons for the abandonment of the terminology of the 'surplus' woman by the women's movements after the end of the First World War: 'With the increased dissemination of scientific views on human

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[103] Catherine Dollard, *The Surplus Woman: Unmarried in Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (New York: Berghahn, 2009), pp. 13, 96, 164. ACLS Humanities Ebook.
[104] Ibid., pp. 93, 99.
[105] Ibid., p. 173.
[106] Ingrid Sharp, 'The Disappearing Surplus: The Spinster in the Post-War Debate in Weimar Germany, 1918-1920', in *Aftermaths of War: Women's Movements and Female Activists, 1918-1923*, ed. by Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 135-57 (p. 143). ProQuest Ebook.
[107] Ibid., pp. 153-54.

sexuality, the single woman began to take on more pathological traits and become in the post-war period associated with deviant sexuality, crime and disease.'[108] Dollard similarly cites the increasing public engagement with the emerging fields of sexology and psychology in the early twentieth century. Dollard suggests that, while the issue of the single woman was reframed in the Weimar era in light of Freudian analysis of female sexual drives, the unmarried woman remained a problematic figure, appearing as neurotic or aberrant in the public imagination.[109] The portrayal of single motherhood is central to my discussion, particularly in Chapters Two and Four. I argue that women writers advocating better treatment for these women and their children emphasise the conventionally maternal qualities of unmarried mothers in order to distance single mothers from deviant sexuality and stress that these women do not pose a threat to society.

The above studies highlight the prevalence of maternalism before and during the Weimar period, particularly in the bourgeois women's movement, among female delegates to the Reichstag, and those engaged with state welfare policies. They substantiate Eifert's argument that spaces women entered were redefined as private. However, the scholarship on maternalist attitudes in Weimar Germany focuses primarily on the beliefs of the leadership of the women's movements and on those (mainly middle-class) women carrying out welfare work. There is a lack of studies that consider the acceptance of maternalist politics among women in the Weimar Republic more widely. My project seeks to address this gap by considering how female authors, and in the case of *Frauenwelt* also the readers, responded to women's particularity and maternalist concepts of women's primary social calling. Furthermore, I will show that left-wing and mainstream authors were reimagining a modern model of motherhood that was, for the new woman figures in popular fiction, compatible with women's increasing access to work, and, in political non-fiction writing, was informed by the widespread lay engagement with psychoanalytic theories and emerging developments in theories of childhood development. Maternalist attitudes influenced cultural depictions of mothers across class and political boundaries; literature, as I argue in this thesis, offered a site in which women writers both challenged and perpetuated elements of maternalism.

Historical Approaches: History of the Labour Movement and History of the Everyday

As scholarship on the Weimar-era women's movements has uncovered, class awareness and political adherence played a significant role in the priorities and approach to women's

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[108] Sharp, 'The Disappearing Surplus', p. 148.
[109] Dollard, *The Surplus Woman*, p. 208.

biological and spiritual motherhood of individuals and political organisations. In light of this, and of the explicit political stances represented in a number of my primary texts, including Alice Rühle-Gerstel's Marxist-Individual Psychology writing and party political publications such as *Frauenwelt* and Helene Overlach's *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute*, a brief outline of the development of the labour movement in Germany is productive. My thesis foregrounds left-wing perspectives to shed light on the ways in which the self-proclaimed socially progressive stance of socialists was underpinned by gender essentialism.

The 1980s saw the emergence of a body of work tracing the history of the labour movement, which sought to build on the 'history from below' approach developed during the 1960s. In his book *A History of European Socialism*, Albert S. Lindemann argues that, while traditional approaches to the study of socialist thought overlooked the experiences of workers themselves, the attempts to write history from below resulted in studies with 'often severely limited focus, and recondite conclusions'.[110] Lindemann provides a broad overview of the development of socialist politics in Europe, while Richard Breitman focuses on the SPD during the Weimar era in *German Socialism and Weimar Democracy*, examining particularly the party leadership's decision to support parliamentary democracy.[111] Stefan Berger's book *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany*, meanwhile, seeks to move beyond the actions and beliefs of the party leadership and 'to write a history of the SPD which [locates] it within the overall development of capitalist society and the everyday experience of workers.'[112] These texts consider primarily the development of organised socialism, offering only severely limited comments on women's contributions. Women's role in the socialist movement has, however, been treated separately in the works by Pore, von Saldern and Evans mentioned above. This thesis contributes to the body of work seeking to recentre women's voices in the left-wing discourses of the Weimar period.

Work on the history of socialism, as well as analysis of social structures and the nature of collective political identities more broadly, are essential for understanding the multiple factors which influence experiences of and attitudes towards motherhood during the Weimar period. New women, whose apparent childlessness was perceived as socially threatening, were strongly associated with white collar work and middle-class milieus in Weimar-era cultural production. Jürgen Kocka's 1981 essay 'Class Formation, Interest Articulation, and Public

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[110] Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. x.
[111] Richard Breitman, *German Socialism and Weimar Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).
[112] Stefan Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 8. Dawson Era Ebook.

Policy'[113] argues that the emergence of white-collar identities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a response to the strong labour movement and resultant development of working-class identities in Germany. Kathleen Canning's article 'Gender and the Politics of Class Formation' (1992), however, highlights the limitations of earlier theoretical models, including that proposed by Kocka. She argues that in earlier attempts to theorise class formation, 'the notion of proletarianization appears as a starting point instead of a historical process to be analyzed',[114] and suggests that this approach simplifies processes of identity construction by privileging class identities over 'ethnicity, nationality, religion, and gender'.[115] Canning builds on the theoretical work undertaken during the 1980s by 'granting history an important place in the work of theoretical renovation'.[116] This thesis similarly follows a historically contingent approach in the analysis of my corpus. Canning argues that class is a 'discursive construction' as well as 'an identity and an ideology',[117] explaining that class identity develops as meaning is 'assigned and contested' by the very members of that class. Canning uses the example of the German Textile Workers' Union (*Deutscher Textilarbeiterverein*) to illustrate her argument that women, as well as men, played a central role in the emergence of class identities. She asserts that women rejected the discourse which drew a connection between women's paid employment and the perceived destruction of the family,[118] and that they 'upheld their own visions of domesticity as they fought to imprint the factory regime with their needs as mothers and wives'.[119] Therefore, for Canning, women contributed to the discursive construction of working-class female identities through their political engagement with workplace conditions and union activities. The notion of discursive construction is similarly central to my discussion, as I view literature as a means for women to imagine new models of motherhood.

The 'history from below' approach, which sought to shed light on the experiences, perspectives and activities of people who did not occupy prominent public office informed the later development of the 'history of the everyday'. Alf Lüdtke's *Alltagsgeschichte* (1989) has been influential in this field, in both English- and German-language scholarship. The body of

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[113] Jürgen Kocka, 'Class Formation, Interest Articulation, and Public Policy: The Origins of the German White-Collar Class in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries' in *Organizing Interests in Western Europe: Pluralism, Corporatism, and the Transformation of Politics*, ed. by Suzanne D. Berger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 63-81.

[114] Kathleen Canning, 'Gender and the Politics of Class Formation: Rethinking German Labor History', *American History Review*, 97.3 (1992), 736-68 (p. 743).

[115] Ibid., p. 744.

[116] Ibid., p. 767.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid., p. 751.

[119] Ibid., p. 752.

work within the field of everyday history focuses on the experience of so-called 'kleine Leute'[120] and, as Lüdtke explains, the primary foci of this approach are 'jene »alltäglichen Tätigkeiten«[121] and reconstructions showing 'in welcher Weise die Beteiligten Objekte *und zugleich* Subjekte waren bzw. werden konnten.'[122] The history of the everyday thus links to the feminist theoretical position that the private is political and illustrates how the historical context impacted the lives of individuals. While I examine literary sources, rather than the historical data that is commonly used in the history of the everyday, the principles of this approach inform my methodology, which seeks to recentre the experiences and attitudes of voices that have previously been neglected. The impact of political and economic circumstances on individuals features in all four groups of primary texts analysed in this thesis but is addressed particularly explicitly in the socialist fiction discussed in Chapter Three.

The connection between the private and political is further exemplified in studies examining leisure time during the Weimar period. For example, W. L. Guttsman's book *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany* considers the relationship between socialism and leisure activities,[123] while Christina Benninghaus's article 'Mothers' Toil and Daughters' Leisure' draws on reports written by teenage girls as part of their vocational training to comment on girls' expectations of women's entitlement to leisure time. Benninghaus concludes that leisure time was associated with youth, 'a phase of life that implied a right to free time and pleasure'.[124] Furthermore, Benninghaus notes that the report writers expected mothers to prioritise domestic duties, which evidences the widely held conservative ideas about the gendered division of labour that also appear in a number of my primary texts. Benninghaus does not, however, examine in detail why this may have been the case; my analysis seeks to uncover the nature of expectations of mothering and the ways in which women themselves engaged with these discourses.

The focus on the experiences of 'kleine Leute', rather than those in leadership positions, is also foregrounded in my literary primary sources. Indeed, two works of fiction studied in this thesis share the title *Kleine Leute*, centring the stories of 'ordinary' people. The sources for everyday history typically include oral histories, surveys, reports and diaries. Earlier studies which analyse survey data, such as Erich Fromm's *Arbeiter und Angestellte am Vorabend des Dritten Reiches* and S. J. Coyner's 'Class Consciousness and Consumption: The New Middle Class

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[120] Alf Lüdtke, *Alltagsgeschichte: Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1989), p. 9.
[121] Ibid., p. 11.
[122] Ibid., p. 12.
[123] Guttsman, *Workers' Culture*.
[124] Christina Benninghaus, 'Mothers' Toil and Daughters' Leisure: Working-Class Girls and Time in 1920s Germany', *History Workshop Journal*, 50.1 (2000), 45-72, (p. 53).

During the Weimar Republic' offer insights into the behaviours of members of different social groups and provide pertinent evidence to support theoretical claims about class consciousness.[125] Yet, this approach requires care to avoid extrapolated conclusions. For example, Fromm's analysis is based on 584 of 1100 survey responses which survived the relocation of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research to the United States in 1933.[126] Hence, while the surveys provide first-hand insight into the attitudes and behaviours of these respondents, care should be taken to avoid generalising conclusions about the views of a community or population in general. Karen Hagemann similarly bases the analysis in her book *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik* on interviews she conducted with elderly women in Hamburg who had lived in working-class communities in the city during the Weimar period. While Hagemann's sample size of 106 questionnaires and 51 interviews is too small to provide conclusive evidence about the working class in Weimar Germany as a whole, her book nevertheless provides valuable examples of attitudes towards family life and mothering responsibilities that could be found among Weimar working-class women. Her notion of the proletarian 'Doppelmoral',[127] in which, she argues, elements of bourgeois ideology regarding the family unit have been combined with a tolerance of premarital relationships, recalls Pore's assertion that bourgeois idealisation of motherhood was adopted by the Social Democratic women's movement and illustrates how social attitudes towards motherhood evolve.

Such historical sources which rely on self-reporting must, however, be treated with caution. In addition to the question of extrapolating conclusions from a relatively small sample, Benninghaus stresses that the purpose of the writing should not be overlooked. For example, the essays that she analyses were written as part of a training course, and the girls may therefore have sought to portray themselves favourably. Benninghaus argues that such primary sources reflect the 'prevailing normative ideas of that class' rather than the lived reality.[128] Nevertheless, reports and survey responses provide insights into the political discourses and views which resonated with members of the working-class in Weimar Germany, and offer an explanation for the influences which shaped attitudes towards motherhood and family during this period. Mindful of such purposes and 'prevailing noramative ideas', my analysis of the views

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[125] Erich Fromm, *Arbeiter und Angestellte am Vorabend des Dritten Reiches: Eine sozialpsychologische Untersuchung* (Munich: DAV, 1980); Sandra J. Coyner, 'Class Consciousness and Consumption: The New Middle Class during the Weimar Republic', *Journal of Social History*, 10.3 (1977), 310-31.

[126] Wolfgang Bonss, 'Critical Theory and Empirical Social Research: Some Observations', in *The Working Class in Weimar Germany: A Psychological and Sociological Study*, Erich Fromm, ed. by Wolfgang Bonss, trans. by Barbara Weinberger (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1984), pp. 1-40 (pp. 1-2).

[127] Karen Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik: Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Dietz, 1990), p. 175.

[128] Benninghaus, 'Mothers' Toil and Daughters' Leisure', p. 67.

presented in my primary sources takes into account the political bias of the authors and underlines that the attitudes present are not only reflections of cultural perspectives but also attempts to shape public discourses and construct new images of motherhood that are compatible with the lifestyles and aspirations of a range of younger women in Weimar Germany.

Chapter Overview

This thesis comprises four chapters, each discussing one group of primary texts. In Chapter One: 'The Psychology and Politics of Mothering', I explore the depiction of the relationship between politics, capitalism, the social status of motherhood, and women's psychological development in two left-wing theoretical texts: Alice Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* and Henny Schumacher's *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe.* I situate these two works within the context of developments in women's psychology research in the interwar period and highlight the radical nature of these texts, which expose the hypocritical treatment of mothers in social, psychological, and legal terms, and call into question the existence of women's inherent maternal instinct. I argue that the work of Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher anticipates post-World War Two feminist writing such as Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), which emphasised the connection between psychology, the private sphere and political context.

In Chapter Two: 'Women's Rights and Responsibilities as Mothers in the Women's Political Press and Left-Wing Non-Fiction Writing', I analyse the tensions between the promotion of essentialist notions of maternal duty and support for increased access to abortion and contraception in left-wing non-fiction writing written by and for women. I contest that, by leaving normative ideas of gender largely unchallenged, socialist women packaged more radical policies in terms believed to be more palatable to a broader readership.

An excursus on genre in Weimar fiction follows Chapter Two. This discussion situates the fiction analysed in Chapters Three and Four in the wider cultural context, outlining the features of *neue Sachlichkeit* and political fiction, while foregrounding women writers' contributions to these genres.

I discuss the appeal to familial values to attract women's political support in four examples of left-wing fiction in Chapter Three: 'Portrayals of Motherhood in Socialist Fiction'. I argue that the strategy adopted by the authors reflects that of the non-fiction texts in Chapter Two; by referencing conservative notions of gender roles and offering communism as the means to protect the working-class family against the threat to its integrity posed by capitalism, the authors promote women's political engagement in terms deemed to be non-threatening to a

contemporary audience. I show, however, that these texts also include subtle challenges to the prevailing gender hierarchy by including positive portrayals of active female political engagement and highlighting the specific ways in which (young) women are impacted by social inequalities and financial hardship.

In the final chapter of this thesis, Chapter Four: ''New Mothering' and Intergenerational Tensions in Popular Fiction', I demonstrate how the novels *Gilgi – eine von uns* by Irmgard Keun, *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* by Vicki Baum, and *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* by Gabriele Tergit expose the competing priorities for young, working women seeking to balance their professional and private lives, and the intergenerational tensions that arise as they forge a modern lifestyle that is at odds with the values of their mothers' generation. I argue that, while they may not endorse a particular party perspective, these novels are political in their criticism of the specific prejudices faced by women, and explore how both Baum and Keun attempt to reimagine a positive model of single motherhood. By including works of popular fiction in my discussion, I draw parallels between the less explicitly politically aligned mainstream and declaredly left-wing political discourses of motherhood in the Weimar period.

This thesis recentres women's voices, which have been critically neglected, in the conversations around a topic that was so central to women's lives during the Weimar period by studying the depictions of motherhood in fiction and non-fiction texts by left-wing and socially critical women writers. My analysis shows that women in Weimar Germany actively engaged in discourses around women's reproduction and sought to construct models of motherhood that suited their contemporary experiences, priorities, and aspirations.

Chapter One: The Psychology and Politics of Mothering

Introduction

Maternalist policies and expectations of women's motherhood, which persisted throughout the Weimar period, were based on the assumption of women's inherently caring and nurturing characteristics. Across the primary sources analysed in this thesis, progressive calls for greater opportunities for women beyond the private sphere, improved rights for unmarried mothers, and advocation of access to birth control are accompanied by an expectation that, given favourable social and economic circumstances, women both want to and are naturally equipped with the capacity to mother. Psychoanalysis, which captured the public imagination in the early twentieth century, was invoked to substantiate these claims. In her study *Sexual Politics and Feminist Science*, Kirsten Leng identifies a trend in early twentieth-century Germany of lay engagement with new scientific ideas and, indeed, psychoanalysis reached a wide audience among both specialists and the general public during the Weimar era. Leng shows that '[e]nthusiasm for science transcended class and gender boundaries: both women and workers proved avid consumers of science.'[1] She argues that, by appealing to the language of science, women were able to 'frankly and publicly participate in debates about sex and sexuality' and challenge the religious rhetoric that had previously dominated public discourse about sexuality.[2] As women's access to education and public space increased in the early twentieth century, emerging fields such as psychoanalysis offered a route for women to establish their participation in scientific discourses. My discussion builds on Leng to consider how women writers not only appealed to scientific language but also included left-wing political ideas to challenge and influence discourses of motherhood during the Weimar period. Leng's analysis focuses on theoretical, non-fiction writing but does not consider how the strategy of appealing to scientific language was transferred into other genres, as my analysis in later chapters does. In order to understand why women writers accepted that the desire to mother was innate and continued to appeal to normative images of idealised motherhood, it is necessary to consider the influence of popular science, particularly psychoanalysis, during the Weimar period.

In this chapter, I examine developments in theories of women's psychology in the interwar period and analyse two left-wing political texts which seek to apply these emerging

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[1] Kirsten Leng, *Sexual Politics and Feminist Science: Women Sexologists in Germany, 1900-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 30.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

theories of women's psychology specifically to women's motherhood and mothering. By beginning with a discussion of two theoretical works, Alice Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (1932) and Henny Schumacher's *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* (1929), I establish the context within which the discourses analysed in this thesis were developing and consider the extent to which conceptual advances were reaching a wider audience. I argue that Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher offer an innovative contribution to discussions of motherhood by questioning biologically essentialist notions of women's personality and incorporating a political approach to underline how mothering happens within a specific social context rather than in isolation. I assert that these two works anticipate later developments in feminist theories, as they explore ideas which only returned to prominence in the feminist discourses of the 1970s.

      Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart investigates women's place in the family, at work, and in society more broadly, arguing that women's lower social status impacts upon their psychological development, creating feelings of inferiority which serve to perpetuate women's disadvantaged social position. Alice Rühle-Gerstel describes the book as a 'Versuch zur Sozialpsychologie der Weiblichkeit'.[3] The book comprises a little over 400 pages and assumes some knowledge of Adlerian psychology in its detailed analysis of women's personality types. Rühle-Gerstel adopts an academic writing style and cites a significant number of statistics and research findings throughout *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, although her referencing is inconsistent and there are instances in which names of researchers, dates or sources are unclear. She also draws heavily on her own original research in the form of a survey, which received 155 responses from a sample of attendees at adult education courses, at which Rühle-Gerstel gave lectures on cultural topics, including psychology, pedagogy, and women's emancipation.[4] This sample size is therefore not sufficiently representative to draw meaningful conclusions about women's attitudes towards marriage, work and motherhood in general, and Rühle-Gerstel herself acknowledges some of the limitations of her survey (ARG, p. 322). Nevertheless, she bases conclusions on this data and in some cases infers answers from qualitative data to suit her argument (ARG, p. 101). Despite its weaknesses and taken in its context, however, the survey acts as the basis for a number of helpful anecdotal examples which illustrate Rühle-Gerstel's points. The author positions her book as a contribution to research into women's psychology but the text is also explicitly left-wing and the limitations of some of her sources should be viewed in light of her political bias. She seeks to highlight particularly the

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[3] Alice Rühle-Gerstel, *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1932), p. 408. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation ARG.
[4] MS 'Mein Lebenslauf', Munich, Institüt für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ), Nachlass: Alice Rühle-Gerstel, Archive/ED 227 Bd. 1/12-15.

ways in which women are disadvantaged within a capitalist system and, notwithstanding her occasional tendency to overstate the conclusions that can be drawn from her survey, the given examples provide insights into the attitudes and experiences of the women with whom Rühle-Gerstel came into contact at her lectures.

Rühle-Gerstel was born into a middle-class German-speaking Jewish family in Prague in 1894.[5] She first became interested in socialism around 1917,[6] and remained involved with and supportive of socialist politics throughout her life. Yet, despite her political engagement, she never became a member of a political party.[7] In 1921, she married Otto Rühle, a left-wing politician, former SPD member of the Reichstag, and educational theorist. Following the completion of her doctorate, also in 1921,[8] Rühle-Gerstel became acquainted with, and studied under Alfred Adler, who developed the theory of Individual Psychology. In 1932, Alice Rühle-Gerstel and Otto Rühle left Dresden, moving first to Prague then, following the refusal of Otto Rühle's residency permit on the grounds of his political affiliations, to Mexico, where Otto's daughter from his first marriage was living with her husband.[9] Jutta Friederich notes that Rühle-Gerstel did not feel settled in Mexico, and that her "Briefe an ihre Freunde wurden immer hoffnungsloser und deuteten öfter Selbstmordgedanken an."[10] In 1943 Alice Rühle-Gerstel committed suicide on the same day that Otto Rühle died of a heart attack.

Friederich notes that *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, was widely reviewed when it was published, including by Hannah Arendt, who was somewhat critical of the book's conclusion.[11] Rühle-Gerstel's work represents a radical position within Weimar-era discussions of women's role in society and, as I shall discuss, explores ideas to which post-World War Two feminists returned, such as the notion of gender as a social construct. *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* should also be viewed within a tradition of left-wing political and philosophical studies of women's place in society. Prominent earlier examples of such in-depth studies from within the Social Democratic movement include Lily Braun's *Die Frauenfrage. Ihre geschichtliche*

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[5] Extended biographical information about Alice Rühle-Gerstel can be found in: Jutta Friederich, *Alice Rühle-Gerstel (1894-1943): Eine in Vergessenheit geratene Individualpsychologin* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013); Marta Marková, *Auf ins Wunderland! Das Leben der Alice Rühle-Gerstel* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007).

[6] Jana Mikota, 'Die proletarische Bibliothek. Alice Rühle-Gerstels und Otto Rühles Beitrag zu einer Lesesozialisation der proletarischen Mädchen und Jungen in den 1920er Jahren', *Medaon*, 1 (2007) <http://www.medaon.de/pdf/A-Mikota-1-2007.pdf"16> [accessed 26 October 2017], p. 2.

[7] Gerald Mackenthun, 'Alice Rühle-Gerstels individueller Weg zwischen Marxismus und Individualpsychologie' in *Gestalten um Alfred Adler: Pioniere der Individualpsychologie*, ed. by Alfred Lévy and Gerald Mackenthun (Würzburg: Konigshausen & Neumann, 2002), pp. 215-38 (p. 215).

[8] Marta Pelinka-Marková, 'R-Gerstel, Alice' in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, ed. by Hans Günter Hockerts, 27 vols (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005), XXII, p. 218.

[9] Friederich, *Alice Rühle-Gerstel*, pp. 33-35.

[10] Ibid., p. 43.

[11] Ibid., p. 134.

Entwicklung und wirtschaftliche Seite (1901) and August Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879). Indeed, the 1972 reprint of *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* was renamed by the publisher, Neue Kritik, to *Die Frau und der Kapitalismus*, explicitly positioning Rühle-Gerstel's text within this tradition by referencing Bebel's influential tome.

Yet, Rühle-Gerstel's work has received very limited attention in post-World War Two scholarship in both the fields of women's political writing and psychology due to a number of factors. First, while she remained committed to left-wing political perspectives throughout her life, and *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* positions itself as a Marxist text, in the years following the First World War, Rühle-Gerstel and her husband became increasingly isolated from socialist circles due to their criticisms of the Soviet model. Her work was, therefore, championed in neither western nor Soviet academic contexts following the Second World War, which undoubtedly contributed to Rühle-Gerstel's work dropping into relative obscurity following her death.

Second, with the rise to power of the National Socialists, the productive psychoanalytic working groups in central Europe disbanded, with many members of psychoanalytic communities fleeing to the United States, where they were able to continue working since interest in psychoanalysis had been growing there in the interwar years.[12] Rühle and Rühle-Gerstel instead went into exile in Mexico and, despite continuing written correspondence, Rühle-Gerstel and her Individual Psychology colleagues were unable to meet at their study groups. In fact, in a letter to Gina Kaus dated 15th December 1937, Rühle-Gerstel states that she has moved away from the study of Individual Psychology: 'von der Individualpsychologie bin ich auch weit weg, sie passt nicht auf das Leben, habe ich herausgefunden.'[13] Furthermore, Rühle-Gerstel was forced to give up much of her writing work in Mexico. Due to Rühle being unable to find long-term work and Rühle-Gerstel being unable to find a publisher for the novel she had been working on,[14] she was obliged to take on a number of secretarial, translation and administrative roles to cover the couple's living costs.

A final, and probably crucial, reason for the relative obscurity of Rühle-Gerstel's work is that *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* has not been translated. As a result, the book remains

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[12] For example, in 1932 Franz Alexander established the Psychoanalytic Institute in Chicago and invited Karen Horney to become the Assistant Director (Janet Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis: Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Anna Freud, Melanie Klein* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 105) and Stanley Cobb founded the first full-time psychiatric unit in a US hospital in Boston in 1934, where Helene Deutsch worked following her arrival in the USA in 1935 (Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, p. 57).
[13] IfZ, ED 227 Bd. 14/1-94.
[14] Rühle-Gerstel's final two book-length projects, an autobiographical account of her friendship with Leon Trotsky, *Kein Gedicht für Trotzki*, and her exile novel, *Der Umbruch oder Hanna und die Freiheit*, were published posthumously in 1979 and 1984 respectively.

inaccessible to non-German-speaking readers and failed to achieve widespread recognition in the French- and English-speaking environments in which post-war feminist psychoanalytic theories were primarily developed. In this chapter, I reintegrate Rühle-Gerstel's contribution into the historiography of feminist psychoanalysis and evaluate her discussions of the social and psychological consequences of motherhood in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*.

While Rühle-Gerstel's text sought to reach an audience of academics and psychologists, the second text I discuss in detail in this chapter, Henny Schumacher's *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe*, aimed to present a theoretical explanation of psychological development to working-class women. At just sixty pages, the text is substantially shorter than Rühle-Gerstel's holistic analysis. Schumacher's focus in the text is largely on the impact of early childhood experiences on psychological development. She addresses working-class women directly, using phrases such as 'uns Frauen',[15] and offers practical suggestions for how her readers can support socialist aims through childcare and early-years education practices. In *Die proletarische Frau*, Schumacher advocates the incorporation of emerging psychoanalytic theories into methods for raising children, as well as identifying areas in which more psychological research could be productive.

The focus on early childhood experiences in *Die proletarische Frau* corresponds to Henny Schumacher's expertise as a Kindergarten teacher. Schumacher was born in Cologne in 1882 and completed her training as a Kindergarten teacher in 1907. Between 1912 and 1924 she worked in Berlin at the Kindergarten Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus. Schumacher was, however, also engaged in political activity and became involved in the USPD, which ultimately led to her losing her job. From 1924 until her death in 1934 Schumacher lived from the proceeds of her writing work, primarily journalistic, which she had begun while still working at Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus.[16] Schumacher wrote for a number of publications, including *Frauenwelt*, the women's magazine of the SPD, which is discussed in Chapter Two, and *Die neue Erziehung*, the journal of the *Bund entschiedener Schulreformer*, of which she was a leading member in the area of preschool education.[17] Helge Wasmuth observes that, while the *Bund* was a cross-party organisation, its policies corresponded largely to those of the left-wing parties in Weimar

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[15] Henny Schumacher, *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* (Berlin: Dietz, 1929), p. 42. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation HS.

[16] Manfred Berger, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Kindergartens: Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt: Brandes & Apsel, 1995), pp. 168-72.

[17] Helge Wasmuth, *Kindertageseinrichtungen als Bildungseinrichtungen: Zur Bedeutung von Bildung und Erziehung in der Geschichte der öffentlichen Kleinkinderziehung in Deutschland bis 1945* (Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt, 2011), p. 357.

Germany.[18] Schumacher's socialist perspectives were therefore not out of place in the *Bund entschiedener Schulreformer*. Schumacher herself was a supporter of obligatory Kindergarten attendance, 'da die Familie keine Erziehungsgemeinschaft mehr sei.'[19] Compulsory Kindergarten attendance was a policy proposed by the USPD but blocked by the 'bourgeois parties' when put to a vote in the Reichstag (HS, p. 49). Despite general recognition of the value of early-years education, the subject was not, as Wasmuth notes, a priority for the socialist movement during the Weimar period,[20] perhaps due to the continued separation of political issues along gender lines with less attention given to those areas viewed as 'women's concerns'. The gendered division of political activity is exemplified in the socialist non-fiction and fiction discussed in Chapters Two and Three, and I return to the ways in which the separation of 'women's issues' was both supported and challenged by socialist women writers during the Weimar era.

As the title itself suggests, *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* is an explicitly political text, highlighting the threat to the working-class family posed by the capitalist system and endorsed by an introduction from Marie Juchacz, leader of the women's branch of the SPD. Throughout the text, Schumacher repeatedly highlights the importance of community, painting a nostalgic picture of the rural past in which the family unit formed the centre of production and basis of community (for example: HS, p. 11) While imagery reminiscent of the 'Heimat' is typically associated with the political right, Schumacher's text evokes this nostalgia to highlight the damaging impact of capitalism on working-class families. Her romanticisation of the rural environment can also be seen within the context of poor living conditions for many working-class families in urban settings even during the relative stability and prosperity of the mid-twenties, and the wider promotion of outdoor activity during the Weimar period, closely associated with the youth movements.

Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart and *Die proletarische Frau* both adopt left-wing political approaches to highlight the connection between the individual and society, and underline the specific ways in which women as mothers are impacted by capitalist, male-dominated social structures. My comparison of these two works explores the ways in which assumptions about mothering were both contested and reinforced in the Weimar Republic, which simultaneously offered increasing opportunities for women and saw continued widespread acceptance of conservative ideas about gender roles. In the following, I provide an overview of developments in theories of women's psychology in the Weimar period, and examine how ideas which came to prominence in the 1970s were already anticipated in the

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[18] Wasmuth, *Kindertageseinrichtungen als Bildungseinrichtungen*, p. 357.
[19] Ibid., p. 319.
[20] Ibid., p. 399.

interwar years. My analysis then explores the strategies employed by Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher that propose political measures to improve the social status of mothers. I argue that Rühle-Gerstel in particular adopts a radical position that challenges widely held assumptions of inherent gender different.

Part One: Developments in Theories of Women's Psychology

The works of Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher form part of a wider body of academic and lay engagement with scientific ideas during the early twentieth century and should be read within that context. Neither author was a practising psychoanalyst, but both draw on developments in psychological theories to illustrate their political and academic writing; Rühle-Gerstel was a leading voice in Marxist Individual Psychology, while Schumacher appeals to psychoanalytic and scientific language as a specialist in preschool education. Other women contributing to the discussions of women's psychology, such as Helene Deutsch (1884-1982) and Karen Horney (1885-1952), were, by contrast, professional psychoanalysts with medical backgrounds.

Helene Deutsch and Karen Horney made significant contributions to the study of women's psychology during the interwar years. As higher education began to offer more opportunities for women, medical training became a route into psychological practice for a number of women, including Deutsch and Horney, who completed their medical degrees in 1913 and 1915 respectively.[21] As a relatively new field, psychoanalysis offered an opportunity for women to establish themselves as experts more readily than other male-dominated areas of medicine. Psychoanalysis nevertheless remained firmly under the influence of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) throughout the interwar period and Deutsch and Horney both belonged to the Vienna-based circle of Freudian psychoanalysts.

Helene Deutsch joined Freud's weekly meetings in 1916 and was among the first women to join his Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1918.[22] Deutsch underwent training and personal analysis with Freud from 1919,[23] and led the Vienna Psychoanalytic Training Institute from 1924-1935. As director of the Institute, she was closely involved in the selection of candidates to train as future psychoanalysts and was, therefore, highly influential. In 1935, Deutsch emigrated to America, where she continued to actively engage in the field of psychoanalysis for the

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[21] Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, p. 31; Dee Garrison, 'Karen Horney and Feminism', *Signs*, 6.4 (1981), 672-91 (p. 674).
[22] Ibid., pp. 31-33.
[23] Ibid., p. 34.

remainder of her career.[24] Deutsch remained a loyal supporter of Freud's theories throughout her life and his influence can be clearly identified in her work,[25] in particular in her adoption of Freud's concepts of female passivity, masochism, and her biologically essentialist approach. Hélène Parat notes that Deutsch views pregnancy and labour as the direct continuation of the sexual act for women, and comments on Deutsch's understanding of motherhood as a narcissistic triumph for some women, who consider their child to be a part of themselves.[26]

Deutsch published the first psychoanalytic book-length study on the topic of female sexuality in 1925, which promoted notions of inherent gender difference. While praising progress in women's equality in her autobiography, Deutsch writes: 'though woman is different now, she is forever the same, a servant of her biological fate, to which she has to adjust her other pursuits.'[27] She thus perpetuates discourses which limit women's social opportunities by emphasising their reproductive capacity. For this reason, Deutsch's work has divided opinions.[28] Nevertheless, Deutsch's contribution contained nuanced and innovative elements. For example, Webster contests that criticisms of Deutsch focus only on her published articles and do not take into account her clinical practice,[29] while Sayers argues that Deutsch 'used her own and her patients' mothering experience to go well beyond [Freud's] ideas'.[30] Deutsch, for example, reduces the significance of Freud's notion of 'penis envy' in her account of women's psychology.[31]

Karen Horney, similarly, built on Freudian theory in her early work on women's psychology. Horney was introduced to psychoanalysis through Karl Abraham (1877-1925), who commended her to Freud in 1912, after she delivered a paper at a meeting of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society.[32] Horney published her first article on women's psychology in 1922 but her engagement with gendered personality development lasted only until 1933, when she

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[24] Helene Deutsch, *Confrontations with Myself: An Epilogue* (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 163; Paul Roazen, *Helene Deutsch: A Psychoanalyst's Life* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1992), p. 183.

[25] In her autobiography, *Confrontations with Myself*, Deutsch repeatedly refers to Freud's 'genius' (pp. 16, 129, 130) and describes her 'complete and unchanged dedication' (p. 217) to his theories.

[26] Hélène Parat, 'Helene Deutsch, pionnière du féminin', *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 74.3 (2010), 807-24 (pp. 817-19).

[27] Deutsch, *Confrontations with Myself*, p. 124.

[28] Some critics, including Roazen, a personal acquaintance of Deutsch, describe the biological essentialism of her work sympathetically (Roazen, *Helene Deutsch*, p. 338), while others, including Webster, Badinter, and Sayers, criticise her assumption of female masochism or inherent constitutional inferiority (Brenda S. Webster, 'Helene Deutsch: A New Look', *Signs*, 10.3 (1985), 553-71, (p. 553); Elisabeth Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct*, trans. by Roger DeGaris (London: Souvenir Press, 1981), pp. 269-72; Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, p. 64).

[29] Webster, 'Helene Deutsch', p. 554.

[30] Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, p. 81.

[31] Éliane Lecarme-Tabone, 'Simone de Beauvoir et Hélène Deutsch', *L'homme et la société*, 179-180 (2011), 47-61, (p. 52).

[32] Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, pp. 88-90.

turned her attention to other psychoanalytic questions, most notably anxiety. [33] In contrast to Deutsch, Horney was vocally critical of Freud's theories throughout the course of her career and her relationship with the psychoanalytic community consequently became strained. In 1941 Horney and a group of her associates formed 'an independent Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis' in New York.[34]

Horney, like Deutsch, challenges Freud's notion of penis envy suggesting that it is based on a 'one-sided cultural masculine perspective'.[35] Yet, as critics including Dee Garrison have pointed out, Horney's earlier work on women's psychology fails to fully overcome notions of essential gender difference; for example, she explains women's greater attention to physical appearance as stemming from 'the little girl's inability to display her genitals like a boy when urinating',[36] and assumes women have an 'innate wish for motherhood.'[37] However, as Sayers notes, Horney later changed her view on women's inherent desire to have children after her own experiences as a mother.[38] Horney incorporated the impact of social factors into her understanding of women's relationship to motherhood and maternal behaviours, and argued that 'mothering is [...] an effect [...] of the mother's experience of her own parents.'[39] Horney suggests that mother-daughter relationships are ambivalent and women, motivated by competitiveness which stems from early childhood experiences of 'being bettered [...] by the mother or an older sister', seek to surpass their mothers.[40] She, therefore, offers a social rather than biological explanation for women's desire to mother, which corresponds to the arguments of Schumacher, Rühle-Gerstel and, later feminist psychoanalytic theorists such as Nancy Chodorow. Here Horney also agrees with Deutsch in foregrounding the significance of women's relationships with their mothers in their own subsequent mothering. As Webster underlines: 'Deutsch makes the further important observation that to be a good mother herself a woman must have a positive (nonmasochistic) relation to her own mother or mother substitute.'[41]

Despite Freud's dominance in the field of psychology in the early twentieth century, a number of competing theories were also developed by psychoanalysts such as Carl Jung (1875-1961) and Alfred Adler (1870-1937), who broke away from the Freudian school in 1913 and 1911 respectively. Alfred Adler initially trained as a physician before becoming a student of

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[33] Garrison, 'Karen Horney and Feminism', pp. 687-88.

[34] Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, p. 128.

[35] Marianne Horney Eckardt, 'Karen Horney: A Portrait', *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 65.2 (2005), 95-101, (p. 100).

[36] Garrison, 'Karen Horney and Feminism', p. 677.

[37] Ibid., p. 689.

[38] Sayers, *Mothering Psychoanalysis*, p. 106.

[39] Ibid., p. 108.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Webster, 'Helene Deutsch', p. 569.

Freud in 1902. However, due to a number of conflicts with Freud, including Adler's rejection of Freud's notion of a son's incestuous love for his mother,[42] Adler withdrew from Freud's psychoanalytic society.[43] Alice Rühle-Gerstel belonged to the Adlerian school of thought and she draws heavily on Adler's theories of the inferiority complex and (over-)compensation through individual striving towards goals of superiority in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*. Henny Schumacher also discusses the consequences of children's development of feelings of inferiority in *Die proletarische Frau*, and Adler's theories are mentioned in parenting and childcare advice articles in the SPD's women's magazine *Frauenwelt*, which I discuss in Chapter Two. Adler's theory thus played a role in shaping left-wing discourse around mothering during the Weimar period.

Adler's theory of Individual Psychology identifies feelings of inferiority (*Minderwertigkeitsgefühle*) and resulting attempts to compensate for perceived inferiority as central to human psychology. In *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, Adler explains that '*throughout the whole period of development, the child possesses a feeling of inferiority in its relations both to parents and the world at large*.' [Emphasis in original][44] Consequently, he argues, humans are constantly attempting to compensate for (self-perceived) feelings of inferiority by striving towards a goal of superiority.[45] Alice Rühle-Gerstel summarises in her 1924 study *Freud und Adler*: 'Freud lehrt: alles kommt vom Sexuellen her. Adler lehrt: alles kommt vom Machtwillen her. Oder vielmehr: alles strebt zur Überlegenheit hin.'[46] As Richard E. Watts explains, the concept of *Minderwertigkeitsgefühle* stems from 'Adler's holistic understanding [...] that social-psychological (familial and societal) influences were foundational to clients' presenting problems',[47] and Watts observes that the term 'Individual Psychology' is 'based on the Latin meaning of *individuum* – "indivisible" or "holistic."'[48] Therefore, Adlerian psychology foregrounds the individual's experiences of social relationships and recognises the individual as a whole within a social context. This contrasts to Freud's theories which present a fragmented model of the psyche, within which, according to Freud, explanations for the patient's neurosis can be found. Adler's stress on social relationships reflects his interest in the

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[42] Alfred Adler, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, trans. by P. Radin (London: Kegal Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1924), p. 11.
[43] Andrea Capovilla, *Entwürfe weiblicher Identität in der Moderne* (Oldenburg: Igel, 2004), p. 149.
[44] Adler, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, p. 13.
[45] Adler, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, p. 8; Rudoph R. Dreikurs, *Fundamentals of Adlerian Psychology* (Chicago: Alfred Adler Institute, 1953), p. 23. Dreikurs emphasises that feelings of inferiority are 'a faulty self-evaluation' and 'independent of a man's true value'.
[46] Alice Rühle-Gerstel, *Freud und Adler* (Dresden: Am anderen Ufer, 1924), p. 69.
[47] Richard E. Watts, 'Adler, Alfred' in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Theory in Counseling and Psychotherapy*, ed. by Edward S. Neukrug (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483346502.n17>.
[48] Ibid.

socialist movement in his early career, although Watts suggests that Adler was '[m]ore of a humanist than a socialist',[49] and, as Andrea Capovilla notes Adler became increasingly conservative during the 1920s and early 1930s: 'Im Zuge dieses wachsenden Konservativismus distanzierte sich Adler von marxistischen Individualpsychologen wie Alice Rühle-Gerstel'.[50]

With its emphasis on social factors and interpersonal relationships, Adler's theory offered a productive framework for the analysis of women's psychological development and, in addition to Rühle-Gerstel, Sofie Lazarsfeld (1881-1976), for example, drew on Adlerian theory to argue that gender differences were the result of cultural practice rather than biology. Sofie Lazarsfeld was introduced to Alfred Adler and the Vienna circle of Individual Psychologists through her acquaintance Rudolf Hilferding (1877-1941) and his Individual Psychologist wife, Margarethe Hilferding (1871-1942). In 1924, Lazarsfeld began writing about child development, marriage, and women's sexuality and, in 1925, founded her Individual Psychology marriage and sexual health advice centre (*Ehe- und Sexualberatungsstelle*).[51] Lazarsfeld was acquainted with Alice Rühle-Gerstel and contributed to the magazine *Das proletarische Kind*, which was published by Rühle-Gerstel and her husband Otto Rühle.[52] In her book *Wie die Frau den Mann erlebt* (1931), Lazarsfeld follows Individual Psychology to contest that men's feelings of inferiority lead them to overcompensate and exert greater power in gender relations.

While Lazarsfeld's work is progressive in its understanding of the cultural rather than biological causes of gender difference, Leng highlights the apparently contradictory conclusions that Lazarsfeld draws in her analysis of marriage. The reform of marriage laws and improved rights for both unmarried mothers and divorced women was a priority for both the socialist women's movements and feminists of the Sexual Reform movement during the Weimar period, and Lazarsfeld participates in this conversation through her writing. For Lazarsfeld, heterosexuality formed the basis of social structures and, as Leng writes, Lazarsfeld viewed heterosexuality as necessary 'for human survival and social order'.[53] Thus, Lazarsfeld identifies gender difference as a social construction, yet proposes no alternative to the unequal gender relations codified in the institution of marriage in order 'to ensure heterosexual harmony.'[54] Leng observes that Lazarsfeld views 'female homosexuality as a pathological consequence of unsatisfactory heterosexual relations'[55] and that, while Lazarsfeld believed 'acquired

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[49] Watts, 'Adler, Alfred'.
[50] Capovilla, *Entwürfe weiblicher Identität*, p. 151.
[51] Dorothe Friebus-Gergely, 'Sophie Lazarsfeld oder „Wie die Frau den Mann erlebt"', in *Gestalten um Alfred Adler*, ed. by Alfred Lévy and Gerald Mackenthun, pp. 157-74, (pp. 159-62).
[52] Friederich, *Alice Rühle-Gerstel*, p. 75.
[53] Leng, *Sexual Politics and Feminist Science*, p. 300.
[54] Ibid., p. 304.
[55] Ibid., p. 300.

homosexuality' could be 'cured', she acknowledged that 'many women so afflicted do not wish to be cured' and that the homosexual relationships she came across in her advice centre were full of 'devotion and tenderness'.[56] Similarly, Rühle-Gerstel suggests in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* that women may turn to homosexuality due to dissatisfaction in heterosexual relationships. She writes: 'Dieser normale Verkehr ist entweder für die Frau unbefriedigend, er läßt sie kalt, dann ist die lesbische Untreue nicht nur Lustersatz, sondern auch Racheakt' (ARG, p. 159). These ideas may be considered by many twenty-first century readers to be problematically heteronormative, but assumptions of heterosexuality were widely held during the interwar era and, I follow Leng to view the writing of theorists such as Lazarsfeld and Rühle-Gerstel within its historical context. Despite suggesting 'causes' for homosexuality, neither Lazarsfeld nor Rühle-Gerstel criticise women in homosexual relationships and their texts' analyses of gender relations and the development of gendered personalities are progressive for the period.

The work of Horney, Deutsch and Lazarsfeld formed part of a conversation about women's psychology, sexuality, and motherhood, which was taking place in psychoanalytic circles and society more widely during the interwar period, and of which Rühle-Gerstel was also a part. Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* incorporates an explicitly political perspective into her theory of women's psychological development, to offer an innovative analysis of women's role in society and women's personality development, that radically rejects notions of maternal instinct and women's inherent psychological particularity.

Alice Rühle-Gerstel's Contribution to Women's Psychology

Rühle-Gerstel belonged to the branch of Individual Psychology which combined Adler's theory with Marxism. Her understanding of psychological development therefore percieves the individual in relation to class society. As a founding member of the International Association for Individual Psychology (*Internationaler Verein für Individualpsychologie*) in Dresden, which, in 1927, was renamed the Marxist-Individual Psychology Working Group (*Marxistisch-Individualpsychologische Arbeitsgemeinschaft*),[57] Rühle-Gerstel was a prominent member of the Marxist Individual Psychology community. In her 1927 book *Der Weg zum Wir*, Rühle-Gerstel explains how both Marxism and Individual Psychology share the same goal: 'Die Individualpsychologie befaßt sich mit der Veränderung der Menschen, der Marxismus mit der

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[56] Leng, *Sexual Politics and Feminist Science*, p. 301.
[57] Friederich, *Alice Rühle-Gerstel*, p. 28.

Veränderung der Verhältnisse. Am Ziele – Gemeinschaft – treffen sie sich.'[58] Indeed, Rühle-Gerstel sees the two theories as inextricably linked. At a 1927 conference organised by the *Marxistisch-Individualpsychologische Arbeitsgemeinschaft* in Dresden, she emphasised: 'Marx erklärt die wirtschaftlich-gesellschaftliche Entwicklung – Adler die damit parallel laufende Entwicklung des Seelenlebens',[59] and claimed: 'Entweder ist man bürgerlich und kein Individualpsychologe oder Individualpsychologe und notwendigerweise Sozialist.'[60] As Rühle-Gerstel explains in *Freud und Adler*, by viewing the individual in connection with their environment and helping them to understand their place in society, Individual Psychology develops a sense of community and an individual who is ready to cooperate with others; she concludes that these conditions prepare the individual for participation in the socialist movement. [61] She contrasts this to Freud's approach: 'Aus seiner Wendung in die Vergangenheit erklärt es sich, daß Freud bloß die Absicht hat, an der Vergangenheit Erkrankte zu heilen. Adler hingegen will Menschen für die Zukunft bilden.'[62] Rühle-Gerstel's understanding of Individual Psychology is therefore informed by left-wing political perspectives and, as we shall see, this is evident in her holistic analysis of women's psychological development and social status in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*.

Central to Rühle-Gerstel's psychological study of women is her assertion that women's feelings of inferiority and striving towards goals of superiority are gendered in a way in which men's are not. Rühle-Gerstel emphasises that women are in a materially disadvantaged position in comparison to men: 'Real und ideologisch, gemessen an der Position des Mannes, ist die Position der Frau „unten".' (ARG, p. 75) She gives examples such as girls' more limited access to education compared to their brothers (ARG, pp. 51, 53) or women's lack of professional opportunities (ARG, p. 293), and explains that this disadvantaged position is internalised by women: 'Die herrschende Meinung über das Weib sickert auf tausend Wegen in die Herzen der Mädchen und gräbt dort ihre unvergängliche Spur.' (ARG, p. 59) Thus: 'der Inhalt der weiblichen Minderwertigkeitsgefühle ist spezifisch geschlechtlich. Er bezieht sich auf die Tatsache des Weibseins.' (ARG, p. 75) Rühle-Gerstel writes that, while individual feelings of inferiority vary between women, all women share a gendered sense of inferiority resulting from the prevailing gender hierarchy (ARG, p. 74). Her analysis is inherently political, as she not only views the

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[58] Alice Rühle-Gerstel, *Der Weg zum Wir: Versuch einer Verbindung von Marxismus und Individualpsychologie*, 2nd edn (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 1980), p. 196.
[59] MS Conference Report: 'Marxismus und Individualpsychologie', IfZ, ED 227 Bd .15, p. 11.
[60] Ibid., p. 9*.*
[61] Rühle-Gerstel, *Freud und Adler*, p. 96.
[62] Ibid., p. 99.

individual within their social context but she also criticises the inequalities present within that context.

Like their *Minderwertigkeitsgefühle*, women's compensatory goals of superiority are also gendered. Rühle-Gerstel asserts: 'das Ziel jeder Frau befindet sich in der Gegend der Männerwelt, denn wo der Mann ist, ist oben. Die Zielbildung des männlichen Geschlechts ist von seiner Geschlechtsrolle weit unabhängiger.' (ARG, p. 76) Thus, due to structural inequalities, women are striving for achievements that, while considered goals of superiority for women, would only be considered within the realm of normal achievements for men. She illustrates this idea as follows (Figure One):
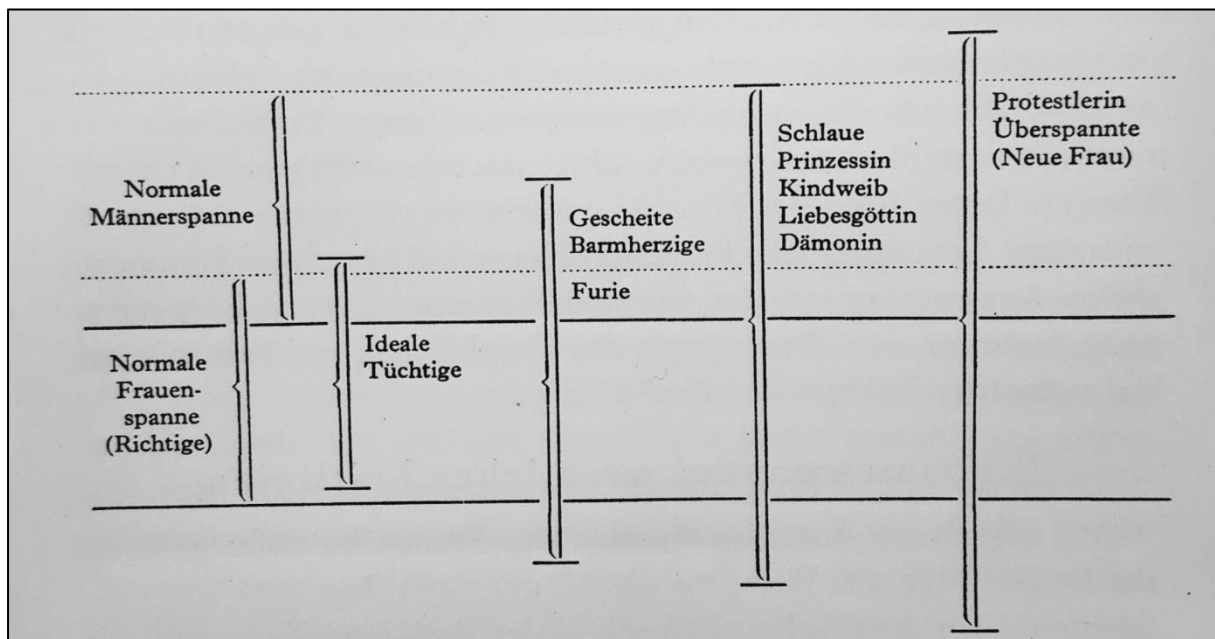
[Figure One: ARG, p. 82]

In Figure One, Rühle-Gerstel refers to thirteen categories of women, showing how some groups of women strive for higher goals of superiority than others. In her analysis of women's personality development, Rühle-Gerstel identifies and describes these thirteen groups of women. While this categorisation relies on certain stereotypes, it does recognise that referring to women only as a single group is reductive and she ironically names the categories to expose the ways in which women are perceived according to prevailing social conventions and attitudes. Furthermore, Rühle-Gerstel acknowledges that not all women will fit neatly into one of the groups she identifies (ARG, pp. 80-81). She describes the typical characteristics of these groups in relation to contemporary social structures and gender hierarchy. For example, 'die Richtigen' 'modeln sich und ihr Leben nach den Erfordernissen des Männeralltags' (ARG, p. 84), whereas 'die Protestlerinnen' 'benehmen sich wie Männer' (ARG, p. 112) and refuse to follow rules for or expectations of girls and women: 'die Protestlerin [freut sich] wenn sie einen Jungen niederboxen, eine technische Preisaufgabe lösen oder auf dem Schulausflug die schwerste

Zeltplane tragen kann.' (ARG, p. 112) Rühle-Gerstel's categorisations highlight the rigid expectations of women's behaviour and reveal how different personality types respond to their material position of inferiority in society.

Rühle-Gerstel's analysis of the personality development of each of her categories of women focuses on whether their goals are female-, male-, or non-gender- (*übergeschlechtlich*) oriented, and whether their goals are close to or far removed from the reality of the opportunities for and (idealised) expectations of women in the Weimar period. 'Die Protestlerin', for example, has a male-oriented goal ('Nur keine Frau sein!' (ARG, p. 111)) that is far from reality. Rühle-Gerstel suggests that those women whose goals are furthest removed from reality are most likely to suffer from neurosis as their goals are not realisable and their attempts at compensation are therefore unsatisfactory. However, she also identifies women whose goals are further removed from reality as having greater potential to bring about social change, since these women are least fulfilled in the current social system. She summarises the gender orientation and reality degree of the goals of different types of women in the following table (Figure Two):

	Männlich	Weiblich	Übergeschlechtlich
	die Richtige (normale Frau)		
Wirklichkeitsnah .	Die Tüchtige	Die Ideale	—
Etwas ferner	Die Gescheite	Die Barmherzige	Die Furie
Wirklichkeitsfern .	Die Schlaue	Prinzessin Kindweib Liebesgöttin	Die Dämonische
Wirklichkeitsfremd (neurotisch oder neue Wirklichkeit schaffend).	Die Protestlerin	—	Die Überspannte (die neue Frau)

[Figure Two: ARG, p. 83]

Thus, Rühle-Gerstel's analysis again combines psychological and political perspectives to demonstrate how social factors influence the personality development and psychological well-being of an individual.

Although these attempts to categorise women according to personality types rely on generalisations, Rühle-Gerstel challenges gender essentialism in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*. Throughout the book she adopts an extremely progressive stance for the period to

question the notion of inherent gender difference and emphasises that girls' socialisation, rather than their biology, impacts the development of their feelings of inferiority. For example, Rühle-Gerstel describes how sons are favoured over daughters by drawing on the events of the First World War: 'In einer Familie, in der die drei Geschwister sonst allgemein gleichmäßig behandelt wurden, sagte bei Kriegsausbruch der milde Vater: „Lieber sollten alle beiden Mädels in den Krieg müssen, als mein Junge!"' (ARG, p. 41). Rühle-Gerstel emphasises the significance of early childhood experiences in influencing girls' sense of self and understanding of their place in the world. The emphasis on the importance of early childhood experiences is common to both Freudian and Adlerian theories, and the dissemination of these ideas during the Weimar period explains the volume of articles containing advice for the care of infants in the left-wing women's press discussed in Chapter Two. Rühle-Gerstel describes how young girls are taught characteristics associated with femininity, such as passivity: 'In seine Seele wird frühzeitig die Überzeugung von der weiblichen Passivität Eintritt finden. Nicht nur der weiblichen Passivität dem Geschlechtspartner gegenüber, sondern der ganzen Gesellschaft gegenüber.' (ARG, p. 341) Her assertion that such characteristics are learnt challenges biological essentialism and sets Rühle-Gerstel's work apart from mainstream notions of gender and personality development.

Moreover, Rühle-Gerstel explicitly rejects the notion that women's primary social role, located in the domestic sphere and strongly associated with their capacity for motherhood, is the result of their biology. She writes: 'Allzusehr hat Erziehung und Milieu sie auf die „Natürlichkeit" ihrer Rolle vorbereitet.' (ARG, p. 334) She argues that women accept mothering as their natural role because it is presented to them as such: 'Da Natur, Sitte, Mann, Staat und Religion es so verlangen, wird die Mutterschaft bejaht mit all ihren Schwierigkeiten, und aus der Not wird eine Tugend' (ARG, p. 343). Furthermore, Rühle-Gerstel asserts that 'maternal' characteristics are not specific to women. She writes: 'Nicht die physiologische Tatsache der Mutterschaft, sondern eine bestimmte Charakterhaltung macht das Wesen der Mütterlichkeit aus. [...] Insofern ist Mütterlichkeit keine geschlechtstypische Eigenschaft der Frau' (ARG, pp. 334-35). By separating biological motherhood and the characteristic of 'motherliness', Rühle-Gerstel emphasises that the social role allocated to women is constructed rather than inevitable. The rejection of women's inherent disposition to childcaring (as opposed to childbearing) is an innovative aspect of her writing and feeds into her presentation of gender as socially constructed, anticipating later feminist arguments (ARG, p. 122). In the conclusion of *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, Rühle-Gerstel claims: '„Das Weib" hat es nie gegeben. Geschlechtsideologien aller Art wechselten miteinander ab im Zusammenhang mit den jeweiligen Wirklichkeiten.' (ARG, pp. 406-07) By presenting definitions of gender as dependent on social factors, Rühle-Gerstel sets her work apart from that of other psychoanalysts, and indeed, as I show throughout this thesis, mainstream discourses of women's role in interwar

society and anticipates later feminist psychoanalytic studies that seek to explain how gender is acquired.

Historicising Feminist Theories of Women's Psychology: Pre- and Post-World War Two Developments

A number of themes raised in Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, including her rejection of assumptions of innate maternal instinct and her identification of the connections between politics and reproductive behaviour, anticipate the focus of later feminist psychoanalysis. The First and Second World Wars are frequently seen as watershed moments in German history, with pre- and post-war events and movements typically considered as distinct from one another. The links between pre- and post-World War Two feminism are consequently commonly overlooked. Indeed, Emily Spiers argues that contemporary German feminists 'generally avoid glossing a domestic feminist tradition before 1968'.[63] Spiers notes a tendency to read earlier feminists through the lens of historical hindsight and to express frustration with the priorities and strategies of earlier generations. However, as Spiers and Mikus emphasise in their article, continuities do indeed exist between early radical feminism (Mikus highlights particularly the example of Hedwig Dohm) and later twentieth- and twenty-first-century German feminism. My analysis foregrounds the instances in which the conversations taking place in Weimar Germany anticipate ideas developed primarily in the French and Anglophone contexts after the Second World War.

The criticism of women's domestic and maternal roles in the post-World War Two era arose first in France. Simone de Beauvoir's advocacy of greater access to abortion provision and birth control, as well as her sharp criticism of the social and psychological impact of women's confinement to the domestic sphere in *The Second Sex* (originally published as *Le deuxième Sexe* in 1949), for instance, echo similar arguments presented by Rühle-Gerstel in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, and these themes are also present in the other primary sources considered later in this thesis.[64] Like Rühle-Gerstel, Beauvoir considers women's place in society holistically. Elisabeth Badinter, meanwhile, adopts an historical approach to study social attitudes towards motherhood specifically in *The Myth of Motherhood* (originally published as *L'Amour en plus* in 1981). Badinter stresses the influence of psychoanalytic theory on expectations of parenting. She is critical of the status afforded to psychoanalysis in public discourse, asserting that 'no one

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[63] Birgit Mikus and Emily Spiers, 'Split Infinities: German Feminisms and the Generational Project', *Oxford German Studies*, 45.1 (2016), 5-30 (p. 16).
[64] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier (London: Vintage, 2011), pp. 406-12, 434-35. VL Ebook.

dreamed of demanding stricter proofs' for the pronouncements of prominent psychoanalysts, which resulted in feelings of guilt among women who could not fulfil the idealised portrait of motherhood promoted by psychoanalysis.[65] Having studied developments in historical attitudes towards motherhood, Badinter unambiguously concludes that 'maternal instinct is a myth'.[66] While the methodologies employed by Beauvoir, Badinter, Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher differ, all three authors call into question essentialist assumptions of women's inherent capacity for mothering, highlighting one of the ways in which Weimar-era psychological writing by women anticipated post-World War Two feminist theory.

Badinter does not consider that psychoanalytical approaches could be, and indeed were, subverted. A major twentieth-century study that employs psychoanalytic theories in service of a subversive feminist analysis is Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978). Chodorow's book is based on the American context and draws on Freudian thought, which had become popular in the USA in the interwar period. Given its focus on the ways in which women's mothering is reproduced across generations, Chodorow's text is highly relevant to this thesis and, before analysing Rühle-Gerstel's and Schumacher's writing in detail, a brief review of Chodorow's work is productive to consider how ideas explored in the interwar period were later (re)developed after the Second World War. It should be noted that Chodorow refers to neither Rühle-Gerstel nor Schumacher, who were unable to participate in developments in the USA, in Schumacher's case due to her death in 1934 and in Rühle-Gerstel's case for the reasons outlined above that explain the lack of attention given to her work after the Second World War. Nevertheless, Chodorow's work clarifies and expands on themes first explored in texts such as *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, and provides a useful lens to further explain the ideas found in interwar writing that questions the notion of maternal instinct. In *The Reproduction of Mothering* Chodorow argues that 'social structurally induced psychological processes' lead to the reproduction of women's mothering.[67] Her analysis, which I outline briefly below, goes beyond biologically essentialist and sociological role training arguments to explain the continued expectation of women's caring and mothering work. As Gershenson and Williams note, 'Chodorow has played an especially important role in establishing a place for psychoanalysis within the mainstream of feminist theory and practice',[68] yet, as my analysis shows combining feminist and psychological ideas was not a post-World War Two innovation.

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[65] Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood*, p. 275.
[66] Ibid., p. 327.
[67] Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 7.
[68] Geoffrey Gershenson and Michelle Williams, 'Nancy Chodorow', in *Profiles in Contemporary Social Theory*, ed. by Anthony Elliot and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 281-91 (p. 287). ProQuest Ebook.

Rather, Chodorow's work brought attention to a strategy employed by earlier feminists, including Rühle-Gerstel.

Like Rühle-Gerstel, Chodorow does not see women's mothering as inevitable. Chodorow dismisses the evolutionary-functionalist argument which suggests that women's mothering has evolved from hunter-gatherer societies, writing that it 'does not provide a convincing argument grounded in biology for why women, or biological mothers, should or must provide parental care.'[69] Chodorow also notes that there is little evidence of the existence of maternal instinct,[70] concurring with Rühle-Gerstel, Schumacher and Badinter. Chodorow rejects role-training arguments, as, she argues, they do not offer an explanation for why women want to mother. She writes that parenting is not just a learnt behaviour but also requires emotional involvement 'in an interpersonal, diffuse, affective relationship'.[71] Chodorow moves beyond role-training arguments to offer an explanation grounded in Freudian psychoanalytic and object-relations theory for why women want and choose to mother. She clarifies the argument presented in *The Reproduction of Mothering* in a later article: 'women's mothering itself *is* a social structure, which affects other structures; it is not something apart from social structure or society.'[72] Thus Chodorow's argument goes beyond Rühle-Gerstel in her assertion that women's mothering has itself become a self-reproducing social structure.

Echoing Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher, Chodorow highlights how children develop the expectation that women will mother from the earliest age. She explains that children's experiences of being mothered by a woman leads to '[g]irls and boys expect[ing] and assum[ing] women's unique capacities for sacrifice, caring, and mothering'.[73] She further argues that mothers' perception of their children's gender leads them to treat their male and female children differently, which recreates in women the capacity for mothering. She writes: 'Because they are the same gender as their daughters and have been girls, mothers of daughters tend not to experience these infant daughters as separate from them in the same way as do mothers of infant sons.'[74] As a result, Chodorow suggests, 'girls come to experience themselves as less separate than boys, as having more permeable ego boundaries'.[75] This mother-daughter bond leads to the development of a female 'relational triangle', which Chodorow explains with reference to Freud's theory of an infant's Oedipus complex:

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[69] Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 21.
[70] Ibid., p. 23.
[71] Ibid., p. 33.
[72] Judith Lorber and others, 'On "The Reproduction of Mothering": A Methodological Debate', *Signs*, 6.3 (1981), 482-514 (p. 501).
[73] Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 83.
[74] Ibid., p. 109.
[75] Ibid., p. 93.

Because of the father's lack of availability to his daughter, and because of the intensity of the mother-daughter relationship in which she participates, girls tend not to make a total transfer of affection to their fathers but to remain also involved with their mothers, and to oscillate emotionally between mother and father.[76]

As a result, heterosexual relationships are experienced differently by men and women, according to Chodorow, and 'a woman's relation to a man *requires* on the level of psychic structure a third person, since it was originally established in a triangle.'[77] In Chodorow's account, this is the basis for women's desire to mother and the phenomenon through which women's mothering is reproduced between generations. Indeed, the under-availability of the father, on both literal and emotional levels, is exemplified across the texts analysed in Chapters Two, Three and Four of this thesis, in which fathers are either entirely absent or play only a secondary role in domestic settings.

While Chodorow's work expands on themes explored in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* and therefore exemplifies how Rühle-Gerstel anticipates later developments in feminist psychology, *The Reproduction of Mothering* has been the subject of a number of criticisms. Chodorow's methodology has been questioned by critics such as Flower MacCannell, who asserts that Chodorow's work glosses over tensions in object-relations and Freudian theory regarding the 'self'.[78] In addition, political criticisms have been levelled at Chodorow's book, with Gersehnson and Williams suggesting that Chodorow fails to offer an overtly feminist political position.[79] *The Reproduction of Mothering* does, however, explicitly engage with the impact of capitalism on women's increasing isolation in the domestic sphere, and the political perspective in Chodorow's text is, in fact, a point of comparison with the writing of Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher.

Furthermore, Chodorow's the text 'has been criticized for generalizing about gender personality across lines of class, race, ethnicity, and nationality', as Gershenson and Williams note.[80] It is indeed the case that Chodorow's examples are primarily drawn from the post-World War Two American context and based on the experiences of white, middle-class, non-working mothers, a fact that Chodorow acknowledges in the preface to the second edition of the text.[81] The criticism of generalisations about women's experiences has not just been directed towards Chodorow but rather forms the basis of much recent criticism of the feminist theory produced

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[76] Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 193.
[77] Ibid., p. 201.
[78] Juliet Flower MacCannell, 'Mothers of Necessity: Psychoanalysis for Feminism', *American Literary History*, 3.3 (1991), 623-47 (pp. 631-35).
[79] Gershenson and Williams, 'Nancy Chodorow', p. 289.
[80] Ibid., p. 288.
[81] Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, pp. xi-xii.

in the post-World War Two period up until the 1980s. The identification of this issue led to the emergence of intersectional feminism, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her article 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color' (1991). Crenshaw's article focuses on the interplay of race and gender in cases of sexual violence against women. She argues that the 'elision of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class', and demonstrates how the experiences of women of colour become overlooked 'when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition'.[82] The notion of intersectionality has been adopted by feminist scholars to exemplify the interaction of gender with race, class, sexual identity, disability, and other marginalised identities. The texts analysed in this thesis do not discuss race and the terminology of intersectionality was not yet used in the interwar period. Nevertheless, the works of the left-wing authors considered here particularly stress the ways in which economic hardship exacerbates the challenges faced by mothers. The approach of authors such as Rühle-Gerstel can therefore be seen as a tentative hint towards ideas that later developed into intersectional feminism.

In the following, I reference later feminist psychological theory, particularly Chodorow's account of the intergenerational reproduction of women's mothering to demonstrate continuities in ideas across interwar and post-World War Two periods. The work of Rühle-Gerstel adopted a radical position within the context of Weimar Germany and anticipated later theoretical advances. While other primary sources considered in this thesis do not display the radicalism of Rühle-Gerstel, I nevertheless indicate instances in which the positions taken by the authors foreshadow post-World War Two feminism.

Part Two: The Social Psychology of Motherhood

In their contributions to discourses of mothering, Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher combine political and psychological theory, as they attempt to influence the way motherhood is viewed by society. The approach employed by these two authors represents an example of strategies used by women writers to challenge gender normative ideas about women's nature and role in society. By combining scientific theories with political perspectives, Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher present their own ideas as progressive and authoritative.

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[82] Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review*, 43.6 (1991), 1241-1300 (p. 1242).

<u>The Social Status of Mothers</u>

Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart and *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* underscore the relationship between the material social context, in which, they argue, women's mothering is devalued, and an individual's psychological state. Their analyses are informed by both feminist perspectives and class awareness; as Rühle-Gerstel observes: 'Die Stellung der Frau in der Gesellschaft ist also unter einem doppelten Aspekt zu betrachten: wie steht die Frau in der Männergesellschaft – und wie steht sie in der Klassengesellschaft?' (ARG, p. 14)

Central to Rühle-Gerstel's analysis of motherhood is society's hypocritical treatment of women's mothering. She argues that motherhood is simultaneously seen as women's duty, devalued as domestic work, and glorified as a form of higher calling. Indeed, as will be shown in later chapters, the tensions between the glorification of motherhood and criticisms of the treatment of mothers was a recurring feature of left-wing writing about gender roles during the Weimar period. Describing prevalent social attitudes, Rühle-Gerstel refers to the 'unbequem[es] Piedestal' (ARG, p. 32) upon which mothers find themselves and the 'heilig[er] Beruf der Frau zur Mutterschaft' (ARG, p. 340). The metaphorical pedestal and use of the word 'heilig' allude to the ideological glorification of motherhood, while the 'uncomfortable' nature of the pedestal signals the disconnect between the idealisation and reality of motherhood.

To illustrate her point, Rühle-Gerstel references Mothering Sunday, which was introduced in Germany in 1923, following a promotional campaign initially led by Rudolf Knauer, the President of the Association of German Florists.[83] Of Mothering Sunday, Rühle-Gerstel writes that, after being celebrated for the day: 'abends, schleichen die Mütter allmählich wieder in das bescheidene Halbdunkel ihrer Alltage zurück, wo sie nun bis zum nächsten Jahr ihrer schlichten und vielfältigen Aufgaben erfüllen werden' (ARG, p. 28). For Rühle-Gerstel, Mothering Sunday celebrations exemplify the hypocrisy inherent in society's approach to motherhood; for the majority of the year, mothers are overlooked, existing in a 'Halbdunkel', where their extensive work within the home is barely acknowledged by those around them.

Rühle-Gerstel frames men's hypocritical glorification of women's motherhood in the language of Individual Psychology. While society pays lip service to the sanctity of motherhood, mothering, she stresses, is devalued in material terms. Rühle-Gerstel identifies this devaluation as a male strategy to overcome feelings of inferiority arising from men's inability to bear children: 'Diese Stärke [die Mutterschaftseignung] aber übersieht der Mann, da er selbst sie

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[83] Karin Hausen, 'Mother's Day in the Weimar Republic', trans. by Miriam Frank with Erika Busse Grossmann, in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), pp. 131-52 (pp. 132-33).

nicht besitzt.' (ARG, p. 241) In order to overcome the perceived weakness of being unable to give birth, men devalue women's reproductive capacities, and, indeed, 'women's work' in general. Women's suitability for work in the male-dominated professions is questioned in order to exclude women from these fields and allow men to maintain an advantaged social position. Rühle-Gerstel dismisses arguments that cast doubt on women's capacity for work by emphasising women's historical and ongoing work in domestic, farming and manufacturing roles. She explains that women's ability to work in these areas is not queried: 'Es handelt sich hier durchweg um Berufe, die die Männer entweder nicht ausüben können oder nicht ausüben mögen.' (ARG, p. 239) By limiting women's opportunities largely to these areas and stating the importance of men's work in other areas, men preserve their position of social power.

Furthermore, Rühle-Gerstel draws on Individual Psychology to explain why women willingly accept the maternal role allotted to them. Motherhood, Rühle-Gerstel writes, serves as a form of compensation for some women and a means to access a position of authority from which women are otherwise excluded: 'Dem Sohne gegenüber stark sein, Autorität, Vorbild sein, das bedeutet für die Frau: wenigstens einen Mann unter sich zu haben.' (ARG, p. 244) She argues that the desire to compensate for perceived (and material) inferiority and attempts to access power motivate women's mothering: 'Die Vorstellung der Männer, Muttersein sei gleichbedeutend mit „auf das Kind zentriert sein", ist eine hochmütige Illusion. Im Mittelpunkt steht nicht das Kind, sondern die Mutterrolle.' (ARG, p. 244) She therefore calls into question essentialist assumption of a maternal instinct, suggesting instead that women mother to access the nominal status of motherhood. For Rühle-Gerstel, the prevailing gender hierarchy impacts women's psychological development and anticipates Chodorow's assertion that '[t]he ideology of patriarchy and the ideology about mothering arise from the very division of labor they are said to explain.'[84]

The psychological consequences of prevailing gender inequality during the Weimar period are similarly highlighted by Schumacher, who notes that girls are aware of women's disadvantaged position from a young age:

An der Fernhaltung der Frau von allen öffentlichen Angelegenheiten, an ihrem Ausschluß von den Berufen, die Ansehen, Ehre und hohen Gewinn abwerfen, und an ihrer Festhaltung in der häuslichen Sphäre erlebt das Kind die Geringschätzung von Frau und Frauenarbeit. (HS, p. 38)

By underscoring the importance of early childhood experiences in shaping expectations of gender roles, Schumacher's text forms part of the same psychological discourse as Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, likewise foreshadowing later developments in

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[84] Lorber and others, 'On "The Reproduction of Mothering"', p. 508.

feminist theory. Schumacher suggests that mothers themselves play a role in perpetuating women's socially disadvantaged position: 'Die proletarische Frau, stolz auf ihre männlichen Kinder, unterstützt unbewußt die geringe Meinung des männlichen Geschlechts über die Psyche und die Leistungen der Frau.' (HS, p. 38) While Schumacher's text does not go into the psychoanalytic detail of Chodorow's explanation, she anticipates Chodorow's identification of women's unconscious role in reproducing unequal opportunities for men and women.

Women are not equipped to challenge the prevailing power structures, Schumacher emphasises, due to the lasting psychological effects of children's introduction to and experience of gender roles: 'Frauen [wachsen] heran, die jeder kirchlichen und staatlichen Autorität fügsam sind, ja, sich unter ihr am wohlsten fühlen.' (HS, p. 42) Thus, girls' upbringing, which is based on normative expectations of gender, serves to maintain gender inequality. This assessment is substantiated in the journalistic sources analysed in Chapter Two, in which essentialist ideas of gender or expectations of women's supporting role in the socialist movement are left largely unchallenged. Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel offer a theoretical explanation for why women in the Weimar-era socialist movement appeared willing to accept the prioritisation of the class struggle over gender issues.

Schumacher also identifies the impact of gendered upbringing on men and their ability to engage with raising their own children. She argues that the gender hierarchy, which is recreated within the family, leads to distance between fathers and their children: 'Der männliche Autoritätspunkt hindert häufig genug die Väter, ihren Kindern im Suchen und Forschen nach Wahrheit gleichberechtigter Kamerad zu sein.' (HS, p. 13) Furthermore, she argues that mothers entrench this distance: 'er [der Vater] [wird] von der Mutter tagsüber den Kindern als strafender Rachegott („Na, wartet nur, bis der Vater kommt!") hingestellt. Daß auf diese Weise kein Vertrauensverhältnis entstehen kann, leuchtet ein.' (HS, p. 15) Schumacher's analysis therefore again bears similarities with later feminist psychoanalysis. For instance, Chodorow argues that '[t]he relative unavailability of the father and overavailability of the mother create negative definitions of masculinity and men's fear and resentment of women'.[85] Badinter similarly criticises psychoanalytic frameworks that over-emphasise the role of the mother, leading, she asserts, to feelings of guilt in women who, for economic, social or medical reasons, are unable to devote themselves entirely to their children.[86] Schumacher's focus on early childhood experiences and child raising foreshadows Chodorow's work and contrasts with Rühle-Gerstel's foregrounding of women's experiences as adults. While both Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher recognise the significance of early childhood experiences, Rühle-Gerstel seeks to

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[85] Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 190.
[86] Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood*, pp. 275-76.

improve the situation for women, while Schumacher aims to protect children and secure future benefits.

Both authors recognise that social factors, rather than biology, perpetuate gendered divisions of labour and dismiss the notion of women's natural ability for raising children and the existence of an inherent 'maternal instinct'. Schumacher, however, suggests that children instinctively turn to their mothers over their fathers for care: 'Säugling und Kleinkind sind [...] von Natur auf die mütterliche Hilfe mehr angewiesen als auf die des Vaters.' (HS, p. 58) Schumacher does not explore this assertion further and, although the behaviour she describes could be explained as a result of the more ready availability of the mother, Schumacher's use of the phrase 'von Natur' suggests that she sees this childhood behaviour as instinctual, which complicates her rejection of the biological basis for gendered divisions of labour. Schumacher's claim reflects a tendency throughout her book to rely on some normative and romanticised ideas about childcare. As will be seen in both the non-fiction and fiction texts analysed later, conventional ideas of the 'good mother' as caring, patient, and selfless remained prevalent during the Weimar period and, particularly in the socialist fiction discussed in Chapter Three, were used as shorthand to advance criticism of the impact of capitalism on the unity of working-class families.

As well as analysing the interaction between gender inequality and the expectation that women would mother, Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel also shine light on the consequences of class inequality on women's mothering. Rühle-Gerstel, anticipating Chodorow, equates the emergence of capitalism with women's insolation in small family units and exclusion from productive work: 'die Kleinfamilie von heute, bestehend aus Vater, Mutter und Kindern entspricht im engeren Sinn der mobil gewordenen Gesellschaftsordnung des Kapitalismus und der weltanschaulichen Phase des (männlichen) Individualismus.' (ARG, p. 357) Rühle-Gerstel thus demonstrates how private lives are impacted by external social and political factors. Adopting an explicitly left-wing perspective, Rühle-Gerstel views the idealisation of the traditional ('bourgeois') family unit as contrary to socialist aims because such insular groupings create further divisions within society. She argues that this is specifically damaging to women: 'Die Frau ist der Zellkern jeder solchen asozialen Zelle' (ARG p. 364), and that women's double burden, which has been exacerbated by the capitalist economic structure, impacts women's attitudes towards and ability to mother: 'Es ist klar, daß eine Mutter, welche ihren Kindern keine ausreichende Versorgung bieten oder nicht genügend Zeit zur Verfügung stellen kann, die Mutterschaft vor allem als Last und Qual empfinden muß.' (ARG, p. 344) This assertion again evokes the feminist argument that the private is political. Rühle-Gerstel reiterates her claim that society's treatment of mothers is hypocritical, as motherhood is simultaneously idealised and overlooked. The bourgeois model of family creates the illusion of women's importance by

placing them at the centre of the domestic environment, yet they are thus confined to the private sphere. She writes:

Die Mutterschaft wird vom Staate und der öffentlichen Meinung als der schlechthin weibliche Beruf angesprochen und im Falle einer Schwängerung gesetzlich erzwungen. Aber wo sie vorhanden ist und in Erscheinung tritt, wird sie in den Kreis des Privatlebens und der Privatfamilie zurückverwiesen. (ARG, p. 343)

By considering wider political factors, Rühle-Gerstel reiterates how men benefit from promoting women's role within the family, reducing competition from women in the public sphere. Chodorow later makes a similar argument, asserting that the growth of capitalism, which relocated the majority of paid work to outside the home, heightened gendered divisions of labour, excluded women from the public sphere, and had both material and psychological consequences for women as mothers. [87] I discuss Rühle-Gerstel's proposed solution to this structural issue in Part Three of this chapter.

Although Rühle-Gerstel's work anticipates post-World War Two feminism, *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* is, nevertheless, rooted in the context of Weimar Germany. Despite arguing that capitalism excludes women's domestic work from public space, Rühle-Gerstel also acknowledges women's increasing employment opportunities and access to public space. However, for Rühle-Gerstel, women's greater presence in the workplace outside the home only increases the double burden: 'die Millionen berufstätiger Frauen empfinden das Vorhandensein beider Kreise [öffentliche und private Sphären] meist als Not und Last.' (ARG, p. 380) She therefore exposes as inaccurate the media depiction of new women, who enjoyed greater independence and participated regularly in leisure activities. Rejection of the typically (lower-)middle-class new woman was common to the left-wing texts analysed in this thesis and I return to the image of the new woman again in Chapter Four to analyse how popular fiction by women writers both drew on this ubiquitous character and sought to redefine her priorities.

The impact of capitalism on working-class women's experiences of motherhood is also considered by Schumacher. She argues that the emergence of capitalism has resulted in women's greater presence in the public sphere. Schumacher writes that, following industrialisation, 'Frauen und Kinder [wurden] als billige Arbeitskräfte, und zwar unter unerhört harten Arbeitsbedingungen, in den industriellen Prozeß eingestellt.' (HS, p. 9) As part of a wider left-wing discourse to which Rühle-Gerstel also contributed, Schumacher highlights the impact that the emergence of capitalism had on family and domestic life. She

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[87] Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 5.

describes the economic hardship that requires working-class women, and, in the nineteenth century, also their children, to take on work outside the home.

Indeed, Schumacher presents similar arguments to Rühle-Gerstel regarding the failure to recognise motherhood and child raising as socially productive work. She writes: 'Die Erziehungsarbeit wird, wirtschaftlich und psychologisch gesehen, immer schwieriger. Sie wird, von der Gemeinschaft aus betrachtet, unproduktiv.' (HS, p. 16) Like Rühle-Gerstel, Schumacher raises the psychological impact of the devaluation of mothering and the increased double burden that arise from a capitalist framework of productivity. In fact, Schumacher frames this as a triple burden of mothering, housework and work outside the domestic sphere:

Die Mutter ist gezwungen, neben ihrer häuslichen Arbeit, die mit Putzen, Waschen, Kochen und Nähen schon eine volle Kraft beansprucht, noch einer Erwerbsarbeit nachzugehen. Gerade, wenn Kinder kommen und die Kraft der Mutter hierdurch während der Schwangerschaft und nach der Geburt absorbiert wird, muß die proletarische Frau noch eine dritte Arbeitslast auf sich nehmen. (HS, p. 15)

Schumacher thus foregrounds the gendered impact of capitalist social structures on private lives and calls for greater recognition of the volume of mothering work that women perform. Yet, in showing how women's paid employment, rather than the expectation of women's unpaid domestic labour, is leading to an additional burden, Schumacher leaves unchallenged the notion that women's primary responsibility is domestic work.

Schumacher asserts that the expectation of female domestic responsibility is established in childhood, stressing again the psychological significance of early childhood experiences. Drawing on the example of unequal access to leisure time, Schumacher writes: 'Die Folge ist Ausnutzung des heranwachsenden Mädchens für das Haus, dem erst neben der Schule, dann neben der Berufsarbeit, jede freie Stunde in oft unnützer, widersinniger Weise geopfert wird.' (HS, pp. 13-14) This, she maintains, has undesirable psychological consequences for both girls and boys, leading to feelings of inferiority in girls and abuse of privilege by boys: 'Die Knaben merken sehr bald, daß sie eine bevorzugte Stellung gegenüber ihren Schwestern und überhaupt dem weiblichen Geschlecht einnehmen und nützen ihre Freiheit weidlich aus.' (HS, pp. 38-39) According to Schumacher, expectations and devaluation of women's domestic work is detrimental to the psychological development of both men and women.

Capitalist structures are also identified by Schumacher as being reproduced within the family. She equates paternal authority with the power that capitalists possess over the working class: 'ob der Kapitalist seine Arbeiter ausbeutet oder der Vater seine Kinder prügelt – die Machtverhältnisse und die Gesinnung sind die gleichen.' (HS, p. 31) Indeed, Schumacher is critical of the (mis)use of power by some parents: 'Der kapitalistische Eigentumsbegriff spielt mit: die Kinder sind von uns erzeugt und von uns umsorgt, also dürfen wir mit ihnen tun, was

wir wollen!' (HS, p. 33) She evokes the psychological consequences of people's integration into a capitalist society, suggesting that even children are treated as possessions and objects of parental power. In Part Three of this chapter, I examine Schumacher's assertation that the state should play a greater role than individual parents in determining the upbringing of a child.

Schumacher identifies the risk posed to working-class families by capitalist society. She argues: **'Die Einordnung der Familie in den kapitalistischen Arbeitsprozeß löst den Familienzusammenhang.**' [Emphasis in original] (HS, p. 14) She highlights the absence of fathers from the home environment due to their work and draws attention to the impact of women's work outside the domestic environment on children's upbringing and psychological development. She notes, for example, that young children are frequently left unattended or attended only by older siblings when parents are unable to afford childcare (HS, p. 47). The risk posed to the working-class family by capitalism is a recurring theme in the primary texts analysed in this thesis, featuring in letters written by the readership of the SPD's women's magazine, *Frauenwelt*, and the works of fiction considered in Chapter Three. Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel provide theoretical and political insight into these themes. The explicitly left-wing analyses in the work of Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel, as well as the journalistic and fiction sources analysed later in this thesis, foreground the impact of the social context on family life and, in seeking to promote a socialist message, Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel centre class experience in their writing.

Consistent with her political position, Schumacher draws parallels between the binary opposites which create inequality between men and women and between classes: 'Zwei Welten stehen einander gegenüber: Herr und Knecht, Groß und Klein, Reich und Arm. Diese Begriffspaare haben die gleiche Wurzel: das Recht des Stärkeren!' (HS, p. 31). Rühle-Gerstel likewise identifies binary opposites which cement oppression, although her focus is more explicitly on gender than Schumacher's, which foregrounds class inequality. Rühle-Gerstel argues that masculinity is equated with 'oben', while femininity is 'unten': 'Deshalb geht das kompensatorische Streben nicht nur von „unten" nach „oben", sondern auch von der weiblichen nach der männlichen Seite des Lebens.' (ARG, pp. 74-75) For both Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel, gender and class inequalities are linked and, compared to the socialist texts discussed in Chapters Two and Three, they pay greater attention to gender inequality that was typical in left-wing writing from the Weimar period.

Rühle-Gerstel emphasises the connection of class and gender inequality and argues that one cannot be resolved in isolation of the other: 'es gibt keine Lösung der Frauenfrage ohne Lösung der sozialen Frage – und es gibt keine Lösung der sozialen Frage ohne wenigstens versuchsweise, schrittweise Lösung auch der Geschlechterfrage.' (ARG, p. 399) Furthermore, considering women's psychological striving towards superiority, she suggests that, depending

on women's social class, different inequalities may appear more or less pronounced. She claims that, as working-class women see their male friends and relations also struggling, class inequalities are more apparent to them, while bourgeois women focus more on gender inequalities as they do not experience the same class disadvantages as working-class women (ARG, p. 127). In this regard, Rühle-Gerstel's text contributes to a socialist feminist discourse represented by prominent figures such as Clara Zektin,[88] but which remained distanced from the official policies of the SPD or KPD. By stressing the interplay of class and gender in women's experiences, Rühle-Gerstel's work hints at a tentative step towards later feminist intersectionality, which underlines how factors such as class, as well as race, disability, sexuality and other marginalised identities, compound women's experiences of discrimination.

Finally, foregrounding her political position and indeed somewhat undermining her attempt to recognise the interaction of class and gender identities, Rühle-Gerstel asserts: 'Innerhalb der kapitalistischen Ordnung aber sind alle Frauen der Tendenz nach Proletarierinnen.' (ARG, p. 23) Rühle-Gerstel exposes the theoretical nature of her approach here, as the lived experiences of working-class women would have differed substantially from those of middle- and upper-class women. Nevertheless, her work seeks to demonstrate the widespread and universal nature of the social disadvantages faced by women. She observes: 'Die Frauen aller Schichten sind bis zum 21. Lebensjahr und während ihrer Ehezeit vom Besitz ausgeschlossen' (ARG, p. 18). Power within a capitalist society lies with those who possess goods and money, hence, according to Rühle-Gerstel, women in Weimar Germany were excluded from attaining power. She notes: 'man ist wohl gewohnt, von der Proletarierin zu sprechen, aber „Kapitalistin", das klingt fremd und ungewohnt' (ARG, p. 19). With this linguistic observation, Rühle-Gerstel demonstrates the extent to which women are subordinated below male power and concludes: 'Unbeschadet der Klassenlage ihrer Väter oder Gatten, unbeschadet ihrer Lebenshaltung, sind sie eigentlich Proletarierinnen' (ARG, p. 19). As Mackenthun's analysis of *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* emphasises, Rühle-Gerstel's text is informed by Marxism,[89] but the book also presents an explicitly feminist argument in its identification of the universal discrimination against women. By attributing this situation to capitalism and conservative gender politics, Rühle-Gerstel again contests that women's particularity is socially constructed rather than biologically inherent.

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[88] Clara Zetkin, 'Guidelines for the Communist Women's Movement', trans. by Ben Lewis, in *Clara Zetkin: Letters and Writings*, ed. by Mike Jones and Ben Lewis (London: Merlin, 2015), pp. 42-61 (pp. 44-45).
[89] Mackenthun, 'Alice Rühle-Gerstels individueller Weg', pp. 230-32.

<u>Married Mothers in the Family and Socially Ostracised Single Mothers</u>

Having established the impact of capitalism on the perception and status of mothers, Rühle-Gerstel explores in greater detail the hypocrisy of dominant attitudes towards motherhood. This theme is not explored in Schumacher's book, which assumes married motherhood. Rühle-Gerstel's comparison of the treatment of married and unmarried mothers reflects her holistic and explicitly feminist approach.

Rühle-Gerstel identifies bourgeois morality as the root of the expectation that mothers would be married and that motherhood would be their primary role: 'Die Kleinbürgerfamilie ist jene Familie, in der die Frau ausschließlich oder wenigstens vorwiegend Hausfrau und Mutter ist und diese ihre Rolle von ihr selbst und allen Familienmitgliedern bejaht wird' (ARG, p. 36). The extent to which this role has been adopted and accepted by women is revealed by the fact that all members of the family, including the mother herself, agree with this situation. Within the psychological framework of *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, the exposure of young girls to only one model of womanhood perpetuates the psychological acceptance of domestic 'duty'. The hypocrisy of the treatment of mothers remains central to Rühle-Gerstel's analysis of women in the family: 'Zwar bemerkt man oft, daß sie im konkreten Fall die „erste Geige" spielt, aber sie spielt sie eben vom zweiten Rang her' (ARG, p. 42). Here, Rühle-Gerstel underlines the burden of work and responsibility taken on by women within the domestic sphere while emphasising that the centrality their domestic contribution is unrecognised. This lack of recognition is reflected in their subordinated social status and, as I show in my discussion of the legal rights of mothers below, women's lack of power within the family. By questioning women's domestic role, Rühle-Gerstel adopts a more radical position than was typical of the Weimar period and her contribution does not represent a mainstream position in the discourse around women's mothering.

Rühle-Gerstel outlines the impact that the expectation of selflessness has on women's psychological development and health. She emphasises how the prioritisation of the private sphere limits women's social opportunities beyond the immediate family by asserting, in a striking and unsubstantiated generalisation, that 'Frauen im allgemeinen keine Freunde haben.' (ARG, p. 368) She argues that after their marriage, women lose contact with the friends of their youth and their social circle is focused entirely on their family. Women are, according to Rühle-Gerstel, psychologically unequipped to form close relationships with a non-family member. She writes that, while women are able to engage in passing pleasantries more easily than men, these brief conversations rarely develop into a friendship:

Typisch ist der Schlußsatz, mit dem solch zufällige Frauengespräche meist enden: „… Aber jetzt muß ich heim. Mein Mann kommt nach Hause. Mein Sohn will fortgehen. Meine Mutter liegt

krank…“ Das heißt, die Familie verhindert mich daran, außerfamiliären Kontakt zu pflegen, über eine unverbindliche Zufallsstunde hinaus. (ARG, p. 366)

The limited possibility of extrafamilial relationships renders women more dependent on family: 'Durch ihre generative Rolle ist die Frau mehr als der Mann prädisponiert, sich zu binden, zusammenzuschließen, zu kollektivieren.' (ARG, p. 357) Rühle-Gerstel, in anticipation of Chodorow's later arguments, notes that neither the isolated family units of capitalist society, nor the male-dominated public sphere offer adequate opportunities for women to form fulfilling relationships. As explained above, Chodorow draws on object relations theory to suggest that women's need to form closer bonds and the lack of separation between young girls and their mothers leads to women's perception of themselves as less distinct from others than men. Rühle-Gerstel contradicts the dominant discourse of women's natural domestic role and alludes to the damaging psychological consequences of the unreasonable demands placed on women in the family: 'Diese Funktion ist eine völlig altruistische Funktion. Kein Mensch ist aber zu völligem Altruismus fähig' (ARG, p. 32). Furthermore, Rühle-Gerstel questions the idea of women's particularity, by refuting the assertion that women have an inherent capacity for nurturing and the ability to continuously subordinate their own needs to those of the people around them.

To underline how nurturing is not a universal characteristic of women, Rühle-Gerstel references how women in the different groups of personality types that she identifies in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* might respond to motherhood. She contrasts women with female-oriented compensatory goals to those who have male-oriented or non-gendered goals. She writes that types such as 'das Ideal' emphasise their motherliness and altruism as part of their strategy to strive towards superiority (ARG, p. 89), while types such as 'die Tüchtige' or 'die Gescheite' seek greater interaction with the public sphere as mothers through engaging with parents' associations and sending their children to nursery (ARG, p. 374). Rühle-Gerstel therefore seeks to breakdown the stereotype of the mother by showing that, while some women are psychologically suited to a caring role, others are less so. In a further example of her text anticipating Chodorow's later work, Rühle-Gerstel suggests that women's acceptance of their maternal role, especially by the types of women who embrace and emphasise their motherliness, contributes to the perpetuation of gender ideology and is damaging to all women: 'Die Ideale trägt so durch ihr ideales Dasein zur Schädigung ihrer Mitschwestern bei; sie befestigt immer wieder in den Augen der Männer ein Ideal, welches doch nur ganz wenige Frauen erfüllen können.' (ARG, p. 91) Rühle-Gerstel's rejection of essentialist ideas of gender difference stands in contrast to the views presented in the primary sources analysed in Chapter Two, which tend to accept conventionally maternal characteristics as inherently female, and illustrates the theoretical radicalism of Rühle-Gerstel's work.

In *Die proletarische Frau*, Schumacher similarly highlights the consequences of rigid ideology on women's emotional health. Like Rühle-Gerstel, Schumacher shows how the work that mothers do in the family is not recognised or valued. She refers to 'das ganze Martyrium der proletarischen Mutter' (HS, pp. 19-20) and a mother's 'Sklavendasein' (HS, p.20). Yet, Schumacher does not challenge expectations of women's mothering role to the extent that Rühle-Gerstel does, as is apparent even from the title of the book which refers to women's *Erziehungsaufgabe*. Moreover, it is assumed throughout *Die proletarische Frau* that motherhood is synonymous with marriage and Schumacher leaves other mothering scenarios out of her discussion.

In contrast, Rühle-Gerstel approaches the family environment more critically. She notes that the limitation of women's opportunities outside the family can cause competition between women within the family, with mothers-in-law seen as 'lächerlich' and 'gehässig', while daughters-in-law are considered to be a 'Fremde' or 'Rivalin' by their husbands' mothers (ARG, p. 38). Drawing again on psychological perspectives, she explains women's investment in the family by presenting the family environment as the space in which women can most readily access autonomy and authority: 'die Frau bring die Familienherrschaft an sich.' (ARG, p. 361) Thus, Rühle-Gerstel explains women's willing acceptance of their familial role by highlighting the opportunity for women to assume a position of influence. She argues that, regardless of the gender orientation of the goals of superiority towards which they strive, the majority of women recognise the family as a significant social sphere with which they must engage:

Die meisten erkennen den zugemessenen kleinen Kreis an, manche, die „Weiblichen", als den einzigen und hauptsächlichen, die „Männlichen" als Schranke oder Fessel, die „Übergeschlechtlichen" als eine Unterabteilung innerhalb des großen Kreises, den sie ebenfalls zu besiedeln trachten. (ARG, p. 362)

For Rühle-Gerstel, women's greater investment and engagement, whether positive or negative, with the family is a psychological consequence of their limited opportunities in the public sphere.

Both Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher paint a largely negative picture of the psychological consequences of expectations of and women's experiences of mothering within the family environment. Rühle-Gerstel, however, also considers women's mothering outside the family setting both to advance her criticism of society's hypocritical attitude towards motherhood and to explore further the psychological impact of motherhood. Taking a feminist and socialist stance, she advocates improve rights for single mothers.

Rühle-Gerstel argues that the social ostracisation experienced by single mothers is a symptom of bourgeois morality. She writes that the 'ideologische Maske' (ARG, p. 336) falls

away in the case of single mothers and states that 'in der honorigen Gesellschaft sittlicher Familien' single mothers face 'Entrechtung, Verachtung, Hunger, Not, Tod' (ARG, p. 336). The contradiction between the consequences of single motherhood and the notion of honourable society highlights the hypocrisy Rühle-Gerstel identifies in bourgeois values. Rühle-Gerstel describes how single motherhood is seen as shameful: 'Noch heute wagt kaum eine ledige Mutter, ihre Mutterschaft offen zu bekennen' (ARG, p. 336). The phrase 'noch heute' is repeated several times in Rühle-Gerstel's discussion of single motherhood and presents the views she is discussing as out-dated.

Underscoring the imbalance of power between men and women, Rühle-Gerstel emphasises the vulnerability of women who become pregnant outside of marriage: 'die Frau [sucht] Rettung in schleuniger Heirat. [...] Wohl ihr, wenn es gelang, wenn der Kindesvater sich zur Heirat bequemte. Wehe ihr, wenn er sie sitzen ließ' (ARG, p. 337). The choice of the word 'Rettung' asserts women's dependency on men and highlights the male position of power that allows men, who most probably would have been fully aware of the consequences of single motherhood for women, to refuse marriage. The verb 'sich bequemen' implies that men are doing women a favour by agreeing to marriage and underscores how women are forced to carry sole responsibility for extra-marital pregnancies: 'Die Frau soll sich als diejenige fühlen, der etwas Schuldhaftes vergeben worden ist' (ARG, p. 338). Thus, Rühle-Gerstel both underlines the contradictory attitudes towards motherhood, which promote childbearing as women's duty, but only under socially endorsed conditions, and emphasises the consequences of women's lack of power in a male-dominated society.

Rühle-Gerstel indicates that it is impossible for unmarried mothers to remain within bourgeois social circles and suggests that this leads to a hopeless attitude: 'Sie ergibt sich in ihr soziales Schicksal. Sie ist eine Verlorene' (ARG, p. 340). Rühle-Gerstel aims to underline single mothers' helplessness with the words 'Schicksal' and 'Verlorene'. The short, blunt sentence structure at the end of this quotation helps to paint a negative picture of the consequences of single motherhood. Suggesting that unmarried mothers face a common fate underlines the scale of prejudice experienced by single mothers, particularly in middle- and upper-class environments during this period. The notion of the 'Schicksal' of single mothers is present in Else Kienle's *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, which I analyse in Chapter Two. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Two, improving the rights of unmarried mothers was a priority for socialist women during the Weimar period and received substantial media attention. Rühle-Gerstel is thus engaging here with a more mainstream public conversation than in some of the more theoretical sections of *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* and her criticisms of the treatment of single mothers are mirrored by many within the left-wing women's movements.

Rühle-Gerstel's pessimistic view of unmarried mothers' experiences is, however, somewhat exaggerated to serve her political disparagement of bourgeois values and capitalist social hierarchy. She concedes that there is greater acceptance of premarital pregnancy in rural and working-class communities (ARG, p. 337) and portrays the working class as progressive. Rühle-Gerstel's analysis substantiates Karen Hagemann's notion of the proletarian 'Doppelmoral'. Hagemann identifies a specifically working-class attitude to sexuality that was present during the Weimar era: 'Von der bürgerlichen unterschied sich die proletarische Doppelmoral dadurch, daß sie Frau und Mann auch vor der Ehe das Ausleben von Sexualität gestattete, wenn beide bereit waren im Falle einer Schwangerschaft zu heiraten.'[90] Hagemann thus suggests that men were less likely to abandon pregnant partners in working-class communities than in middle- and upper-class communities, where, as Rühle-Gerstel asserts, acknowledging extra-marital pregnancy was damaging to a man's reputation and perceived as a risk to the male position of power (ARG, p. 338). Renate Pore suggests that bourgeois notions of idealised motherhood influenced working-class communities during the Weimar period,[91] and, while Hagemann does not go as far as Pore's suggestion that such bourgeois ideals were 'uncritically accepted',[92] she does identify their influence in the development of the 'Doppelmoral', which led to the expectation that mothers would be married. Hagemann sees the emergence of the proletarian 'Doppelmoral', which she attributes to improving living conditions and increasing financial means to afford marriage for the working classes from the late nineteenth century onwards, as detrimental to open discussion about sexuality and birth control.[93] Rühle-Gerstel, however, is motivated by a Marxist understanding of the proletariat as a site of potential revolution and focuses only on the tolerance of premarital sexual relationships within working-class communities to advance her socialist argument. She does not engage in wider discussion of potential contradictions in the proletarian attitudes she praises, or explore the criticisms of marriage as an institution advanced by feminists within the Sexual Reform movement.[94]

As well as seeking to make a political point in her analysis of single-motherhood, Rühle-Gerstel also considers the psychological consequences of becoming pregnant outside of

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[90] Karen Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik: Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Dietz, 1990), p. 175.
[91] Renate Pore, *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919-1933* (London: Greenwood, 1981), pp. 76, 81.
[92] Ibid., p. 76.
[93] Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik*, pp. 175-76.
[94] Helene Stöcker, for example, criticised marriage as an oppressive, patriarchal institution. Christl Wickert, *Helene Stöcker, 1869-1943: Frauenrechtlerin, Sexualreformerin und Pazifistin: Eine Biographie* (Bonn: Dietz, 1991), pp. 61-62.

marriage, especially for middle- and upper-class women who are, according to Rühle-Gerstel, more subjected to a rigidly applied morality. She suggests that, within bourgeois society, single motherhood pushes women into criminality: 'Die Eltern haben die Schande nicht geduldet, die Tochter aus dem Hause gewiesen. Sie hat ihre Stellung verloren. Es wird ihr leicht gemacht, den Halt zu verlieren. Sie landet in der Prostitution oder im Verbrechertum' (ARG, p. 339). Drawing on her Individual Psychology background, Rühle-Gerstel clearly connects the social context with the behaviour of the individual. She alludes to the sense of desperation single mothers experience as a result of their exclusion from society. Indeed, Rühle-Gerstel alleges:

Kindesaussetzung und Kindesmord sind fast ausschließlich Verbrechen lediger Mütter. Daraus, daß sie neben dem kriminellen Abort einen großen Prozentsatz der weiblichen Kriminalität überhaupt ausmachen, ersieht man, wie sehr die Stellung der Mutter in der Gesellschaft über soziales oder asoziales Verhalten des weiblichen Geschlechts entscheidet (ARG, p. 339)

Again, Rühle-Gerstel foregrounds the connection between the individual and their social circumstances. By identifying crimes such as abortion, infanticide, and child abandonment as 'women's crimes' (ARG, p. 384), Rühle-Gerstel underlines the vulnerability of women and the potential consequences of their lack of agency over their own bodies and lack of social and financial autonomy. In his historical study of theories of women's criminology, Karsten Uhl notes that around the turn of the twentieth century criminologists assumed that criminal behaviour was influenced by biology.[95] Criminology was an emerging field at the time, with the first book on female criminality in German written by Paul Näcke in 1894.[96] According to early theories of female criminality, which Uhl notes remained prevalent until the 1950s, women who committed crimes were thought to be deficient in 'weiblich[e] Eigenschaften wie [die] Mutterliebe',[97] and it was assumed that women's crimes were motived by emotion.[98] By stressing the social factors that lead women to commit crimes, Rühle-Gerstel challenges the dominant discourses, rejecting again biological essentialism.

While the source for Rühle-Gerstel's assertions about female criminality remains unclear, the court reports of Gabriele Tergit, whose novel *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* is analysed in Chapter Four, similarly identify women's limited reproductive freedoms as a cause for the criminalisation of women. As Sutton writes: 'Tergit lists the crimes for which women defendants mostly appear in court as abortion, prostitution, procurement, infanticide,

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[95] Karsten Uhl, 'Mutterliebe und Verbrechen: Mutterschaft und Sexualität im kriminologischen Diskurs, 1880-1980', in *Mütterliche Macht und väterliche Autorität: Elternbilder im deutschen Diskurs*, ed. by José Brunner (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008), pp. 48-62 (p. 50).
[96] Ibid., p. 56.
[97] Ibid., p. 53.
[98] Ibid., p. 51.

theft, and defamation. Significantly, the first four of these crimes are linked to female sexuality and motherhood'.[99] The psychological consequences of bourgeois morality and extramarital pregnancy are also explored in Kienle's *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, and Rühle-Gerstel's citation of the legal and psychological implications of unplanned pregnancies or single motherhood forms part of a wider campaign to improve women's reproductive rights during the Weimar period. Drawing on Individual Psychology's assertion that the individual and social are linked, Rühle-Gerstel argues that women are not naturally predisposed to commit certain types of crimes but rather that their limited access to the public sphere means that they have fewer opportunities to commit 'men's crimes' such as fraud and forgery: 'Nicht ein moralisches Plus des weiblichen Geschlechts erweist die geringere Kriminalität, sondern nur ein Resultat der sozialen Stellung der Frau' (ARG, p. 384). Rühle-Gerstel therefore stresses the hardship caused by social structures that pushes women into crimes linked to sexuality and motherhood and, dismissing essentialist ideas that women's criminal behaviour is biologically informed, suggests that this same desperation would result in women's participation in other forms of criminal behaviour were their access to public space equal to that of men.

Women's Legal Rights as Mothers

Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher base much of their criticism of the disadvantaged status of mothers on unwritten social conventions and normative ideas about gender roles. Yet, both texts also refer to the legal situation in Weimar Germany to substantiate their claims about the material barriers to positions of power faced by mothers. In *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, Rühle-Gerstel contrasts men's feelings of inferiority, which, she argues, are typically based on imagined rather than material grounds, with those of women, which result from 'eine deutliche Minderwertigkeitsposition.' (ARG, p. 64) By drawing on examples from Weimar law, Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher underline women's actual position of inferiority and the psychological impact of this inequality.

Rühle-Gerstel argues that the legal texts of the Weimar Republic are a further example of the manifestation of male-dominated society (*Männergesellschaft*), since marriage and motherhood are associated with a loss of legal rights for women. Citing the much-debated Article 109 of the Weimar constitution, which guaranteed equal rights for men and women 'in principle' (*grundsätzlich*),[100] Rühle-Gerstel comments: 'Zwar hat die ledige Frau dieselben

[99] Fiona Sutton, 'Weimar's Forgotten Cassandra: The Writings of Gabriele Tergit in the Weimar Republic', in *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Karl Leydecker (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), pp. 193-209 (p. 197).
[100] Fritz Stier-Somlo, *Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reichs vom 11. August 1919: Ein systematischer Überblick* (Bonn: A. Marcus & E. Webers, 1925), p. 223.

Rechte wie der Mann' (ARG, p. 382). The qualifier 'ledige' underline the conditional nature of women's equality during the Weimar era, and Rühle-Gerstel lists the loss of rights associated with marriage to emphasise the extent of women's disadvantaged position:

Sie verliert mit ihrem Mädchennamen zugleich ihre Staatsangehörigkeit; das Recht, ihren Wohnsitz selbst zu wählen; das Vefügungsrecht über ihr Vermögen und teilweise über ihr Einkommen. Sie darf einen Beruf nur ausüben mit Zustimmung des Ehemannes, sie darf ohne seine Einwilligung keine Auslandsreise machen, keine Erbschaft annehmen, kein Bankkonto eröffnen, kein Grundeigentum erwerben. Sie „darf" also juristisch sehr viel weniger als die ledige Frau. (ARG, pp. 179-80)

This criticism continues Rühle-Gerstel's attack on the hypocrisy of the prevailing social morality, showing how women who conform to social expectations of mothering within marriage are rewarded only with a loss of rights which perpetuates their dependence and limited access to the public sphere.

Rühle-Gerstel continues to highlight the disconnect between the idealised model of womanhood and the material status of women in comments regarding the legal powers of mothers towards their own children. While raising children continued to be seen as women's primary responsibility, fathers retained legal authority within the family, including in instances of divorce: 'Ist sie schuldlos geschieden und hat das Gericht ihr die Kinder zugesprochen, so bleibt trotzdem die elterliche Gewalt und das Verfügungsrecht über den eventuellen Besitz der Kinder beim Vater' (ARG, p. 332). Relying again on a list format to emphasise how limited women's decision-making rights relating to their children remained, Rühle-Gerstel writes: 'Über Wohnort, Schule, Freizeit, Berufsausbildung, Heirate Minderjähriger, über Vermögen und Erwerb der Kinder hat das letzte Wort der Vater zu sprechen.' (ARG, p. 332) These examples expose the limitations to legal equality in Weimar Germany, despite the constitutional guarantee of equal rights, and further Rühle-Gerstel's persistent, politically motivated attempts to expose the hypocrisy of the social morality that glorifies motherhood. In *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik*, Hagemann substantiates Rühle-Gerstel's assertions of women's legal disadvantage, suggesting that women were deterred from seeking divorce during the Weimar era: 'aus Sorge um die Kinder, aus Angst vor der unsicheren Zukunft und aus Rücksicht auf die öffentliche Meinung'.[101]

Similarly, Schumacher questions the effectiveness of Article 109 and emphasises mothers' lack of legal rights over their own children in *Die proletarische Frau*, including, like Rühle-Gerstel, a list of areas in which the rights of the father trump those of the mother (HS, p.

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[101] Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik*, p. 326.

32). In both cases, the list format underscores the author's criticism of the legal inequality of parents. Schumacher stresses the disconnect between social expectations of women's primary responsibility for raising children and their lack of autonomy to make decisions: 'Die Mutter übt neben dem Vater die elterliche Gewalt aus. Da aber bei Meinungsverschiedenheiten die Ansicht des Vaters entscheidet, gilt also ihr Wille nur dann, wenn er sich in Uebereinstimmung mit dem ihres Mannes befindet.' (HS, pp. 32-33) Schumacher does not question the assumption that women should take primary responsibility for childcare and, indeed, her assertion that women should have greater rights in this area cements it as women's domain. Schumacher's criticism of the father's default right to dictate childcare in the case of divorce again underlines the deeply ingrained unequal division of domestic labour by assuming that children should remain with their mothers, even when the father is responsible for the breakdown of the marriage: 'Das Gerechtigkeitsgefühl des Kindes muß verletzt werden, wenn auf Grund dieses Paragraphen das Kind von der Mutter brutal losgerissen und einem Vater zur Erziehung überantwortet wird, der gerade durch seine Schuld die Familiengemeinschaft zerstört hat.' (HS, p. 36) As well as revealing women's disadvantaged legal status, Schumacher also highlights the psychological impact that these laws can have on children. Schumacher's citations of similar examples to Rühle-Gerstel demonstrates that these topics formed part of public discussion around the rights of women and mothers during the Weimar era.

Rühle-Gerstel also considers the legal barriers to women who wish to avoid motherhood in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*. She advocates the legalisation of contraception and abortion in all cases, not just the limited instances in which they were permitted under Weimar law. Having outlined the limiting social and psychological consequences of society's idealisation of motherhood for women, Rühle-Gerstel declares: 'Eine wirkliche Befreiung der Frau kann nicht stattfinden ohne eine wirkliche Geburtenregelung' (ARG, p. 351). As discussed in the introduction, Paragraph 218 was a topic of widespread public debate during the Weimar period and *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* was published shortly after the 1931 campaigns for the abolition of the paragraph so can be seen as part of a large body of writing on this topic from the late Weimar period. Indeed, birth control and abortion is a recurring theme in my primary texts and will be discussed in every chapter. While Kienle's *Frauen* and the works of fiction analysed in Chapters Three and Four advocate greater access to abortion by presenting an individual's experiences (whether documentary or fictional) in a way intended to be relatable, Rühle-Gerstel focuses on policy and broader social attitudes. She ridicules the ideology which permits the use of contraceptives to prevent the transmission of venereal diseases but not to prevent unwanted pregnancies (ARG, p. 349). She cites protests which followed the installation of a condom dispenser in a public toilet in Hamburg as an example of the illogicality and potentially harmful consequences for public health of the morality which blindly objects to birth control (ARG, p.

349). Adopting an explicitly feminist perspective, Rühle-Gerstel frames the issue in terms of gender inequality: 'Die Verhütung der Empfängnis stellt an die Frauen eine weit größere Anforderung als an die Männer. [...] „Das ist deine Sache", lautet ihre Rede' (ARG, p. 349). This quotation recalls Rühle-Gerstel's earlier observation that single mothers, rather than both parents, are held responsible for the pregnancy. While premarital sexual relationships were becoming increasingly acceptable in the Weimar period, society's attitude to contraception and to single motherhood remained out of step with the changing relationship habits of young people, which, as Rühle-Gerstel shows, placed women in a vulnerable position. Rühle-Gerstel's interpretation of the pressure placed on women is a somewhat negative analysis and contrasts with arguments, as cited in Hagemann's study, which frame the increasing use of contraception during the Weimar period as women taking control of their reproductive choices.[102] In a more radical intervention than was typical for the era, Rühle-Gerstel advocates access to birth control without the caveat or expectation that it would be used to control the number of children women have, rather than whether they have children at all. While both the socialist and groups within the bourgeois women's movements supported increased access to contraception during the Weimar period, the political left, as will be seen in Chapter Two, tended to do so on the grounds of economic hardship, leaving intact the assumption of women's motherhood and instead seeking simply to limit family size.

Advocating legal access to abortion, Rühle-Gerstel bemoans the lack of unified campaign to secure the abolition of Paragraph 218. Yet, despite her readiness to criticise the actions of left-wing parties in other regards, as I elaborate in Part Three of this chapter, she suggests that the lack of centralised campaign was not caused by divisions on the political left, but rather by women's reluctance to share their personal experiences, due to their internalisation and acceptance of the privatisation of motherhood in a capitalist *Männergesellschaft*: 'die Frauen [trachten] lieber für sich mit ihrem Schicksal fertig zu werden, als daß sie sich öffentlich gegen ihr Geschick auflehnen' (ARG, p. 350). Thus, she offers a psychological, rather than political, explanation for the loss of momentum in campaigns to legalise abortion by citing women's feelings of guilt or shame arising from the expectation of motherhood.

Indeed, somewhat uncharacteristically, Rühle-Gerstel does not frame her discussion of abortion primarily in terms of class. Instead, she describes abortion as a gender issue which crosses class lines:

Es ist irrig, zu glauben, daß vorzugsweise die ledigen Mütter oder die Angehörgen [sic] der proletarischen Schichten das Kontingent der Abtreibungen stellen. Der Fall Kienle-Wolf in

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[102] Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik*, p. 204.

Stuttgart im Jahre 1930 hat gezeigt, daß die Patientinnen sich ebensowohl aus dem Kreise der verheirateten Frauen aller Stände rekrutieren. […] Unter den Patientinnen waren alle Sprossen der sozialen Stufenleiter vertreten (ARG, pp. 350-51)

I analyse the evidence of abortion across all social classes in Kienle's *Frauen* in Chapter Two. Rühle-Gerstel's prioritisation of the (un)availability of abortion as a gender question, rather than a class issue, reflects the broad debate surrounding this topic and the attention it received from across the political spectrum during the Weimar period. Furthermore, it shows how Rühle-Gerstel negotiates competing socialist, feminist, and psychoanalytic perspectives in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, demonstrating her readiness to move beyond socialist bias in order to advance her feminist argument. Nevertheless, Rühle-Gerstel's political perspectives are clearly still present in her approving description of the situation in Russia, where abortion had been legalised and, she asserts, '[d]er Pfuscherabort, damit die Folgeerkrankungen und die Todesfälle, sind fast ganz verschwunden.' (ARG, p. 351) Praise of the Russian model is common in left-wing German publications from the Weimar period, as exhibited also in the socialist non-fiction writing analysed in Chapter Two.

While Rühle-Gerstel's discussion of contraception is political, Schumacher focuses more on practical questions when she addresses the topic in *Die proletarische Frau*. Schumacher argues that the lack of education about contraception available to working-class girls poses a risk to them, especially in rural communities, where access to both education and contraception may be more limited than in urban environments. This parallels the approach taken in the socialist women's press, for example in *Frauenwelt*, which ran articles aimed at educating women about the advantages of using birth control.[103] The differing approaches of Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher highlight the audience for which both authors were writing, with Rühle-Gerstel targeting a specialist readership while Schumacher sought to package her theoretical text in an accessible way for a non-specialist audience. Discussing the health risks of rural child labour more broadly, Schumacher suggests that irregular attendance at school and contact with older children and teenagers can lead to cases of pregnancy in girls even under the age of fourteen (HS, p. 26). Schumacher argues that the economic and social circumstances put young girls at risk. Moreover, Schumacher blames the challenging financial situation for mothers' lack of time to educate their children about sexuality and relationships (HS, p. 40). Thus, Schumacher avoids the explicitly feminist discussion with which Rühle-Gerstel engages and instead focuses on calling for an amelioration of the conditions under which working-class

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[103] For example: Dr R.K., 'Verhütung unerwünschter Fruchtbarkeit', *Frauenwelt*, 21 September 1929; Susi Bork, 'Paragraph 218 Geburtenregelung?', *Frauenwelt*, 24 January 1931; Julius Moses, 'Einiges über Schwangerschaftsverhütung', *Frauenwelt*, 18 February 1933.

communities live, which would enable better education and remove girls from situations in which they may be exploited by older teenagers.

Part Three: Socialism and Improving the Status of Motherhood

Both Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher turn to socialist politics to address the issues arising from biological essentialism and its impact on women's psychological development. Nevertheless, Rühle-Gerstel is critical of elements of the organised socialist and women's movements. In fact, she dismisses the women's movement in its existing forms as a means for women's greater emancipation based on a psychological analysis of Weimar feminist activism. She suggests that some strands of the movement offer a 'male-oriented' goal of accessing the same opportunities and achievements as men, while others reflect a 'female-oriented' goal which emphasises women's particularity (ARG, pp. 128-36). Recognising the interplay between various forms of oppression and discrimination, Rühle-Gerstel identifies the tensions between different classes and generations within the women's movements and concludes that they have reached a dead-end, since both the bourgeois and socialist women's movements failed to challenge men's dominance in society and politics (ARG, pp. 140, 142). Echoing the criticism frequently levelled at the socialist movement that the class struggle took precedence over the fight against gender inequality, Rühle-Gerstel remarks: 'die Frauen [geraten] in der Bewegung, die sie zur Freiheit führen soll, unter die Botmäßigkeit der Befreier.' (ARG, p. 398) Thus, for Rühle-Gerstel the organised socialist movement is, in its existing form, ill equipped to tackle the deep-rooted gender inequality that reproduces itself through its impact on gendered psychological development.

Nevertheless, in a theoretically informed argument, Rühle-Gerstel asserts that socialism is the only means for women to increase their access to the public sphere and for motherhood to be more greatly value. For Rühle-Gerstel, questions of gender and class inequality are closely linked (ARG, p. 399), and, while she hints that the organised socialist movement is taking insufficient action, Rühle-Gerstel nonetheless promotes socialism. Her support of socialism is thus based on a theoretical position rather than endorsement of either the SPD or KPD. Rühle-Gerstel writes that, in principle, socialism should offer women: 'gleichberechtigte Zulassung zu allen Gebieten des Männerlebens und die materielle Grundlage dafür, daß sie von dieser Zulassung auch Gebrauch machen können; und Gleichwertung ihrer Mutterschaftsleistung mit der Sachleistung der Männer.' (ARG, p. 398) Rühle-Gerstel combines divergent radical feminist positions, both suggesting that women should be able to compete with men in areas in which their opportunities were limited and appealing to female particularity to argue for greater recognition of motherhood as productive work.

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Henny Schumacher's *Die proletarische Frau*, by contrast, can be considered an example of the tendency within the socialist movement to prioritise resolving class inequality over gender discrimination. Schumacher does acknowledge the lack of gender inequality in the socialist movement, writing: 'Noch heute gilt auch noch für den Proletarier – es sind sogar „klassenbewußte" unter ihnen – das Wort: „Die Frau gehört ins Haus!"' (HS, p. 13). Yet, unlike Rühle-Gerstel, she advocates overcoming this issue within the framework of organised socialism. Her text addresses women directly and is an explicit call to action for working-class, socialist women. Schumacher seeks to encourage greater political participation by women but her approach to resolving gender inequality is less radical than Rühle-Gerstel's and, building on her experience as a Kindergarten teacher, Schumacher's suggestions remain focused on childcare. The political activities in which Schumacher proposes women should engage follow the established gendered division of activities within the socialist movement:

Die proletarische Frau kann durch persönliche Fühlungnahme und Aufklärung ihrer Schicksalsgenossinnen, durch Mitarbeit bei den „Kinderfreunden" und der „Arbeiterwohlfahrt", durch ihr Eindringen in die kommunale Verwaltung und in die Vorstände solcher Anstalten gute Pionierarbeit leisten. (HS, pp. 48-49)

Schumacher thus offers a tentatively feminist perspective in her call for women's active political participation but by suggesting women focus on educating other women and engaging in welfare work, her suggestions remain within the accepted realm of 'women's concerns'.

Schumacher's text in fact appears to suggest that, due to the influence of the social context on women's psychological development, women are predisposed towards conservatism. She asserts: 'Die Frau ist konservativ durch Sitte und Tradition, und es liegt die Gefahr nahe, daß sie diese Eigenschaft ihren Kindern mitgibt, weniger durch Vererbung als durch Erziehung.' (HS, p. 58) Again, Schumacher emphasises the significance of early childhood experiences in an individual's psychological development and implies that, due to their limited opportunities beyond the private sphere, women develop more conservative perspectives. Her suggestion that women focus on issues in which female participation is already established is perhaps a strategic attempt to encourage women into the socialist movement. However, Schumacher fails to imagine opportunities for women in other policy areas. She concludes her text by stating that, as mothers, women have a central role to play in the socialist movement: 'Der Sozialismus bricht durch in den Seelen der Menschen. Die proletarische Frau und Mutter leite ihr Erwachen.' (HS, p. 60) This statement exposes tensions between the feminist positioning of women as central to the success of the socialist movement and the conservative assumption of women's maternal role. Schumacher's conclusion recalls Rühle-Gerstel's criticism that the socialist women's movement was too focused on future equality at the expense of making contemporary

changes. Schumacher implies that, in order to achieve a more equitable socialist future, women in the present must accept their duty within the domestic sphere and work to raise children who will be less confined by normative gender roles.

Despite perpetuating gendered divisions of political and domestic labour, Schumacher proposes two measures for improving the rights and social status of mothers, both of which are echoed in Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*. First, both Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel argue that the state must take on parental responsibilities. Schumacher suggests that is it necessary 'daß die **Gesellschaft die Pflicht der Erziehung übernimmt.** [...] Diese Pflicht der Gesellschaft dem kommenden Geschlecht gegenüber hat ihre erste Auswirkung in der Sorge um die werdende Mutter zu finden.' [Emphasis in original] (HS, p. 45) She argues for measures, including the state provision of maternity hospitals, nurseries and Kindergärten, which would ensure women's financial independence and, by providing services for expectant and new mothers, signal the social value of motherhood. As Wasmuth explains, for Schumacher, society should take responsibility for raising children, since the family is an inherently conservative institution that is poorly placed to bring up children in the spirit of community.[104] In order to achieve a socialist society, Schumacher calls for the de-individualisation of child raising.

Similarly, Rühle-Gerstel argues that the state must guarantee women's financial independence by stepping into the current role of the father and calls for mothering to be recognised and valued as socially productive work: 'Kinder gebären wird eine gesellschaftliche Arbeitsleistung.' (ARG, p. 353) While this proposal challenges the traditional structure of the family with the aim of giving women greater autonomy, it does not challenge assumptions that women take primary responsibility for raising children. Furthermore, ascribing a financial value to motherhood by equating it with other paid occupations commodifies women's bodies. Nevertheless, within the context of Weimar Germany, this suggestion is highly progressive, and, as Pore writes, was being discussed in the Social Democratic movement more widely at this time.[105] Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher thus contribute to a political discourse that drew on notions of women's particularity to protect women and raise their social status as mothers.

Both Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel connect the privatisation of mothering with the disadvantaged social status of women. Rühle-Gerstel demands the 'Sozialisierung der Mutter' (ARG, p. 354), and praises the *Mutterschutzbewegung* (movement for the protection of mothers) as 'ein notwendiges Kompromiß' (ARG, p. 354) within the existing male-dominated capitalist society. Returning to her theory of female-, male-, and non-gender-oriented goals, Rühle-Gerstel argues that the *Mutterschutzbewegung* represents a female-oriented goal in its identification of

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[104] Wasmuth, *Kindertageseinrichtungen als Bildungseinrichtungen*, p. 358.
[105] Pore, *A Conflict of Interest*, p. 83.

particular challenges faced by women and mothers, and she contrasts this with the Open Door Movement,[106] whose demands for the abolition of specific 'restrictions' on women's work, such as maternity leave provision, Rühle-Gerstel labels as male-oriented. Rühle-Gerstel asserts, however, that in order to introduce the 'Mutterordnung' necessary for women's motherhood to be valued and women to have equal opportunities and social status, male-oriented and female-oriented perspectives must be synthesised 'in einer übergeschlechtlichen Subjekthaftigkeit' (ARG, p. 354). She suggests that this change must happen both in society more broadly and also 'im Charakter der einzelnen Frauen', since the necessary re-valuation of women's mothering work cannot occur within the existing gender hierarchy: 'Dieser Forderung steht nicht nur Herrschaftsinteresse und Moral der maßgebenden Männerkreise entgegen, sondern auch wichtige Teile der Frauenschaft selbst' (ARG, p. 353). Rühle-Gerstel is realistic about the unlikely prospect of a 'Mutterordnung' or state-funding of motherhood being introduced within the current system and her call for a radical restructuring of society and the resulting developments in the psychology of individuals within the new social structure represents an innovative contribution to debates around motherhood in the Weimar era. As my analysis of the socialist press and socialist fiction in Chapters Two and Three will show, Rühle-Gerstel represents a more radical position than was typically adopted in more mainstream socialist publications aimed at a wider, non-specialist audience. Rühle-Gerstel's assertion that existing gender norms must be broken down in order to overcome the social disadvantages associated with motherhood recalls her claim that gender is socially constructed and is a more theoretical and progressive approach than that generally found in left-wing journalism or fiction aimed at women and girls.

While Schumacher's text does not go so far as Rühle-Gerstel's in theoretical terms, and despite advocating women's involvement in welfare work, she nevertheless explicitly calls for the end to the perception of childcare as 'women's work':

Es ist verführerisch, dieses Gebiet nun als die Domäne der Frau zu betrachten und den männlichen Einfluß allmählich auszuschalten. Ich halte dies für falsch. Es handelt sich hier um menschlich bestimmte Aufgaben, an denen beide Geschlechter gleiches Recht haben müssen. (HS, p. 58)

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[106] Open Door International was founded in 1929 following disagreements among feminists about how to achieve workplace equality. Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 353.

Schumacher calls for men to play a greater role in childcare, which, in combination with her demands for the socialisation of parenting, would increase the opportunities open to women and dismantle the default assumption that women are responsible for unpaid domestic work.

In their calls to overcome gendered divisions of labour (and in Rühle-Gerstel's case, more radically overcome gender), both Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher anticipate Chodorow's assertions in *The Reproduction of Mothering* that equal parenting is necessary to break the cycle of women's mothering. Chodorow argues that children's psychological development would occur differently in a society where they were parented by men and women:

Children could be dependent from the outset on people of both genders and establish an individuated sense of self in relation to both. In this way, masculinity would not become tied to denial of dependence and devaluation of women. Feminine personality would be less preoccupied with individuation, and children would not develop fears of *maternal* omnipotence.[107] [Emphasis in original]

Equal parenting would, according to Chodorow, reduce gender differences in personality development. She elaborates in a later article: 'men *have* the foundations of parental (maternal) capacities and desires for primary relationships, but these have been repressed in their development' [Emphasis in original].[108] Chodorow, Schumacher and Rühle-Gerstel reject biological essentialism by asserting that there is no inherent reason for one sex to take primary responsibility for childcare and Chodorow theorises that characteristics cited as evidence for women's natural caring capacity are in fact developed in girls at a young age, while they are repressed in boys. Similarly, Rühle-Gerstel argues that 'motherliness' is not exclusively a characteristic found in women: 'Insofern ist Mütterlichkeit keine geschlechtstypische Eigenschaft der Frau, und sie ist tatsächlich auch sehr oft bei Männern zu finden, während sie bei Frauen vielfach fehlt.' (ARG, pp. 334-35) while Schumacher suggests that the capacity for child raising must be taught to both men and women: 'Aus der Erkenntnis: jeder ist Erzieher! muß die Erkenntnis folgen: Jeder muß zur Erziehung fähig gemacht werden.' (HS, p. 46) Rühle-Gerstel's and Schumacher's texts therefore anticipate Chodorow's later work on gendered psychological development and adopts a more radical and non-essentialist position than was, as will be shown the Chapters Two, Three and Four, typical in presentations of motherhood from the Weimar period.

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[107] Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 218.
[108] Lorber and others, 'On "The Reproduction of Mothering"', p. 512.

Preliminary Conclusions

The primary texts analysed in this chapter, Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* and Schumacher's *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe*, combine psychological and political theories in their analyses of women's role, responsibilities, and opportunities as mothers. These texts engaged with emerging theories of women's psychology, which were the subject of discussion during the interwar period both in professional psychoanalytic circles and lay society more broadly, and anticipate later developments in feminist theory.

Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher draw strong links between an individual and their social situation, and present socialism as the means for women to access gender equality. Schumacher underscores socialist expectations of women's responsibility for raising the next generation of politically aware workers. Free from party political allegiance, and aimed at a more specialist audience, Rühle-Gerstel's text, meanwhile, offers a holistic and radical assessment of women's social status. Rühle-Gerstel goes beyond the mainstream voices within the Weimar-era left-wing movements, thoroughly rejecting essentialist notions of inherent gendered personality in favour of a model based on Individual Psychology that stresses the role of the social and cultural context in shaping women's personality development. She emphasises the need for sweeping social restructuring to overcome mothers' disadvantaged social and legal status.

Furthermore, both texts considered in this chapter anticipate conversations which were resumed by post-World War Two feminist psychologists, as I have illustrated with particular reference to Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Ideas more strongly associated with later feminist movements, such as the assertion that the private is political and approaches to analysing women's experiences that take into account competing inequalities such as class and gender, are already present in the discussions taking place during the Weimar era. The Second World War is frequently seen as a watershed moment in German history and, as a result, continuities between the pre- and post-World War Two contexts are overlooked. By reintegrating the work of authors such as Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher into feminist historiography, my analysis deepens understanding of developments in feminist thought and of the innovative conversations around gender and women's social role that were beginning to take place in the Weimar period.

In this chapter I have focused on texts which adopt an explicitly theoretical and psychological approach to analysing motherhood during the Weimar era. In the following chapter, I turn to political non-fiction writing about motherhood that was intended for a wide, non-specialist readership. Psychoanalytic, socialist and feminist perspectives can be found in these texts, revealing parallels between the work of Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher and the journalistic and political texts examined in the next chapter. My analysis demonstrates how

discourses of mothering during the Weimar era were informed by psychoanalytic theories, as authors appealed to scientific language to present an authoritative voice and strengthen their appeal for improved rights for mothers.

Chapter Two: Women's Rights and Responsibilities as Mothers in the Left-Wing Women's Press and Non-Fiction Writing

Introduction

During the Weimar period the left-wing political parties and branches of the women's movement, including the *Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform* (BfM), campaigned for greater legal access to birth control and abortion as well as improved rights for single mothers and divorcing women. Yet, these more radical positions were promoted in tandem with a largely uncritical acceptance of gender difference and expectations of women's mothering. In this chapter I argue that the political left presented itself as an authority on modern, socialist mothering practices and drew on emerging theories of childhood development and psychoanalysis to influence the ways in which women raised their children. I also explore the tensions in support for women's increased reproductive choices that leave intact the assumption of women's inherent desire to mother.

Building on the discussion in Chapter One, I assess whether the more radical ideas of writers like Alice Rühle-Gerstel were reaching and resonating with a wider audience by drawing on a range of primary sources, including the women's press, Helene Overlach's *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute: ein Wort an die christlichen Frauen* (1931) as an example of a KPD pamphlet, and Else Kienle's book-length publication dealing with the question of abortion, *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin* (1932). The breadth of the material consulted has enabled me to identify trends in these sources and, in this chapter, I cite representative examples to support my analysis. Like Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* and Henny Schumacher's *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe*, the texts analysed here are examples of political non-fiction writing. The prominent themes in these texts, including women's social and legal status, their rights as mothers, and access to birth control and abortion, mirror those discussed by Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher. Yet these texts differentiate themselves from those discussed in Chapter One in a number of key regards. Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher adopt a theoretical approach, whereas the sources in this chapter tend to take a more practical line, focusing on the contemporary lived experiences of their readership. Indeed, these texts were intended to reach a wide, non-specialist audience of primarily working-class and lower-middle-class women, although, as I discuss below, Kienle's text targeted a broader readership including the general public as well as medical professionals and policy makers. The format of these texts reflects their appeal to a wider audience; the newspaper articles are short and the political pamphlet and book-length publication analysed in this chapter are also broken into short subsections. The

language is more informal, with the reader frequently addressed as 'du', and references to psychoanalysis do not rely on specialist knowledge.

A vast number of print media publications existed during the Weimar era. These newspapers, magazines, and periodicals comprised official party organs, non-affiliated publications from across the political spectrum, specialist magazines and periodicals, publications of professional societies such as *Die Ärztin*, the journal of the *Bund deutscher Ärztinnen*, and light entertainment targeted at a range of demographics. Indeed, Bernhard Fulda notes the popularity of tabloid newspapers, particularly in Berlin, during the Weimar period.[1] Reading newspapers was the most popular leisure time activity in Weimar Germany and, as Fulda writes, the daily press in the early 1930s had a circulation of over 20 million copies.[2]

The popularity of print media was not, however, a new phenomenon in the Weimar period and both Kinnebrock and Guttsman describe the growth in the number of political publications in Imperial Germany. By 1912 there were '89 socialist newspapers, with a total circulation of 1,478,000',[3] and, between 1871 and 1933, a total of 366 political women's magazines existed,[4] with varying periods of publication. As Kinnebrock explains, the expansion of the press in the nineteenth century offered a new avenue for women to engage in political conversations.[5] The political left recognised the importance of print media in disseminating their views among the working classes.[6] Yet, as critics including Fulda, Guttsman and Kinnebrock have shown, the didactic functions of political papers could negatively impact their popularity and resulted in attempts by the political press to modernise their offering during the Weimar years.[7] For example, Fulda observes that '[e]ye-catching headlines, photos and caricatures became increasingly common after 1925',[8] and that a serialised novel helped

[1] Bernhard Fulda, 'Industries of Sensationalism: German Tabloids in Weimar Berlin', in *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. by Karl Christian Führer and Corey Ross (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 183-203 (p. 184). VL Ebook.

[2] Ibid., p. 183.

[3] W. L. Guttsman, *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany: Between Tradition and Commitment* (New York: Berg, 1990), p. 275.

[4] Susanne Kinnebrock, 'Der Aufstieg als Niedergang? Eine Analyse der Öffentlichkeitsprozesse rund um politische Frauenzeitschriften in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik', in *Öffentlichkeiten und gesellschaftliche Aushandlungsprozesse: Theoretische Perspektiven und empirische Befunde*, ed. by Elisabeth Klaus and Ricarda Drüeke (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 79-99 (p. 87).

[5] Susanne Kinnebrock, 'Politikvermittlung durch Frauenzeitschriften? Popularisierungsstrategien und Konturen frauenpolitisch aktiver Öffentlichkeiten im Wandel', in *Politik auf dem Boulevard: Die Neuordnung der Geschlechter in der Politik der Mediengesellschaft*, ed. by Margreth Lünenborg (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), pp. 275-301 (p. 280).

[6] Guttsman, *Workers' Culture*, p. 274.

[7] Fulda, 'Industries of Sensationalism', p. 186; Guttsman, *Workers' Culture*, p. 276; Kinnebrock, 'Der Aufstieg als Niedergang?' p. 194.

[8] Fulda, 'Industries of Sensationalism', p. 192.

increase a paper's circulation.[9] Kinnebrock, meanwhile, highlights the popularity of *Feuilleton* sections in the political women's press,[10] and the modern appearance and content of the SPD's *Frauenwelt* and the communist *Der Weg der Frau*, both of which are included among my primary sources in this chapter.[11] *Der Weg der Frau* appeared from 1931-1933 and stated the aim of reaching a working-class readership. Indeed, the first issue proclaimed that much had changed for women in the early twentieth century, that women had new opportunities and responsibilities but that working-class women continued to face many difficulties caused by economic and social inequality: 'Unsere Aufgabe soll es sein, ihr [der Arbeiterfrau] hier helfend und beratend zur Seite zu stehen, sie aufzuklären und zu ermuntern.'[12] Contributors to the magazine included Käthe Kollwitz, Helene Overlach and Maria Leitner. *Der Weg der Frau* was published by Willi Münzenberg's publishing house, which also produced popular left-wing newspapers the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* and *Welt am Abend*, the most popular communist paper in Berlin.[13] Kerstin Wilhelms notes that the appearance of *Der Weg der Frau* was similar to the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*, which was published from 1924-1933.[14] Both Fulda and Guttsman highlight how the combination of light entertainment and political content in Münzenberg's publications increased their appeal,[15] and Fulda stresses Münzenberg's independence from the KPD leadership as a factor in his ability to produce more attractive newspapers that escaped the dry content of the KPD's official organs.[16] In fact, the KPD's *Die Rote Fahne* and SPD's *Vorwärts* had relatively small circulations, as Fulda notes, with readers complaining that the official party newspapers were not sufficiently entertaining.[17] Fulda identifies the development of the mass tabloid as a significant innovation of the Weimar-era press,[18] and *Frauenwelt* and *Der Weg der Frau* sought to emulate this format to disseminate political ideas in a competitive market in which readers demanded entertainment.

In the following, I introduce a number of prominent voices in the publications and public debates analysed in this chapter before examining how left-wing publications such as the SPD's *Frauenwelt* sought to present themselves as an authority on socialist mothering practices. The final part of this chapter uncovers the tensions present the arguments offered in support for

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[9] Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 29. Oxford Scholarship Online Ebook.
[10] Kinnebrock, 'Politikvermittlung durch Frauenzeitschriften?', p. 289.
[11] Kinnebrock, 'Der Aufstieg als Niedergang?', p. 94.
[12] 'Zum Geleit!', *Der Weg der Frau*, no. 1, n.d. 1931, p. 1.
[13] Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 17.
[14] Kerstin Wilhelms, 'Frauenzeitschriften in der Weimarer Republik', in *Hart und zart: Frauenleben 1920-1970* (Berlin: Elefanten, 1990), pp. 53-60 (p. 56).
[15] Guttsman, *Workers' Culture,* p. 280; Fulda, 'Industries of Sensationalism', p. 191.
[16] Fulda, 'Industries of Sensationalism', p. 191.
[17] Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 23, 26.
[18] Ibid., p. 43.

improved rights for single mothers and greater access to birth control and abortion that are underpinned by a continuing idealisation of motherhood.

Key Voices: Else Kienle, Helene Overlach, and Toni Sender

Due to the journalistic nature of much of the material analysed in this chapter, a relatively large number of individual authors are cited. Moreover, a number of the articles cited here are unattributed or identified only by initials and the authors therefore, in some cases, remain anonymous. There are, however, prominent voices that can be identified in left-wing women's contributions to discourses of reproductive choice and motherhood during the Weimar era. I introduce here Else Kienle (1900-1970), who wrote on the topic of abortion and birth control and is also frequently mentioned by other journalists discussing these topics, Helene Overlach (1894-1983), leader of the KPD women's division, and Toni Sender (1888-1964), editor of the SPD women's magazine *Frauenwelt* from 1928-1933.

The arrest of Dr Else Kienle and her colleague Friedrich Wolf in 1931 on the charge of providing illegal abortions attracted substantial media attention and is frequently cited as a catalyst for widespread demonstrations against Paragraph 218 of the penal code, which outlawed abortion in all instances in which there was a not a strong, certified medical reason to terminate the pregnancy.[19] In 1932, Kienle published *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, which recounts her own experiences of and attitudes towards women's sexual health and reproductive choice. As Maja Riepl-Schmidt notes, Kienle began writing *Frauen* during the five weeks in which she was incarcerated following her arrest on 20th February 1931.[20] Despite the many column inches dedicated to Kienle's case the previous year, the publication of her book, which was after the collapse of the 1931 campaigns against Paragraph 218 and on the eve of the National Socialist seizure of power, failed to garner widespread attention and is rarely remembered in discussions of the Weimar abortion debates. My analysis in this chapter therefore reintegrates Kienle's contribution to these discussions into the wider discourses around women's mothering and reproductive choice during the Weimar era.

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[19] See for example: Atina Grossmann, 'Abortion and Economic Crisis: The 1931 Campaign Against Paragraph 218', in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), pp. 66-86 (p. 73); Katja Patzel-Mattern, 'Das »Gesetz der Frauenwürde« Else Kienle und der Kampf um den Paragrafen 218 in der Weimarer Republik', in *Bad Girls: Unangepasste Frauen von der Antike bis heute*, ed. by Anke Väth (Konstanz: UVK, 2003), pp. 177-99 (p. 187); Karen Offen, *European Feminisms: 1700-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 304-05.

[20] Maja Riepl-Schmidt, 'Else Kienle', in *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, Else Kienle, 2nd edn (Stuttgart: Schmetterling, 1989), pp. 157-70 (p. 159).

While Kienle's writing has not received much critical attention, there has been some biographical interest, most notably by Maja Riepl-Schmidt.[21] Kienle's personal involvement with the campaigns against Paragraph 218 has also been situated within the historical context of developments in abortion laws and campaigning by Katja Patzel-Mattern.[22] In her 1958 autobiography *Woman Surgeon*,[23] Kienle portrays herself as a rebellious child who was reluctant to accept authority,[24] and, indeed, Kienle ended her first engagement due to her fiancé's unwillingness to allow her to continue working as a doctor after their marriage.[25] Kienle qualified as a doctor in 1923, and, after a period working in a hospital, she was able to open her own practice 1928 with the financial assistance of her second fiancé and first husband, Stefan Jacobowsky, who was supportive of her choice to continue working as a married woman.[26] As well as running her private practice, Kienle volunteered at a free advice centre for birth control and sexual health.[27] Although the 1931 charges against Kienle were dropped, she left Germany in 1932, first for France then later for America where she remained living and working as a doctor for the rest of her life.

Kienle's name is, as Horst Theissen points out, most frequently mentioned in relation to prominent communist doctor and author Friedrich Wolf.[28] Kienle and Wolf were both based in Stuttgart and Riepl-Schmidt writes that Wolf referred patients to Kienle's clinic, where abortions could be performed,[29] although Kienle claimed in a 1931 interview in the KPD-affiliated women's magazine *Der Weg der Frau* that Kienle and Wolf were not personally acquainted prior to their arrest.[30] Kienle again attempts to distance herself from Friedrich Wolf in her autobiography, which omits mention of her 1931 arrest entirely. It is, however, worth noting that the reliability of Kienle's autobiography has been questioned by Riepl-Schmidt, who suggests that, due to her status as an immigrant in the Cold War-era United States, Kienle may have sought to avoid association with the communist movement.[31] Furthermore, Kienle is keen

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[21] Riepl-Schmidt, 'Else Kienle'; Maja Riepl-Schmidt, *Wider das verkochte und verbügelte Leben: Frauenemanzipation in Stuttgart seit 1800* (Stuttgart: Silberburg, 1990), pp. 255-65; Maja Riepl-Schmidt, 'Else Kienle (1900-1970): Die Verteidigung der Frauen gegen das Gesetz und das Gericht der Männer', in *Frauen im deutschen Südwesten*, ed. by Birgit Knorr and Rosemarie Wehling (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1993), pp. 269-74.

[22] Patzel-Mattern, 'Das »Gesetz der Frauenwürde«'.

[23] *Woman Surgeon* was first published in English in 1958. It was published under the title *Mit Skalpell und Nadel* in Germany in 1968.

[24] Else Kienle La Roe, *Woman Surgeon* (London: Frederick Muller, 1958), pp. 26-27.

[25] Ibid., pp. 97-98.

[26] Ibid., pp. 140-42.

[27] Riepl-Schmidt, 'Else Kienle', p. 158.

[28] Horst Theissen, 'Vorwort', in *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, Else Kienle, pp. 7-11, (p. 7).

[29] Riepl-Schmidt, 'Else Kienle', p. 158.

[30] M.G., 'Dein Körper gehört dir: Interview mit Dr. Else Kienle', *Der Weg der Frau*, no. 1, n.d. 1931, p. 2.

[31] Riepl-Schmidt, *Wider das verkochte und verbügelte Leben*, p. 264.

to highlight her work as a plastic surgeon in her autobiography, writing that it was her contact with injured soldiers after World War One which led to her interest in this area of medicine.[32] The autobiography, which Atina Grossmann has described as 'incredibly expurgated',[33] can also therefore be seen as an attempt to take back control of her public image. Kienle remains, however, a significant figure in the Weimar-era campaigns against Paragraph 218 and my analysis focuses on her engagement with the topic in *Frauen*.

Frauen comprises three key elements, a personal narrative, case histories, and political commentary, which Kienle interweaves in a chronologically non-linear memoir-style text. *Frauen* begins by describing Kienle's present-tense experiences in prison in 1931, confounding the reader's expectation of an account of her professional activities implied by the book's title. She repeatedly returns to her interrogations as a device for introducing the narrative accounts of the cases of individual women patients she has treated. The book closes with 12 short chapters which take a more political and philosophical approach to discussing the legal status of women in Weimar Germany, their role in society, and the responsibilities and duties of doctors. Despite Kienle's background as a doctor, *Frauen* is not written in a scientific or technical manner and is not written for an academic audience but is rather a personal and political text, which, as Riepl-Schmidt identifies, is both a rational analysis of the impact of Paragraph 218 and an emotional appeal to the reader.[34] Indeed, the book ends with a direct call to action, echoing language familiar to those on the political left: 'Geht voran, kämpft für die andern! Nur durch Solidarität werdet ihr eure Ketten sprengen...'[35]

The text adopts a narrative style and includes a variety of literary techniques, such as the short story format of the cases of individual women, rhetorical questions and direct appeals designed to encourage the readership to question their own assumptions and opinions, as well as the more reflective sections discussing politics and the role of doctors, which form the culmination of the book. This suggests that through *Frauen* Kienle hoped to reach a large audience and, indeed, the original publication of the book by Gustav Kiepenheuer, a prominent left-leaning publishing house during the Weimar era, which included among its published authors Marieluise Fleißer, Anna Seghers and Bertolt Brecht, implies that Kienle's text was expected to reach a sizeable readership.

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[32] Kienle, *Woman Surgeon*, p. 9.
[33] Atina Grossmann, 'German Women Doctors from Berlin to New York: Maternity and Modernity in Weimar and in Exile', *Feminist Studies*, 19.1 (1993), 65-88 (p. 88).
[34] Riepl-Schmidt, *Wider das verkochte und verbügelte Leben*, p. 259.
[35] Kienle, *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, p. 155. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation EK.

The book is polemical and Kienle's authorial voice is clearly present throughout, both as a first-person narrator and as an external commentator. She combines her position of authority and expertise as a doctor with a more vulnerable and personal account of the suffering she witnesses. Kienle implies that, as a woman, she is able to understand and relate to her female patients in a privileged way compared to her male colleagues and that her text can, therefore, offer deeper insights into the experiences of aborting women. As Grossmann notes, this was a common argument made by women doctors during the Weimar era, who 'insisted that their dual experience as physicians and as women lent them privileged insight into women's intimate lives',[36] equipping them to deal with questions of reproductive and sexual health. In *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany*, Usborne asserts that the voices of aborting women have typically been lost, noting that women's voices are mediated through doctors' records or court reports.[37] While it is the case that Kienle mediates the voices of her patients in *Frauen*, she does so foregrounding her understanding and empathy as a woman herself and the text presents a clear feminist stance. As Kienle describes in *Frauen*, she worked extensively in women's healthcare, beginning her career on a ward treating women suffering from venereal diseases. By highlighting this experience, Kienle both emphasises her expertise as a doctor and underlines her profound understanding of the specific health challenges faced by women.

The text offers a more overtly feminist perspective than other left-wing texts discussed in this chapter. Even the title of the book demonstrates that Kienle's focus is centred on women's experiences and issues. Grossmann identifies Kienle with the feminism of the Sexual Reform movement, which both 'assum[ed] that female nature and sexuality could be truly fulfilled only in motherhood' and simultaneously 'insisted on women's right to sexual pleasure and control of their bodies'.[38] I show, however, that Kienle combined this feminist perspective with a socialist viewpoint, thereby resisting association with a single branch of the women's movement. Although Kienle avoids endorsement of any particular political party, and was a member of neither the KPD nor SPD herself, her analysis is explicitly left-wing, highlighting the impact of social factors such as unemployment and poverty on health and family life, and criticising the motivations of state, religious, and business leaders in opposing the legalisation of birth control and abortion. Kienle's text differentiates itself from other publications from the anti-Paragraph 218 campaign through more extensive references to personal experience of this illegal procedure than was typical at this time, and by bridging medical, political, and feminist perspectives. The book was reviewed in the SPD organs *Vorwärts* and *Die Genossin*, as well as

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[36] Grossmann, 'German Women Doctors from Berlin to New York', pp. 69-70.
[37] Cornelie Usborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2007), p. 22.
[38] Grossmann, 'Abortion and Economic Crisis', p. 75.

Die neue Generation, the magazine of the BfM,[39] but it appeared after the 1931 action had lost momentum and failed to attract the same level of coverage as Kienle's arrest had done the previous year.

Helene Overlach was a prominent figure in the widespread demonstrations that followed the arrest of Else Kienle and Friedrich Wolf in 1931.[40] Although she was a leading member of the communist women's movement during the Weimar era, there has been limited research into Overlach's career and there is, to date, no book-length biography. Overlach had become a member of the KPD in 1920, having previously been a member of the *Freie sozialistische Jugend*.[41] During the Weimar era, she was involved with the communist press, becoming an editor for the *Ruhr-Echo* and *Niedersächsische Arbeiterzeitung*, two communist-affiliated publications, in 1924. She was also involved in the production of the short-lived women's magazine *Der Weg der Frau*, the first issue of which carries the interview with Else Kienle cited above. In 1927 Overlach was elected to the central committee of the Communist Party and, one year later, she became leader of its women's division, as well as a member of the Reichstag. She remained a member of the Reichstag until 1933. In 1931, Overlach produced a sixteen-page pamphlet for the KPD entitled *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute: ein Wort an die christlichen Frauen*, which addresses women directly, from an explicitly female perspective, and seeks to explain to its intended readership of working-class Christian women what capitalism is, how it creates social inequality, and why the reader should support the communist movement. The pamphlet's assumption of the need to educate its readership positions Overlach as an authoritative voice, echoing the presentation of Kienle's authority as a doctor in *Frauen.* Overlach's focus on issues relating to the family and her criticism of the Church reflects common themes across the publications analysed in this chapter.

Like Helene Overlach, Toni Sender worked as a journalist and editor for the party political press. In 1918 Sender became editor of *Volksrecht*, a regional newspaper affiliated to the *unabhängige sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (USPD), and in 1920 she was appointed editor of the Metal Workers' Union's *Shop Councils' Magazine*.[42] In contrast to Overlach and Kienle, Sender's work as a journalist and member of the Reichstag, first representing the USPD then from 1924 as a member of the SPD, did not focus on areas of policy

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[39] The same review by Dr Julian Marcuse was reproduced in *Die Genossin*, no. 10, n.d. October 1932 and *Die neue Generation*, no. 8/9/10, n.d. August-October 1932. *Frauen* was also reviewed in *Vorwärts*: Fritz Baer, 'Erfahrungen um den §218: Aus der Praxis einer Aerztin', *Vorwärts*, 3 May 1932, p. 5.

[40] See Thesis Introduction for further information about the campaigns against Paragraph 218.

[41] Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten: Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945* (Berlin: Dietz, 2004), p. 553.

[42] Toni Sender, *Autobiography of a German Rebel* (London: Routledge, 1940), pp. 115, 156.

typically designated as 'women's issues'. Indeed, in her autobiography, she recalls her male colleagues' surprise when she informed them that she would not 'deal with matters concerning household problems. I would not do it, for every one of my opponents was prepared to scoff at me, knowing that I was not managing a household myself. I would not expose my weak spots.'[43] Prior to her political work, Sender had succeeded in forging a career in the typically male-dominated sphere of the metal industry, where she had become a manager.[44] While Sender observes in her autobiography that women 'must make a greater effort, must show more efficiency than a man in order to be recognised as an equal'[45] and, as Critchfield comments, Sender was '[c]onvinced that fundamental social change can never be accomplished without the active participation of women',[46] her priority remained the advancement of the socialist movement as a whole rather than particularly focusing on women's rights. Despite her vocal criticism of women's exclusion from workers' councils in the wake of the First World War,[47] as well as her support for measures to increase women's political engagement,[48] Sender's political work during the Weimar era was largely in the male-dominated areas of foreign and economic policy, in contrast to the typical focus of women Reichstag representatives during the period.[49] Her acceptance of the editorship of the SPD women's magazine *Frauenwelt* in 1928 therefore appears somewhat at odds with her prior work.

Frauenwelt was launched in 1924 and ran until 1933. The magazine replaced *Die Gleichheit*, the previous women's newspaper of the SPD which had been edited by Clara Zetkin from 1892-1917. Zetkin was fired by the SPD leadership, ostensibly because the theoretical nature of the publication was not popular among working-class women but, as Pore discusses, Zetkin's outspoken opposition to World War One was more likely to have been the reason for her ousting.[50] Zetkin was replaced as editor by Marie Juchacz, who remained leader of the SPD women's branch throughout the Weimar period. *Die Gleichheit* was formatted more like a

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[43] Sender, *Autobiography*, pp. 124-25.
[44] Richard Critchfield, 'Toni Sender: Feminist, Socialist, Internationalist', *History of European Ideas*, 1.4-6 (1992), 701-06 (p. 703). For further biographical detail, see also: William Smaldone, *Confronting Hitler: German Social Democrats in Defense of the Weimar Republic, 1929-1933* (Plymouth: Lexington, 2009), pp. 163-77.
[45] Sender, *Autobiography*, p. 245.
[46] Critchfield, 'Toni Sender', p. 702.
[47] Corinne Painter, 'Revolutionary Perspectives: German Jewish Women and 1918-19', *Journal of European Studies*, 51.2 (2021), 93-110 (p. 96).
[48] Claudie Weill, 'Women in the German Revolution: Rosa Luxemburg and the Worker's Councils', in *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*, ed. by Christine Fauré, trans. by Richard Dubois and others (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 412-23 (pp. 415, 421). ProQuest Ebook.
[49] See Thesis Introduction for further information about the focus of women's political work during the Weimar period.
[50] Renate Pore, *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919-1933* (London: Greenwood, 1981), p. 30.

traditional newspaper than *Frauenwelt*, which was presented in magazine format, and, under Zetkin's leadership, *Die Gleichheit* sought to educate working-class women on the ideological foundations of socialism and included articles on political and economic themes.[51] The newspaper included supplements 'Für unsere Mütter und Hausfrauen' and 'Für unsere Kinder', only the latter of which was continued after 1917.[52] *Die Gleichheit* ceased publication during the hyperinflation of 1923 and was replaced the following year by *Frauenwelt*, which sought to modernise and thereby broaden the appeal of the SPD's print media offering for women.[53]

Frauenwelt included pictures, short stories, sewing patterns and fashion advice, alongside articles about childcare, work, and politics. The magazine was designed, as Wilhelms notes, to appeal to an audience beyond party members.[54] As Pore writes: 'Its aim was to make socialist ideals appealing to women […] but it was not well received by women functionaries in the party, who considered it much too frivolous and completely inadequate for their purposes.'[55] By 1927 the circulation of *Frauenwelt* had reached 120, 000,[56] but the SPD was not happy with the magazine's performance and, in her autobiography, Sender views the circulation of *Frauenwelt* as struggling when she took over the editorship.[57] Sender writes that she was offered the role of editor since the SPD leadership 'knew I was a person with strong political interests and convictions, but they thought me also capable of speaking the language of the average small-town and village woman'.[58] There is little evidence in Sender's political career up until this point to substantiate this assumption, which reflects the side-lining of women by the leadership of both the SPD and KPD. After a few weeks deliberation, Sender accepted the editorship on the condition that her 'intellectual freedom would remain untouched'.[59] Sender's acceptance of this role can therefore be seen less as an indication of her engagement with the women's movement and more within the context of her general promotion of socialist politics. Henny Schumacher, whose book *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* was discussed in Chapter One, is included among the regular contributors to *Frauenwelt* as an expert in the field of early childhood development.

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[51] Sigrid Weigel, 'Anders geartet, aber gleich gewertet: Ausbreitung und Differenzierung der Frauenpresse um die Jahrhundertwende' in *Sind das noch Damen? Vom gelehrten Frauenzimmer-Journal zum feministischen Journalismus*, ed. by Ruth-Esther Geiger and Sigrid Weigel (Munich: Frauenbuchverlag, 1981), pp. 75-91 (p. 83).
[52] Weigel, 'Anders geartet', p. 84.
[53] Pore, *A Conflict of Interest*, p. 63.
[54] Wilhelms, 'Frauenzeitschriften', p. 58.
[55] Pore, *A Conflict of Interest*, p. 63.
[56] Wilhelms, 'Frauenzeitschriften', p. 59.
[57] Sender, *Autobiography*, p. 250.
[58] Ibid., pp. 249-50.
[59] Ibid., p.250.

In September 1926, *Frauenwelt* launched a new advice column under the title 'Wer weiss Rat?', which I shall consider here alongside selected other articles and regular features. The column appeared regularly in *Frauenwelt* until the magazine ceased publication. When it was launched, 'Wer weiss Rat?' was intended as a space for readers to ask for advice and exchange ideas. The questions covered topics including work, religion, financial concerns, family life and childcare, and practical advice about housework. The submitted answers would be published over the following three issues to encourage debate among the readership and a collaborative approach to resolving everyday issues such as how to stop your child biting their nails,[60] with a range of different solutions suggested by readers. After Toni Sender became editor of the magazine in 1928, 'Wer weiss Rat?' underwent a change of format. While readers were still invited to send in their responses to questions posed by other readers, all questions from then on would be answered principally by 'Elisabeth', a pseudonym for Sender herself.[61] This format change brought with it a change of tone, with Elisabeth's answers presented as authoritative and there was less debate among the readership about the best approach to issues raised in the questions. This change reflects Sender's objective of promoting a clear socialist message and her confidence in her own convictions, which had helped her achieve success in predominantly male domains. The revised format also corresponds to a trend identified by Kinnebrock, in which women's political magazines of the Weimar era moved away from the exchange of ideas underpinning the women's press in the pre-World War One period towards a model of 'one-way communication' during the Weimar years.[62] Kinnebrock asserts that supposed readers' letters in *Der Weg der Frau* were even faked to further control the message of the magazine.[63] There is no evidence that this was also the case in *Frauenwelt*, however, the tone of 'Wer weiss Rat?' certainly changed once Sender became editor, as different types of questions were selected for publication, and it is not beyond possibility that some questions were edited or even invented. The authoritative position assumed by the publications discussed in this chapter demonstrates both the patronising assumptions of women's political naivety and attempts to influence their readership's attitudes and behaviour.

On account of this editorial change, my analysis of 'Wer weiss Rat?' focuses primarily on the columns published in 1926 and 1927 which offer insight into the concerns, preoccupations

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[60] 'Wer weiss Rat?', *Frauenwelt*, 12 March 1927. Subsequent references to the advice column 'Wer weiss Rat?' follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the shortened title 'Rat' and the date of publication.

[61] Christl Wickert, 'Sender, Toni', in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 27 vols (2010), XXIV, pp. 248-49. Online Version <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd118613189.html#ndbcontent> [accessed 20 January 2020].

[62] Kinnebrock, 'Der Aufstieg als Niedergang?', p. 96.

[63] Kinnebrock, 'Politikvermittlung durch Frauenzeitschriften?', p. 293.

and perspectives of socialist women who were not public figures or senior members of the SPD during the Weimar period. In doing so, I aim to analyse the extent to which the ideas of leading figures and thinkers in the socialist and women's movements resonated with working-class and lower-middle-class left-wing women. The published questions and answers were selected by the magazine editors and can therefore be presumed to represent topics and opinions that the SPD was prepared to endorse. Furthermore, the readers of *Frauenwelt*, particularly those willing to contribute to the magazine, are likely to be among the more politically engaged women. It is worth briefly noting that questions and responses are often signed only with initials. Many of the published letters speak of personal experiences which identify the writers as women, however, it is possible that some responses were submitted by men, as evidenced for example in one signed Dr Julian M (Rat, 6 November 1926).[64] While it cannot be claimed that this column reflects the views of all socialist women during the Weimar period, it nevertheless provides an opportunity to examine the perspectives of women who were supportive of the socialist movement but not actively engaged in party leadership or promotion of the party as professional writers.

Part One: Women's Maternal Duty and Modern Mothering Practices

Widespread acceptance of traditional gender roles was reflected in women's political writing from the Weimar era and in the left-wing women's press. Yet, while women continued to accept primary responsibility for raising children, they also sought to incorporate new and emerging advice into their mothering practices. Psychoanalytic theory in particular featured frequently in the women's press during this period and the female readers were encouraged to adapt their mothering to incorporate new theories of childhood development. Tensions thus arose in these publications between the essentialist assumption of women's maternal instinct and the notion that raising children required a level of education that could be provided by these authors and in these magazines, which positioned themselves as authorities on childcare.

<u>Women's Political Duty and the Language of Motherhood</u>

The language of duty is frequently linked to motherhood in texts produced by the socialist and women's movements during the Weimar period. In her pamphlet, *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute*, for example, Helene Overlach draws on conventional notions of mothering to promote communism, leaving unchallenged the assumption that women care for children. This

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[64] This response in likely to be written by Dr Julian Marcuse who contributed articles to *Frauenwelt* as well as *Die Genossin* and *Die neue Generation*.

approach is typical of left-wing propaganda, which, as has already been shown in Henny Schumacher's *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* in Chapter One, privileged the class struggle over other social inequalities, including gender relations. While Henny Schumacher calls for the state to intervene in childcare and encourages male participation in raising children, Overlach's text both reflects the widespread internalisation of women's role as mothers and, to borrow Chodorow's later formulation, contributes to the continued reproduction of mothering by failing to question women's role as primary care-givers. Overlach's pamphlet does not move beyond the official party line of promoting the class struggle over gender issues and therefore does little to challenge gender hierarchy or break the cycle of women's mothering.

The language used in *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute* is conversational and attempts to create a shared sense of community and common experiences. The pamphlet addresses Christian working-class women directly using the informal address: 'Auch du, christliche Arbeiterin, Bäuerin, Hausfrau hast schon tausendmal mit aller Kraft deines Glaubens gefleht um das tägliche Brot.'[65] The use of the informal address seeks to present the communist movement in an approachable, welcoming light. Furthermore, by suggesting with 'Auch du' that this situation is commonplace, Overlach references a shared experience which crosses religious divides. She thus attempts to create a sense of community and appeal to her readers as fellow women. By writing in the first-person plural she implies that the communist movement can offer working-class women a welcoming community: 'Wir arbeitenden Frauen, die wir den Weg aus diesem Elend schon gefunden haben' (HO, p. 4). Moreover, the title of the pamphlet, a reference to the Lord's prayer, appeals to shared experiences of widespread poverty during the late Weimar period. The use of religious language is designed to catch the attention of and appeal to working-class women who identify as Christian, however Overlach takes the line 'unser täglich Brot gib uns heute' literally to reference the material need caused by the economic depression.

Overlach's pamphlet explicitly targets mothers, making reference to 'deine Kinder' (HO, p. 6) and 'eur[e] Kinder' (HO, p. 14). Moreover, Overlach uses emotive language in her description of the state's role in allowing the persistence of conditions that are detrimental to children's welfare:

Kinder sind die allerbilligsten Arbeitskräfte, und die christlichen Führer verlangen, daß die werktätigen Frauen durch fleißiges Gebären recht viel solcher Arbeitskräfte in die Welt setzen.

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[65] Helene Overlach, *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute* (Berlin: KPD, 1931), p. 3. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation HO.

Es ist kein Wunder, wenn unter diesen Verhältnissen Kindersterblichkeit und Volksseuchen, wie Tuberkulose und Grippe, immer mehr zunehmen. (HO, p.11)

Overlach's reference to child mortality is a direct emotional appeal to mothers to act to protect their children. She also alludes to the exploitation of children, who are treated as economic resources under existing social structures. The economic reliance on children's work is a recurring theme in the political fiction analysed in Chapter Three and I return to this topic in more detail there.

Overlach's appeal to mothers through the emotive description of the exploitation of children not only forms part of her political efforts to recruit women to the communist movement but also reflects a wider left-wing reliance on conservative assumptions of women's innate nurturing capacities. In this regard, the portrayal of women in *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute* is normative and contributes to discourses which promote continued gendered divisions of labour and result in women's continued internalisation of mothering behaviours. For example, while criticising the self-serving behaviour of those men in positions of power within a capitalist society, Overlach writes: 'Ob Kinder frieren und Frauen sich absorgen, ist diesen Herren gleichgültig.' (HO, p. 4) Again, she leans on emotive language to appeal to women and presents children as the object of women's concerns and capitalism's exploitation. While Overlach does not explicitly engage with psychoanalytic ideas in *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute*, the suggestion that women might worry themselves to death over their children's welfare introduces a psychological perspective and alludes to increasing awareness to the relationship between psychological and physical health. *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute* evokes issues of childcare to attract women to the communist movement. By highlighting social injustices relating to children, such as child labour and the overcrowding of schools, the pamphlet implies that women are not and even should not be concerned with other political considerations. Instead, the pamphlet cements child welfare as a 'woman's issue', which both contributes to the continued exclusion of women from other areas of policy and signals to women that they should focus only on those areas designated as more suitable for for women's participation.

To further support her promotion of communism, Overlach emphasises the better family life possible in the Soviet Union: 'Nur dort ist ein glückliches Familienleben möglich, wo für Mutter und Kind der größtmöglichste staatliche Schutz herrscht, wie in der Sowjetunion.' (HO, p. 15) The pamphlet also includes a photograph of a smiling child receiving a medical check-up with the caption: 'Frohe Mütter und glückliche Kinder in der Sowjetunion' (HO, p. 16). Once again, women's role in the family is used to promote communism, reinforcing women's supposed natural place in the domestic environment. The advocacy of state protection of mothers and children exemplifies the failure to challenge gender roles or hierarchy by revealing

that, even in the perceived idyll of the Soviet Union, women's social role is as mothers and nurturers.

Positive references to the Soviet Union are common in left-wing writing from the period and also appear in Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, Else Kienle's *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, and Hermynia Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, which will be discussed in Chapter Three. In *Frauen*, for instance, Kienle draws on the example of Russia to demonstrate how legalising abortion there has resulted in far fewer deaths following amateur abortion attempts (EK, p. 143). While Kienle is citing empirical data from Russia which supports her arguments, and she would not have had many data sources to draw upon due to the lack of progressive interventions in family planning in many other states, her praise of the socialist state cannot be seen as an apolitical example. Despite asserting that doctors should be apolitical in their professional lives (EK, p. 120), *Frauen* is a political and socially-critical text.

Yet, while Kienle criticises the hypocritical treatment of mothers in Weimar society, as I discuss later in this chapter, she, like Overlach, leaves the notion of women's maternal nature largely unchallenged in *Frauen*. Kienle's discussions of women's own personal conflicts regarding the question of abortion exposes her maternalist attitudes:

Jede Frau, die ihr Kind nicht austragen will, aus welchen Gründen auch immer, behält in der Tiefe ihres Bewußtseins ein Gefühl dafür, daß sie in den natürlichen Lauf der Entwicklung eingreift. Sie empfindet das als dunkle, schicksalhafte Not und Verstrickung. Manchmal wohl auch als bittere, unentrinnbare Schuld. Jede von ihnen, auch die oberflächlichste, spurt etwas von der Notwendigkeit, ihre biologische Aufgabe als Frau zu erfüllen. (EK, p. 63)

Kienle also refers to 'Mutterinstinkt' (EK, p. 95) without problematising the concept and repeatedly emphasises that women decide to terminate pregnancies only reluctantly or because society dictates that motherhood under their particular circumstances is not condoned. Kienle writes: 'Für jede Frau bleibt es ein unerhört schwerer, schmerzlicher Entschluß, ihrem Körper aus solcher Überlegung heraus die letzte Erfüllung zu versagen.' (EK, p. 132) and emphasises: 'Und es ist wahr, daß sie mit der Abtreibung ein Verbrechen begeht. Aber nicht gegen den Staat und die Gesellschaft. Sondern gegen sich selbst. Gegen ihren Körper.' (EK, p. 133) The tensions in Kienle's advocacy of legal access to abortion and her maternalist perspectives are not unique to *Frauen*. Kienle's arguments, which echo those of feminists associated with the Sexual Reform movement, have their roots in pre-World War One Germany and, as Grossmann outlines, were common among Weimar-era women doctors, who 'were suspicious about the hazards of sexual freedom that birth control might facilitate but were also impassioned about

the dangers of limiting access to contraception and abortion.'[66] Following her 1931 arrest, Kienle may also have been aware of the precarious legal position in which she may find herself if she were to be seen as promoting 'immoral' behaviour by presenting abortion as a rational choice. Kienle therefore does not challenge the notion of a maternal instinct, as Rühle-Gerstel does, but rather endorses the idea that childbearing is natural, self-evident, and ultimately fulfilling for women. Unlike Rühle-Gerstel, Kienle appears to conflate women's biological capacity for childbirth with a psychological predisposition to mothering, a distinction that Chodorow is at pains to untangle in *The Reproduction of Mothering.* As I discuss below, Kienle's lack of critical engagement with essentialist ideas about gender difference mirrors the approach of much of the left wing and explains why economic arguments are privileged in Weimar-era writing that advocates legal access to abortion.

The works of Overlach and Kienle use the language of motherhood to promote women's political engagement; such maternalist strategies relocate women's traditionally private role into public space. This process is inverted in several of the discussions in the column 'Wer weiss Rat?' in *Frauenwelt*, in which socialist principles are transported back into the private sphere. The examples from 'Wer weiss Rat?' cited below deal with the interaction between politics and the private sphere, and childcare advice in questions submitted between 1926 and 1927. These discussions show how the political and private were linked, with the socialist movement encouraging mothers, who appear open to modernising their mothering, to incorporate explicitly political perspectives into how they raise their children.

The first example was submitted by a woman whose husband was a party and union functionary. While acknowledging that this activity brought her husband great joy and was important to the workers' movement, the woman complained that the hours he spent away from home due to his political activity was detrimental to their family life (the couple had three school-aged children). She asks: 'Aber wie ist diese Arbeit mit dem Familienleben vereinbar? Weiß vielleicht eine Frau, die sich in gleicher Lage befindet, einen Ausweg?' (Rat, 25 September 1926) This question already reveals the gendered division of labour so prevalent during the Weimar period, with the husband engaging with work and political activity in the public sphere while the wife is focused on private family life. This question also corresponds to the common left-wing assumption that male political activity contrasted with female political naivety or passivity, exemplified in a *Frauenwelt* article entitled 'Um die Republik: Ein Gespräch'. In this article a conversation between a husband and wife is imagined, in which the husband seeks to explain the importance of republicanism to his wife. She initially replies: 'Ich habe dafür keinen

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[66] Grossmann, 'German Women Doctors', p. 71.

Kopf.'[67] This sketch underlines the notion that women need to be educated about politics by their male relatives. The presumed need to educate women about politics can also be seen in the political fiction I analyse in Chapter Three, where I consider further strategies employed to combat women's perceived political naivety.

The responses submitted to this first question in 'Wer weiss Rat?' do little to challenge gender norms. Women's maternal role in the domestic sphere is emphasised, for example by Frau Maria R., who writes: 'Da ist es Sache der Mutter, das Kind zu erziehen, und jeder Augenblick, den das Kind mit dem Vater verbringen kann, ist eine Freude für beide' (Rat, 20 November 1926) while E. W. believes: 'Darunter leidet das Familienleben nicht allzusehr, und die Kindererziehung ist bei Erkenntnis des Notwendigen bei der Frau in guten Händen.' (Rat, 6 November 1926) E. W.'s answer also reflects the most prominent theme in the responses submitted to this question, namely that the husband's political work is important and must be respected by the rest of the family. E. W., whose husband is also a party functionary, writes: 'Es ist aber so, daß die Arbeiterbewegung Leute gebraucht, die nicht nur aus voller Ueberzeugung sich derselben widmen, sondern die auch wirklich befähigt sind, ihr zu dienen und sie zu fördern.' (Rat, 6 November 1926) Several answers also use the language of sacrifice, suggesting that women 'müssen eben dieses Opfer bringen im Interesse der Allgemeinheit' (Rat, 23 October 1926), and remain '– wenn es auch Opfer erfordert – treue Gehilfinnen' (Rat, 23 October 1926). These answers reinforce the idea that political activity is primarily the domain of men and cast women in a supporting role. While these answers are sympathetic to the concerns about family life, they talk of this as a necessary sacrifice to the cause, showing acceptance of the impact of political engagement on the private sphere.

Indeed, other responses even reproach the women for complaining. Frau Erna R., for example, argues that the woman should be proud of her husband and of his trust in her to raise the children without his supervision!

Arme Frau und Mutter, warum klagen Sie so laut? Haben Sie nicht das Bewußtsein, Ihr Mann arbeitet mit an einer großen, guten Sache, an der wir bestrebt sind, alle unser Teil mit beizutragen? Sie sollten stolz sein, daß Ihr Mann in diesem Kampfe steht. Ihre Kinder werden ihm es sicher danken, wenn sie es jetzt vielleicht auch noch nicht verstehen können. Ihr Mann hat sicher das Vertrauen, Ihnen die Erziehung der Kinder allein überlassen zu können. (Rat, 23 October 1926)

This response is clearly reflective of the political perspective of *Frauenwelt*'s editors and of the SPD. Frau Erna R. evokes the notion of a collective struggle in which women must play their

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[67] Hedwig Wachenheim, 'Um die Republik: Ein Gespräch', *Frauenwelt*, 7 March 1925.

(supportive) role. This response, like the answers discussed above, promotes the idea of male political action and women's domestic responsibility, with no answers suggesting that mothers should have the opportunity to spend time participating in political activity outside of the home. Fathers' long absences from the home, combined with the exclusive availability of the mother, underscores the typical prioritisation of class over gender inequality within the SPD and exemplifies the scenarios criticised as damaging for the mental health of women and psychological development of children in the texts considered in Chapter One.

A number of diverging opinions are, however, included in the printed answers, showing that the deferral of family life to the political cause was not universally accepted. E. St., for example, suggests that, if a man intends to fully immerse himself in work, he should not start a family (Rat, 23 October 1926). Like the author of the question, E. St. respects the importance of the political work carried out by the husband but rejects the idea that this must take precedence over family life. Indeed, she argues that family responsibility is part of his socialist duty (Rat, 23 October 1926). The preoccupation with political ideals in the answers chosen for publication reflects *Frauenwelt*'s attempt to promote political engagement among its readership and encourage their support of the political work carried out by their husbands.

In addition to encouraging women's support of politics, the 'Wer weiss Rat?' column also addresses parents' duties and responsibilities in the question of religion. Left-wing criticism of the Church was common; as Melching notes, during the Weimar era many left-wing intellectuals objected to the extent of the Church's societal influence,[68] and, as the following question submitted to 'Wer weiss Rat?' demonstrates, this message was reaching the wider socialist community. Reader P. K. asks whether, having made the decision to leave the Church themselves, P. K. and her husband should also withdraw their daughter. She writes: 'wir haben [unsere Tochter] aber nicht in unseren Austritt aus der Kirche eingeschlossen, weil wir unserem Kinde die selbständige Entscheidung nicht nehmen möchten. Haben wir recht gehandelt oder haben die Recht, die uns Vorwürfe darüber machen, daß wir als Eltern nicht auch unsere Tochter von dem Zwange kirchlicher Bindung befreit haben?' (Rat, 12 March 1927)

In comparison to the above question, this query prompted less debate and fewer answers. This indicates greater consensus among the readership of *Frauenwelt*, less interest in the topic, or less willingness among the editors to countenance alternative views about the role (or lack thereof) that religion should have in the upbringing of socialist children. Only one respondent, Th. H. agrees that P. K. and her husband made the right decision (Rat, 9 April 1927). Th. H. argues that with proper upbringing, P. K.'s daughter will be well placed to make

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[68] Willem Melching, ''A New Morality': Left-wing Intellectuals on Sexuality in Weimar Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25.1 (1991), 69-85 (p. 75).

important decisions independently. The other answers, however, disagree. A. S. and T. V. both argue that P. K. and her husband did not let their daughter independently make the decision to join the Church and therefore dismiss P.K.'s suggestion that the daughter should be left to decide whether to leave alone (Rat, 23 April 1927). T. V., for example, writes: 'Es ist also m. E. Ihre Pflicht, nachdem Sie Ihre Tochter ohne ihre selbständige Entscheidung in die Kirche haben aufnehmen lassen, sie auch jetzt, nachdem Sie sich über deren Ziele klar geworden sind, aus ihr abzumelden' (Rat, 9 April 1927). T. V.'s reference to duty seeks to shut down further discussion of this question by presenting the solution as self-evident. Furthermore, T.V. references socialist criticisms of the Church in her answer, noting that the aims of the Church are contrary to socialist goals. This comment recalls Overlach's criticisms of the attitudes and priorities of the Church in *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute* and reflects explicit criticism of the leadership of both the Catholic and Protestant churches in Kienle's *Frauen* (EK, pp. 140-42).

Modelling Modern Socialist Mothering

The willingness of the socialist women who responded to questions posed via 'Wer weiss Rat?' to incorporate political perspectives into their mothering, reveals that, while traditional gendered divisions of labour remained largely unchallenged in the Weimar-era socialist movement, left-wing women were actively seeking to construct a new model of mothering for their generation. This is particularly pronounced in the discussions and practical advice around mothering in *Frauenwelt* and the frequent references to developments in psychoanalysis. The focus on theory shows that women were actively reflecting on their mothering practices and looking beyond the advice of their own mothers to inform the way they raised their children.

This is exemplified in two questions submitted to 'Wer weiss Rat?' regarding appropriate stories to tell children in order to raise them in line with socialist values. The first question, submitted by R. L., relates to advice she has been given to raise her children in a secular environment. As Christmas is approaching, she asks: 'Sollen wir wirklich die alten schönen Lieder nicht mehr singen und die alten schönen Märchen nicht mehr erzählen?' (Rat, 18 December 1926) Similarly, the second question, submitted by Lu. O., seeks suggestions for stories to read her two young daughters and games to play with them: 'Die alten Märchen vom „Bauchaufschlitzen", „bösen Stiefmüttern", „schönen Prinzen" und „guten Königen" wollen mir für die Phantasie des Kindes nicht von Vorteil erscheinen. Sie sollen das Glück nicht immer im Unerreichbaren suchen. Also: Was erzählen wir? Was spielen wir?' (Rat, 21 May 1927) These two questions approach the introduction of politics into the private sphere in a positive light. The responses received to these two questions, however, fail to present a strong consensus about the best approaches to storytelling with young children. Indeed, the editors included a

note when closing responses to the first question that a full postal bag of unprinted letters remained in response to this question, which would be forwarded to R. L. The editors comment that the volume of responses are 'ein Beweis, wie wichtig [diese Frage] für uns ist.' (Rat, 26 February 1927) This signals that women felt that they possessed expertise in child raising, which they were keen to share with their fellow readers. While this is a demonstration of female support and solidarity, it remains rooted in traditional gendered divisions of labour.

The practical responses to these questions include information about a new volume of Christmas songs, available 'in der betreffenden Volksbuchhandlung' as well as socialist publications of fairy tales ('am besten bei T. H. W. Dietz') sent in by a reader signed as 'Th. Ad.', who also suggests that R. L. could make up stories with her children (Rat, 12 February 1927). The idea of inventing stories is echoed in several other responses (Rat, 16 July 1927, 18 June 1927). In answer to the second question, I. F. also suggests a detailed list of specific authors and stories which are suitable for children in a socialist household. This list includes Hermynia Zur Mühlen's collection *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* (Rat, 18 June 1927). Two further examples of Zur Mühlen's writing for a young readership, *Lina: Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens* and *Kleine Leute* are analysed in Chapter Three. These suggestions demonstrate that politically engaged women were seeking to incorporate their political perspectives into the way they raised their children and were turning to left-wing publications for advice. In addition to the magazines discussed in this chapter, Alice Rühle-Gerstel and her husband, Otto Rühle, produced a magazine entitled *Das proletarische Kind*, which included advice to support parents in raising class conscious children. The range of books suggested by *Frauenwelt*'s readers implies that socialist literature for children was reaching its intended audience.

There were also calls among the answers for the development of socialist culture, which would make it easier for socialist families to reject religious celebrations. Hedwig S., for example, argues that the socialist movement must engender its own culture with the same artistic value as the old, well-known Christmas songs (Rat, 26 February 1927), while A. W. similarly suggests: 'Zu unserm Kampf gehört nach meiner Ansicht vor allen Dingen auch die Erziehung der Kinder im Sinne einer neuen Festkultur. [...] Wir müssen den Mut haben, die Gedankenruinen aus unserer kleinbürgerlichen Vergangenheit zu beseitigen' (Rat, 15 Jaunary 1927). The appetite for socialist cultural production further reveals the willingness of *Frauenwelt*'s readership to introduce politics into the private sphere.

Despite the positive views expressed above, a number of other respondents resisted the rejection of traditional fairy tales. F. Sch emphasises that fairy tales are about the morals and encourages others to see the message behind the characters: 'Warum sollten wir als echte Republikaner unsern Kindern nicht Märchen und Weihnachtslieder erzählen, die von Prinzessinnen und Königen handeln? [...] Die Märchen aus uralten Zeiten sind Sinnbilder, in

denen die Prinzessinnen und Könige das gute Prinzip darstellen' (Rat, 12 February 1927).
Hedwig S., despite her opposition to Christmas songs, also concedes that fairy tales are based in
a fantasy world and that the message of the story should be emphasised to children (Rat, 26
February 1927). These responses demonstrate that there was little consensus among socialist
women about the specific ways in which politics should be introduced explicitly into child
raising, although they all agree that political perspectives should be born in mind.

While readers exchanged advice on the topic of storytelling via 'Wer weiss Rat?',
Frauenwelt facilitated less debate on the subject of managing children's behaviour. *Frauenwelt*
instead presented itself as an authority on the management of children's behaviour, including
contributions from experts in their fields and appealing to psychoanalytic theories to educate
women about their children's development. The positioning of the magazine as a source of
authority reveals a contradiction underscored by Elisabeth Badinter in *The Myth of Motherhood*.
In her discussion of psychoanalysis in the post-World War Two context, Badinter notes that
psychoanalysts presented themselves as experts in raising children, publishing popular manuals
to educate mothers about the topic, while simultaneously promoting the notion of women's
inherent maternal instinct.[69] This tension is exhibited in *Frauenwelt*, which both appeals to
idealised notions of female particularity and seeks to influence mothering practices by
suggesting that women require instruction in this area. Experts, including education theorists
Henny Schumacher and Heinrich Schulz and paediatrician Dr Edith Rosenkranz, contributed to
the regular column 'Die Kunst des Erziehens' to provide advice on topics such as the importance
of patience and encouragement, thereby reinforcing conventional notions of the ideal mother as
caring and mild-tempered. For example, Heinrich Schulz argues in his article 'Nicht immer
schelten!' that children are already aware of their weaknesses, and that parents should
therefore avoid further berating children for their faults: 'Nicht immer mußt du lärmend
schelten, du mußt auch mit milder Freundlichkeit, auch mit einem lächelnden Stirnrunzeln
erziehen können.'[70] Indeed, the ineffectiveness of strict discipline is a recurring theme in 'Die
Kunst des Erziehens', appearing in the articles 'Die schmutzige Schürze', in which young Gerda
is so fearful of being punished after accidentally damaging her pinafore that she lies to her
mother, [71] 'Eine kleine aber „moralische" Geschichte', in which Elli Müller-Rau argues that
threatening misbehaving children with the police (a tactic she claims mothers use to stop their
children from causing a public scene) leads to children's later uncritical acceptance of

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[69] Elisabeth Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct*, trans. by Roger DeGaris (London: Souvenir, 1981), p. 274.
[70] Heinrich Schulz, 'Die Kunst des Erziehens: Nicht immer schelten!', *Frauenwelt*, no. 17, n.d. 1924.
[71] 'Die Kunst des Erziehens: Die schmutzige Schürze', *Frauenwelt*, no. 20, n.d. November 1924.

authority,[72] and 'Wie ein Kind artig wird', in which Henny Schumacher writes that smacking children leads them to withdraw into themselves: 'Von nun an ist er Nachahmer. Eine Nummer. Ein Maschinenteilchen'.[73] Schumacher continues her criticism of physical punishment in 'Das eigensinnige Peterl', in which she argues that hitting children has long-lasting psychological consequences: 'Haß und Menschenverachtung sind nun geweckt. Der Glaube an die Güte der Menschen weicht zum Mißtrauen und der Verachtung. Nun ahnt man überall Ungerechtigkeit. Bitterkeit wird wach.'[74] These articles emphasise that smacking and threatening children is counterproductive and incompatible with the aims of socialist upbringing, as it prevents children from becoming independent, critical thinkers who can imagine a better (implicitly socialist) future.

The advice against strict discipline and physical punishment was clearly adopted by many socialist women, as evidenced in the answers submitted to questions regarding behaviour in 'Wer weiss Rat?'. Three questions regarding child behaviour were submitted to 'Wer weiss Rat?' in the three years before 'Elisabeth' began responding to questions. The first was submitted anonymously and concerned the reader's thirteen-year-old son, whose behaviour had become violent towards other children and animals. She asks: 'Soll ich ihn strafen und wie?' (Rat, 9 October 1926) The second and third questions, submitted by readers M. O. and E. R. respectively, seek advice about their toddlers' aggressive behaviour. E. R. emphasises that she does not want to resort to hitting her son (Rat, 16 July 1927). Almost all printed responses to these questions stress that the mothers should react to their children's behaviour with patience. For example, G. M. advises the first questioner that: 'Bestrafung würde den Zustand des Jungen noch verschärfen' (Rat, 4 December 1926). This sentiment is echoed by Sophie H., who writes: 'Durch Schläge jedoch würde er nur noch roher und verstockter.' (Rat, 20 November 1926) These responses demonstrate women's rejection of previous models of child raising which permitted physical punishment but reiterate their acceptance of a model of mothering based on patience, love and care.

The answers to the first question in particular also reveal readers' familiarity with advances in psychoanalysis, with two respondents advising the mother to take her son to see a psychiatrist (Rat, 20 November 1926). The editors also include a response from Dr. Julian Marcuse, a psychologist and regular contributor to *Frauenwelt*, which directs the questioner towards Alfred Adler's theory of Individual Psychology, of which Alice Rühle-Gerstel was an

[72] Elli Müller-Rau, 'Die Kunst des Erziehens: Eine kleine, aber „moralische" Geschichte', *Frauenwelt*, 2 July 1927.

[73] Henny Schumacher, 'Die Kunst des Erziehens: Wie ein Kind „artig" wird', *Frauenwelt*, 9 February 1929.

[74] Henny Schumacher, 'Die Kunst des Erziehens: Das eigensinnige Peterl', *Frauenwelt*, 13 July 1929.

adherent.[75] Marcuse's reference to Adler demonstrates that his theory was circulating beyond the academic working groups to which Rühle-Gerstel belonged. Marcuse suggests that the son is suffering from a *Minderwertigkeitsgefühl* and advises: 'nur durch Güte, dauernde Belehrung und Erweckung des Gemeinschaftsgefühls ist Abhilfe zu schaffen' (Rat, 6 November 1926).

The inclusion of Dr. Marcuse's response forms part of *Frauenwelt*'s positioning of itself as an authority on socialist mothering, with his medical title lending credibility and authority to his opinion. Furthermore, the editors included a critical response to I. T.'s suggestion about managing toddlers' behaviour, again establishing the editors as experts in relation to the 'amateur' readers. I. T. writes that giving the toddler a slap on the back of the hand to demonstrate that this hurts (and therefore is bad behaviour) should be sufficient to prevent the child from continuing to hit others. A short note from the editors follows this response: 'Wir veröffentlichen auch diese Zuschrift, möchten aber betonen, daß die Erziehung des Kleinkindes unter Umständen – gerade von unserem Standpunkt aus – doch schwieriger ist, als es der Einsenderin wohl erscheint' (Rat, 15 January 1927). The editors' intervention undermines I. T. and creates a hierarchy between the advice sent in by readers and that published in the rest of the magazine.

The reservations about I.T.'s response were not the first time *Frauenwelt*'s editors had contradicted readers' views on this topic. In 1925 the magazine printed a series of readers' letters received in response to an article by Eva Klaar entitled 'Mutter, deine liebe Hand…'. Klaar's article evokes the enduring psychological impact of corporal punishment: 'das Selbstgefühl deines Kindes hast du zermürbt, erschlagen in jenen Augenblicken, das Selbstgefühl und Kraftbewußtsein, das es im Leben brauchte und das es sich mühsam dann nach Jahren erst wieder zurück eroberte.'[76] Klaar appeals to increasing public awareness of advances in psychoanalysis and theories of childhood development to persuade readers of the dangers of corporal punishment. Klaar's article prompted a substantial response from readers, whose letters were published throughout June, July and August 1925. While many readers agreed that corporal punishment should be avoided, a small number of readers suggested instances in which it may be appropriate. Where such views were published, the editors added a note highlighting their objection.[77] Thus, while inviting women to share their opinions on the topic, the editors made their own stance on corporal punishment clear and sought to influence the mothering practices of their readership. This substantiates Kinnebrock's assertion that, in

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[75] The response is signed 'Dr Julian M, Nervenarzt'. Given Marcuse's regular contributions to the publication and inclusion of his medical specialism, It can be assumed that he is the author of this response.

[76] Eva Klaar, 'Mutter, deine liebe Hand…', *Frauenwelt*, no. 9, n.d. 1925.

[77] 'Prügel', *Frauenwelt*, no. 14, n.d. July 1925; 'Prügel', *Frauenwelt*, no. 18, n.d. August 1925.

comparison to the pre-World War One period, debate was not encouraged in the Weimar-era women's press.[78] I build on Kinnebrock's analysis to demonstrate that these magazines not only sought to influence women's electoral behaviour but also their daily mothering practices.

Following the 1928 editorial decision to publish answers written by 'Elisabeth' to all questions submitted to 'Wer weiss Rat?', the element of debate among readers was largely lost. 'Elisabeth' was a pseudonym of the magazine editor, Toni Sender, although it is unclear whether all answers were written exclusively by Sender herself and, on some occasions, answers continued to be attributed to other respondents. Following this change, typically just one answer was published to each question, preventing the readership exchanging ideas and sharing their own expertise. Despite refusing to take responsibility for areas designated as 'women's issues' in the Reichstag due to her lack of direct experience in these areas, Sender appeared happy to offer advice on these topics to *Frauenwelt*'s readership. After the change of format in 'Wer weiss Rat?', an increasing number of practical household queries were included in the column such as 'Wie macht man ein amerikanisches Ziegenfell wieder locker und ansehlich?' (Rat, 26 January 1929) or 'Wie reinigt man am besten Bücher, ohne das Papier dabei anzugreifen[?]' (Rat, 21 March 1931). Readers did nevertheless continue to submit questions on similar themes to those seen in the earlier editions of 'Wer weiss Rat?', such as Ilsa A's request for advice on how to overcome a disagreement with her husband about whether they should hit their child when he misbehaves. (Rat, 12 January 1929) Ilsa A is reluctant, perhaps influenced by earlier discussions in *Frauenwelt* and citing her own negative experiences of corporal punishment as a child. Elisabeth's answer confirms this approach, writing: 'Zum Erziehen braucht man Liebe, Geduld, Humor und Konsequenz.' (Rat, 26 January 1929). At Ilsa A's request, Elisabeth also provides a list of suggested reading, including work by Otto Rühle, Alice Rühle-Gerstel's husband. By pointing the reader to authoritative sources of information, Elisabeth's answer closes the topic, presenting her answer as the 'correct' one and leaving no room for debate among the readership. The majority of answers submitted by readers address the questioner in the formal 'Sie' form, yet Elisabeth uses the informal 'du' address. While this may have been intended to create the impression of a discussion among friends, it also reflects the somewhat patronising tone of *Frauenwelt* towards its readership, which was already evident in the decision to change the format of 'Wer weiss Rat?' to include answers from Elisabeth.

Despite relying on conventional notions of the ideal mother, these examples demonstrate that socialist women attempted to incorporate new ideas into their mothering. Their willingness to change their mothering practices also reveals an implicit criticism of the

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[78] Kinnebrock, 'Politikvermittlung durch Frauenzeitschriften?', p. 293.

parenting of previous generations and alludes to more widespread intergenerational tensions during the Weimar period that I explore in greater detail in Chapter Four. New knowledge gained from the expansion of psychoanalytic study is cited as a key factor in the need for mothers to adopt different strategies to those of the previous generation. This is made explicit in an article from 1925 entitled 'Die Großmütter in der Erziehung' that appeared in the regular column 'Die Kunst des Erziehens'. The unnamed author writes:

Viele junge Arbeitermütter machen sich heute, unterstützt durch Elternbeiratstätigkeit, zum erstenmal ernste Gedanken über Erziehung, sie versuchen ein planmäßiges Wirken, wo unsere Mütter nur das primitive Rezept von Zuckerbrot und Peitsche anwenden konnten, weil sie es nicht anders kannten.[79]

While the author criticises the mothering of previous generations, thereby creating a generational divide in women's mothering practices, she is careful to blame a lack of knowledge and education, rather than the poor intentions of women themselves. This article also underlines the tensions in *Frauenwelt*'s presentation of mothering; by referencing parental advice provisions (*Elternbeiratstätigkeit*), the author exposes the contradictions between society's expectation that mothering is carried out in the private sphere by women but also that women require public education to mother in the most effective and modern way. The author suggests that friction between generations of mothers can be overcome if young mothers explain the aims of new methods to the older generation 'mit Geduld und voll Eindringlichkeit'.[80]

Although this author is positive about the potential for harmonious intergenerational relationships, discussions in 'Wer weiss Rat?' expose continued tensions. For example, in one question, a grandmother's inability to understand modern parenting techniques is presented as the cause of conflict. The anonymous question relates to a recent event in which the questioner's son laughed when his grandmother alluded to the stork bringing children (the questioner had already explained to her son how children were born) and the grandmother responded angrily to the child's perceived insolence: 'Darob große Empörung wegen des „frechen und vorlauten" Kindes unter Androhung einer Handgreiflichkeit, gegen die ich natürlich eingeschritten wäre.' (Rat, 6 November 1926) The questioner's early explanation of reproduction to her child reflects a trend of *Aufklärung*, as social taboos relaxed, and which feminists, particularly of the Sexual Reform movement supported as a means to protect women

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[79] 'Die Kunst des Erziehens: Die Großmütter in der Erziehung', *Frauenwelt*, no. 24, n.d. November 1925.
[80] Ibid.

from sexual harm or exploitation by equipping them with knowledge about reproduction.[81] The majority of answers submitted to this question support the questioner's approach and acknowledge the generational conflicts caused by changing theories of child raising. For example, Elisabeth H. underlines that mothering practices were changing: 'Wir müssen daran denken, daß wir in einer neuen Zeit leben.' (Rat, 4 December 1926) Similarly, Ch. Kr. writes: 'Wir stehen an der Wende zwischen der alten und der neuen Zeit' (Rat, 4 December 1926), while advising the mother to continue to follow her convictions about the best way to raise her child. This sentiment is reinforced by Ila and Hanna Sch., with the latter advising the author of the question: 'lassen Sie sich in Ihrer Erziehung von niemand, selbst von Ihren Eltern nicht, beeinflussen' (Rat, 18 December 1926). This demonstrates widespread adoption of emerging advice about upbringing among the readership of *Frauenwelt* and highlights a willingness among women to change the ways in which they mother, while maintaining the expectation that parenting was primarily a task for women.

Frauenwelt presented itself as an authority of modern socialist mothering and brought developments in pedagogy and psychoanalysis to the attention of its readership. The discussions in 'Wer weiss Rat?' show that women were receptive to this advice and made conscious attempts to modernise the ways in which they mother to take account of both political perspectives and psychoanalytic developments. Nevertheless, despite willingness to adapt mothering practices, a more radical reallocation of domestic labour is not mooted and assumptions of women's primary responsibility for childcare remain largely unchallenged.

Part Two: Challenging the Status Quo: Support for Radical Changes to Women's Rights

Access to Abortion

While assumptions of women's mothering were not dismantled in mainstream left-wing publications during the Weimar years, these same publications nevertheless strongly advocated greater freedoms and rights for women to choose when and how they mother. Paragraph 218 of the Weimar penal code was the subject of widespread debate during the Weimar era, as the discussion of Rühle-Gerstel's work has shown. Arguments in favour of legal access to abortion were also put forward strongly in Else Kienle's *Frauen* and Helene Overlach's *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute*, and Paragraph 218 was a recurring theme in the left-wing and women's press, forming the basis of standalone articles and journalistic series such Maria Leitner's collection of

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[81] See, for example: Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), p. 269.

articles entitled 'Wo gibt es Hilfe? Opfer und Schmarotzer um den §218', which appeared in the socialist daily newspaper *Volks-Zeitung für das Vogtland* in 1931.

The justifications for liberalising abortion laws can be divided into two key groups; first, the 'moral' arguments, which draw on examples of sexual violence or women's ill-health, and second, the 'social' arguments, which seek to demonstrate how the economic conditions of the Weimar era have a detrimental impact on women's ability to mother. The arguments remain rooted in notions of gender difference and women's natural mothering instincts, suggesting that women's decisions to terminate pregnancies are forced on them by external factors rather than based simply on a personal desire not to mother. This signals the continued attachment to essentialist ideas of gender among the left-wing movements of the Weimar era, despite their more radical support for women's right to choose the circumstances under which they become mothers.

Helene Overlach presents a number of scenarios in her pamphlet to advance a 'moral' argument for legalising abortion. Overlach criticises the fact that abortion is a criminal offence: 'auch dann, wenn das Leben der Mutter in schwerer Gefahr ist, auch dann, wenn die Mutter krank oder idiotisch ist, oder durch eins der scheußlichsten Verbrechen, durch Notzucht, schwanger geworden ist!' (HO, pp. 8-9) Overlach thus argues that the law is too rigid and should make allowances for the extreme circumstances she references. Her examples also reflect eugenic ideas that circulated among branches of the women's movement in the early twentieth century in service of securing women's greater reproductive autonomy.[82] Overlach's criticism is directed at the leadership of the Church and Christian political parties, and, in her attempts to appeal to Christian women, she leaves idealised notions of mothering intact, does not explicitly call for the legalisation of abortion in all cases, and instead suggests that abortion may be required in certain extreme scenarios as a last resort, in order to protect women.

Kienle's *Frauen* similarly offers a range of scenarios under which a woman may seek to terminate her pregnancy. Several of these reflect a 'moral' argument in favour of allowing abortions, most notably a case Kienle narrates in the chapter 'Blutschande', in which a teenaged girl becomes pregnant after being raped by her father. After repeated physical abuse, the mother blockades the father out of their bedroom and, when he returns home drunk and is unable to enter his own bedroom, the father instead attacks his daughter in the adjacent room. Kienle writes: 'Und nun würden sie alle drei nebeneinander auf der Anklagebank sitzen: der verbrecherische Vater, das halbe Kind, das nicht Mutter geworden war, und die Mutter, die ihr

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[82] See, for example: Charlotte Woodford, *Women, Emancipation and the German Novel 1871-1910: Protest Fiction in its Cultural Context* (London: Legenda, 2014), pp. 133-34; Richard J Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933* (London: Sage), pp. 120-23.

dabei geholfen hatte.' (EK, p. 111) Kienle makes clear in this description of the family that she considers only the father to have acted criminally. She further emphasises the innocence of the daughter by underlining her young age and of the mother by stressing that she was only protecting her daughter. By citing an extreme case in which the terminated pregnancy was the result of crime, Kienle seeks to undermine arguments which state that abortion should be illegal in all instances.

This case also illustrates an example of female solidarity in the face of male violence. The mother initially tries to protect the daughter from knowing about the father's violence and is unaware that the daughter hears the father's attacks through the wall. The daughter, in return, tries to support her mother: 'Sie traute sich nicht, der Mutter zu sagen, daß sie alles wisse. Aber mit kleinen, unbeholfenen Zärtlichkeiten versuchte sie, ihr Trost zu geben.' (EK, p. 110) After the father's attack on the daughter, the bond between the two women strengthens and 'sie blieben Schwestern' (EK, p. 111). The solidarity between women is based on shared experiences of male violence that overcomes generational divides and demonstrates the feminist perspective present in Kienle's text.

Furthermore, Kienle argues that strict abortion laws are responsible for preventable deaths and cause suffering to mothers and their children. She gives examples of cases in which women have died or suffered permanent health consequences as a result of attempting to terminate pregnancies themselves. For instance: 'Der gewollte Erfolg war da. Die Leibesfrucht war beseitigt. Aber die verätzten Stellen im Magen und Darm wollten nur schwer heilen. Sie war zu einer siechen Frau geworden.' (*EK*, p.122) Kienle's examples demonstrate how ineffective the abortion ban is; it fails to prevent women terminating pregnancies and leads to avoidable suffering. She asserts that the legalisation of abortion in all cases would in fact protect women and children, those that the existing laws claim to safeguard, and thereby exposes the hypocrisy inherent in the prevailing approach to women's reproductive rights and choices.

Maria Leitner echoes these arguments in 'Wo gibt es Hilfe? Opfer und Schmarotzer um den §218'. Leitner's short story *Mädchen mit drei Namen* is analysed in Chapter Three and further details of Leitner's life, work and political activity can be found in the introduction of that chapter. In 'Wo gibt es Hilfe?', Leitner's ironic repetition of the phrase 'Ja, heilige Mutterschaft!'[83] emphasises the hypocrisy of society's treatment of motherhood. Like Kienle, Leitner underlines the dangerous consequences of the unsafe, amateur abortions that the existing law forces women to undergo:

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[83] Maria Leitner, 'Wo gibt es Hilfe? Opfer und Schmarotzer um den §218', in *Mädchen mit drei Namen: Reportagen aus Deutschland und ein Berliner Roman 1928-1933*, ed. by Helga Schwarz and Wilfried Schwarz, (Berlin: Aviva, 2013), pp. 63-92 (pp. 72-73).

Das Risiko haben die Frauen. Sie alle begleichen die Rechnung. Nicht nur, weil man ihnen Gefängnis in Aussicht stellt, wenn sie nach eigenen Gutdünken über ihren Körper verfügen wollen, sondern vielmehr, weil man sie Kurpfuschern, Nichtskönnern, Wucherern ausliefert, die ihre Gesundheit oft für immer schädigen, sie unfruchtbar machen, ja sie töten.[84]

Leitner presents a 'moral' argument for the legalisation of abortion here by emphasising the risks to women's health over the threat of criminal prosecution. Like Kienle, she argues that, since the law does not stop women attempting to terminate pregnancies, the procedure should be legalised in order to ensure it can be performed safely. Leitner also adopts a feminist perspective in this passage by showing that women are put at risk and disadvantaged by the law in a way that men are not.

The second key set of arguments, the 'social' case, for the legalisation of abortion represents the strategy used most prominently by the socialist and communist movements during the Weimar period and is based primarily on economic considerations. Typically the social argument for allowing abortion draws on the example of women who already have multiple children and are financially, physically and emotionally unable to have more. Kienle cites several such examples and, in so doing, underlines that women do not terminate pregnancies because they reject motherhood. The most extreme example cited by Kienle is that of Frau Rahmer, who already has eleven children. Kienle argues that forcing Frau Rahmer to continue her twelfth pregnancy risks the welfare of her first eleven children: 'Sie wollte das Kind nicht. Und sie würde es nicht austragen. Um der elf anderen willen mußte das zwölfte beseitigt werden. Aber das Gesetz kümmerte sich nicht um diese elf anderen Kinder: Das Gesetz verlangte die zwölfte Mutterschaft unter allen Umständen.' (EK, p. 128) Showing how limitations to abortion provisions endanger children, Kienle attempts to make abortion acceptable to opponents who viewed it as an attack on an unborn child. This argument evokes idealised notions of the 'good mother' who prioritises the well-being of her children. Mirroring the arguments of the socialist women's movement, Kienle highlights the financial hardship which makes caring for another child impossible: 'Frau Rahmer war oft nicht in der Lage, ihren Kindern auch nur ein paar Scheiben trocken [sic] Brot zu geben.' (EK, p. 128)

Tapping into wider public discourses that are present in almost all of the primary sources analysed in this thesis, Kienle also engages with psychological ideas in her discussion of abortion. In the case of Anna M. she shows how physical ill health and financial hardship can impact on the psychological welfare of women and repeats her argument that preventing women from accessing safe, legal abortions is damaging to them and to their children. While

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[84] Maria Leitner, 'Wo gibt es Hilfe?', p. 64.

Anna M. is able to obtain a legal abortion due to her ill health (which Kienle implies is exacerbated by the family's economic struggles), Kienle emphasises that existing laws are too limiting: 'Schlimmer als die körperlichen Beschwerden noch war das Bewußtsein, ein zweites, unerwünschtes Leben in sich zu tragen. Was sollte denn aus ihr, aus diesem zweiten, - aus dem ersten Kinde werden? [...] sie [durfte] das lebende Kind nicht durch das ungeborene gefährden.' (EK, pp. 85-86) Kienle's writing here briefly adopts a stream-of-consciousness style to reflect the psychological stress caused to Anna M. by her unwanted pregnancy. By emphasising the well-being of Anna M.'s two-year-old child, Kienle again suggests that the hurdles to accessing safe abortions are counterproductive; instead of protecting children, as they claim to do, their focus on protecting an unborn child risks endangering the welfare of older children.

Kienle's brings her left-wing perspectives to the fore by asserting that working-class women are disproportionately impacted by Paragraph 218 (EK, pp. 131-36). Furthermore, Kienle criticises the political motivations of industrial leaders who oppose the liberalisation of abortion laws due to, she claims, their sector's reliance on cheap labour. She notes that a capitalist economy (although she avoids using the word 'capitalist' despite employing socialist language in her reference to the 'Proletariat') is built on the exploitation of the working-classes: 'Der heutigen Welt ist der Wunsch nach möglichst zahlreichen Proletariern angeboren, einerlei, ob sie mit ihnen etwas anfangen, ob sie für sie auch nur notdürftig sorgen kann.' (EK, p. 139)

Moreover, both Kienle and Leitner contrast the possibility for wealthy young women to gain advice regarding contraception and safe abortions from their doctor with the lack of information available to working-class women and girls. While this assertion is politically useful, as the authors underscore the connection between reproductive health and financial means, Cornelie Usborne calls this claim into question in *Cultures of Abortion*, writing that women were better informed about, and took greater control of, their reproductive choices than left-wing publications implied.[85] Highlighting class differences, Leitner, for example, describes a conversation between two wealthy women outside a clinic, in which one says that she enjoyed her stay and both laugh. Leitner comments: 'Wie atmet man hier ruhig in dieser Welt der strengen Gesetzlichkeit und Sauberkeit.'[86] Leitner stresses the significant reduction in the risk of legal or health complications for aborting women at the expensive clinic and thus provides a strong contrast between the experiences of wealthy women and those with limited financial means forced to rely on unsafe backstreet abortion providers. Similarly, Kienle underlines the consequences of social inequality for working-class women:

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[85] Usborne, *Cultures of Abortion*, pp. 24-25.
[86] Leitner, 'Wo gibt es Hilfe?', p. 92.

Auf diese Art treibt der Staat selbst besonders die armen und unwissenden Frauen zur Abtreibung. Weil sie den leichten, sauberen Weg der Verhütung nicht kennenlernen können, müssen sie später die bitteren Leiden, die Gefahren und die Schmach der Unterbrechung durchmachen. (EK, p. 148)

This scenario is played out in Elfriede Brüning's novel *Kleine Leute*, which I discuss in Chapter Three, and Vicki Baum's *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*, analysed in Chapter Four. Again, Kienle highlights how counterproductive and unjust existing laws governing women's reproductive rights and health are.

Overlach likewise discusses abortion in the context of shared class experiences, writing: 'Mit zermalmender Härte trifft der Abtreibungsparagraph die arbeitenden Frauen und Mädchen in Stadt und Land.' (HO, p. 8) She demonstrates that this issue cuts across geographical location to affect all working-class women and girls and appeals to the notion of class solidarity. Unlike Kienle, Overlach avoids wider discussion of women's reproductive rights and personal autonomy. She focuses instead on economic factors, echoing left-wing arguments that largely rested on the economic and social circumstances which prevent women from mothering as they would (apparently) wish to and thereby fails to challenge essentialist ideas about women's mothering.

Kienle, by contrast, goes beyond socialist criticism to introduce an explicitly feminist perspective into her discussion of Paragraph 218. Kienle argues that, as abortion is a gendered issue, men cannot understand or pass judgement on women's decisions. Kienle uses rhetorical questions to prompt her readership to consider the issue of abortion from the perspective of women who terminate their pregnancies. For example, in the case of Erna Kroll, whose boyfriend leaves her while she is pregnant when he is presented with the opportunity to marry a woman from a wealthier family, Kienle's feminist perspective is clear as she highlights how women are burdened with responsibilities in a way in which men are not: 'War denn ihr Tun verderblicher oder gemeiner gewesen als das des Mannes, der sie ins Elend gebracht hatte?' (EK, p. 103) Kienle's use of these pointed questions encourages her readers to reflect on the unjust, gendered consequences of the existing abortion laws.

Like Overlach, Kienle is critical of the Church's approach to women's autonomy and reproductive rights. While Overlach focuses on the hypocrisy of the Church's leadership, recalling also Rühle-Gerstel's arguments about society's hypocritical treatment of mothers, Kienle's approach remains centred on gender hierarchy more broadly. Referencing the 1931 papal Encyclical, she writes: 'Bei allem Respekt vor der geistigen Kraft einer so alten und erfahrenen Institution, wie es die katholische Kirche ist: So können nur Männer reden und schreiben, die niemals die Fülle des grauenhaften Elends aus nächster Nähe gesehen haben' (EK, p. 141). The exclusively male leadership of the Church, according to Kienle, prevents them being

able to pass informed judgement on aborting women. Kienle's criticism of the Church locates her writing within a broader left-wing tradition of challenging the social authority of religious leaders.

In the final chapter of *Frauen*, Kienle proposes a number of measures to improve the status and rights of women. While her proposed changes do not include the radical restructuring of society that Rühle-Gerstel advocates in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, Kienle's proposals are rooted in left-wing and feminist ideas. For instance, Kienle argues that laws must reflect the contemporary lived reality and take into account extreme financial hardship. She argues that divorce should be easier, that there should be legal, free access to contraception, and that women undergoing an abortion should receive the same rights and financial compensation as women on maternity leave (EK, pp. 153-54). These proposals foreground the rights and protection of women, yet remain rooted in ideas of gender difference referencing women's 'besonder[e] körperlich[e] Aufgaben' (EK, p. 154) Kienle thus leaves notions of women's maternal duty and natural propensity for motherhood unchallenged, mirroring both the mainstream of the socialist movement and elements of the bourgeois women's movement, rather than Rühle-Gerstel's radical perspectives.

Single Mothers and Illegitimate Children

A second aspect of women's reproductive rights that received sustained attention in left-wing non-fiction writing during the Weimar period was the rights of single mothers and their illegitimate children. *Unehelichkeit* was a recurring theme in several women's magazines and newspapers from the period, including *Frauenwelt*, and its predecessor *Die Gleichheit*, communist-affiliated *Der Weg der Frau* and the BfM's journal *Die neue Generation*. The women's press tended to take a practical approach to *Unehelichkeit*, alerting women to their rights and campaigning for further changes to the law. Practical legal advice was frequently included for single mothers, for example, in the regular column in *Der Weg der Frau* entitled 'Du und das Recht'. By contrast, Else Kienle takes a more philosophical approach in *Frauen* to foreground the social ostracisation of unmarried mothers and echoes a number of Alice Rühle-Gerstel's arguments in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, which, as discussed in Chapter One, highlight society's hypocritical treatment of motherhood.

Kienle, like Rühle-Gerstel, emphasises the impact of prevalent images of mothers, arguing that the idealisation of motherhood crosses historical periods and geographical locations:

Die Dichter aller Völker haben die heilige Fruchtbarkeit besungen. Ihr gelten die tiefsten Mythen, die heiligsten Riten aller Religionen. Vom ver sacer, dem Feste der

frühlingsglücklichen Befruchtung, bis zur glücklichen Gottesmutter Maria, von den uralten Mutterschaftsvorschriften der Primitiven bis zu den Schutzbestimmungen des russischen neuen Rechts für Wöchnerinnen – immer wurde die geheiligte Fruchtbarkeit als ein Geschenk Gottes oder der Natur gehegt und geachtet. (EK, p. 80)

Thus, Kienle demonstrates how embedded these ideas are and, through her reference to 'holy' motherhood and (unsubstantiated) identification of the centrality of motherhood in 'all religions', alludes to the strength of feeling and emotional responses to ideas about women's mothering. Like Rühle-Gerstel, Kienle identifies the influence of the ruling classes on social ideals: 'Mutterschaft – sie ist für die herrschende Gesellschaftsmoral eines der unbestrittenen und absoluten Ideale.' (EK, p. 76)

Further mirroring Rühle-Gerstel, Kienle seeks to demonstrate the damaging impact of society's apparent glorification of motherhood, highlighting the suffering that can be caused by the promotion of motherhood within marriage as the only acceptable model. The overlapping arguments in the works of Rühle-Gerstel and Kienle signal that these authors were engaging in a wider public conversation and seeking to influence the discourses of motherhood. In the chapter 'Eine höhere Tochter', Kienle illustrates the story of Irmgard König, a young woman from an upper-middle-class family who begins a relationship with a mechanic. Although they intend to marry (to the disapproval of her family), he is killed in a motor racing accident while Irmgard is pregnant. Upon revealing her pregnancy and intention to become a single mother to her family, Irmgard immediately becomes an outcast: 'Vier Wochen lang kämpfte Irmgard in ihrem Elternhaus um Verständnis, um Liebe, um Hilfe. Umsonst. Man behandelte sie wie eine Verfemte.' (EK, p. 67) Irmgard's former acquaintances also ostracise her, demonstrating how prevalent the morality displayed by her family is: 'Zuweilen traf sie auf der Straße jemand aus ihrem früheren Kreise. Dann sahen die Freundinnen, mit denen sie auf so vielen Bällen vergnügt gewesen war, beiseite. Und die jungen Männer gingen plötzlich auf die andere Seite der Straße, wenn ihnen diese junge Frau mit dem Kind auf dem Arm begegnete.' (EK, p. 67) To illustrate the hypocrisy in these attitudes, Kienle underlines that Irmgard corresponds to the idealised notion of the caring, doting mother in all regards other than her marital status. Kienle describes how reluctantly Irmgard sends her daughter to a nursery while she is at work and how she buys toys for her daughter whenever she can afford to do so (EK, p. 68). Moreover, Irmgard's alarmed and concerned reaction to her daughter's coughing portrays her as a responsible and caring mother. Indeed, Kienle writes: 'Und da saß [Irmgard] dann vor mir, gehetzt, sorgenvoll, ängstlich fragend. Das echte Bild einer Mutter. Einer vorbildlichen Mutter. Und gerade deshalb verdammt, ausgestoßen, im Elend.' (EK, p. 68) In recounting this story, Kienle criticises explicitly the rigid morality which creates suffering for mothers and their children, who, through no fault of their own, do not meet the uncompromising standards of respectability imposed by society.

Moreover, Kienle demonstrates how society's rigid adherence to a code of morality can in fact prevent women's mothering, as illustrated in the story of one of her patients, a woman from a respectable family who was married to a man she hardly knew. She became lonely and her attempts at closer companionship with her husband were rebuffed. She eventually began a relationship with her husband's brother and became pregnant. Upon learning of her pregnancy from Dr. Kienle, she responds: 'Es gibt keine Lösung! Es gibt nur die Möglichkeit, ehrlich die Folgen auf mich zu nehmen.' (EK, p. 76) After telling her husband of her infidelity: 'Mit unbeirrbarer Hand richtete sie die Waffe gegen die eigne Stirn und nahm das Kind mit sich, dessen Leben sie nicht verantworten konnte.' (EK, p. 76) This episode demonstrates the impact of society's strict morality. Despite apparently honouring and protecting motherhood, in this instance the woman's understanding of the moral code and social consequences of her adulterous pregnancy resulted in her death. Kienle's assertion that relaxing moral expectations would enable more women to become mothers echoes the arguments of Sexual Reform feminists, whose perspectives were rooted in the pronatalism of the pre-World War One feminist movement.

These two examples narrate the stories of women from upper- and upper-middle-class families, and Kienle emphasises that it is bourgeois morality, as well as the influence of the Church, which drive the idealisation of motherhood. Kienle exposes the blind ideology which glorifies motherhood but does little to support mothers:

Was aber vermögen sie alle, die Gesetzgeber, die Vertreter Gottes, die Führer der Industrien, die so kläglich versagt haben, - gegen die allmächtige Natur? Sie hat es so eingerichtet, daß die Frau fruchtbar ist, und daß ein Kind entsteht und zur Welt kommt, ohne Rücksicht darauf, ob es dann auch leben kann. (EK, p. 81)

Kienle contrasts social ideals about motherhood with the lived realities for many women, especially working-class women: 'Geburt wird zu einem höchst zweifelhaften Glück. Eine immer wachsende Zahl von neuen Bürgern dieses Planeten wird von ihren Eltern mit Sorge, mit Abneigung, ja mit Abscheu begrüßt.' (EK, p. 80) Her criticism of the lack of support given to working-class families recalls similar criticisms made by Rühle-Gerstel in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* and Helene Overlach in *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute*, as well as Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Maria Leitner in the political fiction analysed in Chapter Three. Overlach rehearses again criticism of the Church to underscore the hypocrisy of social attitudes towards motherhood: 'In Worten: Würde und Heiligkeit der Mutterschaft! In Taten: Mutter und Kind werden dem größten Elend preisgegeben.' (HO, p. 10) Overlach thus seeks to persuade women reading her pamphlet that, despite promoting idealised notions of motherhood, religious and right-wing political leaders do not support mothers or working-class families. This argument is,

however, more a criticism of socio-economic and political circumstances than an explicit call for women to have greater autonomy in their reproductive choices.

Kienle and Overlach expose the consequences for unmarried mothers of strict social morality but do not deal at length with the practical implications of single motherhood. Kienle's call for a change in social attitudes reflects the socialist movement's aims but her approach differs from that of the left-wing women's press. Multiple articles addressed the topic of unmarried motherhood in *Die Gleichheit* in the immediate post-World War One years. For example, in an article entitled 'Ledige Mutterschaft', Lotte Müller emphasises the ideological commitment of the socialist movement to honour motherhood, regardless of the woman's circumstances: 'verheiratete Frauen sind nicht als wertvollere Mütter zu betrachten, nur weil sie verheiratet sind nach den Gesetzbegriffen unserer Zeit.'[87] The tensions between the continued acceptance of gender norms and the support for more radical changes to the status quo are exemplified in this article. Müller frames her support for unmarried mothers within the assumption that all motherhood should be respected and supported by the state, thus cementing the notion of women's duties in the domestic sphere.

Müller's article also reveals a common feature of women's press articles about *Unehelichkeit*: reference to the constitution. Müller notes that the new laws enacted in Germany in the wake of the First World War guaranteed the rights and protections of all mothers, without reference to their marital status. Repeated discussion of the legal position of single mothers and their children is found in *Die Gleichheit*, including by Clara Bohm-Schuch in 'Ein Frauenverband zur Unehelichkeitsfrage' (25 July 1920), Henni Lehmann in 'Das Gesetz über die rechtliche Stellung des unehelichen Kindes' (15 December 1922), and E. Giese in 'Uneheliche Kinder' (15 March 1923). These articles seek to make the female readership of the newspaper aware of their legal rights and equip them with the information to challenge the status quo and defend their own and their children's entitlements.

Repeated references to the law in *Die Gleichheit* reflect the urgency of communicating the sweeping constitutional changes in the early Weimar years. The determination of left-wing women's publications to inform their readership about their legal rights continued, however, throughout the Weimar period. For example, *Der Weg der Frau* featured a regular column by Peter Maslowski entitled 'Du und das Recht', which sought to clarify women's legal position in different situations. The approach reflected the political leanings of the magazine and in the first issue the column was subtitled 'Ist die Frau gleichberechtigt?'. Maslowski emphasises:

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[87] Lotte Müller, 'Ledige Mutterschaft', *Die Gleichheit*, 15 July 1921.

'Bürgerliches Recht ist das Recht des Privateigentums.'[88] Maslowski's column, like the articles in *Die Gleichheit*, makes reference to the legal situation, but, as a communist publication, is somewhat more critical of the provisions for unmarried mothers. In relation to *Unehelichkeit*, he writes:

Wo aber bleibt der uneheliche Vater? Das Gesetz, das der armen Mutter alle Lasten aufbürdet, schützt diesen Mann, indem es grundsätzlich bestimmt: *Das uneheliche Kind ist mit seinem Vater – nicht verwandt*. Zwar ist ohne Mann noch kein Kind unehelich in die Welt gesetzt worden, aber was tut's, das heilige Eigentum muß geschützt werden![89]

Thus, Maslowski highlights the continued gender inequality in the law and suggests that a desire to protect wealth and power, rather than concern for the welfare of illegitimate children, motives the political decisions of (implicitly bourgeois) lawmakers. Instead of celebrating advances in women's legal status, Maslowski cites bourgeois, capitalist social structures as the cause of women's continued disadvantaged position. Yet, despite this more radical approach, Maslowski fails to challenge the ideas about gender difference which contributed to women's continued inequality with his reference to 'die natürliche Mutterliebe'.[90] In order to argue for women's improved legal rights with regard to their children, he appeals to women's perceived inherent capacity for child nurturing.

Finally, it should be noted that it was not only the socialist women's press which supported improvements to the rights of single mothers. The BfM publication *Die neue Generation* included a regular section entitled *Unehelichkeit*, which included short reports detailing developments in the rights and status of unmarried mothers and their children. For example, one paragraph under the title 'Das Erbrecht für das außereheliche Kind' in 1930 praised the recent acceptance by the Reichstag legal committee of a draft law that would give illegitimate children the same entitlement to the father's inheritance as children born within wedlock.[91]

It is therefore apparent that there was widespread support for improvements to the rights and status of single mothers among the women's movement, particularly the left-wing branches, during the Weimar period. These publications sought to influence public opinion and bring about a more radical challenge to the status quo, which privileged motherhood within marriage. Yet, the arguments employed were underpinned by gender essentialism; improving

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[88] Peter Maslowski, 'Du und das Recht: Ist die Frau gleichberechtigt?, *Der Weg der Frau*, no. 1, n.d. 1931, p. 18.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] 'Unehelichkeit: Das Erbrecht für das außereheliche Kind', *Die neue Generation*, no. 1/2, n.d. January - February 1930.

the rights of single mothers formed part of a wider discourse in which motherhood was seen as women's natural social responsibility and the socialist movement sought to broaden society's glorification of motherhood to include unmarried mothers.

Preliminary Conclusions

The presentation of motherhood and reproductive rights in the primary sources analysed in this chapter reveal tensions in the approach to motherhood of the political left during the Weimar era. On the one hand, essentialist assumptions of women's desire, and indeed duty, to mother are left largely unchallenged. On the other hand, these sources suggest that women require education in mothering practices. The publications analysed here presented themselves as authorities on motherhood, childcare and reproductive health by appealing to psychological, scientific and political language. Thus, ideas theorised in the works of Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher were disseminated in a more accessible format with the intention of influencing the mothering and reproductive choices of women of childbearing age. Moreover, the readership of *Frauenwelt* appears receptive to such advice, in some cases actively seeking guidance from other readers and the magazine's editors via the advice column 'Wer weiss Rat?'. The openness of women to this advice underscores the prevalence of psychoanalytic ideas in public discourse during the Weimar period and demonstrates how women sought to modernise their mothering in response to social and scientific advances after the First World War.

Moreover, Kienle and Overlach cite their gender as evidence of their privileged understanding of women's reproductive health and choices, thereby affording greater weight to women's voices in these debates and attempting to influence public opinion on abortion and single motherhood. The texts analysed in this chapter are highly critical of the treatment of single mothers, and strongly advocate the liberalisation of abortion laws. Nevertheless, tensions remain in these authors' support for more radical policies, as they cite economic hardship, rather than personal preference, as a grounds for limiting family size and stress women's inherent desire to mother. This approach represents, particularly in the case of Helene Overlach's pamphlet aimed at Christian women, a pragmatic means to gain support for greater reproductive choice and acceptance of different models of motherhood against the backdrop of widespread gender conservatism during the Weimar era. While the views represented in this chapter are less radical than those of Rühle-Gerstel, women's discussions of the status of motherhood and their reproductive rights were contributing to the same discourses that aimed to shape women's changing social role.

This chapter has shown how the theoretical ideas developed in the texts analysed in Chapter One were circulated to a wider audience through the socialist women's press and political non-fiction writing. The popular application of psychological ideas combined with political and feminist perspectives exhibited in these texts can also be seen in the works of fiction analysed in Chapters Three and Four. After an excursus outlining the literary landscape in Weimar Germany, my analysis of women's contributions to discourses of mothering in Weimar Germany continues by examining the presentation of motherhood, family, intergenerational tensions, and reproductive choice in works of socialist and popular fiction.

Excursus: Genre and Weimar Women's Writing

Chapters Three and Four of this thesis examine the presentation of motherhood and intergenerational female relationships in fiction written by women during the Weimar period. These texts are part of the same discourse as the non-fiction writing analysed in Chapters One and Two in thematic terms. It is, however, also important to understand their relative position within the cultural landscape of the Weimar era, before beginning a detailed analysis of their portrayals of motherhood. The explicitly left-wing political fiction discussed in Chapter Three shares stylistic features with the mainstream popular fiction novels discussed in Chapter Four and I therefore view these two groups of texts as being in dialogue with one another formally as well as thematically.[1]

As many critics, including Charlotte Woodford, Ruth Whittle, and Jo Catling have pointed out, writing by women was historically excluded from the literary canon and, in some earlier studies of German literature, was treated as a distinct category, overlooking women's contributions to a broad range of literary styles and engagement in mainstream as well as experimental cultural developments.[2] For example, Jethro Bithell's 1959 study *Modern German Literature 1880-1950* is around 600 pages in length but includes just one twenty-five-page chapter entitled 'The Women Writers' that considers women's literary contributions, and, in an indication of the lingering separation of women's writing from German canonical works, Bernhard Weyergraf's 1995 edited volume *Literatur der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* similarly includes less than forty pages, by Hilke Veth, dedicated to 'Literatur von Frauen' in a book of over 800 pages. Veth's chapter highlights how women writers in the Weimar era responded to the social and political circumstances, taking a largely thematic approach to note trends in women's writing such as pacifist perspectives in the wake of the First World War and the prominence of the new woman in fiction from the mid-1920s onwards.[3]

By the early 1980s, however, an emerging body of scholarship, first in German then in English, was beginning to pay greater attention to writing by women. This body of work, which has continued to grow rapidly in recent decades, has considered women's literary contributions

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[1] Text synopses and detailed analysis of the themes will follow in Chapters Three and Four. The comments in this excursus deal only with stylistic features of the primary texts.

[2] Charlotte Woodford, *Women, Emancipation and the German Novel 1871-1910* (London: Legenda, 2014), p. 165; Ruth Whittle, *Gender, Canon and Literary History: The Changing Place of Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers (1835-1918)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013); Jo Catling, 'Introduction', in *A History of Women's Writing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland*, ed. by Jo Catling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-10 (p. 3).

[3] Hilke Veth, 'Literatur von Frauen', in *Literatur der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933*, ed. by Bernhard Weyergraf (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1995), pp. 446-82 (pp. 457, 460).

in more detail and in their diversity. For example, Gisela Brinker-Gabler's influential work has drawn attention to the scale of women's literary contributions from the Middle Ages to twentieth century.[4] Similarly, *A History of Women's Writing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland*, the first English-language historical overview, spans from the Middle Ages through to the post-reunification era to offer a survey of the breadth of prose, drama and lyric texts produced by women.[5] Active scholarship on German women's writing has led to the publication of lexica, thematic and theoretical studies, and monographs dedicated to the work of individual writers.

A number of studies of women's writing from the Weimar era, including Vibeke Rützou Petersen's *Women and Modernity in Weimar Germany*, take a thematic approach. Rützou Petersen seeks to 'establish that popular culture is a forum where debates about subjectivity, gender, sexuality, social conditions, and nationhood were, in the early twentieth century, discussed'[6] and identifies reading as 'an empowering enterprise' for women as consumers of popular culture.[7] With the developments in cinematic technology and a high volume of magazines, newspapers and periodicals published during the Weimar era, popular culture could more readily reach a mass audience. Rützou Petersen suggests that culture was perceived as gendered at this time, with 'low' popular culture coded as feminine in contrast to 'male' high culture.[8] Yet, the expansion of popular culture in the Weimar Republic lead to women's contributions and depictions of women's lives becoming more readily accepted in the mainstream, whereas, in the pre-World War One era, women's literary work tended to be treated as a separate entity that dealt only with 'women's issues'. I follow Rützou Petersen in recognising popular fiction as a discursive tool for constructing and reflecting public discourses. Rützou Petersen highlights the recurring themes of unplanned, premarital pregnancy and abortion in popular fiction writing from the Weimar period, situating this discussion within the historical context of limited access to birth control and safe abortion. I build on this discussion to consider how the presentation of these topics relates to attitudes towards motherhood and is shaped by the political perspectives of the authors whose work I analyse.

Other studies take a stylistic or theoretical approach. Kerstin Barndt's *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit: Der Roman der Neuen Frau in der Weimarer Republik*, for example, focuses on the stylistic features of Weimar-era women's writing, highlighting particularly *neue Sachlichkeit*

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[4] For example: Gisela Brinker-Gabler, *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen*, 2 vols (Munich: Beck, 1988); Gisela Brinker-Gabler, Karola Ludwig, Angela Wöffen, *Lexikon deutschsprachiger Schriftstellerinnen 1800-1945* (Munich: DTV, 1986).
[5] *A History of Women's Writing*, ed. by Jo Catling.
[6] Vibeke Rützou Petersen, *Women and Modernity in Weimar Germany: Reality and Representation in Popular Fiction* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2001), p. 5.
[7] Ibid., p. 11.
[8] Ibid., p. 4.

(new objectivity) and melodrama, which will be discussed below, as stylistic attributes of novels including *Gilgi* and *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*.[9] A further body of scholarship, meanwhile, bridges these approaches. Walter Fähnders and Helga Karrenbrock's edited volume *Autorinnen der Weimarer Republik*, for instance, contains chapters on Irmgard Keun, Vicki Baum and Gabriele Tergit. This volume combines historical and biographical discussion with consideration of the themes and stylistic features of the authors and works included. Similarly, Elizabeth Boa's chapter 'Women Writers in the 'Golden' Twenties' and Renny Harrigan's article 'Die Sexualität der Frau in der deutschen Unterhaltungsliteratur 1918-1933', among other examples, situate the texts they discuss in their social and cultural context, highlighting they ways in which the themes and literary style of novels written during the Weimar era reflect and contribute to the public discussions of women's changing social role and increasing visibility in the public sphere.[10]

This thesis is a contribution to the body of scholarship that spans historical and literary perspectives to uncover how women's writing engaged with, mirrored, and advanced social discourses around motherhood. In the following I provide an overview of the stylistic influences present in the fiction texts discussed in Chapters Three and Four, including *neue Sachlichkeit*, melodrama, and *Gebrauchsliteratur* (functional literature). I also discuss features and traditions of German-language women's political writing, both socialist and feminist, before embarking on a detailed analysis of my primary sources in Chapters Three and Four.

Neue Sachlichkeit

The *neue Sachlichkeit* movement, which emerged during the period of economic stability from 1924 and remained dominant until the early 1930s, was not exclusively a literary movement. Visual art, for example by painters such as Otto Dix, and architecture and design, exemplified in work produced by members of the Bauhaus school, were also encompassed in the *neue Sachlichkeit* movement. The cultural movement is considered a response to the radical subjectivity of Expressionism; in *neue Sachlichkeit*, the self-reflective stories of individual emotional experience common to Expressionism are replaced by heightened realism that typically paints a picture of contemporary society, offering a collective story exemplified

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[9] Kerstin Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit: Der Roman der Neuen Frau in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003).

[10] Elizabeth Boa, 'Women Writers in the 'Golden' Twenties', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. by Graham Bartram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 123-37. Cambridge Core Ebook; Renny Harrigan, 'Die Sexualität der Frau in der deutschen Unterhaltungsliteratur 1918-1933', trans. by Elka Schloendorn, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 7.3-4 (1981), 412-37.

through the actions of individual characters who conform to widely recognisable social types. Critics have sought to explain the emergence of this movement with reference to the historical context. Helmut Lethen, who has written extensively on literary *neue Sachlichkeit*, comments on the historical use of the term 'Sachlichkeit', drawing a link between industrial automation and cultural objectivity,[11] as well as discussing how the First World War and instability of the early Weimar years had social and psychological impacts that influenced the turn towards objectivity.[12] Lethen's book on *neue Sachlichkeit*, published in 1970, is among the first in-depth post-World War Two studies of the movement, which has since received more extensive critical attention, particularly in German-language scholarship.

Lethen returns to the relationship between social psychology and literary production in his book *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (1994), which appeared also in English translation as *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany* in 2002. Lethen's work studies the cultural context within which work of the *neue Sachlichkeit* style was produced. In *Cool Conduct*, for example, he explores the emergence of a 'culture of shame' after the First World War. Lethen argues that, in attempting to regain agency after the experience of war, the subject of *neue Sachlichkeit* creates distance between themselves and others, and between their own inner and outer selves that enables them to conceal their emotions.[13] This contrasts to the 'culture of guilt' reflected, according to Lethen, in the accounts of inner turmoil more typical of Expressionism.[14] He writes: 'In new objectivity's images, individuals are no more than motion-machines, feelings are mere motor reflexes, and character is a matter of what mask is put on.'[15] The notion of a 'mask' ties into the idea of Weimar-era cultural 'types', as discussed in the introduction to this thesis and in relation to Rühle-Gerstel's psychological study of women's personality development in Chapter One. Lethen's *Cool Conduct* considers how the 'Cool Persona', who is alienated in modern society, the 'Radar Type', who embraces the mass culture of modernity, and the pitiful figure of the 'Creature' feature as 'types' in literary texts from the period.[16] He notes how 'types' acted as a form of shorthand for the reader: 'Typologies turn the body into something that can be read [...] they make judgments easier to form'.[17] Lethen offers almost exclusively male examples for the 'Cool Persona', with the

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[11] Helmut Lethen, *Neue Sachlichkeit 1924-1932: Studien zur Literatur des 'weissen Sozialismus'* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1970), p. 8.

[12] Ibid., p. 9.

[13] Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 18.

[14] Ibid., p. 17.

[15] Ibid., p. 11.

[16] See Thesis Introduction for definitions and further discussion of Lethen's 'types'.

[17] Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, p. 154.

exception of Marieluise Fleißer's titular character in *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier* (1931), whose androgyny is emphasised in the novel. Indeed, Lethen and Barndt, among others, note that the *neue Sachlichkeit* movement has typically been associated with masculinity.[18] More recent work, including Barndt's *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, has, however, called this assumption into question, revealing the contributions that women writers made to *neue Sachlichkeit*. While Lethen does not find many examples of a female 'Cool Persona', he cites Keun's eponymous Gilgi and Doris, the protagonist in Keun's second novel *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932), as examples of the 'Radar Type' and identifies a female 'Creature' in Brecht's poem 'Von der Kindsmörderin Marie Farrar' (1922). Lethen does not comment on the implications of citing young, unmarried women as the types of the 'Cool Persona' and 'Radar Type' that embrace Weimar modernity, leaving unexplored in his text the perceived threat of women's apparent rejection of their traditional social role. Meanwhile, the given example of a female 'Creature' is an unmarried mother, who, in response to the social consequences of single motherhood feels compelled to commit infanticide. Lethen's examples reference but do not unpack normative assumptions about gender and women's social role in Weimar Germany. In Chapters Three and Four, I show how the inclusion of characters who appear to correspond to social 'types' in women's political and popular fiction enables the authors to complicate the assumptions seemingly embodied by these 'types' and question the opposition between new women and mothering.

As noted in the introduction, references to common social 'types' were ubiquitous during the Weimar period and both Maria Leitner and Gabriele Tergit draw on these 'types' in their journalistic writing. Leitner's short portraits of figures including the 'Stenotypistin', 'Damen der Gesellschaft', and the 'Tauentzien-Girl' appeared in the tabloid newspaper *Tempo* from 1928-1932.[19] Money is a recurring theme in these articles, as Leitner highlights the insufficient wages received by working women that impact on their professional choices and living situations. Tergit's journalistic sketches similarly depict social 'types' from the 1920s and 1930s, including 'die Nachbarin', 'die Luxusgroßmama' and 'der Generaldirektor'.[20] Tergit's writing is satirical, exposing the idiosyncrasies of the 'types' she describes, but she takes a less explicitly political perspective than Leitner. Characters that would have been readily recognisable as certain social 'types' appear in all of the fiction texts discussed in this thesis,

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[18] Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, p. 73; Kerstin Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, p. 3.
[19] Maria Leitner, 'Menschen in der Großstadt', in *Mädchen mit drei Namen: Reportagen aus Deutschland und ein Berliner Roman, 1928-1933*, ed. by Helga Schwarz and Wilfried Schwarz (Berlin: Aviva, 2013), pp. 28-62.
[20] A selection of Tergit's journalistic sketches are available in: Gabriele Tergit, *Atem einer anderen Welt: Berliner Reportagen*, ed. by Jens Brüning (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994).

most prominently in Tergit's *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*, which borrows passages from her journalism.[21] As critics including Sabine Kyora and Sabina Becker have noted, de-individualisation of characters was a common feature of *neue Sachlichkeit* writing, and I discuss its political implications in the final section of this excursus.[22] In Chapter Four I return again to the discussion of Weimar-era 'types' and their relation to the psychoanalytic ideas that had entered common cultural discourse during the Weimar period.

In addition to the analysis of the cultural development of 'objectivity' during the Weimar period offered by Lethen's work, scholars have studied the aesthetics of this style of writing. Kyora notes that 'no programmatic statements by single authors representative of *Neue Sachlichkeit* can be found',[23] however, critics such as Becker have identified retrospectively a number of prominent features and aesthetic qualities. In the volume *Neue Sachlichkeit im Roman*, Becker underscores the centrality of authenticity and contemporaneity,[24] and, in a further article, 'Die literarische Moderne der zwanziger Jahre', she highlights how the realist elements of *neue Sachlichkeit* were created through the use of observation, documentary elements, and reportage (journalistic style prose incorporated into works of fiction).[25]

All the fiction texts discussed in this thesis appeal to authenticity in their references to place and time. Brüning, Leitner, Tergit, and Keun particularly refer to the challenging economic conditions and political unrest of the late Weimar years. Tergit and Brüning, for example, expose the challenges faced by independent tradesmen, among others. In *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*, the carpenter Duchow alludes both to the changing tastes and wider impact of mass production on independent traders during the Weimar period, as well as indicating the economic considerations of the period which force consumers and businesses to cut costs.[26] Furthermore, Tergit's text refers to the collapse of several companies, including a carpentry firm (GT, p. 274), an estate agency and mortgage provider (GT, p. 270) and a bank (GT, p. 338). The

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[21] Fiona Sutton, 'Weimar's Forgotten Cassandra: The Writing of Gabriele Tergit in the Weimar Republic', in *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Karl Leydecker (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), pp. 193-209 (p. 199).
[22] Sabine Kyora, 'Concepts of the Subject in the Avant-Garde Movements of the 1910s and *Neue Sachlichkeit*', in *Neue Sachlichkeit and Avant-Garde*, ed. by Ralf Grüttemeier, Klaus Beekman and Ben Rebel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 277-96 (p. 278). ProQuest Ebook; Sabina Becker, 'Die literarische Moderne der zwanziger Jahre: Theorie und Ästhetik der Neuen Sachlichkeit', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 27.1 (2002), 73-95 (p. 76); Sabina Becker, 'Neue Sachlichkeit im Roman', in *Neue Sachlichkeit im Roman: neue Interpretationen zum Roman der Weimarer Republik*, ed. by Sabina Becker and Christoph Weiss (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1995), pp. 7-26 (p. 12).
[23] Kyora, 'Concepts of the Subject', pp. 281-82.
[24] Becker, 'Neue Sachlichkeit im Roman', p. 10.
[25] Becker, 'Die literarische Moderne', p. 76.
[26] Gabriele Tergit, *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*, 3rd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Schöffling, 2016), pp. 254-55. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation GT.

failure of these businesses is indicative of the financial crisis in Germany triggered by the Wall Street Crash in 1929. Brüning, Leitner and Keun similarly reference the unemployment and lack of opportunities for young people during the depression. Keun, for instance, describes the 'Hoffnungslosigkeit'[27] and 'Elend' (IK, p. 184) found in the waiting room of the welfare office when Gilgi goes to collect her unemployment payments. These novels thus capture the atmosphere and anxiety prompted by the economic depression in the later years of the Weimar Republic.

Keun and Tergit also feature the political instability of the period in their novels. Tergit indicates the prevalence of open anti-Semitism, for example, in the language used in a letter addressed to the journalist Gohlisch, who publishes the first article on Käsebier (GT, p. 178) and in the reflections of Miermann, a Jewish newspaper editor, condemning anti-Semitic discourse (GT, p. 324). Moreover, symptoms of the political turbulence of the period are included, as in the aggression exhibited by the attendees of political meetings (GT, pp. 325-26) and the street fight that occurs after the opening night of the Käsebier theatre (GT, p. 337). Tergit's narrator comments on the political slogans of the Communists and National Socialists: 'Große Worte klangen: »Nieder mit dem Kapitalismus!« - »Für deutsche Freiheit!« Aber dahinter stand für jeden einzelnen die nagende Sorge, ob er seinen Platz, seinen engen oder weiten Platz, würde im Leben halten können.' (GT, p. 337) Thus, the narrator evokes the atmosphere of uncertainty in the closing years of the Weimar Republic and draws a connection between the challenging economic circumstances and the growing support for parties at the extremes of the political spectrum.

In Keun's *Gilgi*, meanwhile, narrative comments alluding to the historical context are interjected into the story. For example, as Gilgi prepares fried potatoes, the narrator notes: 'und Spanien ist Republik geworden, und immerzu passiert was auf der Welt' (IK, p. 179). Snippets of music also punctuate the narration. For instance, as Gilgi hums a song while dressing for work in the novel's opening passage, the text is interspersed by the song's lyrics (IK, pp. 6-8). These references to contemporary culture and the political context exemplify how literature of the *neue Sachlichkeit* genre recreates a poetic realism to root the text in the specific period in which it was set.

References to the political and economic situation are also included in the political fiction discussed in Chapter Three. The work of Brüning and Leitner depicts the impact of the depression of the later Weimar years on the employment prospects of their characters. Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, meanwhile, deals with the descent of lower-middle-class Germans into

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[27] Irmgard Keun, *Gilgi – eine von uns*, 6th edn (Berlin: List, 2013), p. 183. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation IK.

poverty following the hyperinflation of 1923. Like the popular fiction, the political fiction situates its narratives in the contemporary context but is more specific in its proposed solution, offering the communist movement as a means to overcome the widespread financial hardship experienced during the Weimar era.

Although it is less rooted in a specific historical moment than the other novels discussed here, Baum's *Helene* similarly includes documentary elements that invoke the authenticity of place and Helene's academic environment. As Lynda J. King elaborates in her article 'The Image of Fame', the appeal to authenticity was part of the marketing strategy of the book. King notes that Baum's publisher, Ullstein, publicised that Baum had previously resided in Heidelberg to emphasise her knowledge of the town, and included quotations from female students and doctors in its advertising campaign to signal the credibility of the novel's characters and events.[28]

A further common feature of literary *neue Sachlichkeit* is the use of montage passages that mirror technical advances in films of the period which regularly incorporated montage sequences. Montage features in all three novels discussed in Chapter Four, as well as in Maria Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen* discussed in Chapter Three. For example, in Tergit's novel, characters including the journalists Fräulein Dr Kohler (GT, pp. 117-20) and Miermann (GT, pp. 308-12) and the author Lambeck (GT, p. 62) walk through Berlin, with advertising slogans and snippets of conversations punctuating the narration of the characters' movement through the city. Likewise, Baum includes montage-style passages describing the morning and evening activities of the core group of characters in Heidelberg,[29] and Keun describes Gilgi and Martin's walks through Cologne, mentioning the architecture and businesses that they pass (IK, pp. 141-45). Leitner's Lina meanwhile observes the changing atmosphere as she walks from affluent to working-class districts in Berlin with her friend Angelika.[30] Such montage passages heighten the realism of the novels through the detailed presentation of what the characters see, smell and hear, which helps transport the reader into the scene.

The use of techniques that mirror film technology and realist depictions of contemporary, often urban, life associated *neue Sachlichkeit* with the context of Weimar modernity, as Becker points out.[31] Weimar modernity emerged as a result of the technological advances that ushered in an age of mass production and mass media, changing the employment

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[28] Lynda J. King, 'The Image of Fame: Vicki Baum in Weimar Germany', *The German Quarterly*, 58.3 (1985), 375-93 (pp. 380, 388).
[29] Vicki Baum, *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1928), pp. 19-23, 40-42.
[30] Maria Leitner, 'Mädchen mit drei Namen', in *Mädchen mit drei Namen,* ed. by Helga Schwarz and Wilfried Schwarz, pp. 141-210 (pp. 155-57).
[31] Becker, 'Neue Sachlichkeit im Roman', p. 16.

market, the accessibility of previously luxury items, and the leisure activities of the population. Modernity is particularly associated with the urban environment and an increased pace of life. Rützou Petersen notes that, in light of the social and political changes that occurred following the First World War, 'woman [was perceived] as the embodiment of the darker sides of modernity, the irrational, threatening, and decadent aspects' that led to 'middle-class fears of losing privilege'.[32] Women's increasing visibility in the public sphere and the growth of popular culture, which enabled women to participate more readily in mainstream public conversations, led to a fear of losing power and influence, particularly among the typically male producers of 'high' culture. While modernity was viewed as a threat by some, the engagement of *neue Sachlichkeit* writers with the concept of modernity was more ambivalent. Becker and Grüttemeier, Beekman and Rebel identify *neue Sachlichkeit* as a genre that enabled writers to analyse modernity and mass culture. Becker writes: '›Sachlichkeit‹ erweist sich innerhalb des hochkapitalisierten Systems der Weimarer Republik als eine mögliche Kategorie zur kritischen Hinterfragung der gesellschaftlichen Modernisierungsschübe',[33] while Grüttemeier, Beekman and Rebel observe that *neue Sachlichkeit* both 'avoid[ed] a radical opposition towards modernity as well as uncritical adoration'.[34] The explicitly left-wing texts I discuss in Chapter Three are, as would be expected of such political writing, critical of the social developments that had led to stark social inequality but it is indeed the case that the novels in Chapter Four, particularly *Gilgi* and *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* are rather more ambivalent in their depiction of Weimar modernity, portraying the glamour of the Weimar-era urban scene as well as the financial precarity and political instability of the final years of the Republic.

It is also worth noting that the *neue Sachlichkeit* movement is frequently associated with 'Entpsychologisierung'. In a context in which psychoanalytic ideas were entering mainstream public discourse, the 'de-psychologising' of literature may appear at first glance surprising, and, as I show in my analysis, the popular fiction texts analysed in Chapter Four, do in fact make reference to psychoanalysis in the conversations and relationships between characters, which demonstrates again how pervasive these ideas had become by the Weimar period. Yet, the 'Entpsychologisierung' of *neue Sachlichkeit* literature does not refer to a rejection of psychological ideas but is rather an aesthetic comment on the narrative voice typical of these novels. As Becker explains: 'Der Verzicht auf das psychologisierende Erzählen infolge der Forderung nach der Darstellung gesellschaftlicher Typen statt individueller Persönlichkeiten

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[32] Rützou Petersen, *Women and Modernity*, p. 3.
[33] Becker, 'Neue Sachlichkeit im Roman', p. 18.
[34] Ralf Grüttemeier, Klaus Beekman and Ben Rebel, '*Neue Sachlichkeit* and Avant-Garde: An Introduction', in *Neue Sachlichkeit and Avant-Garde*, ed. by Grüttemeier, Beekman and Rebel, pp. 7-16 (p. 13).

[…] avanciert zu einem der hervorragenden Kennzeichen neusachlichen Schreibens.'[35] Narratives in which the inner psychological turmoil of the protagonist dominates the prose, as had been common in the Expressionist movement, were replaced by texts in which an impersonal narrator comments, often ironically, on the events from a distance. As Kyora writes, 'the author retreats behind the observed'.[36] The actions and experiences of characters are depicted but insights into the subject's emotions, decision-making processes or own sense of identity are frequently absent.

The distanced narrator of *neue Sachlichkeit* is most apparent in *Gilgi* and *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*, as both Keun's and Tergit's narrators offer ironic commentary on the figures and events. While Tergit's narrator remains external to the characters throughout the novel, the narrative style in Keun's novel changes over the course of the book to reflect Gilgi's character development. The initial voice is that of an ironic, third-person narrator, which is interrupted by realist renderings of the sounds of the tram or typewriter. As the novel progresses and Gilgi begins to lose control over her life as she invests more in her relationship with Martin, the narrative voice shifts to Gilgi's own first-person internal monologue, revealing Gilgi's attitudes while simultaneously highlighting the fragmented nature of a character who struggles to find a sense of belonging in society. However, as Lorisika notes, Gilgi frequently uses the word 'man', thus generalising her experiences in line with her presentation as an archetypal Weimar new woman.[37] This is particularly apparent in the passages in which Gilgi's rationality is at the fore, underscoring her new womanhood but also calling into question the apparent self-assurance of new women, complicating their depiction in contemporary media. Moreover, the insights into Gilgi's thoughts throughout the novel further increase the possibility for the reader to identify with her character. As Gilgi makes the decision to end her relationship with Martin, the distanced narrative voice of the opening passages returns.

Other Genre Influences

Julian Preece suggests that Leitner's novella *Mädchen mit drei Namen* is a 'critical reaction to the literary sensation' of Keun's second novel, *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*,[38] hence the inclusion of features of *neue Sachlichkeit*, such as the montage passages, and the use of a first-

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[35] Becker, 'Neue Sachlichkeit im Roman', p. 20.
[36] Kyora, 'Concepts of the Subject', p. 282.
[37] Irene Lorisika, *Frauendarstellung bei Irmgard Keun und Anna Seghers* (Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen, 1985), p. 132.
[38] Julian Preece, 'The Literary Interventions of a Radical Writer Journalist: Maria Leitner (1892-1942)', in *Discovering Women's History: German-Speaking Journalists (1900-1950)*, ed. by Christa Spreizer (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 245-64 (p. 264).

person narrator to mirror Keun's novel. Zur Mühlen's novella *Lina* was also written as a critical response to mainstream fiction. Zur Mühlen produced a number of texts, of which *Lina* and *Kleine Leute* are examples, which she referred to as her 'Propagandaerzählungen'.[39] These texts sought to provide a left-wing alternative to the conservative tendencies of mainstream fiction for girls and young women. While neither Leitner nor Zur Mühlen wrote exclusively for children or young people, both *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and *Lina* are aimed at a young readership. These texts are didactic and sought to educate their young readers about the benefits of left-wing political participation.

Throughout her career, Zur Mühlen used writing as a tool to promote her socialist politics and she was particularly interested in the potential of children's literature to introduce socialist principles to young readers and counteract the influence of bourgeois values that she claimed were so prevalent in texts written for children. In her 1919 essay 'Junge-Mädchen-Literatur', Zur Mühlen writes:

diese jungen Seelen von vierzehn und sechzehn Jahren [sind] in den meisten Fällen idealshungrig, verbergen sogar unter äußerlicher Albernheit gar oft einen tiefen Gerechtigkeitssinn. Und in dieser entscheidenen Zeit werden ihnen die Werke unserer beliebten Jugenderzähler und Erzählerinnen als einzige geistige Nahrung geboten![40]

Zur Mühlen bemoans, in this essay, the glorification of war, women's domestic role and bourgeois morals presented as 'einzig gute aller Welt'[41] in the existing offering of literature written for girls and young women. She thus highlights the implicit politics of existing fiction aimed at a young audience and advocates an explicitly left-wing response. She repeats her call for children's literature that challenges established social structures in her answer to the question 'Welche Bücher sollen wir unseren Kindern geben?', which was posed in the communist newspaper *Berlin am Morgen* in 1931:

Ein gutes Kinderbuch muß in noch höherem Maße die gleichen Eigenschaften besitzen wie jedes andere gute belletristische Buch: Verbundenheit mit Zeit und Leben, eindeutige Einstellung, eine lebendige, fesselnde Fabel. Außerdem muß es ein wirksames Gegengift gegen die heutige Schule und Klassenerziehung sein.[42]

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[39] Manfred Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen: Eine Biographie* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), p. 109.
[40] Hermynia zur Mühlen, 'Junge-Mädchen-Literatur (1919)', in *Das proletarische Kinderbuch: Dokumente zur Geschichte der sozialistischen deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, ed. by Manfred Altner (Dresden: VEB, 1988), pp. 266-69 (p. 268).
[41] Ibid.
[42] Hermynia Zur Mühlen, 'Welche Bücher sollen wir unseren Kindern geben?', *Berlin am Morgen*, 16 December 1931, p. 7. Cited in: Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, p. 95.

As Wallace writes, Zur Mühlen hoped her texts 'would demythologise the ideology of romantic love, marriage, and motherhood that is promoted [in bourgeois *Mädchenliteratur*].'[43] Zur Mühlen's novella is certainly a sober depiction of the disappointments and chronic exhaustion experienced by her eponymous protagonist.

Zur Mühlen's writing references 'motifs and a framework familiar to readers of bourgeois *Mädchenliteratur*',[44] as Wallace observes, which exemplifies how she put into practice her theoretical objectives outlined in her 1919 essay 'Junge-Mädchen-Literatur'. Jennifer Drake Askey corroborates Zur Mühlen's analysis of *Mädchenliteratur* in her book *Good Girls, Good Germans*, in which she argues that literature written for girls, the production of which grew rapidly in the nineteenth century, was 'fundamentally conservative'[45] and drew heavily on the idea that its readership would identify with the young, middle-class, female protagonists who were then to serve as an example of how young women should, and indeed sometimes should not, behave.[46] The dominance of middle-class and conservative perspectives in fiction aimed at girls and women was not an exclusively German phenomenon. As Nicola Humble, Hilary Hinds, and Kristin Ewins among others have noted, the emergence of middlebrow fiction in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century likewise remained preoccupied with themes of domesticity, despite some attempts, analysed by Ewins, to promote a socialist message.[47] Zur Mühlen references the tropes common to *Mädchenliteratur* in her reliance on familiar character types and scenarios, which she transposes into a working-class, rather than middle-class, environment. In seeking to produce a didactic text, Zur Mühlen further follows the mould of the pedagogic *Mädchenliteratur* of the late nineteenth century. However, Askey emphasises that *Mädchenliteratur* portrayed a fantasy, in which the readers participate on an emotional level,[48] and, while Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute* ends on a harmonious, optimistic note, the protagonist's repeated disappointments in *Lina* and the novella's pessimistic ending, which serves as a warning to her readership about the dangers of political inactivity, contrast with the fairy tale resolutions typical of *Mädchenliteratur*.

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[43] Ailsa Wallace, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen: The Guises of Socialist Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 129.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Jennifer Drake Askey, *Good Girls, Good Germans: Girls' Education and Emotional Nationalism in Wilhelminian Germany* (New York: Camden House, 2013), p. 10.
[46] Drake Askey, *Good Girls, Good Germans*, pp. 5, 7, 126.
[47] Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Hilary Hinds, 'Domestic Disappointments: Feminine Middlebrow Fiction of the Interwar Years', *Home Cultures*, 6.2 (2015), 199-211; Kristin Ewins, '"Revolutionzing a Mode of Life": Leftist Middlebrow Fiction by Women in the 1930s', *English Literary History*, 82.1 (2015), 251-79.
[48] Drake Askey, *Good Girls, Good Germans*, p. 109.

Lina has also been identified as an example of a *Bildungsroman* by Julie Shoults.[49] Zur Mühlen's *Lina* does indeed follow the protagonist from the age of 16 through to her death at the age of 39 but referring to this novella as a *Bildungsroman* overstates the character's development. Lina fails to substantially alter her perspectives and move beyond her role as a housemaid, which defines her place in society. Although a positive alternative is offered in the figure of Lina's politically active friend Kati, Lina fails to follow Kati's model and the benefits of political affiliation enjoyed by Kati pass Lina by. The genres of the *Bildungsroman* and *Mädchenliteratur* correspond to elements of Zur Mühlen's novella but given the novella's depiction of the harsh realities of Lina's life and death, *Lina* should be viewed rather as didactic political fiction.

Stylistic elements of melodrama are present in several of the fiction texts discussed in Chapters Three and Four, most notably Baum's *Helene* and Keun's *Gilgi*, but also, to a lesser extent Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and Zur Mühlen's *Lina*. As Woodford writes, melodrama as a genre has been used historically by women writers to indicate the urgency of a situation,[50] such as the crisis of the protagonists' unplanned pregnancies in *Gilgi* and *Helene*. Kerstin Barndt explores the combination of features of *neue Sachlichkeit* and melodrama in novels written by (and largely for) women during the Weimar period in her book *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*. Like Woodford, Barndt notes that melodrama as a genre has been associated with women writers and argues that melodrama should be viewed as an aesthetic category that does not carry any value judgement, criticising analyses of *Gilgi* that have devalued the novel because of its melodramatic features.[51] Barndt suggests: 'in den zwanziger Jahren nimmt das Melodramatische eine exponierte Stellung in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Hoch- und Populärkultur ein'.[52] This position is exemplified in Keun's work, which is experimental in its style but includes several plot points that revolve around a melodramatic event. According to Barndt, these melodramatic moments are created by binary decisions faced by the characters, such as Gilgi's choice between love and work,[53] and contributed to the contemporary success of the novel.[54] Ritchie, meanwhile, gives the example of Hans and Hertha's suicide as the key

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[49] Julie Shoults, 'Hermynia Zur Mühlen: Writing a Socialist-Feminist Pacifism in the Aftermath of WWI', in *Women Writing War: From German Colonialism Through World War I*, ed. by Katharina von Hammerstein, Barbara Kosta and Julie Shoults (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), pp. 181-208 (p. 182).

[50] Charlotte Woodford, 'Women's Autonomy and the German Novel around 1900: Hidden Continuities and Generational Differences', *Oxford German Studies*, 45.1 (2016), 31-44 (p. 34).

[51] Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, pp. 24, 138-39.

[52] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[53] Kerstin Barndt, '„Eine von uns?" Irmgard Keuns Leserinnen und das Melodramatische', in *Autorinnen der Weimarer Republik*, ed. by Walter Fähnders and Helga Karrenbrock (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2003), pp. 137-62 (pp. 147, 151).

[54] Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, p. 139.

melodramatic moment in the novel, as Gilgi arrives with financial support too late to save the family.[55] Furthermore, with reference to the ambiguous ending of the novel, in which a pregnant Gilgi boards a train for Berlin, leaving Martin behind in Cologne, Ritchie asks whether this ending is a 'flight from reality or a flight to a better reality?'[56] Indeed, Keun leaves this open.

stud. chem. Helene Willfüer includes similarly melodramatic features, particularly in the structuring of the plot around binary opposites, explored by Barndt in her discussion of the recurring theme of life and death.[57] The melodramatic plot of Baum's novel, which tracks Helene's experiences of financial hardship and personal isolation through her unlikely professional success and ultimate acceptance of her former professor's marriage proposal, creates a fairy-tale-like narrative that exists outside a specific historical moment and, as the novel progresses, becomes increasingly removed from the reality of women's experiences in Weimar Germany. *Helene* was written before the economic depression that dominated the closing years of the Weimar Republic and shaped the experiences of characters in the novels of Tergit, Keun, Brüning and Leitner. Nevertheless, even in the context of the 'Golden Twenties', the novel's happy ending, in which Helene achieves a fulfilling and balanced work and home life, remained out of reach for the vast majority of women.

While the fiction discussed in this thesis can be considered examples of literature in the *neue Sachlichkeit* style, it is clear that the authors were also influenced by other genres. Women writers thus developed their own literary styles and voices, appealing to both experimental and popular fiction genres to produce socially critical texts that would reach their target readership effectively.

Women's Political Writing

Like the non-fiction texts discussed in Chapters One and Two of this thesis, the fiction writing analysed in Chapters Three and Four has political implications. The works of Leitner, Zur Mühlen, and Brüning are explicitly political and seek to promote left-wing ideas. The novels of Keun, Baum, and Tergit should, however, also be viewed as political. In this thesis I treat women's writing as a means for women to shape discourses around motherhood and their reproductive choices. As such, writing can be seen as a subversive tool that enables women to challenge the status quo and call into question dominant assumptions about their social role. As my analysis will uncover, these works of fiction echoed and developed the themes in the non-

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[55] J. M. Ritchie, 'Irmgard Keun's Weimar Girls', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 60.1 (1990), 63-79 (p. 72).
[56] Ibid., p. 73.
[57] Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, p. 26.

fiction texts considered in earlier chapters, such as access to abortion and contraception, single motherhood, and intergenerational tensions that emerged as young women sought to distance themselves from the models of womanhood represented by their mothers' generation.

Women writers' use of fiction as a political tool was not a new development in the Weimar period and feminists in Germany and beyond had long used writing as a means of social criticism. For example, Chris Weedon's book *Gender, Feminism, and Fiction in Germany 1840-1914* explores discourses around gender and women's social role in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[58] In her book *Women, Emancipation and the German Novel 1871-1910*, Charlotte Woodford, meanwhile, uncovers how women in the late nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century used fiction as a form of protest by which 'they could begin to shape the representation of their own emotional and social realities.'[59] Woodford shows how women's critical engagement with themes such as maternalism, pregnancy, and single motherhood had emerged in the pre-World War One period. Continuities, as well as developments, in these arguments from the pre- to the post-World War One period can be identified. For example, assumptions of women's maternal instinct, as I have shown in Chapter Two, remained prevalent in the Weimar period.[60] Other arguments, however, such as the pronatalist and eugenicist ideas of the Wilhelmine-era Sexual Reform Movement,[61] are not dominant in the primary texts considered in this thesis. Nevertheless, the fiction examined in this thesis should be seen as a continuation of women's political activism through the medium of writing that had been established before the foundation of the Weimar Republic.

While political criticism can be included in texts belonging to any genre or literary style, the fiction in Chapter Three of this thesis is representative of *Gebrauchsliteratur*. *Gebrauchsliteratur* is functional, didactic fiction, in which the political message is privileged over artistic values. Although *Gebrauchsliteratur* can be employed in service of any political perspective, the functionality of the genre makes it particularly suited to left-wing writing, which sought to reach a mass readership with an unambiguous message. Writers of *Gebrauchsliteratur* attempted to distance themselves from what they perceived as the bourgeois tendencies of Expressionism by moving away from the emphasis on the aesthetic form and foregrounding the didacticism of their texts. Indeed, as Altner notes, Zur Mühlen was aware, 'daß sie mit diesen [Propaganda]Erzählungen keine künstlerischen Ansprüche erfüllte, sondern reine Agitation betrieb.'[62] Becker argues that the functionalisation of literature during the

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[58] Chris Weedon, *Gender, Feminism, and Fiction in Germany, 1840-1914* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).
[59] Woodford, *Women, Emancipation and the German Novel*, pp. 6-7.
[60] Ibid., p. 125.
[61] Ibid., pp. 125, 138.
[62] Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, p. 109.

Weimar era derives from the politicisation of society.[63] *Gebrauchsliteratur* formed part of the wider *neue Sachlichkeit* movement and is hence realist in its depiction of contemporary society, including references to political and economic events of the early twentieth century. Within this genre fiction and non-fiction elements can be blurred, thereby rooting the texts in their historical and social context. Furthermore, these texts tend to avoid extended descriptive passages and aim for linguistic precision. As *Gebrauchsliteratur* serves a didactic function, the language and narratives are intended to be accessible to, and reflect the lived experiences of, a wide working-class and lower-middle-class readership. The conversational tone, linear and episodic structure, and short length of the novellas by Leitner and Zur Mühlen make them widely accessible. While Leitner opts for a first-person narrative, Brüning's novel and both of Zur Mühlen's novellas have an omniscient third-person narrator, who gives insights into the thoughts and attitudes of the characters but also offers commentary on events in the story to steer the reader towards the intended political conclusions. This contrasts to the trend of maintaining distance and restricting narration to objective observation without psychological insight most typical of literature of the *neue Sachlichkeit* movement. Moreover, the serialisation of *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen* in the communist press also increased the potential reach of their work.

Central to *Gebrauchsliteratur*, as Becker writes, is the 'Entsentimentalisierung und Entindividualisierung'[64] of literature, which is visible in the use of tropes to be discussed in Chapter Three, such as the socialist movement as a family and the unsentimental, at times even pessimistic portrayal of the opportunities available to young, working-class women during the Weimar period. The repetition of common names such as Lina, Anna and Trude in these texts also reflect the authors' attempts to de-individualise their narratives and give the impression that they are telling a collective story. *Kleine Leute*, the shared title of Zur Mühlen's short story and Brüning's novel, which was originally ironically titled *Handwerk hat goldenen Boden*, further implies that the events and characters portrayed are typical of working-class and lower-middle-class experiences during the Weimar period. The typicality of these stories recalls the prominence of 'types' in Weimar culture and, while Keun's and Tergit's novels are less explicitly political than the writing analysed in Chapter Three, *Gilgi* and *Käsebier* also include elements of *Gebrauchsliteratur* in their depiction of characters who are representative of social stereotypes.

Gebrauchsliteratur was not exclusively a literary strategy of the left-wing during the Weimar period, nor was it the exclusive literary strategy of the left. Indeed, Walter Fähnders and Martin Rector argue that, until the establishment of the *Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer*

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[63] Becker, 'Die literarische Moderne', p. 88.
[64] Ibid., p. 89.

Schriftsteller (BPRS) in 1928, the far left lacked a coherent literary strategy,[65] and Wallace notes that '[i]t was not until the early 1930s that the BPRS turned its attention towards creating a form of mass literature that could extend its appeal beyond its traditional proletarian male audience to the rural working classes, young people and, in particular, women.'[66] Zur Mühlen's attempts to appeal to a young female readership in the mid-1920s were therefore not representative of the wider cultural strategy of the political left. Leitner, Brüning and Zur Mühlen were all members of the BPRS, underscoring their commitment to using their writing as a site of political action. The BPRS was an association of writers linked to the communist movement in Weimar Germany and had the stated intention: 'die literarische Selbstbetätigung des revolutionären Proletariats auszulösen und zu fördern'.[67] Although membership of the KPD was not stipulated for BPRS members, they were required to conform to the *Bund*'s action programme, which reflected KPD ideology.[68] Hein emphasises in his study of the BPRS that surviving information about the membership and activities of the organisation is limited but suggests that the initial membership of the *Bund* in 1928 was around 300, with this number growing to around 600 members, who were largely concentrated in Berlin, by 1932.[69] As Helga Gallas notes, the association comprised two key subgroups: 'zum einen die bürgerlich-revolutionären Schriftsteller wie [...] Anna Seghers, Erich Weinert, Friedrich Wolf; zum anderen die proletarischen Schriftsteller und Arbeiterkorrespondenten wie Willi Bredel, Karl Grünberg, Hans Marchwitza u.a.'[70] In addition to the authors Gallas cites, a number of women writers, including Elfriede Brüning, Berta Lask, Hedda Zinner and Maria Leitner, were members of the group. However, Hein explains that women played a relatively small role in the BPRS: 'Die Anzahl der weiblichen Mitglieder in den Reihen des Bundes war ausgesprochen gering, sie lag aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach unter 10% und entsprach damit nicht einmal der quantitativen Verteilung innerhalb der KPD, die 1929 einen Frauenanteil von 16,5% besaß.'[71] Hein writes that women members' literary production was almost exclusively in the genre of children's fiction, although he recognises notable exceptions like Hedda Zinner, whose journalistic work deals with general political themes.[72] Leitner and Brüning similarly wrote newspaper articles

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[65] Walter Fähnders and Martin Rector, *Linksradikalismus und Literatur: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der sozialistischen Literatur in der Weimarer Republik*, 2 vols (Hamburg: Rowohl, 1974), II, pp. 154-56.
[66] Wallace, *The Guises of Socialist Fiction*, p. 101.
[67] Helga Gallas, *Marxistische Literaturtheorie: Kontroversen im Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller* (Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand, 1971), p. 32.
[68] Christoph M. Hein, *Der "Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller Deutschlands": Biographie eines kulturpolitischen Experiments in der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg: Lit, 1991), p. 66.
[69] Ibid., pp. 55, 57-58.
[70] Gallas, *Marxistische Literaturtheorie*, p. 33.
[71] Hein, *Der "Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller Deutschlands"*, pp. 63-64.
[72] Ibid., p. 64.

addressing political and social topics in addition to their fiction. A further notable exception is Anna Seghers, whose 1928 novella *Aufstand der Fischer von St Barbara* was awarded the Kleist Prize. Hein suggests that the BPRS was more concerned with encouraging women workers to read, rather than write, political texts.[73] He concludes that, reflecting the priorities of the socialist movement as a whole, the BPRS tended to emphasise the class struggle and attach less importance to the *Frauenfrage.* This is exemplified in Seghers's *Aufstand der Fischer von St Barbara*, which focuses on the protests of a working-class, fishing community and does not engage with feminist discourses. Although the BPRS was influenced by developments in cultural policy taking place in Russia and the international communist community,[74] German socialist fiction in the interwar period did not generally replicate the features of Socialist Realism, which was emerging in Russia from 1929. As Evgeny Dobrenko explains in his introduction to Socialist Realism, this genre 'produced the symbolic values of socialism instead of its reality.'[75] The idealised narratives common in Socialist Realism contrast with the sobriety of *neue Sachlichkeit* and *Gebrauchsliteratur*, more commonly adopted in German-language fiction of the period, which sought to reflect the challenges of the present rather than a desired socialist future.

In summary, the fiction texts discussed in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis share a number of stylistic features. They can be considered examples of literature from the *neue Sachlichkeit* movement and the socialist fiction analysed in Chapter Three provides examples of *Gebrauchsliteratur*. These works of fiction continue a tradition of women's political writing that began in the pre-World War One period and engage in public discussions of the topics present in the non-fiction writing considered in Chapters One and Two. In the following two chapters, I provide synopses of the primary texts before exploring how they participate in and attempt to influence public debates around birth control, abortion, and single motherhood, and depict the intergenerational tensions that arise between mothers and daughters.

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[73] Hein, *Der "Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller Deutschlands"*, p. 66.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Evgeny Dobrenko, 'Socialist Realism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 97-114, (p. 110).

Chapter Three: Portrayals of Motherhood in Socialist Fiction

Introduction

This chapter analyses how three left-wing women writers from the Weimar era use literary depictions of family as a means to promote socialism. By presenting relatable characters, recognisable situations, and a clear didactic message, these authors encourage criticism of class and gender inequality in Weimar Germany and offer membership of the KPD as the means to overcome the hardship depicted in the texts. The works I analyse here, Hermynia Zur Mühlen's novellas *Lina: Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens* (1924) and *Kleine Leute* (1925), Maria Leitner's novella *Mädchen mit drei Namen* (1932) and Elfriede Brüning's novel also entitled *Kleine Leute* (written 1932-33, first published 1970), share a didacticism and an intention to appeal to a broad working-class readership. I argue that these texts rely on normative ideas of gender roles, by appealing to domestic and familial themes to encourage women's political participation. Yet, these texts all also include subtle challenges to the prevailing gender hierarchy by presenting positive models of independent female activism.

As supporters and members of the KPD, Brüning, Leitner and Zur Mühlen actively engaged in politics, and the political perspectives in their writing are explicit. Hermynia Zur Mühlen (1883-1951),[1] the oldest of the three authors discussed in this chapter, was a member of the KPD from 1919 until the early 1930s.[2] Zur Mühlen, who was born into an aristocratic Austrian family, relocated to Frankfurt in 1919 after separating from her first husband, Victor von zur Mühlen and spending a period of convalescence in Davos due to pulmonary tuberculosis. Zur Mühlen was a prolific writer and translator,[3] and during the Weimar period, she published short propagandistic stories in the communist press.[4] Julie Shoults comments that, although Zur Mühlen was a member of the KPD, she understood socialism broadly as 'the attempt to form an egalitarian society characterized by a spirit of cooperation and solidarity

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[1] For further biographical details, see: Manfred Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen: Eine Biographie* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997).

[2] Ailsa Wallace notes that there is 'no precise record of Zur Mühlen's resignation from the KPD' but that later statements from Stefan Klein, Zur Mühlen's second husband, and Johannes R. Becher place her withdrawal from the party in the early 1930s. Ailsa Wallace, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen: The Guises of Socialist Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 117.

[3] According to her own estimation, Zur Mühlen published around one hundred translations from Russian, English and French. Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, p. 9.

[4] Zur Mühlen published, for example, in *Rote Fahne, Jungen Genossen* and *Revolutionär*. 'Zur Mühlen, Hermynia', in *Lexikon deutschsprachiger Schriftstellerinnen 1800-1945*, ed. by Gisela Brinker-Gabler, Karola Ludwig and Angela Wöffen (Munich: DTV, 1986), pp. 340-42, (p. 340).

across boundaries of social class, gender and nation'.[5] I similarly use the term socialism broadly in this thesis to encompass views represented by both the SPD and KPD. Zur Mühlen fled Germany following the National Socialist seizure of power, initially seeking refuge in Czechoslovakia before settling in London, where, although she continued to publish original texts and translation, she failed to replicate her earlier literary success. Ailsa Wallace observes that there was some interest in Zur Mühlen's socialist fairy tales in the German Democratic Republic and among members of the student movement and extra-parliamentary opposition in the Federal Republic of Germany, and that studies of exile writers also began to take notice of Zur Mühlen's work from the 1970s.[6] However, scholarship has, to date, tended to focus on either biographical accounts of Zur Mühlen's life or on her later literary works, such as the semi-autobiographical *Das Riesenrad* (1932) or anti-fascist novel *Unsere Töchter, die Nazinen* (1934). Wallace's study of Zur Mühlen's propagandistic works is therefore a valuable contribution and my analysis builds upon Wallace's discussions of Zur Mühlen's attempts to write a 'socialist literature for girls'[7] by exploring how her attempts to encourage the political engagement of girls and young women relied on appeals to protect the working-class family, thereby cementing the separation of political issues along gender lines.

The two short stories by Zur Mühlen discussed here are part of the series of novellas she referred to as her *Propagandaerzählungen*. *Lina: Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens* follows the protagonist, Lina, through a series of domestic postings as a housemaid, beginning during the Wilhelmine period when 16-year-old Lina is sent from her rural home in the Black Forest to work for the uncompromising wife of an army major in Frankfurt. The story spans a 23-year period and ends during the Weimar era when Lina commits suicide upon learning that she will lose her job since her ill health prevents her from working. This is the only fiction text in this thesis in which a substantial part of the narrative takes place in the pre-World War One period. This enables Zur Mühlen to show the continuity in the experiences of working-class girls and women before and during the Weimar period. She thus challenges the efficacy of the social and political advances of the Weimar era and implies that a more radical restructuring of society is necessary to ameliorate conditions for girls like Lina. The novella warns of the dangers of political inactivity by offering a sombre picture of the ways in which members of the working-class are exploited within the capitalist system and, as Wallace underlines, 'demonstrates that in

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[5] Julie Shoults, 'Hermynia Zur Mühlen: Writing a Socialist-Feminist Pacifism in the Aftermath of WWI', in *Women Writing War: From German Colonialism Through World War I*, ed. by Katharina von Hammerstein, Barbara Kosta and Julie Shoults (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), pp. 181-208, (p. 183).
[6] Wallace, *The Guises of Socialist Fiction*, pp. 5-6.
[7] Ibid., pp. 101-30.

a patriarchal capitalist society, a working-class woman is doubly disadvantaged.'[8] Lina is dehumanised by the treatment she receives from her upper-middle- and upper-class employers, working 'wie eine Maschine',[9] and ultimately ending her own life as she is unable to envision her place in the world without her work. Lina is viewed simply as a domestic resource, emphasised by Lina's final employer's response to her death: 'Die Frau Oberlehrer bekam fast Krämpfe, als sie die Leiche sah. Sie schrie und weinte und fragte dann schluchzend den Herrn Oberlehrer: „Hast Du den Hahn gut zugedreht, Gustav? Es wird ohnehin eine riesige Gasrechnung geben."' (HZM(a), p. 58). *Lina* was initially serialised in the communist newspaper *Arbeiterstimme* in 1924 before being published in book form by the *Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag* in 1926.

Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, which was also published by the *Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag* in 1925, follows two generations of a family, as the economic hardship that follows the 1923 hyperinflation leads to their political awakening. Martha and her husband Josef Huber run a shop selling drapery and sewing equipment but experience financial difficulties after many of their customers turn to cheaper, mass-produced alternatives. Josef, a committed Catholic at the start of the novella, votes Zentrum, while his father-in-law, Herr Grammel, a cobbler, supports the SPD. Martha is, however, introduced to communist principals by Trude, one of their regular customers. Martha becomes convinced when she experiences the sense of community at a communist rally and learns of the state provisions for mothers and their children in Soviet Russia, as she struggles to feed her own young child. Martha shares what she has learnt with her mother and husband, and her mother, Frau Grammel, is quickly convinced by the protections offered to women and children and joins the KPD. It is not until later in the story that Josef, after a Priest refuses him financial help, renounces his Catholicism and declares his newfound belief in the workers' movement at a party meeting to which he has followed Martha and Frau Grammel. In contrast to *Lina*, *Kleine Leute* ends on a positive note as, with the support of Trude and their new comrades, Josef and Martha are able to raise the funds to pay their rent and attract new (communist) customers to their shop. Both of Zur Mühlen's novellas are written for a young audience; therefore, the language is simple, the narrative is linear and episodic, and the stories are short, making the texts easily accessible to their intended audience.

Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen* focuses on the struggles of a working-class girl and, like Zur Mühlen's novellas, was designed to communicate an explicitly political message: that through collective class action, the opportunities and living conditions for working-class girls like the protagonist, Lina (who shares her name with Zur Mühlen's title character) will be

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[8] Wallace, *The Guises of Socialist Fiction*, p. 129.

[9] Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *Lina: Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens* (Berlin: Vereinigung Internationaler Verlags-Anstalten, 1926), p. 56. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation HZM(a).

improved. While there is no record of the precise date at which Maria Leitner (1892-1942) joined the KPD, she was, according to Helga W. Schwarz, in attendance at the second Communist International Congress in Moscow in 1920 and, by 1922, was working for the Youth Communist International in Berlin.[10] Schwarz notes that Leitner's political activity began with her involvement in the antimilitarist movement in her native Hungary around the end of the First World War, probably under the influence of her two brothers. At the beginning of the 1920s she fled to Germany, via Austria, to escape the persecution of those associated with the Hungarian antimilitarist movement. Leitner joined the *Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller* (BPRS) in 1928,[11] and *Mädchen mit drei Namen* was serialised in the communist tabloid *Die Welt am Abend* in 1932. The novella was first reprinted in book form only in 2013 as part of a collection of Leitner's newspaper publications from the Weimar period. Julian Preece suggests that Leitner was not interested in publishing her literary work in book format and instead choose to focus on serialisation in newspapers in order to reach a larger audience of working-class women and girls effectively.[12] Indeed, Bernhard Fulda observes that *Welt am Abend*, which was published by Willi Münzenberg, had the largest circulation of any communist newspaper during the Weimar period,[13] so offered an effective means for Leitner to reach a sizeable readership. The novella's 'episodic, repetitive structure'[14] is, as Preece notes, suited to serialised publication and, moreover, this format and the novella's conversational tone ensured the text was accessible to Leitner's target audience. Yet, despite this political engagement, Leitner herself claimed in a letter dated 20th May 1941 that she had never been a member of a political party.[15] She was, however, seeking to obtain a visa to enter the USA at this time, having fled to France from fascist Germany so it is possible that Leitner's assertion in this letter was expedient to her changed circumstances. Compared to Zur Mühlen and Brüning, relatively little is known about Leitner's life and it was only recently uncovered that she died in a psychiatric hospital in Marseille, in 1942.[16]

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[10] Helga W. Schwarz, *Internationalistinnen: Sechs Lebensbilder* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1989), pp. 84, 86.
[11] *Maria Leitner oder: Im Sturm der Zeit*, ed. by Julia Killet and Helga W. Schwarz (Berlin: Dietz, 2013), p. 136.
[12] Julian Preece, 'The Literary Interventions of a Radical Writer Journalist: Maria Leitner (1892-1942)', in *Discovering Women's History: German-Speaking Journalists (1900-1950)*, ed. by Christa Spreizer (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 245-64 (p. 263).
[13] Bernhard Fulda, 'Industries of Sensationalism: German Tabloids in Weimar Berlin', in *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. by Karl Christian Führer and Corey Ross (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 183-203 (p. 191). VL Ebook.
[14] Preece, 'The Literary Interventions of a Radical Writer Journalist', p. 264.
[15] Letter cited in: *Im Sturm der Zeit*, ed. by Julia Killet and Helga W. Schwarz, p. 43.
[16] Preece, 'The Literary Interventions of a Radical Writer Journalist' p. 248. It had previously been assumed that Leitner had been killed while working with the Belgian resistance in the early 1940s. This is the account in: Ursula Münchow, 'Neue Wirklichkeitssicht und politische Praxis: Sozialistische Literatur

During the 1920s, Leitner travelled extensively, writing articles and stories based on her experiences, including her 1932 collection of reports entitled *Eine Frau reist durch die Welt*. However, for much of the Weimar period, Leitner was based in Berlin, the setting for *Mädchen mit drei Namen*. In Leitner's short story, Lina runs away from her provincial life in Cottbus to seek a better future in Berlin but, against the backdrop of the depression and mass unemployment of the late Weimar period, Lina struggles to find suitable accommodation or work. While working at a bar, she is given the name Evelyn in order to appear more alluring to the customers. Lina repeatedly comes into contact with the social welfare office (*Pflegeamt*) from where she is finally sent to a convent reformatory, where she is allocated her third name, Annunciata, by the nun who greets her. At the convent, Lina befriends Anna, a communist who was arrested for her alleged involvement in strike action which became violent. Anna denies violent actions and Leitner's text does not enter into any discussion about whether violence is a justifiable means to an end in class struggle. Together, Anna and Lina secure their expulsion from the convent by criticising the greed of the Catholic church, recalling common anti-religious rhetoric in left-wing publications, and the story ends on a hopeful note as Lina, under the guidance of Anna and her brother Franz, joins the workers' movement and declares herself ready to play her part in the class struggle. While Leitner's work has attracted some scholarly attention, the focus has tended to be on her travel writing and her exile novel *Elisabeth, ein Hitlermädchen* (1937). My discussion of *Mädchen mit drei Namen* therefore offers greater insight into Leitner's earlier activist writing.

Unlike the other primary sources in this chapter, Elfriede Brüning's *Kleine Leute* was written as a full-length novel and not intended for serialisation. Brüning's *Kleine Leute*, originally ironically titled *Handwerk hat goldenen Boden*, is a semi-autobiographical story of a family living in Berlin, struggling in the harsh economic climate of the late Weimar period. Hermann Wegener, a master carpenter, is unable to secure commissions, and his wife, Anna, who manages the family's finances, persuades him that they should open a lending library to try to make ends meet. The depiction of challenges faced by independent traders in the face of growing mass production during the Weimar period echoes Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*. Brüning's novel also features as central characters Hermann and Anna's daughter Trude, who is working as a typist and deals with an unplanned pregnancy over the course of the novel, and their son Mogli, who is frequently distracted by his activities with his youth organisation. At the

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und Arbeiterinnenbewegung', in *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen*, ed. by Gisela Brinker-Gabler, 2 vols (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), II, pp. 249-68 (p. 267); 'Maria Leitner', in *Lexikon sozialistischer deutscher Literatur: Von den Anfängen bis 1945: Monographisch-Biographische Darstellungen,* ed. by Inge Diersen (Leipzig: VEB, 1964), pp. 320-21 (p. 320).

close of the novel, both Hermann and Mogli have registered for unemployment support and the family are living in two rooms at the back of the lending library.

Elfriede Brüning (1910-2014)[17] became a member of the KPD and BPRS in 1931 and, as Elisabeth Simons suggests, was among both the youngest and most active members of the association.[18] Brüning's interest in writing began at a young age; after leaving school, she began an unpaid internship as an office assistant at the Kosmos press agency and started publishing articles and short stories in newspapers during the 1920s.[19] After she became a member of the BPRS, her writing adopted a more explicitly political perspective in response to the criticism that she received upon initially presenting her work to colleagues in the BPRS, who asserted her texts focused too heavily on the 'Sonntage des Lebens' and overlooked 'den harten Alltag'.[20] However, Brüning's history of writing light entertainment fiction later enabled her to present herself as politically harmless following her arrest in 1935, alongside ten other members of the BPRS who had continued to meet illegally after the National Socialist assumption of power, and she was ultimately released from custody without charge.[21] Brüning published three unpolitical entertainment novels during the Third Reich (*Und außerdem ist Sommer* in 1934, *Junges Herz muß wandern* in 1936 and *Auf schmalem Land* in 1938) but, following her marriage to Joachim Barckhausen in 1937, she largely focused on her private life for the remainder of the National Socialist period, returning only to her writing career after the Second World War and her separation from her husband. Brüning is primarily known for the work she produced during the years of the German Democratic Republic. She was awarded both the *Goethepreis der Hauptstadt der DDR* and the *Literaturpreis der DFD* in 1980.[22] Brüning's first novel, *Kleine Leute* has not, to date, received substantial critical attention and, in this chapter, I show how Brüning engaged in public discussions of abortion and drew on autobiographical themes to advocate communism as a solution to the hardships faced by many families during the closing years of the Weimar Republic.

While Brüning's novel shares a didacticism and common themes with the novellas of Zur Mühlen and Leitner, this work also distinguishes itself from the other three texts discussed in

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[17] For further biographical details, see: Elfriede Brüning, *Und außerdem war es mein Leben* (Munich: DTV, 1998); Sabine Kebir, *Frauen ohne Männer? Selbstverwirklichung im Alltag: Elfriede Brüning (1910-2014): Leben und Werk* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2016).

[18] Elisabeth Simons, '„Eigenes Erleben von der Seele schreiben": Bemerkungen zum literarischen Schaffen von Elfriede Brüning', *Weimarer Beiträge*, 30.4 (1984), 620-28 (p. 620).

[19] Kebir notes that there is some uncertainty about the chronology and that both 1926 and 1927 have been given as the dates of Brüning's first newspaper publication. Kebir, *Frauen ohne Männer?*, p. 37.

[20] Ibid., p. 74.

[21] Joanne Sayner, *Women Without a Past?: German Autobiographical Writings and Fascism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), p. 249.

[22] Ibid., p. 283.

this chapter in certain respects. First, Brüning's text is a full-length novel, comprising a little over 200 pages, compared to the shorter novellas of Leitner and Zur Mühlen which are each around 60 pages or fewer in length. Second, Brüning's novel was not written with the intention of serialisation. *Kleine Leute* is Brüning's first completed novel and was written over the course of just a few month in the winter of 1932-3.[23] In the afterword to the 1988 edition, Brüning reflects: 'Ich schrieb wie im Fieber, im Wettlauf mit der Zeit'.[24] Due to limited publishing possibilities for an explicitly left-wing text at the time of the National Socialist seizure of power, the novel was not published until 1970 when Brüning, as she claims, came across the manuscript by chance in the desk drawer in which it had been hidden.[25] Brüning's novel was written with the intention of corresponding to her BPRS colleagues' view of proletarian literature. Brüning's *Kleine Leute* is a more stylistically and narratively complex text than Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute* and *Lina* and Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen*. The third way in which Brüning's text differs from Leitner's and Zur Mühlen's is its semi-autobiographical nature. The novel is loosely based on Brüning's own family and the experiences of Brüning's parents are incorporated into narrative events such as Hermann's abandonment of his workshop to avoid his possessions being seized when he is no longer able to pay rent and Anna's optimism at the possibilities of running a lending library. Other elements and characters in the novel, however, including Trude's unemployed boyfriend Hans, are fictional.

In this chapter, I examine the connections between the depiction of family life and promotion of the communist movement in these texts. I argue that, by presenting capitalism as a threat to the working-class family and offering communism as a form of surrogate family, these texts rely on conservative assumptions of gender to appeal to women. Yet, I also consider how the authors question patronising ideas of women's ability to understand politics in their inclusion of positive images of female political participation, and analyse the depictions of female sexuality.

Part One: The Capitalist Threat to the Working-Class Family

<u>Children as an Economic Resource</u>

In both *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and *Lina* the authors advance the criticism that economic hardship experienced by working-class families during the Weimar period led to

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[23] Kebir notes that Brüning began drafting an earlier novel in 1931, however her partial draft was rejected by publishers. Kebir, *Frauen ohne Männer?,* p. 62.

[24] Elfriede Brüning, 'Nachwort', in Elfriede Brüning, *Kleine Leute*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1988), p. 252.

[25] Brüning, 'Nachwort', pp. 254, 259.

children being treated by their parents as either economic burdens or resources. This criticism supports the socialist message of both texts, which assert that the capitalist system negatively impacts on the private relations of working-class members of society and reveals the links between social structure and the attitudes and behaviour of individuals, recalling the texts analysed in Chapter One. Like the writing in Chapter One, the texts discussed here echo *The Communist Manifesto*, in which Marx and Engels write: 'infolge der großen Industrie [werden] alle Familienbande für die Proletarier zerrissen und die Kinder in einfache Handelsartikel und Arbeitsinstrumente verwandelt'.[26] Zur Mühlen and Leitner present this assertion through fictional examples in their novellas. the authors present the theoretical claims of *The Communist Manifesto* in accessible terms by demonstrating through their relatable characters how, due to social class structure and economic circumstances, working-class children are forced to work outside the home and the family unit is broken up in order to survive financially.

This criticism is most pronounced in Zur Mühlen's *Lina*, in which the protagonist is repeatedly exploited not only by her employers but also by her mother and, during her short-lived engagement, her fiancé who feel entitled to Lina's earnings. Lina willingly sacrifices her wages, despite her desire to own the same luxuries as her fourth employer, Frau Kirchner: 'Weshalb darf nicht auch sie sich schmücken, wie diese andere Frau? Sie hat nun schon an die sieben Jahre fleißig gearbeitet – die Arbeit daheim rechnete sie nicht – hat sie nicht auch schöne Kleider verdient, Hüte, Seidenstrümpfe?' (HZM(a), p. 40) This passage highlights social inequality and Lina's indignation, revealed through the narrative adoption of her perspective, is given legitimacy by posing rhetorical questions to which, it is implied, all girls in Lina's position would give the same answer. The notion of financial duty towards her family is, however, deeply ingrained in Lina and, upon learning that she had successfully gained her first job, which was arranged by her mother and aunt, Lina does not question that she must leave home to work even though she is anxious: 'Freilich, [die Schwestern] können nun bereits in der Wirtschaft helfen, da ist es ja ganz natürlich, daß sie, die älteste, in Dienst geht. […] Und die daheim brauchen Geld. [...] Aber die Stadt, so weit fort von zuhaus!' (HZM(a), p. 4) Her mother is unsympathetic to Lina's fears: 'Die Mutter zankte; es sei ein Glück, ein großes Glück, daß sie die Stelle bekomme.' (HZM(a), p. 5). Throughout the novella, Lina continues to send her earnings home to her mother and does not visit home for six years after leaving: 'Daheim ging es immer schlechter. […] Es war besser, der Mutter das Geld zu schicken, das die Reise gekostet hätte.' (HZM(a), p. 35) Lina's family's reliance on her earnings is emphasised here and Zur Mühlen

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[26] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei* (London: J.E. Burghard, 1848). Project Gutenburg Ebook.

criticises how, due to the difficult economic conditions, financial considerations must take priority over familial relationships.

Indeed, the encroachment of financial concerns into interpersonal relationships is further revealed through Lina's romantic relationship with Emil Eilers. Emil is a hairdresser, whom Lina meets when he comes to style her employer's hair. Within the political scheme of the novella, Emil acts as a negative counterfigure to Lina's socialist acquaintances, who will be discussed in Part Three of this chapter. Emil prioritises his own social advancement at the expense of others and ends his engagement to Lina when she loses her job after her employer discovers that Lina, in an attempt to impress Emil, has borrowed a hat without permission. Later in the novella, it is revealed that Emil has become a significant figure within the nationalist movement. Emil's embarrassment about his working-class roots underlines the individualist and self-serving nature of his character: 'Diese peinlichen Verwandten [Emils] lebten in der gleichen Stadt; aber sie sahen den Sohn nie, und nur die Mutter redete bisweilen seufzend und dennoch stolz von „unserem Emil, der ein so feiner Herr geworden ist."' (HZM(a), p. 41). Like Lina's mother, Emil treats Lina as an economic resource who will help him achieve his goal of opening his own hairdressing salon and his interest in Lina is shown to be largely financial: 'Emil Eilers bewunderte zwar das schöne Mädchen aufrichtig, doch verlieh er diesem Gefühl erst Worte, als er erfahren hatte, wie hoch ihr Lohn sei.' (HZM(a), p. 42) While Emil begins to exploit Lina economically, her mother's own sense of entitlement towards Lina's earnings also persists: 'Lina sandte von nun an, allen Klagebriefen der Mutter zum Trotz, nur mehr die eine Hälfte des Lohnes heim, die andere übergab sie Emil „für unser Geschäft."' (HZM(a), p. 43) Lina is thereby placed under financial pressure by those closest to her.

Furthermore, Lina is treated like a burden to her family when she is briefly unemployed and returns home: 'die Mutter war alt geworden, kränklich und müde. [...] Lina merkte, daß sie den Ihren nicht willkommen war. Verbittert dachte sie: „Mein Geld wollt Ihr haben, aber wenn ich einmal rasten will, gibt es für mich bei Euch keinen Platz."' (HZM(a), p. 50) Thus, Zur Mühlen criticises the dehumanising impact of social inequality and economic hardship on working-class family experiences; as Wallace argues,

Zur Mühlen points out that family values are, to a large extent, dependent on socio-economic relations. The rural, working poor [...] are obliged to view family members primarily in terms of their earning potential. [...] The supposedly natural, loving maternal instinct [...] is revealed as a luxury that Lina's mother cannot afford to express.[27]

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[27] Wallace, *The Guises of Socialist Fiction*, pp. 112-13.

Building on Wallace's analysis, I argue that Zur Mühlen's criticism that capitalism poses a risk to the integrity of the working-class family rests on conservative notions of 'the good mother'. Zur Mühlen thus shows how poverty impacts the mothering of working-class women but does little to question idealised notions of motherhood that perpetuate gender inequality.

Similarly, in Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, Lina's first job as a sales apprentice in a local shop is secured by her mother, again showing that, once they are of working age, children are expected to contribute financially to the family. The notion that children who are not contributing become an economic burden also features when, for example, employees of the welfare office contact Lina's mother, asking her to send money for Lina's return to Cottbus from Berlin. Lina explains that this cost is unaffordable and adds: 'wenn sie [das Geld] mir schicken, haben sie nur noch einen Esser mehr zu Haus, nichts weiter.'[28] Lina's mother rejects the request, asking instead that the money be lent to Lina who can work to pay it back (ML, p. 173). This reinforces the suggestion in Leitner's and Zur Mühlen's texts that working-class parents are both unable and unwilling to give financial support to children of working age. Leitner's novella is, however, somewhat more sympathetic in its portrayal of this idea. Leitner's Lina recognises the financial burden that she will place on her parents should she return home and, furthermore, she attributes blame for this to the wider economic situation and lack of work available in her hometown.

In *Kleine Leute* Brüning also acknowledges the expectation that unmarried children of working age support their families financially, however, she deals with the question from the perspective of the parents. Anna and Hermann demonstrate a greater respect for Trude's financial independence and autonomy than the mothers in the novellas of Leitner and Zur Mühlen. Trude's financial independence is demonstrated by her expenditure on leisure and luxury items. For example, when Trude returns from a boating trip with friends she reports that a leak in the boat requires repair: 'Hermann sagte: »Das kostet auch wieder.« »Wieso? Ist doch mein Geld«, sagte Trude spitz.'[29] While Anna and Hermann are forced to borrow money from Trude, they intend to repay her from their furniture sales profits: 'Trude muß noch warten. Was willst du denn alles davon bezahlen? Miete, Kostgeld – was sind denn achtzig Mark... Trude bekommt ihr Geld von dem nächsten Schrank.' (EB, p. 122) Trude is thus seen as an economic resource by her parents, but they do not wish to exploit her earning potential and instead seek

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[28] Maria Leitner, 'Mädchen mit drei Namen', in *Mädchen mit drei Namen: Reportagen aus Deutschland und ein Berliner Roman, 1928-1933*, ed. by Helga Schwarz and Wilfried Schwarz (Berlin: Aviva, 2013), pp. 141-210 (pp. 172-73). Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation ML.

[29] Brüning, *Kleine Leute*, p. 97. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation EB.

to avoid reliance on her income. Yet, other characters in the novel also expect that parents would have access to their children's wages. When Hermann tells his landlord that he is unable to pay the rent on his workspace, the landlord implies that Hermann should use Trude's salary: 'Das können Sie uns nicht erzählen. Ihre Tochter hat doch eine gute Stellung.' (EB, p. 134) This response reveals a lack of respect for Trude's financial independence and the patriarchal expectation that Trude's father is entitled to her income.

Anna plays an active role in supporting and advising Hermann in business matters, and comes up with schemes to earn the family more money, showing her reluctance to exploit the earning potential of her children. Anna manages the family's finances and is frequently depicted carrying out financial calculations: 'Auf dem Tisch lagen weiße, bekritzelte Zettel, Zahlen über Zahlen. Anna rechnete. […] Anna wendete den Zettel, fing noch einmal an.' (EB, p. 26) The ongoing nature of the family's financial struggle is emphasised by the repetition of 'Zahlen' and such references to economic hardship anchor Brüning's narrative in the depression of the late Weimar period. Anna is keen to contribute financially herself; she suggests putting a large commission on hold to sell two smaller cabinets first to raise more capital (EB, pp. 96-97) and proposes opening a lending library, as she believes there is demand for such services: 'Mir geht das mit den Leihbibliotheken nicht aus dem Kopf. Diese Büchereien wachsen wie Pilze aus der Erde. Da muß doch was dran sein.' (EB, p. 95) When Hermann expresses reservations about their rash decision to rent a shop for their library, Anna dismisses his concerns: 'jetzt warte erst mal ab. Man muß auch mal was riskieren können.' (EB, p. 129) Anna's excitement at the prospect of opening a library reflects her commitment to her family and exemplifies her active attempts to improve their standard of living and financial stability. By emphasising the actions Anna takes to care for her family, the text casts Anna in the role of a 'good' mother by conventional standards.

Similarly, in Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, Martha is keen to work alongside her husband when they marry. Like Anna, she has plans to develop their business selling sewing supplies: 'Wenn wir sehr fleißig sind und gut vorwärtskommen […] dann können wir vielleicht schon in einem Jahr einen besser gelegenen Laden mieten, können auch Stoffe verkaufen.'[30] In contrast to *Lina*, however, there is no suggestion in *Kleine Leute* that Martha is exploited. Indeed, her husband Josef is presented as well-meaning but old-fashioned in his attitudes and would prefer that Martha did not need to work at all. (HZM(b), p. 176) It is therefore apparent that it is not women's work that is criticised in these texts but rather the exploitation of girls' and women's

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[30] Hermynia Zur Mühlen, 'Kleine Leute: Eine Erzählung', in *Werke*, ed. by Ulrich Weinzierl, 4 vols (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 2019), III, pp. 174-99 (p. 175). Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation HZM(b).

labour in a system that forces parents to treat their working-age children as economic resources.

Distance between Mothers and Daughters

Frau Grammel in Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute* and Anna in Brüning's *Kleine Leute* feature much more prominently than mother figures in Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and Zur Mühlen's *Lina*. The prominent role of these mother of the pre-World War One generation contrasts with a trend of absent mother figures, which is exemplified not only in *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen* but also in *Gilgi* and *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*, which will be analysed in Chapter Four. In this thesis I argue that Weimar fiction portrays a figurative break between generations as necessary for women to imagine new models of motherhood and womanhood. This assertion is substantiated by the fact that in the two texts in which mothers of the pre-World War One generation feature as main characters, the daughters follow in their mothers' footsteps more closely by choosing marriage and motherhood. For instance, in Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, Martha and her mother enjoy a harmonious relationship and remain in regular contact throughout the novella. Frau Grammel supports her daughter through the birth of a son, which is complicated by Martha's malnourishment (HZM(b), p. 180), and, later in the novella, the two women attend a political meeting together (HZM(b), p. 193). Indeed, Martha and Frau Grammel are united as mothers in their political convictions. In this text, women's shared experiences as mothers are emphasised over generational tensions.

Brüning's *Kleine Leute*, however, offers a more nuanced portrayal of mother-daughter relationships, as her novel includes episodes which show both the tensions between Anna and Trude, as well as moments of closeness and understanding. Anna and Trude's relationship highlights the changing opportunities and expectations of young women in the Weimar Republic. Anna becomes aware of the distance between herself and her daughter following Trude's return from a camping trip: 'Aber du lebst in deiner Welt. Was gehen wir dich an!« Sie schluchzte. Große blanke Tränen rollten ihr über das runde Gesicht, tropften auf die Schürze. Trude beobachtete das alles ganz unbeteiligt.' (EB, p. 31) Anna's reference to Trude living in 'her own world', as well as Trude's lack of interest in her mother's tears emphasises the gulf between them at this moment in the story and demonstrates Trude's attempts to separate herself emotionally and physically from her mother.

Brüning underscores the generational divide again when Anna and Hermann go to the cinema. They watch a film called *Leben zu zweit*, about a young woman in a relationship with a married man. After the film Anna says to Hermann: 'Ich weiß nicht, was die jungen Mädchen heutzutage für Ansichten haben. Diese Madeleine. Will mit einem verheirateten Mann losziehen.' (EB, p. 57) Anna positions her generation against that of Trude and reveals her more

traditional view of how young women should behave; she disapproves of the film's depiction of a casual relationship instead of marriage. The unequal standards of sexuality for men and women raised in Kienle's *Frauen* are also visible here, as Anna makes no comment on the adulterous behaviour of the married man but rather criticises the young woman's participation in the relationship.

Furthermore, Brüning creates an opposition between Anna and Trude in the physical spaces that they occupy. In contrast to Anna, who is rarely seen outside the domestic environment, her daughter, Trude, is rarely present in the family's apartment, representing again her attempts to separate herself from her mother: 'Von Trude wußte man nichts. […] Sie kam aus dem Büro, zog ihr bestes Kleid über und ging.' (EB, p. 102) In her frequent presence in the public sphere, as well as the emphasis on her appearance implied by her choice of clothing, Trude recalls the image of the Weimar new woman, associated with the post-World War One generation. Further literary representations of the new woman will be discussed in Chapter Four.

In spite of moments of distance, Anna and Trude's relationship is not irreparably damaged. For example, Anna is excited to meet Trude at the station when she returns from her trip: 'Ihre Augen suchten den Bahnsteig ab. Plötzlich stieß sie [Hermann] an. »Da kommt ja Trude!«' (EB, p. 24) Anna's enthusiastic response to Trude's return implies her emotional reliance on her children, recalling the psychological analyses of women's desire to mother discussed in Chapter One, and paint her as a conventionally 'good' mother who cares for and is available to her children. Similarly, when Trude is feeling unwell shortly before her abortion appointment, which is discussed later in this chapter and of which Anna is unaware, Anna's behaviour towards Trude is conventionally maternal:

Anna stand gleich auf. »Du bist den ganzen Tag schon so käsig«, sagte sie. »Vielleicht kannst du morgen mal zu Hause bleiben.« Sie nahm Trudes Hand, half ihr behutsam beim Ausziehen und klopfte das Bett zurecht. Als Trude schon lag, beugte sich die Mutter noch einmal zu ihr herunter und sah ihr besorgt ins Gesicht. (EB, p. 71)

The narrator refers to Anna as 'die Mutter', rather than by name, suggesting that her familial role is synonymous with her identity at this moment. Anna's immediate response suggests that Trude is her priority, and her actions physically helping Trude to bed imply an interaction between a mother and younger child, underscoring Trude's ongoing need of her mother's support.

Brüning's nuanced portrayal of Anna and Trude's relationship contrasts sharply with the way in which Leitner and Zur Mühlen deal with mother-daughter relationships in *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and *Lina*. In both novellas the protagonists are physically separated from their

families for much of the narrative and the physical distance mirrors an emotional distance. In line with the explicitly political perspective of these novellas and given the target readership of young women, the exclusion of the mother figures from much of the story allows the authors to follow the party line and emphasise the importance of the class struggle rather than women's issues. However, the absence of the mother figures simultaneously implies the authors' refusal to endorse an image of motherhood in which women are confined to the domestic sphere, relegate their own needs below those of the other members of their families, and are vulnerable to criticism for failing to fulfil an idealised image of motherhood prohibited by their economic status. These strained mother-daughter relationships also underscore the risk to the integrity of the working-class family posed, as Zur Mühlen and Leiter assert, by capitalism.

In Zur Mühlen's text, Lina is sent away to the city to work by her mother. Thus, it is the mother in *Lina* who initiates the distance between the characters. Initially, Lina feels homesick in Frankfurt: 'Daheim, wie fern das liegt. Das Heimweh überkam sie, Heimweh nach der Mutter, den Geschwistern, dem Häuschen, nach der Kuh im Stall, und den gackernden Hennen, dem frechen kleinen Hahn.' (HZM(a), p. 14) Lina's homesickness for her mother, her family house, and the rural environment underlines the association of her mother with the domestic environment and a specific physical space.

Yet, as Lina becomes accustomed to her life in the city, and becomes increasingly aware of social inequality, her homesickness fades and she instead begins to resent her mother, who has sent her away from the family home and continues to claim Lina's wages: 'Sie empfand auch keine Sehnsucht mehr nach den Ihren. [...] Ja, sie grollte manchmal der Mutter: darf man den Kindern das Leben schenken, wenn es ein derartiges Leben ist?' (HZM(a), p. 35) Lina's question here emphasises Zur Mühlen's criticism of the treatment of children as economic resources, underlining the psychological impact that this has on the children. The above passage, which adopts Lina's perspective, also places the blame for this situation on the mothers who bring children into such an environment. Hence, the portrayal of Lina's mother is unsympathetic. There is no explicit comment on women's access to birth control in *Lina*, however, Zur Mühlen's implicit suggestion that working-class women should be able to limit family size in order to alleviate financial struggle is line with left-wing campaigns for improved access to birth control, discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Zur Mühlen's focus remains on the perspectives of her intended young, female readership and she seeks to promote their future political engagement, rather than explicitly highlighting the wider social circumstances and limited opportunities available to women of their mothers' generation, whose financial hardship forces them to rely on their children's earning potential and for whom information about and access to contraception was limited. By eschewing this discussion, Zur Mühlen's focus in *Lina* is on demonstrating the inequality resulting from the capitalist system and, while she shows the

particular ways in which women are impacted by this inequality, her text foregrounds the class struggle as the means to improving the lives of working-class women and largely avoids framing her social criticism in feminist terms.

Zur Mühlen suggests that the power imbalance in a capitalist society leads women to abuse their authority over children and young people, and Lina's mother is not the only mother figure to be portrayed negatively. Two of Lina's employers explicitly describe themselves as stepping into the role of Lina's mother while Lina is working for them. Lina's first employer, Frau Major Glaubner states: 'Ich vertrete an Ihnen Mutterstelle' (HZM(a), p. 17) to justify forbidding Lina to socialise with a friend who was seen in a café with a boyfriend. For Frau Major Glaubner, the role of the mother is therefore associated with authority and she uses her position of power to enforce her bourgeois notions of morality. As Wallace observes, Frau Major Glaubner 'bears little resemblance to *Nesthäkchen*'s doting mother and instead strikes fear into her own daughter and tyrannises Lina'.[31] Wallace thus highlights Zur Mühlen's political criticism of the exploitative behaviour of the middle class but her analysis does not comment further on the interplay of class and gender inequality in *Lina*. Zur Mühlen follows official party lines; by presenting female power as exploitative within the capitalist system she highlights the impact of class inequality but misses an opportunity to explore the possibility of female solidary across class lines. Lina's third employer, Frau Postsekretär, similarly claims to have taken on a maternal role towards Lina, despite also controlling Lina's social life and preventing her budding relationship with a postman. When Lina announces she is leaving to work for a new employer, Frau Postsekretär complains: 'Man behandelt die Mädchen wie eine Mutter [...] und kaum haben sie etwas gelernt, so laufen sie einem davon. Diese Undankbarkeit!' (HZM(a), p. 38) This betrays that, like Frau Major Glaubner, her understanding of a mothering role is connected to authority. Her expectation of Lina's service and loyalty also contradicts the conventional notion of selfless mothering, signalling to the reader that Frau Postsekretär's behaviour is reprehensible. Through these figures, Zur Mühlen criticises the exploitation of those without authority, like Lina.

The authority of mother figures within the home reinforces conservative gender expectations. Lina's mother's authority is apparent at the beginning of the novella as Lina repeatedly replies: 'Ja, Mutter' (HZM(a), pp. 5-6). An example of parental authoritarian behaviour can also be found in Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen*: 'Wenn ich nach Hause kam, kommandierten sie [die Eltern] mich herum. [...] Mir gegenüber fühlten sie sich als Herren.' (ML, p. 143) By describing her parents as 'masters', Lina presents her parents as abusing their

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[31] Wallace, *The Guises of Socialist Fiction*, p. 112.

position of power and exploiting her labour within the domestic setting. As well as offering a political commentary, these depictions raise psychological themes to which feminists later returned. As discussed in Chapter One, Weimar-era writing anticipated themes that returned to prominence in post-World War Two feminist theory and the depiction of mothers' authoritarianism provides a further example of the ways in which Weimar-era texts foreshadow later feminist publications. The apparent tyranny of women as mothers anticipates, for instance, Simone de Beauvoir's argument in *The Second Sex* that, as women are excluded from positions of power due to the prevailing gender hierarchy, motherhood enables women to exercise dominance which they are otherwise precluded from doing.[32] Beauvoir suggests that women particularly wield this power over daughters, as their jealousy begrudges the next generation opportunities that they did not have themselves. Such a self-serving position is criticised in left-wing fiction, which advocates collective striving towards a more equal future. Building on the discussion in Chapter One, these political novellas further illustrate the interactions between politics, social circumstances, and psychological development.

In contrast to Zur Mühlen's Lina, who is sent away to work, Leitner's Lina runs away from her family, which she describes in the opening passage as 'Enge, Zank, Geschrei' (ML, p. 143). In Leitner's novella, therefore, there is already emotional distance between Lina and her family, which is cemented by Lina's move to Berlin. Lina and her mother do not see each other in person again in the novella and her mother is only mentioned briefly in the narrative once Lina has arrived in Berlin, in the passage in which the welfare office request funds from Lina's parents to send her home to Cottbus. However, in comparison to Zur Mühlen's text, Leitner's novella is more sympathetic in its portrayal of Lina's mother. Lina concedes: 'Heute verstehe ich das alles besser, aber damals war ich nur verbittert und habe sie auch gehaßt.' (ML, p. 143) This quotation, from the opening passage of the novella, mitigates Lina's criticism of her parents' behaviour; Lina recognises that external social circumstances, rather than malicious intent, cause her parents to act as they do. This acknowledgement underlines Leitner's assertion that capitalist social structures threaten harmonious familial relationships in working-class communities.

Part Two: Female Sexuality and Reproductive Choices

The generational tensions that, the authors suggest, are exacerbated by the pressures put on working-class families by financial hardship, are reinforced by developing attitudes

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[32] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier (London: Vintage, 2011), pp. 434-35. VL Ebook.

towards sexuality displayed by the female protagonists of these texts. As will be shown, women of the generation that came of age in the pre-World War One period are associated with the status quo and uphold conservative notions of female sexuality that contrast with the more casual approach to relationships by young women such as Trude in Brüning's *Kleine Leute* and, in the novels discussed in Chapter Four, Irmgard Keun's Gilgi and Gabriele Tergit's Käte Herzfeld. Older women's acceptance of traditional ideas about women's sexuality recalls the psychoanalytic arguments outlined in Chapter One that assert that women internalise dominant social discourses about their place in society and unknowingly become guardians of the status quo. In the fiction texts discussed in this chapter and Chapter Four, intergenerational tensions arise as the younger generation of women attempt to shape a new model of womanhood and motherhood. Yet, while the younger, post-World War One generation are typically more open about their sexuality in these political texts, they do not demonstrate the same degree of worldliness in sexual affairs as some of their counterparts do in the non-party political popular fiction texts discussed in Chapter Four.

Women's Perspectives on Sexuality

In Brüning's *Kleine Leute*, the portrayal of Anna corresponds to a largely traditional model of wife and mother. Anna's familial role is exemplified by her location within the domestic sphere. Indeed, Anna rarely leaves the family's apartment and when she does it is usually either with or to meet another member of the family: 'Den ganzen Tag sitzt man allein herum.' (EB, p. 27) While Trude works in an office, Hermann recalls how Anna's seamstress work in the early period of their relationship was located within the home: 'Anna arbeitet, selten kommt sie auf die Straße. Ihr Leben sind die vier Wände, die Nähmaschine, das Trittbrett.' (EB, p. 13) Anna's interaction with the public world is often from the balcony of the apartment, where she frequently waits for Hermann to return home (for example, EB, p. 48). The physical location of Anna within the family's apartment emphasises her social role within the private sphere. Repeated references to Anna cooking and providing meals for Hermann and Mogli when they return from work further underlines her domestic role (EB, pp. 87, 96) and gendered divisions of labour are cemented when Anna invites Hermann to help in the lending library. He retorts: 'Ich will dir bloß sagen, daß ich Weiberarbeit nicht tue.' (EB, p. 180) Hermann, meanwhile, seeks to provide for the family financially and becomes increasingly frustrated when he is no longer able to do so: 'Ist ja ekelhaft, immer abhängig zu sein. Ist ja ekelhaft' (EB, p. 181). Hermann's repetition of 'ekelhaft' emphasises the extent of his frustration and, although their relationship is committed and loving, it is modelled on conservative gender values. Similarly, in Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, Martha and Josef's marriage is portrayed as caring but based on traditional gender roles that are left largely unchallenged. Like Anna,

Martha prepares meals for her husband (HZM(b), p. 192) and Josef is frustrated that he is unable to provide financially for his wife and son (HZM(b), pp. 188-89). These texts, like *Frauenwelt* in Chapter Two, reveal how widespread normative expectations of gender roles remained during the Weimar era. As in *Frauenwelt* and Overlach's *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute*, the focus remains on promoting left-wing political perspectives rather than engaging, for example, in a more theoretical, radically feminist dissection of the institution of marriage, as attempted by Rühle-Gerstel in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* as well as members of the Sexual Reform movement.[33]

Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute* does not thematise questions of sexuality, but Brüning approaches her portrayal of Anna and Hermann's relationship in a progressive manner, including intimate passages between the married couple. The traditional gender divisions present in their domestic and paid work continue into their physical relationship and are, in fact, driven by Anna. For instance, Anna is portrayed as passive: 'Dann ließ sie es still geschehen' (EB, p. 89) and maintains a degree of modesty: 'Sie schlüpfte vorsichtig von unten in das neue Hemd hinein, und erst als es fest am Körper saß, ließ sie das Nachthemd fallen. So schamhaft war Anna noch, er durfte sie immer nur im Dunkeln sehen. Und er war doch ihr Mann.' (EB, p. 89) Hermann, by contrast, displays a progressiveness uncommon for the historical period in his attempts to discuss Anna's sexuality and experiences of menopause: 'Weißt du noch, Anna […] neulich der Film? Sie sprachen da doch von den Wechseljahren. Von den Gefühlen der Frau... Wie ist denn das bei dir?' (EB, pp. 88-89). Anna resists this conversation, corroborating the psychological assessments discussed in Chapter One that women internalise expectations of their sexuality.

Anna's forced modesty and denial of female sexuality recalls passages from Zur Mühlen's *Lina*. The unequal standards to which men and women are held, as well as the impact of extramarital relationships on women's reputation that were discussed in Chapters One and Two are also depicted in this novella. Before Lina departs home, her mother gives her a warning: 'Du wirst einmal heiraten, mußt deine Jungfernschaft bewahren. […] Und der Bub soll ein Herr werden, da darf seine Schwester nicht mit einem ledigen Kind herumlaufen.' (HZM(a), p. 6) Limitations on women's sexuality are presented as self-evident here. Furthermore, Lina's mother reinforces that sisters are not given access to the same opportunities as their brothers. The social advancement of Lina's younger brother is prioritised, illustrating Rühle-Gerstel's criticisms of the impact of the prevailing gender hierarchy on girls and women. Lina adopts her

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[33] For example, feminists associated with the Sexual Reform movement explicitly campaigned against the institution of marriage and, in the early twentieth century, even called for women to boycott marriage. See: Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), p. 269.

mother's advice and, submitting to the status quo and social expectations as she repeatedly does throughout the novella, Lina refuses Emil's physical advances during their short-lived engagement: 'Er schien zu glauben, daß die Rechte des Bräutigams denen des Ehegatten gleichkommen, aber Lina, trotz allem noch die Lehren der Mutter im Ohr, war anderer Ansicht.' (HZM(a), p. 43) This is a rare moment in the novella in which Lina appears to stand up for herself, however, she is simply following her mother's warning rather than taking control of her own sexuality. Like Anna in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*, Lina denies her own sexual autonomy, instead following the dominant social discourses which promoted the notions of female passivity and modesty. In Zur Mühlen's *Lina*, Lina does not become a mother herself, but assumes that she will marry, as is evidenced both by her engagement to Emil Eilers, and by her earlier fantasies of marrying the postman while she is working in her third position with the strict Frau Postsekretär: 'Wie werden die Schwestern staunen, wenn sie mit ihrem Mann heimkommt, dem schönen, stattlichen Mann.' (HZM(a), p. 34) While Lina dreams of marriage, her aspirations or assumptions regarding her possible future motherhood do not feature in the text, again substantiating my assertion that Zur Mühlen sought to prioritise class rather than gender questions in her novella. It is worth noting that Zur Mühlen's Lina would have been closer in age to Brüning's Anna than to Trude and it is therefore unsurprising that she approaches her romantic relationships and sexuality in the more conservative manner of the pre-World War One generation.

Trude appears to take greater ownership of her own sexuality and approach sexual encounters in a more casual manner than Anna or Zur Mühlen's Lina. Trude's relationship with Hans, for example, is informal. The relationship is not officially announced to their families and Hans meets Trude's family only after the couple have been dating and holidaying together for some time. When Anna learns of Trude's pregnancy, she asks her daughter if she intends to marry Hans. Trude's attitude towards her relationship, however, is not confined by the same social expectations that shape Anna's viewpoint: 'Trude dachte zum ersten Mal daran. […] Noch nie hatte sie darüber mit Hans gesprochen.' (EB, p. 31) The fact that Trude had not previously considered marriage shows that Trude's thinking about her relationship with Hans is not governed by the morality of her parents' generation. Despite her own ambivalence about marriage, Trude changes her mind for Anna: 'Wenn du willst, können wir ja heiraten – der Hans und ich' (EB, p. 189). Like Gilgi in Keun's novel, to be discussed in Chapter Four, Trude is not interested in marriage for herself, but, in contrast to Gilgi who dismisses her adoptive mother's concerns, Trude agrees to marry Hans in order to meet her mother's sense of respectability: 'Das Gesicht vor ihr [Trude] hellte sich auf. »Wirst du endlich vernünftig, Trude?« fragte Anna erfreut. »Mein Gott – ich hätte das vor den Leuten nicht überlebt.«' (EB, p. 189) The contrast of Anna's excitement with Trude's indifference underlines the changing generational views of

marriage. Anna clearly attaches greater importance to marriage, showing through her use of the word 'vernünftig' that she considers it to be the only reasonable option for Trude.

This passage exemplifies how Anna and Trude negotiate intergenerational tension in their relationship. After initially reprimanding Trude for her extramarital pregnancy ('Das hättest du uns ersparen können. Neben allem anderen nun das.' (EB, p. 188), Anna quickly begins making suggestions about Trude's heath and, despite their economic hardship, declares that she will buy milk in her concern for ensuring Trude has a healthy pregnancy (EB, p. 189). Instead of becoming angry, Anna immediately reverts to caring for Trude, while Trude compromises by agreeing to marry Hans to reduce her mother's worries. This episode is a moment of reconciliation between the two women: 'Anna weinte [...] Trude sagte beklommen: »Ist es meinetwegen?«' (EB, p. 188) Trude's concern for her mother's sadness here contrasts with her earlier cold reaction to Anna's tears when she first returned from her camping trip. Thus, even though Trude initially reflects the independence and casual approach to relationships of the typical new woman, by the end of the novel she has bowed to pressure and conformed to the social expectations of her parents' generation. Trude's marriage to Hans prior to having her child signals the recreation of the family unit. Trude's acceptance of marriage for her mother's sake, despite her first hesitations, reveals the extent to which expectations of mothering within marriage were socially ingrained during the Weimar period.

The image of the unattached and sexually experienced new woman referenced in much popular fiction of the Weimar era is similarly undermined in Maria Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen*. Given the association of the new woman figure with white-collar employment and the middle classes, it is unsurprising that these texts, which, within the framework of *Gebrauchsliteratur*, seek to portray relatable protagonists to their intended working-class readership, distance their characters from the new woman stereotypes. Leitner's Lina is a young woman seeking independence, but she is presented as somewhat naïve, as her infatuation with Harry, whom she meets in a bar, blinds her to his faults. Harry reveals anti-Semitic opinions, however Lina states: 'wenn er mich küßte, vergaß ich diese allgemeinen Redensarten.' (ML, p. 187) Like Zur Mühlen's Lina, she begins to lend Harry money, for which she is reprimanded by her friend Angelika (ML, p. 187). Lina's willingness to overlook Harry's political position and to allow herself to be financially exploited reveal her naivety and quick emotional investment in the relationship. This contrasts to the independence associated with new women. It is implied at the novella's close that Lina is at the beginning of a relationship with Anna's brother Franz; however, as Franz is protective and introduces her to a political education (as will be discussed in Part Three of this chapter) their relationship references a more conservative gender hierarchy. Lina's attitudes towards marriage and her own potential future motherhood are not discussed.

Leitner's text further critiques the image of the sexually promiscuous new woman in the portrayal of Angelika, Lina's first friend in Berlin who finds work for herself and Lina in dance halls and bars. Angelika uses her sexuality to obtain gifts from men, a behaviour which Leitner implicitly criticises through Lina's reservations. Angelika seeks to manipulate a young man who observes her admiring a hat: 'Du wirst schon sehen, ich werde ihn so weit bringe mir zu kaufen, was ich will.' (ML, p. 157) Lina is, however, sceptical: 'Daran glaubte ich nicht recht, denn der Junge sah eigentlich armselig aus, aber ich wollte meiner neuen Freundin nicht widersprechen' (ML, p. 157). Angelika's aims contradict the financial independence associated with new women and indicate shallow materialism on the part of those who are not politically aware. While Angelika eventually successfully convinces the young man to buy her gifts of clothing, shoes and perfume (ML, p. 162), Angelika's relationship with this young man ultimately leads to Lina's first encounter with the social welfare office, after the bar in which the girls are working is raided by police searching for the young man who is wanted for embezzling funds while working as an apprentice. Thus, Leitner warns her readership of the dangerous consequences of Angelika's manipulative behaviour.

The texts of Leitner, Brüning and Zur Mühlen all present a somewhat less radical and liberated view of female sexuality than can be found in Weimar-era popular fiction, including *Gilgi* and *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*, which are analysed in Chapter Four. In these socialist texts, women of the pre-World War One generation appear to police and deny their own sexuality, recalling psychoanalytic arguments that women internalise dominant social discourses about gender roles. Meanwhile, the younger women of the post-World War One generation, despite their greater openness to casual sexual encounters, are shown to be naïve and willing to conform to the morality of the previous generation as their relationships progress.

Reproductive Choice and Maternal Instinct

Both Zur Mühlen and Brüning engage with public discourses around women's access to contraception and abortion. As the more explicitly didactic of the two works, Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute* echoes the left-wing arguments in favour of birth control that were made in publications such as *Frauenwelt* and *Frauen*, discussed in Chapter Two. Zur Mühlen offers financial hardship as a reason to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Following the difficult birth of her first child and in light of the family's poverty, Martha is keen to avoid a second pregnancy: 'Martha fürchtete sich vor einem zweiten Kind; konnten sie doch das eine kaum ernähren.' (HZM(b), p. 182). Like many of the examples discussed in Chapter Two, Zur Mühlen leaves unchallenged women's desire to mother and instead suggests that external factors such as economic circumstances prevent women from mothering. Indeed, the maternal qualities of both

Martha and her mother Frau Grammel are emphasised in Zur Mühlen's novella. Upon selling a puppy to a Baroness, Martha sees the nursery prepared for the pregnant Baroness's child and her disappointment that her own child will not enjoy the same luxuries triggers her political awakening: '»So sollte mein kleiner Josef auch empfangen werden«, dachte Martha und tat in ihren Gedanken unbewußt den ersten großen Schritt nach vorn: »So viel Schönheit, so viel Sorge sollten jedes kleine Kind erwarten.«' (HZM(b), p. 178). The promise of protection for mothers and children attracts both Martha and her mother to the KPD, emphasising their concern for infant welfare and cementing the gendered division of political issues.

In Martha and Josef's discussion of contraception, Zur Mühlen also recalls the criticism of the Church exemplified in the political non-fiction analysed in Chapter Two. Josef is, at the beginning of the novella, a committed Catholic and refuses to consider contraception on religious grounds. Martha's response evokes the hypocrisy of the Church that both Overlach and Kienle criticise: '»Dann soll deine Kirche die Kinder ernähren«, rief Martha zornig.' (HZM(b), p. 182). Martha's retort asserts that, since the Church opposes limiting family size through contraception or abortion, it should do more to support families with limited financial means. This is not the first instance in which tensions arise between Martha and Josef due to his religious convictions. After hearing about Martha's visit to the Baroness's house, Josef quotes a Bible verse to try to calm Martha. She again raises the criticism that the Church does not do enough to support families: 'Was schert mich dein Himmel, der ohnehin nicht existiert? Hier auf Erden soll es meinem Kind gutgehen.' (HZM(b), p. 178). Martha's attitude is thus consistent with left-wing political messaging during the Weimar era.

The use of contraception is also discussed by Hans and Trude in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*. Brüning's discussion recalls the attempts in publications such as *Frauenwelt* to better educate women about contraceptive options. Trude is shown to be somewhat naïve and only discusses contraception with Hans after she has become pregnant. Hans, rather than Trude, appears to be more informed about birth control: 'Wenn du wieder in Ordnung bist, mußt du gleich zum Arzt und dir was einsetzen lassen. Dann kann nichts mehr schiefgehen. Das ist hundertprozentig.' (EB, p. 68) Trude is set apart from the stereotypical media portrayal of the new woman by her unfamiliarity with contraceptive options and, while her attitudes are more modern than those of her mother, in practice she does not appear to be experienced or knowledgeable. As a work of *Gebrauchsliteratur*, *Kleine Leute* is able to educate its readership by highlighting Trude's missteps and process of acquiring information about birth control.

Trude's attempts to obtain an abortion following her unplanned pregnancy is a central plot point in *Kleine Leute*, which enables Brüning to engage with the ongoing public debate in the late Weimar period about legalising abortion. Like Maria Leitner in her journalistic series 'Wo gibt es Hilfe? Opfer und Schmarotzer um den §218', Else Kienle in *Frauen*, and Vicki Baum

in *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*, which are discussed in Chapters Two and Four respectively, Brüning outlines the hurdles faced by women seeking an abortion in Weimar Germany: either the conditions were unsanitary and unsafe, or the cost was prohibitively high. Trude experiences both of these scenarios in *Kleine Leute*, visiting first a backstreet abortion provider in 'einem morschen Haus' (EB, p. 28), where Trude instantly feels uncomfortable and decides: 'Zu der Frau gehe ich auf keinen Fall.' (EB, p. 29) Trude is therefore left with the option of finding a doctor who is willing to perform an illegal abortion, which she does but at a cost of 150 marks, significantly more than her monthly salary of one hundred marks (EB, p. 62).

In *Kleine Leute* it is recognised that abortions were a fairly common occurrence during the late Weimar period.[34] Hans is acquainted with other women who have terminated their pregnancies, as he is given information about the backstreet abortion provider via word of mouth (EB, p. 29). Again, Hans, rather than Trude, is informed about reproductive choice, indicating the community support offered by the communist movement and discussed in Part Three of this chapter. Furthermore, when Trude goes to the doctor's surgery, she also encounters a colleague, whom Trude suspects is there to terminate a pregnancy, and, when Trude attends her appointment, the doctor is carrying out two abortions that morning, underlining the high demand for this procedure. However, despite abortion being presented as common, it is simultaneously a topic which is not discussed openly. Trude's colleague, Frau Kaprolat, for example, lies to Trude about her reasons for being at the doctor's surgery: '»Denken Sie an, er hat mir eine Spritze verpaßt«, sagte sie unverfroren. »Ich habe nie gewußt, daß man Stockschnupfen mit Spritzen in einen gewissen Körperteil behandeln kann. Haben Sie das gewußt?« Sie sah Trude beschwörend an.' (EB, p. 62) Frau Kaprolat's blatant lie and imploring look, seeking Trude's silence on the matter, demonstrates the taboo nature of abortion, even among women obtaining the procedure. Trude feels betrayed by Frau Kaprolat's lie: 'Trude sah ihr verblüfft nach. Diese falsche Schlange!' (EB, p. 62) Brüning's criticism of the secrecy surrounding abortion hints at a feminist perspective in the novel that echoes Rühle-Gerstel's and Kienle's calls for the destigmatisation of extramarital pregnancy.

Trude's surprise at Frau Kaprolat's behaviour again reveals Trude's naivety and her indignation about being lied to shows that she is unfamiliar with the 'conventions' of such scenarios. Trude is again naïve in her encounter with the doctor who agrees to provide her abortion. When the doctor asks: 'Sie sind nicht Gesund?', Trude replies: 'Doch. Gesund bin ich.' (EB, pp. 61-62), failing to recognise the doctor's hints: '»Liebes Fräulein! Sie haben also Hustenanfälle?« fragte der Arzt fast drohend.' (EB, p. 62) Trude has still failed to understand the

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[34] For a detailed study of abortion in Weimar Germany see: Cornelie Usborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007).

need to present medical grounds for her abortion when she is sent to another doctor, a colleague of the first, for a certification of her ill health and she continues to deny that she is unwell. The doctor berates her:

Sie müssen mal etwas überlegen. Sie kommen zu einem Arzt, sind kerngesund, groß und gut gewachsen. Sie wollen ein Kind wegbringen lassen. Ich habe Ihnen ein Attest ausgeschrieben, aber ein andermal verhalten Sie sich ein wenig klüger. Überlegen Sie sich Ihre Aussagen. (EB, pp. 63-64)

Trude's misreading of the situation distances her from the worldly new woman and underscores the assertion in *Kleine Leute*, as well as *Frauenwelt* and *Frauen*, that greater education on contraceptive matters is necessary.

Trude ultimately decides not to terminate her pregnancy based on her instinctual reactions to the reality of abortion and unconscious desire to continue the pregnancy revealed in a dream. Trude's emotional motivations reinforce essentialist notions of gendered personality that presuppose women's propensity to mother. Her decision is foreshadowed in an encounter with some children on her way to her appointment. When it begins to rain, Trude approaches the playing children: '»Ihr werdet ja hier ganz naß«, sagte sie. »Habt ihr keinen Schirm?«' (EB, p. 73). Trude's concern for the children's well-being casts her in a maternal role and hints to the reader that she may be having doubts about terminating her pregnancy. While the theoretical writing discussed in Chapter One questions the existence of women's inherent mothering capacity, this episode in *Kleine Leute* rather follows the stance in the non-fiction work analysed in Chapter Two and suggests that Trude has a maternal instinct that informs her caring behaviour towards the children. Brüning's text thus reinforces gender stereotypes in the depiction of the younger generation and exposes the tension that arose as the political left both sought to advocate reproductive choice and encourage healthy, left-leaning women like Trude to raise the next generation of socialists.

Trude's doubts about terminating her pregnancy are confirmed while she waits for her appointment at the doctor's surgery; she is the second patient and is disturbed by what she hears of the first patient's appointment: 'Auf einmal ertönte drinnen ein furchtbarer Schrei […] Sie hielt sich die Ohren zu, es half nichts, das Blöken dauerte an. Sie fing krampfhaft an zu schluchzen' (EB, p. 76). Despite the doctor's assertion that it is just anaesthetic which made the first woman cry out, Trude leaves the doctor's surgery without rescheduling her appointment. Trude's distress is underscored in both her physical and emotional reaction, her continued crying, and the narrative insight into Trude's perspective, describing the other woman's cry as 'furchtbar'. This strong reaction again implies the presence of a maternal instinct that made Trude uneasy about terminating her pregnancy and susceptible to fear of the procedure.

The final confirmation of Trude's decision to keep her child comes after a dream, in which Trude has an abortion but learns that the child did not die immediately. In the dream, the old woman performing the abortion is described as a toothless witch, who spins spider's webs around Trude (EB, p. 165). This imagery recalls Trude's fear at her abortion appointment and, by suggesting that Trude feels trapped, reveals her reluctance to go through with the procedure. The witch then begins throwing objects 'achtlos' (EB, p. 165) on the ground. The lack of care reminds the reader of the disengaged, cold manner of the doctors. Finally, Trude learns that the child lived for an hour. This is the first occasion in the novel in which the baby, as opposed to simply the pregnancy, is mentioned, which changes the tone of Trude's relationship to her pregnancy; until this point she had viewed it as unviable due to her financial circumstances. Trude then has a second dream, in which she learns that her child is a girl: 'Mädchen – die haben es schwer im Leben. Dennoch lachte sie leise. Ihr war auf einmal ganz leicht und froh. Ihr Kind sollte leben, egal, ob es ein Junge oder ein Mädchen war.' (EB, pp. 165-66) Trude's acknowledgement that girls face gender-specific hurdles signals an emerging feminist perspective in the novel and, while the focus of the novel's political commentary remains on the implications of economic hardship on the Wegener family, the novel here goes beyond the official party political perspective to introduce gender inequality into the portrayal of social inequality more broadly. Nevertheless, the novel leaves unchallenged essentialist stereotypes that viewed women as less rational, as Trude makes a decision regarding her pregnancy based on her emotional reaction and chooses to ignore the reality of her difficult economic situation. The novel ends while Trude is around six months pregnant so the reader does not learn how she responds to the challenges of raising a child while facing significant financial hardship.

Trude's story corresponds to the left-wing arguments in favour of the legalisation of abortion explored in Chapter Two. Financial hardship is presented as the primary reason for considering an abortion and the notion of women's inherent desire to mother is left unchallenged. In all four texts discussed in this chapter, the conventional, idealised notion of women's natural mothering capacity remains intact and serves the socialist criticism that the capitalist system damages the working-class family by preventing women from mothering. Given the semi-autobiographical nature of *Kleine Leute*, it should also be noted that Brüning herself terminated an unplanned pregnancy in the summer of 1932. Like Trude, she became pregnant while travelling with her boyfriend, Hans Pol, editor of the *Neue Montagszeitung* and a 'committed Communist, married and with a middle-class background'.[35] In her autobiography, *Und außerdem war es mein Leben*, Brüning recalls her own response to Pol's insistence that she

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[35] Sara Jones, 'Sex and Socialism: The Antifascist Hero in the Life and Works of Elfriede Brüning', *Glossen*, 26 (2007) < http://www2.dickinson.edu/glossen/heft26/indexold.html> [accessed 25 March 2019].

terminate the pregnancy: 'ich [dachte] daran, daß ich etwas, was in mir wuchs, würde töten müssen. Doch das verstand er wohl nicht.'[36] It can thus be seen that, like Trude, Brüning was reluctant to terminate her real-life pregnancy. Hence, Trude's decision to continue her pregnancy in *Kleine Leute* could also be read as an attempt by Brüning to imagine how her own experiences could have been different and an expression of her regret that she allowed herself to be persuaded to terminate her pregnancy.

Part Three: The Socialist Family and the Call to Political Action

In the final part of this chapter, I discuss the authors' presentation of the socialist movement in familial terms. The didacticism of these texts and their propagandistic intentions are apparent in their portrayals of the support, kindness and selflessness of the socialist and communist characters with whom the main protagonists come into contact. These texts seek to promote political engagement and warn against the dangerous consequences of political inactivity. Yet, by presenting the socialist movement as a support network and, in *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, as a form of surrogate family, these three authors' attempts to appeal to a female readership reflect conservative values. While all four works of fiction offer positive depictions of female political activity, they maintain the assumption that women's political work should focus on issues relating to social welfare and childcare,[37] echoing the strategy of *Frauenwelt* and *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute*.

At the beginning of her novel, Brüning portrays the Wegener family as largely apolitical. By presenting her central characters as disengaged from party politics, Brüning is able to highlight the impact that social, economic and political conditions have on all members of society, whether they seek to engage with these issues or not. Hermann, in particular, attempts to remain distanced from the political activities of those around him, which include his former colleagues and acquaintances involved in the KPD and the right-wing sympathies of the Guild of Master Carpenters, whose meetings he attends. Hermann's apathy towards politics is displayed on a number of occasions in the novel, including during his first meeting with Hans. Hermann asks the unemployed Hans how he envisions his future. Hans replies: 'das hängt doch nicht von mir ab. Ich will ja arbeiten [...] Aber ehe wir nicht die ganze Gesellschaftsordnung geändert haben...' (EB, p. 70). Hermann, however, does not want to discuss Hans's politics. He first responds: 'Ich verstehe nichts von Politik' (EB, p. 70) then, when Hans continues to try to explain, Hermann interrupts him: 'Wir sind keine Arbeiter! [...] Wenn die Kommunisten erst am

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[36] Brüning, *Und außerdem war es mein Leben*, p. 47.
[37] See Thesis Introduction for further information.

Ruder sind [...] nehmen sie unsereinem die Klitsche weg.' (EB, p. 70) Hermann thus displays a political recognition of his place in society without explicitly understanding it as such; he considers himself to be a member of the (lower) middle class, despite his material living conditions and ongoing economic struggles, and does not want the sweeping social changes proposed by the KPD. The middle-class attachment to social status displayed by Hermann is also exhibited by Josef in Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*. When Martha tries to explain what she has learnt about the workers' movement, Josef replies: 'wir sind dennoch keine Proletarier, sind Mittelstand.' (HZM(b), p. 188) The economic precarity of the middle classes during the Weimar period, following both the hyperinflation of 1923 and the depression in the final years of the Republic, is thematised in *Gilgi* and *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*, which reflect, as Elizabeth Boa writes, the widespread descent into poverty of many in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[38] In these works of political fiction, the authors seek to demonstrate how the policies of the KPD can benefit everyone, not just the traditional working classes.

Hermann again displays a desire to maintain the status quo and resists communist intervention when his landlord loses patience over the rent arrears on his workshop space. Hermann's former assistant, Isaac, and Isaac's friend, Grieser, both communists, offer to help Hermann clear out his belongings and abandon the workspace: 'Der läßt Ihnen sonst Ihren ganzen Plunder pfänden.' (EB, p. 134) Isaac and Grieser represent the notion of a form of brotherhood in their willingness to help Hermann. Hermann, however, seeks to uphold principles which Brüning implies are no longer applicable under the social and economic conditions of the late Weimar Republic: 'Ich will ehrlich mit den Leuten auseinanderkommen.' (EB, p. 135) Hermann only changes his mind about clearing his workspace after attending a Guild meeting, where he learns that he is being excluded from the Guild for failing to deliver an order for which he was unable to afford to buy materials. Upon learning that the Guild will not support him, Hermann begins to accept his changed circumstances and admits to Grieser: 'Weißt ja: die Kleinen sind immer im Unrecht.' (EB, p. 141) Brüning thus highlights that, despite his attempts to remain apolitical, Hermann is unable to avoid being impacted by the political and social events of the late Weimar period. The impact of the social context on the individual is further referenced in the novel's title and links to the text's functionality. Brüning echoes the arguments of Rühle-Gerstel, which show that the individual and the social context cannot be detached from one another and both texts therefore anticipate the later feminist slogan that the private is political.

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[38] Elizabeth Boa, 'Women Writers in the 'Golden' Twenties', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. by Graham Bartram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 123-37 (p. 129). Cambridge Core Ebook.

While Hermann does not become heavily involved in political activity, his increasing openness to the KPD and recognition of the changing social conditions, as well as Anna and Trude's increasingly left-wing perspectives, form part of the didactic message in *Kleine Leute.* Trude, for example, initially feels apathetic about Hans's activism: 'In Wirklichkeit gab es einige Dinge, die waren ihr fremd an ihm. Wenn er wieder und wieder in seine Versammlungen rannte.' (EB, p. 32) However, by the end of the novel she is aware of the political and social situation, and encourages Hermann to claim unemployment support: 'Dann mußt du eben stempeln [...] Müssen ja so viele.' (EB, p. 203) Anna similarly becomes more engaged with the political context over the course of the narrative and, towards the end of the novel, agrees with a communist customer in the lending library who berates Mogli for considering joining the *Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst*. (EB, p. 216) The customer also suggests political fiction for Anna to procure, and Brüning includes the titles of the two recommended books, *Brennende Ruhr* and *Ein Prolet erzählt*, to extend the endorsement to her readership.[39]

Throughout *Kleine Leute*, Brüning includes a number of secondary characters who are members and supporters of the KPD and, through their patient, calm explanations of their cause, as well as their acts of solidarity, she portrays the communist movement in a positive light. Hans, Isaac and Grieser willingly help Hermann to remove his possessions from his workshop, despite Hermann's previous reservations, and refuse payment: 'Das war Solidarität, Meister [...] dafür nehmen wir nichts.' (EB, p. 147) The actions of these characters underscore the community offered by the communist movement, evoking the notion of a communist family. The support that Hermann receives from the communist characters contrasts sharply with the contempt and rejection he receives earlier the same night from the Guild of Master Carpenters. Brüning's support of the communist movement is clear from her presentation of these acts of solidarity and generosity. By interweaving explanations of socialism into the novel in conversations between secondary characters, portraying the actions of the communist characters in a positive light, and showing the gradual adoption of socialist values by the main characters, Brüning presents a political moral in her story, but does so more subtly than in the novellas of Zur Mühlen and Leitner.

The communist characters in Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute* similarly offer a support network for Martha and her family. Martha is first introduced to communism by Trude, a regular customer at Josef and Martha's shop, who performs a comparable function in this story

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[39] *Brennende Ruhr* by Karl Grünberg was published in 1928, while Ludwig Turek's *Ein Prolet erzählt* appeared in 1930. In her autobiography, Brüning recalls that the 'klassenbewußte Arbeiter' who visited her family's lending library in Wedding asked for more political fiction and *Brennende Ruhr* and *Ein Prolet erzählt* were among the first works of political fiction obtained for the library. Brüning, *Und außerdem war es mein Leben*, p. 18.

to Anna in *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and Kati in *Lina*. These women offer positive examples of female political engagement and represent the non-threatening, welcoming face of communism. Trude is loyal and supportive, and, even as he expresses reservations about her political convictions, Josef appreciates the unconditional help offered by Trude: 'Als der Kleine krank war, hat uns niemand so viel geholfen wie [Trude].' (HZM(b), p. 188). When Josef and Martha are unable to pay the rent on their shop, Trude procures financial support via her political network: 'Trude trieb in der elften Stunde einen gutgestellten Genossen auf, der das Geld vorstreckte und sogar noch ein wenig mehr, so daß etwas Waren gekauft werden konnten.' (HZM(b), p. 198) Furthermore, members of the communist community continue to support Martha and Josef by becoming loyal customers: 'die Genossen des Distrikts [machten] eine Ehrensache daraus, ihre Nadeln und Faden bei dem Genossen Huber zu kaufen.' (HZM(b), p. 198). As in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*, the communist characters in Zur Mühlen's novella step forward to offer help without expecting favours in return and the text thus endorses the movement as a means to access a supportive community.

The tendency to present the socialist movement as a family is more pronounced in *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, in which the biological families of the protagonists play a significantly smaller role than in both texts entitled *Kleine Leute*. While the socialist movement is presented as an extended family which supports the biological family in Brüning's novel and Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, due to the emotional and physical distance between the protagonists and their families in *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, the socialist movement replaces the biological family. As Brüning's Trude, Hermann and Anna, and Zur Mühlen's Frau Grammel, Martha and Josef become increasingly politically engaged, the family remains a supportive and close unit. This contrasts with the protagonists' families in both *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, who are detached from political activity and, due to their financial hardship, are unable to nurture their daughters as effectively as socialist friends and acquaintances do.

In Zur Mühlen's *Lina*, the first example of socialism providing a familial environment is introduced when Lina begins her second domestic post with an elderly French woman called Fräulein Yvette. Fräulein Yvette adopts a maternal role in relation to Lina. She affectionately calls Lina 'mein Kind' (HZM(a), p. 19) and treats Lina like a family member; she helps Lina with the cooking and cleaning, and in the evenings, they eat and sit together, creating a familial atmosphere. Lina is surprised by this treatment after her experiences with her first employer; she wonders: 'Ist denn eine Frau nicht verrückt, die [...] das Mädchen behandelt wie ein eigenes Kind, darauf achtet, daß es sich nicht überarbeitet, es bei schönem Wetter in den Park spazieren schickt, einerlei, ob sein freier Tag ist oder nicht?' (HZM(a), p. 21). Although she is confused by Fräulein Yvette's welcome, Lina is pleased to work there and underlines the familial nature of her relationship with her new employer by musing: 'es wird sein, als hülfe ich der Mutter

daheim.' (HZM(a), p. 21) Zur Mühlen explicitly presents Fräulein Yvette's adherence to socialist values as the cause of her caring, motherly behaviour towards Lina.

The relationship between Lina and Fräulein Yvette also serves as a device for Zur Mühlen to educate her readership about the principles of socialism, echoing the assumed need to teach women about politics that is also present in publications such as *Frauenwelt*. Through Fräulein Yvette and Lina's interactions, Zur Mühlen seeks to draw attention to and redress the biased information propagated by the capitalist state. For example, when Fräulein Yvette shows Lina a picture of her grandfather who had fought in the French Revolution, Lina, keen to show her knowledge says: 'Ach ja, [...] das war damals, als die bösen Menschen dem armen König und der armen Königin den Kopf abschlugen.' (HZM(a), p. 23). Lina's naivety is revealed in her simplistic choice of adjectives and unquestioning acceptance of the legitimacy of the power of the king and queen. Fräulein Yvette responds by explaining the inequality and unjustness of French society before the Revolution and stressing the bias of the education system: 'sie [Lehrer] stehen im Sold jener Leute, die Nachfolger des Hofes und des Adels geworden sind.' (HZM(a), p. 23) Zur Mühlen's reference to the bias of the education system in *Lina* recalls her earlier criticisms of *Mädchenliteratur* and demonstrates how she put into practice her call for a socialist response to the popular bourgeois literature for girls.

Similarly, in *Kleine Leute*, Zur Mühlen uses the political awakening of her characters as a device to introduce the reader to communist policies. As *Kleine Leute* is set around the time of the 1923 hyperinflation, the references in this text are explicitly to the KPD. By contrast, since many of the events of *Lina* take place before the First World War and establishment of the KPD in 1918, the novella refers to socialism more broadly until the closing passages, when Lina's friend Kati joins the KPD. As in both *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, a female friend of the protagonist first introduces the principles of communism. Trude, a factory worker, explains rising costs: 'Alles ist so teuer, weil wir armen Teufel das üppige Leben der Reichen bezahlen müssen.' (HZM(b), p. 176) and, while Martha does not understand everything Trude says at first, 'was sie aber verstand, schien ihr richtig' (HZM(b), p. 176). Trude persuades Martha to attend a rally, where Martha experiences the sense of community offered by the communist movement (HZM(b), p. 185). Trude also shares a newspaper clipping with Martha, which explains how pregnant women and children are protected in Soviet Russia. The article, which Martha passes on to Frau Grammel, convinces both women to join the communist movement. The political activity of Martha and Frau Grammel is thus underpinned by a conservative understanding of women's social role and priorities. Indeed, when she goes to join the KPD, Frau Grammel states: 'Mir genügt zu wissen, daß die Kommunisten in Rußland für Mütter und Kinder sorgen, alles andere ist mir gleichgültig.' (HZM(b), p. 190). Although Zur Mühlen's text offers examples of women's activism, *Kleine Leute* also perpetuates the separation of women's

political concerns from the issues tackled by men and assumes that underlining the welfare of women and children will persuade her female readership to engage with politics.

The speech of the female Russian delegate at the meeting attended by Martha, Frau Grammel and Josef at the close of the novella further cements essentialist ideas of women's social role: 'werdende Mütter geschont, betreut, auf daß sie froh ihre Aufgabe erfüllen können'. (HZM(b), p. 195). In Zur Mühlen's depiction, women have a place in the socialist movement but their particularity is stressed. When Josef takes to the stage at the meeting to voice his newfound political values, he praises his wife and mother-in-law for introducing him to communism and concludes: 'Darum sollte man sich bei der Aufklärung an die Frauen halten.' (HZM(b), p. 198) Again, Zur Mühlen seeks to show her readership how women can contribute to the socialist movement by recruiting others, however, it is suggested that women's role is in a supportive rather than leadership function. *Kleine Leute* nonetheless offers positive images of female political participation and rejects the notion that women do not understand politics. Indeed, on two occasions in the novella, Josef acknowledges that Martha and Frau Grammel are more intelligent and well-informed than he is (HZM(b), pp. 188, 196). Moreover, the centring of the female Russian delegate's voice at the party meeting seeks to highlight the positive contribution that women can make to politics. By providing these examples of female activism, Zur Mühlen offers her readership a model for the political role that they may be able to play.

While Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute* ends on a positive note as Martha, Josef and Frau Grammel enthusiastically embrace communism, in *Lina* the protagonist's socialist development is cut short by Fräulein Yvette's death. Nevertheless, the other socialist characters with whom Lina comes into contact over the course of the novella are, like Fräulein Yvette, friendly, generous and supportive. For instance, she visits a socialist doctor, Dr Kohn, who helps her find a new job with better conditions after hearing about her treatment in her current role (HZM(a), p. 38) and by the end of the novella Kati, Lina's communist friend, is 'der einzige Mensch, mit dem sie [Lina] sich noch irgendwie verbunden fühlte.' (HZM(a), p. 56) Lina's emotional connection with Kati again evokes the notion of a socialist family and Zur Mühlen presents the communist movement as a welcoming and nurturing community.

Kati also serves as a counterpoint to Lina in Zur Mühlen's didactic scheme, as Wallace notes in her analysis of Zur Mühlen's socialist *Mädchenbücher*.[40] While Lina is perpetually exhausted and shows physical signs of ageing, Kati remains youthful despite being a mother of four: 'Kati, die in ihrem [Linas] Alter stand, aber frisch und lebensvoll war, wie eine Zwanzigjährige.' (HZM(a), p. 56) While Lina succumbs to depression following her brother's

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[40] Wallace, *The Guises of Socialist Fiction*, p. 116.

death during the First World War, Kati channels her anger into political action (HZM(a), p. 55). She encourages Lina to join her but years of exploitation have left Lina without the energy to engage: 'Ja, die Freundin hatte sicherlich Recht, aber sie ist zu müde zum Kampf. Die Herrschaften, die ihr alles geraubt, haben ihr auch die Kraft genommen, für Recht zu kämpfen.' (HZM(a), p. 57) Wallace suggests that Zur Mühlen's portrayal of Kati in *Lina* and Martha in *Kleine Leute* 'oppose[s] the characterisation of women as 'Hemmschuh der politischen Arbeit des Mannes' in most proletarian-revolutionary literature.'[41] Instead, Zur Mühlen offers her readers, through Kati, an example of a woman autonomously and confidently following her political convictions and actively engaging with party politics. Yet, the gendered division of political issues is preserved, as it is suggested that Kati's political work revolves around the youth group, maintaining the presentation of welfare and youth issues as an area to which women's engagement is most suited. As in Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, the positive portrayals of women's political activity follow official party lines by pointing towards issues in which women's participation was already established.

Not only does Kati serve as a counterpoint to Lina in the narrative, as Wallace shows, but Kati's unconditional friendship and support of Lina, despite the latter's refusal to join her political campaigning, casts Kati in a familial role; Wallace's analysis falls short of identifying the portrayal of socialism as a family network in Zur Mühlen's novella. Although Lina sympathises with Kati's cause, she feels too worn down to act and she therefore serves as a warning to Zur Mühlen's readership about the risks of accepting the status quo. Kati remains a loyal friend to Lina and is the only one of her acquaintances to attend her burial, again adopting the role of a family member. While her employers treat Lina as replaceable, Kati emphasises Lina's humanity: '„Sie haben sie ermordet," schluchzte Kati, „ich habe sie vor zwölf Jahren gekannt, sie war ein Mensch, dem das ganze Leben hätte gehören können."' (HZM(a), p. 59) Through Kati, Lina is identified as a victim of social hierarchy and capitalism.

In Maria Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, the socialist movement is similarly portrayed as a surrogate family. While interned in a convent reformatory, Lina meets Anna, a communist who was arrested for her involvement in strike action. Anna draws strength from her political convictions, again evoking the sense of community accessible through the workers' movement. For example, during hymns, Anna sings the text to revolutionary songs: 'Wenn ich singe, werde ich stark, dann verlieren die hier ihre Macht über mich und die Gewalt, dann weiß ich, daß ich nicht allein bin [...] daß ich zwischen Millionen marschiere, die das gleiche Ziel haben wie ich.' (ML, p. 200) Together, Anna and Lina secure their release by criticising the

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[41] Wallace, *The Guises of Socialist Fiction*, p. 110.

Church, causing the mother superior to expel them from the convent grounds, referencing again the anti-religious sentiments present in the works of Overlach, Kienle and Zur Mühlen. Following Anna's lead, Lina tells her fellow internees at supper: 'wir arbeiten hier ohne Lohn und unsere Arbeit wird an Geschäfte verkauft […] Wir aber bekommen nicht einmal satt zu essen. Wofür sollen wir denn Gott danken?' (ML, p. 203). Anna welcomes Lina into the communist community by offering Lina a home with her and her brother Franz. Like Fräulein Yvette in Zur Mühlen's novella, Anna and Franz provide Lina with the support and education that she has been missing. Through Anna and Franz, Leitner presents the communist movement as non-threatening and familial, thereby encouraging her readership's political engagement. Upon arrival at Anna and Franz's home, Lina immediately feels welcome and comfortable: 'als wäre ich heimgekommen in mein wirkliches Zuhause.' (ML, p. 205) The notion that socialism provides a form of family support is thus spelt out explicitly for the reader.

Mirroring Zur Mühlen's strategy, Leitner explains leftist principles to her readership through Lina's political awakening. Anna and Franz educate Lina about politics, helping her to understand the difficulties and injustices she has faced as an individual within the wider social context: 'Ich wußte wohl, daß ich zu dem Proletariat gehörte. Und die roten Fahnen am 1. Mai, die Versammlungen und die Lieder gefielen mir. Doch nie war ich auf den Gedanken gekommen, daß das alles auch für mich da ist, daß es auch mir helfen soll.' (ML, p. 201) Lina begins to grasp the concepts quickly and her changed thinking is revealed when she goes to visit her former boyfriend Harry, who was sent to the workhouse following an accusation of theft and pimping in the bar in which Lina was working (the same incident for which Lina was sent to the convent reformatory). Harry complains that he is surrounded by beggars and prostitutes and that he misses the company of 'anständige Leute', to which Lina replies: 'Aber vielleicht denken sie auch über dich nicht besser als du über sie. […] Was nennst du überhaupt anständige Leute?' (ML, p. 207). By challenging Harry's prejudices, Lina demonstrates that she is beginning to recognise the injustices of the established social hierarchy and question what it means to be a 'decent' person. Through this exchange, Leitner encourages her readership to do the same.

These developments in Lina's thought are supported and guided by Franz when Lina decides to tell him about her past. Neither Anna nor Franz have asked Lina about her past life, demonstrating the unconditional nature of the support offered by the communist community, and Lina feels guilty that they may have assumed she was, like Anna, arrested on political grounds. Lina is ashamed of her past, however Franz explains that she had no alternative and encourages Lina, and indeed the reader, to look critically at the social conditions which leave girls like Lina with few possibilities:

Sie [die Klosterschwester, die den Standpunkt des Staats vertreten] wollten, daß du nur in dich schaust, daß du nur dich prüfst, daß du nur in dir selbst die Fehler suchst. [...] Du sollst die Fehler in dir selbst suchen und nicht in der Welt, die dich umgibt, nicht in der Gesellschaft, die dich zu einem solchen Leben zwingt. [...] Du sollst Buße tun, die Augen niederschlagen und die Welt um dich nicht sehen. (ML, pp. 209-10)

Thus, the impact of social structures on the psychological development of an individual is demonstrated. Through Franz, Leitner urges her readership to engage with their political and social circumstances. She seeks to emphasise to her readers the need to participate in political action and the class struggle in order to create a world in which they will not have to face the same challenges and miscarriages of justice as Lina does. Leitner's text ends on an optimistic note as Lina announces: 'Ja, ich war bereit. Wunderbar neu wurde mir die Welt.' (ML, p. 210)

The welcome and support that Lina receives from Anna and Franz contrasts with her interactions with the people and institutions who should have protected her officially. As discussed above, Lina's parents' financial hardship forces them to treat their children in economic terms. Meanwhile, the state institutions such as the welfare office are portrayed as out of touch and ineffective. When they suggest that Lina's family should come to Berlin to collect her, Lina repeatedly uses the phrase 'Sie wissen nicht' when explaining the financial barriers to this plan (ML, p. 172). Lina concludes: 'Helfen können sie ja doch nicht, dann schaden sie nur.' (ML, p. 173) The ineffectiveness of the system is further exposed by the acts of resistance performed by the interned girls and women in the *Fürsorgeheim*: 'Jeder machte es besondere Freude, sobald sie sich unbeaufsichtigt fühlte, das, was sie gerade ausgeführt haben, wieder zu zerstören.' (ML, p. 175) As Julian Preece underscores, in Leitner's writing 'institutions denote power, which is exercised over people stripped of their individuality'.[42] Preece underlines that, each time Lina comes into contact with another institution, 'she is allotted a role that she has not chosen and is required to live and work according to an imposed set of rules and procedures'.[43] My analysis has built on Preece's evaluation to show that Lina's negative experiences with state institutions throw the support that she receives from Anna and Franz into stark relief. Leitner shows that the communist community can offer the education and care to children and young people that working-class families are unable to, and state institutions refuse to, due to capitalist inequality.

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[42] Preece, 'The Literary Interventions of a Radical Writer Journalist', p. 258.
[43] Ibid., p.259.

Preliminary Conclusions

In this chapter I have examined the presentation of family relationships and politics in four works of political fiction. While these texts seek to promote women's engagement in political activity, they also all reference conservative notions of gender roles to appeal to a female audience, displaying similar tensions in their approach to the non-fiction writing analysed in Chapter Two. For example, in criticising the impact of economic hardship on working-class women's mothering, these works of political fiction promote the idealised model of the nurturing, emotionally available mother and assume that measures to protect working-class families will persuade women to support the communist movement. In line with the wider policies of the SPD and KPD, these texts privilege class struggle over tackling gender inequality and do not offer a radical reimagining of motherhood. Like the non-fiction work in Chapter Two, these texts advocate access to contraception on economic grounds and leave unchallenged gendered spheres of political activity by casting women in a supportive role and relying on familial themes to engage women in political activity. Perhaps as a pragmatic attempt to avoid alienating readers, they do not call for the more radical changes that, for example, Alice Rühle-Gerstel and Else Kienle do. This is illustrated by Trude's agreement to marry Hans, resulting in the recreation of a traditional family unit in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*. The promotion of the socialist movement to a predominantly female readership in familial terms relies on conservative notions of the family as women's domain. In Brüning's *Kleine Leute* and Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, the communist movement helps protect the family unit in the face of extreme economic hardship, while in Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and Zur Mühlen's *Lina*, members of the workers' movement become a surrogate family for the protagonists. This strategy does little to advance a model of womanhood that is independent of the private sphere, however, it is a pragmatic means for the authors to promote engagement with the socialist movement in a non-threatening way which would appeal to the pre-existing values and perspectives of their readership.

Nevertheless, these texts do include subtle challenges to the prevailing gender hierarchy by foregrounding the experiences of women. Furthermore, all four texts include positive portrayals of women's activism, which centres around political education and recruiting new members for the workers' movement. Moreover, in *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, the relative absence of the protagonists' mothers shows a refusal on the part of the authors to promote a model of motherhood based on socially conservative values. As works of *Gebrauchsliteratur* these four texts engage with the contemporary social situation, highlighting the impact of capitalism on working-class families and individuals. I have argued that these

authors challenge the prevalent of images of the Weimar new women in the media by revealing that many women lacked the experience, knowledge, or financial means to access this lifestyle.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I consider how non-party political popular fiction texts, which were, like the texts in this chapter, written to be accessible to a large, predominantly female audience, seek to contribute to and shape discourses around motherhood. I return to themes explored in this chapter, such as the trope of absent mother, to underline how these texts form part of a larger contemporary debate about women's role in society. I also ask whether popular fiction, which is unconstrained by the values of a specific political party, presents a more radical and feminist representation of motherhood.

Chapter Four: 'New Mothering' and Intergenerational Tensions in Popular Fiction

Introduction

Women's mothering, as has been seen in the preceding chapters, was highly politicised during the Weimar era. In their attempts to frame political ideas in terminology perceived to be more accessible and appealing to women, left-wing fiction and non-fiction writing about motherhood is marked by tensions between progressive perspectives regarding, for example, the rights of single mothers, and continued adherence to essentialist ideas of gender, which leave assumptions of women's maternal instinct unchallenged. The discourses I have analysed in Chapters One to Three of this thesis were not, however, only taking place in left-wing circles. Discussions of women's changing social role attracted widespread commentary from across the political spectrum during the Weimar era and some of the texts analysed in the preceding chapters, such as Maria Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and the communist magazine *Der Weg der Frau*, in fact participate in mainstream public conversations through direct references to texts such as Irmgard Keun's successful novels, *Gilgi – eine von uns* and *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*.[1] In this chapter, I examine the presentation of young women's motherhood and of mother-daughter relationships in three examples of popular fiction by women from the Weimar era to demonstrate the connections and points of divergence between left-wing women's writing about motherhood and popular engagement with these topics. I argue that these works of popular fiction seek to influence public discourses by advocating greater independence and opportunities for women as mothers, and, by distancing young protagonists from their mothers, criticise the model of motherhood represented by women of the pre-World War One generation. Nevertheless, as I show, these authors continue to rely on shorthand coding of conventional maternal qualities and, despite some engagement with psychoanalytic ideas, stop short of the radical rejection of inherent gender difference displayed in the work of Alice Rühle-Gerstel.

In this chapter my analysis will focus primarily on Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi – eine von uns* (1931) and Vicki Baum's *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (1928), with references also to the

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[1] Ingeborg Franke, 'Gilgi – Film, Roman und Wirklichkeit', *Der Weg der Frau*, 1 January 1933, pp. 4-6: Franke asserts that Keun's book does not realistically portray the experiences of working women in Weimar Germany and glosses over contemporary issues such as unemployment and hunger. Julian Preece, 'The Literary Interventions of a Radical Writer Journalist: Maria Leitner (1892-1942), in *Discovering Women's History: German-Speaking Journalists (1900-1950)*, ed. by Christa Spreizer (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 245-64 (p. 264): Preece suggests that Leitner's novella could have been a critical reaction to Keun's *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*.

depiction of generational tensions and women's changing social role in Gabriele Tergit's *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* (1931). All three of these novels were commercial successes at the time of their publication. *Gilgi – eine von uns*, Irmgard Keun's debut novel, was met with widespread critical and public acclaim. The book sold over 30, 000 copies and was serialised in the Social Democratic newspaper *Vorwärts* in 1932,[2] further increasing the novel's reach. Keun (1905-1982) initially trained as an actress but turned to writing after her theatre career faltered. She followed the success of *Gilgi* with the publication of her second, also bestselling, novel *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* in 1932. Keun's novels were blacklisted by the National Socialists due to their perceived 'anti-German' tendencies.[3] Keun left Germany between 1936 and 1940, before returning to her parents' home in Cologne, the city where she had lived from the age of eight and in which *Gilgi* is set. Keun continued to write but only again experienced recognition comparable to that which she enjoyed during the Weimar era in the final years of her life, after the critical rediscovery of *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* in the 1970s.[4]

Gilgi tells the story of the titular character, an archetypal new woman, as she navigates the revelation of her adoption, her relationship with bohemian writer Martin, and her unplanned pregnancy. Over the course of the novel, Gilgi goes from a work-focused, rational, and motivated white-collar worker to being unemployed and infatuated with Martin, before, in the closing chapters, reclaiming control of her life and departing Cologne for Berlin, where she plans to join her friend Olga and raise her child as a single, working mother. The novel explores themes of motherhood, class, and women's work in the late Weimar years.

Vicki Baum's *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* was similarly a bestseller,[5] and, like Keun's novel, engages with public discussions of women's reproductive choice and motherhood, as well as women's access to education and work. By the time of the novel's publication, Baum (1888-1960) already had substantial experience as a writer, having begun her writing career contributing short articles for the magazine run by her first husband, Max Prels, whom she married in 1906.[6] In 1917, after the birth of her first son with her second husband, the

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[2] Irene Lorisika, *Frauendarstellungen bei Irmgard Keun und Anna Seghers* (Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen, 1985), p. 126; Kerstin Barndt, '„Eine von uns?" Irmgard Keuns Leserinnen und das Melodramatische', in *Autorinnen der Weimarer Republik*, ed. by Walter Fähnders and Helga Karrenbrock (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2003), pp. 137-62 (p. 141).
[3] Liane Schüller, *Vom Ernst der Zerstreuung: Schreibende Frauen am Ende der Weimarer Republik: Marieluise Fleißer, Irmgard Keun und Gabriele Tergit* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2005), p. 108.
[4] Andrea Capovilla, 'Irmgard Keun', in *Landmarks in German Women's Writing*, ed. by Hilary Brown (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 139-54 (pp. 140-41).
[5] The novel was serialised in the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* and published in book form by Ullstein with both soft and hard cover editions available. Lynda J. King, 'The Image of Fame: Vicki Baum in Weimar Germany', *The German Quarterly*, 58.3 (1985), 375-93 (pp. 378-79).
[6] Christa Gürtler and Sigrid Schmid-Bortenschlager, *Erfolg und Verfolgung: Österreichische Schriftstellerinnen 1918-1945* (Salzburg: Residenz, 2002), p. 120.

conductor Richard Lert, Baum gave up her career as a harpist to work exclusively in publishing and as a writer.[7] Baum wrote for a number of magazines and newspapers, and, as Capovilla notes, adapted her writing style according to the publication,[8] contributing to her professional achievements. Baum and her family emigrated to America in 1932, where Baum continued to work as a writer.[9]

stud. chem. Helene Willfüer represents one of Baum's most successful publications. The novel, which was written at the request of her publishers, Ullstein, narrates the story of Helene Willfüer, a doctoral student in Chemistry.[10] After discovering her unplanned pregnancy, Helene first attempts to obtain an abortion and then enters into a suicide pact with her boyfriend, Fritz Rainer. While Rainer dies, Helene changes her mind and instead opts for single motherhood. She overcomes extensive challenges to balance single motherhood with completing her doctoral studies and finding professional success. At the close of the novel, she reunites with, and accepts the marriage proposal from, her former professor, Valentin Ambrosius. The narrative is episodic, with a number of time jumps, especially later in the novel, which spans roughly a ten-year period. The third-person narrator adopts the perspectives of various principal characters over the course of the book, including Helene herself, as well as Professor Ambrosius and Tintin, Helene's son.

While Gilgi and Helene both confront unplanned pregnancies, motherhood is not a primary consideration for the young women portrayed in Gabriele Tergit's *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*. Instead, I consider the ways in which Tergit's novel offers a satirical depiction of the intergenerational and social tensions that arise as young women seek to negotiate the increasing opportunities and ongoing limitations that they faced during the Weimar period. Tergit's novel does not focus on one or two central characters but instead follows the rapid rise to fame and equally rapid descent back into obscurity of a cabaret singer, Georg Käsebier, from the perspectives of the journalists, investors, bankers, and members of high society who generate the feverish publicity surrounding Käsebier. The novel is episodic and Käsebier himself only appears relatively rarely as a secondary character. Tergit's narrator offers ironic, satirical comments on the often unsympathetic characters, many of whom are shown to be out of touch with the reality of the period and acting in self-interest to the detriment of others. Tergit's sharp satire of the way in which the press feeds capitalist desire for novelty draws on her own experiences as a journalist. Tergit (1894-1982) was born as Elise Hirschmann and

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[7] Gürtler and Schmid-Bortenschlager, *Erfolg und Verfolgung*, p. 121.
[8] Andrea Capovilla, *Entwürfe weiblicher Identität in der Moderne* (Oldenburg: Igel, 2004), p. 67.
[9] Gürtler and Schmid-Bortenschlager, *Erfolg und Verfolgung*, p. 121; Capovilla, *Entwürfe weiblicher Identität*, p. 64.
[10] King, 'The Image of Fame', p. 379.

adopted the pseudonym Gabriele Tergit due to her family's reservations about her journalistic work.[11] Despite an initial intention to work in social welfare, Tergit began writing newspaper articles in 1915. After completing her doctorate in German history in 1923, she began working as a journalist full time, specialising in court reporting.[12] Tergit was Jewish as well as 'politically suspect in the eyes of the National Socialist regime'[13] due to the content of her court reports, as Mossop notes, and therefore fled Germany in 1933. She settled in London in 1938, only returning to Germany again as a visitor after the Second World War.[14]

As works of popular fiction that reached a large mainstream audience during the Weimar period, *Gilgi* and *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* have received more substantial attention in secondary literature than the sources discussed in the preceding three chapters of this thesis. Gabriele Tergit's work, while it has not been reviewed as extensively as that of Baum and Keun, is also beginning to receive greater critical attention. Before beginning my detailed analysis of these primary sources, it is worth first briefly considering the focus of academic discussions of these novels to situate my work in relation to existing scholarship.

The presentation of the new woman forms a principal theme in the critical discussions.[15] Gilgi is identified as an archetypal new woman by many critics, including J. M. Ritchie,[16] Katharina von Ankum,[17] and Elizabeth Boa, who highlights the significance of Gilgi's physical appearance in signalling her new womanhood.[18] Kerstin Barndt, among others, notes that Gilgi was, as the novel's subtitle suggests, intended as a character to whom contemporary young women would relate,[19] and, while arguing that Gilgi is presented as an individual subject, Renny Harrigan and Irene Lorisika recognise her identification potential and correspondence to many

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[11] Fiona Sutton, 'Weimar's Forgotten Cassandra: The Writings of Gabriele Tergit in the Weimar Republic', in *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics*, ed. by Karl Leydecker (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), pp. 193-209 (p. 194).

[12] Elke-Vera Kotowski, 'Gegenwart tanzen – schreiben – malen: Die Ausdruckformen der *Neuen Frauen* zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts in Berlin: Valeska Gert – Gabriele Tergit – Lotte Laserstein', in *Salondamen und Frauenzimmer: Selbstemanzipation deutsch-jüdischer Frauen in zwei Jahrhunderten*, ed. by Elke-Vera Kotowski (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 89-110 (pp. 99-101).

[13] Frances Mossop, 'Writing the City: The Berlin of Gabriele Tergit (1894-1982), in *Discovering Women's History*, ed. by Christa Spreizer, pp. 267-80 (p. 269).

[14] Sutton, 'Weimar's Forgotten Cassandra', p. 194.

[15] See Thesis Introduction for further discussion of the Weimar new woman.

[16] J. M. Ritchie, 'Irmgard Keun's Weimar Girls', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 60.1 (1990), 63-79 (p. 70).

[17] Katharina von Ankum, 'Motherhood and the "New Woman": Vicki Baum's *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* and Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi – eine von uns*', *Women in German Yearbook*, 11 (1995), 171-88 (pp. 179-80).

[18] Elizabeth Boa, 'Women Writers in the 'Golden' Twenties', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. by Graham Bartram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 123-37 (p. 129). Cambridge Core Ebook.

[19] Barndt, '„Eine von uns?"', p. 138.

of the traits of the stereotypical Weimar new woman.[20] Tergit's Käte Herzfeld and Lotte Kohler

have similarly been discussed in relation to the image of the Weimar new woman. Liane

Schüller describes Lotte Kohler's failed romance with Oskar Meyer as 'ein Zeitschicksal',[21] thus

casting the thirty-something Fräulein Dr Kohler as a representative of her generation, which, as

Schüller argues was caught between the strict morality of the pre-World War One generation to

which their mothers belonged, and the greater sexual freedoms of the younger post-war

generation,[22] of which characters like Keun's twenty-one-year-old Gilgi were a part. Käte

Herzfeld is meanwhile aligned with the image of the new woman by both Schüller and Boa.[23]

Yet, as Schüller is right to highlight, Käte's new womanhood is superficial and '[s]ie ist

keineswegs die Vertreterin einer neuen Moral, als die sie sich selbst gern sähe und

präsentiert.'[24]

 Baum's Helene has likewise been associated with the Weimar new woman in a number

of analyses. However, due to the idealisation of Helene's motherhood, which I discuss in detail

in this chapter, Helene represents a less archetypal portrayal of new womanhood than, for

example, Gilgi. Critics, including Lynne Frame and Elizabeth Boa, have noted how Helene

appears in opposition to Ambrosius's wife, Yvonne Pastouri. Frame identifies Yvonne as an

Americanised 'Girl',[25] while Boa refers to Yvonne as a vamp,[26] with both interpretations

underscoring how Yvonne's sexuality is presented as unbridled and threatening in contrast to

Helene's maternal, selfless nature. Indeed, Charlotte Woodford notes that Helene was intended

as a positive role model for Baum's readership,[27] and Helene should thus be seen as an

aspirational rather than representative figure. Caroline Bland underlines that Helene's success

is individual and forms part of an increasing individualism in the presentation of women's

educational and professional achievements in post-World War One fiction.[28] Similarly, Lynda J.

King stresses that Helene is portrayed as exceptional in Baum's novel and that the individual

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[20] Renny Harrigan, 'Novellistic Representation of die Berufstätige during the Weimar Republic', *Women in German Yearbook*, 4 (1988), 97-124 (p. 116); Lorisika, *Frauendarstellungen*, pp. 125-26.
[21] Schüller, *Vom Ernst der Zerstreuung*, p. 203.
[22] Ibid., p. 205.
[23] Schüller, *Vom Ernst der Zerstreuung*, p. 213; Elizabeth Boa, 'Urban Modernity and the Politics of Heimat: Gabriele Tergit's *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*', *German Life and Letters*, 72.1 (2019), 14-27 (p. 25).
[24] Schüller, *Vom Ernst der Zerstreuung*, p. 217.
[25] Lynne Frame, 'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne: Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman', in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 12-40 (p. 25).
[26] Boa, 'Women Writers in the 'Golden' Twenties', p. 125.
[27] Charlotte Woodford, 'Women's Autonomy and the German Novel Around 1900: Hidden Continuities and Generational Differences', *Oxford German Studies*, 45.1 (2016), 31-44 (p. 36).
[28] Caroline Bland, 'Through Science to Selfhood? The Early Generations of University Women in Fiction', *Oxford German Studies*, 45.1 (2016), 45-61 (pp. 50, 58).

nature of her success enables the character to appear as non-threatening to the prevailing gender hierarchy,[29] offering instead 'a positive model for individual women, a utopian hope for an emancipation gained not by political movements but by each woman's hard work.'[30]

In *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*, Helene finds professional success in the male-dominated chemical industry and women's work appears as a theme in a number of critical analyses of these texts. Harrigan, for example, notes that when Käte Herzfeld takes up work as a travelling saleswoman in *Käsebier*, after failing to earn sufficient money as a gymnastics teacher, she uses her sexuality as a strategy. Harrigan situates Käte's activities within the historical context of increasing numbers of young women working in sales: 'Die Wichtigkeit von Sexappeal bei Verkäuferinnen zeigt sich in der Tatsache, daß die Stellenangebote in den Zeitungen sich für gewöhnlich an Mädchen unter 25 richteten.'[31] Keun's Gilgi, meanwhile, works as a typist, a line of work strongly associated with the Weimar-era new woman. In her analysis of *Gilgi*, Harrigan notes again that emphasis on women's sexuality and attractiveness leaves them vulnerable in the workplace.[32]

The other principal working woman to appear in these primary texts is the journalist Lotte Kohler in *Käsebier*. Yet, while Lotte is depicted physically in the office, descriptions of Lotte engaging in her work in a way comparable to the descriptions in the novels of Keun and Baum is omitted in Tergit's writing. Rather, more secondary attention has been paid to Lotte's movement through the city and the presentation of the urban environment in general has appeared as a major theme in secondary analyses of Tergit's work. Discussing Tergit's journalism, Frances Mossop writes that Tergit does not display gendered anxiety about the city and 'does not thematize the potential dangers of the city and mass society.'[33] Instead, as Boa points out, the anxiety triggered by the city in *Käsebier* is related to political and socio-economic developments, with Lotte Kohler 'perceiv[ing] all too clearly the differences between prosperous west Berlin and the living conditions of industrial workers and the unemployed'.[34] Similarly, Godela Weiss-Sussex notes that Lotte displays 'understanding of and empathy with the present social, political and economic conditions of the inhabitants of [working-class areas of Berlin]' and Weiss-Sussex argues that, instead of offering a sentimental depiction of working-

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[29] Lynda J. King, 'Vicki Baum and the "Making" of Popular Success: "Mass" Culture or "Popular" Culture?', *Women in German Yearbook*, 11 (1995), 151-69 (p. 163).
[30] Ibid., p. 160.
[31] Renny Harrigan, 'Die Sexualität der Frau in der Unterhaltungsliteratur 1919-1933', trans. by Elka Schloendorn, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 7.3-4 (1981), 412-37 (p. 420).
[32] Harrigan, 'Novellistic Representation of die Berufstätige', pp. 110, 112.
[33] Mossop, 'Writing the City', pp. 171, 174.
[34] Boa, 'Urban Modernity', p. 21.

class communities, Tergit provides 'a clear view of the harsh reality of life'.[35] Fiona Sutton, meanwhile, describes the city in *Käsebier* as a 'metaphor for transience, speed, and the ephemeral nature of modern life.'[36] All three novels discussed in this chapter depict their female protagonists moving independently in urban public space and the authors reflect Weimar-era discourses about women's changing social role by challenging the dichotomy of male public space and female private space.

The depiction of the protagonists' reproductive choices and motherhood have also been thematised in secondary literature analysing *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* and *Gilgi – eine von uns*. These discussions are, of course, of direct relevance to my evaluation of these novels and I therefore integrate engagement with these secondary discussions throughout this chapter. In order to situation my discussion more clearly, it is, however, worth briefly outlining the two principal strands of interpretation of new women's motherhood in these texts. Katharina von Ankum's influential article 'Motherhood and the "New Woman"' (1995) sees the novels of Keun and Baum as supporters of the status quo. Von Ankum claims that these novels contribute to a discourse which helped to pave the way for 'the positive reception of fascist models of femininity.'[37] Von Ankum argues that the tempering of women's sexuality through motherhood enables both Gilgi and Helene to return to a more conservative model of womanhood that does not threaten the prevailing gender hierarchy. [38] Von Ankum's argument is echoed by critics including Julia Feldhaus, who argues that that Gilgi's decision become a mother is symptomatic of women's desire to return to their traditional role in Weimar society,[39] and Kerstin Barndt, who highlights Helene's sexual passivity and notes that, where Helene's sexuality is mentioned, it is in the context of natural imagery, again presenting a non-threatening version of female sexuality.[40]

While von Ankum's analysis provides a helpful working definition of what she terms 'new motherhood', her analysis is unfairly critical of the portrayals of the protagonists' motherhood in *Gilgi* and *Helene*, which were written in a context in which conservative ideas about gender remained widespread across the political spectrum, as has been shown in

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[35] Godela Weiss-Sussex, ''Ich gehe und gehe […] und gehe und sehe': Female Experience of the City', in *Berlin: Kultur und Metropole in den zwanziger und seit den neunziger Jahren*, ed. by Godela Weiss-Sussex and Ulrike Zitzlsperger (Munich: Iudicum, 2007), pp. 46-61 (p. 53).
[36] Sutton, 'Weimar's Forgotten Cassandra', p. 204.
[37] von Ankum, 'Motherhood and the "New Woman"', p. 179.
[38] Ibid., pp. 178, 183.
[39] Julia Feldhaus, 'Not without my Mommy: The New Woman's Mother Figure in Irmgard Keun's Novels *Gilgi – eine von uns* (1931) and *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932)', *Monatshefte*, 108.4 (2016), 510-34 (p. 515).
[40] Kerstin Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit: Der Roman der Neuen Frau in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), p. 82.

preceding chapters. Furthermore, von Ankum's assertion that these texts contributed to a discourse which facilitated the fascist seizure of power relies too heavily on hindsight and overlooks the more politically radical and feminist elements in these novels. For example, Renny Harrigan and Caroline Bland indicate the feminist portrayal of female solidarity in an episode in *Helene*, in which Helene sits in a doctor's waiting room while attempting to obtain an abortion,[41] and Bland stresses that, although the book does not offer an explicitly political stance, 'between the lines a strong case is made for legalizing abortion by showing that criminalization makes women vulnerable to indecent assault, physical damage, and profiteering.'[42] In fact, King notes that the publication of *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*, which was written 1925-1926, was delayed because Ullstein considered the book 'too risqué',[43] and Barndt and Gürtler and Schmid-Bortenschlager comment on the scandal created by the publication of Baum's novel.[44] The detailed description of Helene's search for an abortion and the struggles she faces as an unmarried mother were daring in the context of widespread social conservatism in Weimar Germany and echo the socialist and feminist campaigns against Paragraph 218 discussed in Chapter Two. Von Ankum overlooks the fact that Gilgi opts for a non-traditional model of motherhood, rejecting marriage and life as a housewife. She thus clearly breaks away from the model of mothering of the previous generation. As Barndt writes: 'the protagonist becomes a mother by integrating maternity into her own self-image as a New Woman.'[45] Gilgi maintains her independence, is determined to find paid employment and leaves Martin in favour of a life in Berlin with Olga, thus removing entirely the male head of a traditional patriarchal household. While Gilgi does not go through with her initial plan of terminating her pregnancy, her decision to become a mother does not represent an acceptance of women's traditional domestic role. The progressive elements of these texts in the context of Weimar gender politics should not be understated and I am inclined to follow this second line of analysis in my discussion, as will be elaborated below.

In this chapter, I build on these discussions, focusing on the portrayals of motherhood and intergenerational female relationships in Baum's *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*, Keun's *Gilgi – eine von uns* and Tergit's *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm.* I show that, while avoiding endorsement of party politics, these novels include social criticism and feminist perspectives that echo those found in the texts analysed in the preceding chapters. I argue that the authors

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[41] Harrigan, 'Die Sexualität der Frau', p. 437; Bland, 'Through Science to Selfhood?', p. 58.
[42] Bland, 'Through Science to Selfhood?', p. 60.
[43] King, 'The Image of Fame', p. 379.
[44] Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, p. 115; Gürtler and Schmid-Bortenschlager, *Erfolg und Verfolgung*, p. 122.
[45] Kerstin Barndt, 'Aesthetics of Crisis: Motherhood, Abortion, and Melodrama in Irmgard Keun and Friedrich Wolf', *Women in German Yearbook*, 24 (2008), 71-95 (p. 87).

use their novels to educate their readers about the challenges faced by young women in Weimar Germany and advocate greater reproductive freedoms. With reference to psychoanalytic ideas and cultural types, I contest that Baum, Keun, and Tergit sought to complicate the definition of the new woman by showing how their representative young protagonists negotiated, at times unsuccessfully, a balance between financial independence, liberal social values, and familial relationships that were compatible with their modern lifestyles.

Part One: New Women's Reproductive Choices

<u>Abortion</u>

Much conservative media criticism of the new woman revolved around her sexual promiscuity and perceived rejection of maternal duty. While Keun and Baum ultimately challenge this narrative, both Helene and Gilgi do initially seek to terminate their unplanned pregnancies. Gilgi approaches abortion in a matter-of-fact manner in line with the presentation of her as an independent, rational new woman. She takes as self-evident the need for abortion provision. During an appointment with her doctor, she repeats: 'ich will kein Kind'[46] and refuses to recognise arguments against access to abortion:

Hören Sie, Herr Doktor, es ist doch das Unmoralischste und Unhygienischste und Absurdeste, eine Frau ein Kind zur Welt bringen zu lassen, das sie nicht ernähren kann. Es ist darüber hinaus überhaupt das Unmoralischste und Absurdeste, eine Frau ein Kind kriegen zu lassen, wenn sie es nicht haben will... (IK, p. 176)

Gilgi thus touches on the economic arguments advanced by the left-wing campaigns in favour of the legalisation of abortion. Indeed, upon learning of her friend Hertha's third pregnancy, Gilgi exclaims: 'Hertha – mein Gott – das Kind darfst du doch nicht bekommen!' (IK, p. 209) Through Gilgi's response to the impact of financial hardship on Hertha's and her own ability to mother, Keun endorses the socialist arguments against Paragraph 218 and, via Gilgi's rational voice, presents the need for access to abortion provision as self-evident. Although the doctor initially advises Gilgi to marry (IK, p. 175), after hearing Gilgi's arguments, he suggests she return in three weeks: 'es passiert ja häufig, daß so eine Sache von selber in Ordnung geht --- na, und – in solchem Falle könnte man dann eventuell nachhelfen.' (IK, p. 176) The doctor's initial reluctance to offer an abortion echoes the themes discussed in Kienle's *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, and, as will be shown, through the character of Doctor Gropius in *Helene*; the legislation

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[46] Irmgard Keun, *Gilgi – eine von uns*, 6th edn (Berlin: List, 2013), p.175. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation IK.

governing abortion placed doctors, who may otherwise be sympathetic to offering abortion services, in a vulnerable position due to the risk of prosecution. In this instance, the doctor's ambivalent invitation for Gilgi to return avoids an explicit offer to perform a termination, revealing the coded exchanges which took place to enable women with the ability to understand and available financial means to access abortion. Gilgi's comprehension of the doctor's instructions contrasts with Trude's naivety in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*. The recurrence of these episodes across texts suggests that such abortion services were widely used and the authors offer insight into the process for readers who may be unfamiliar with how a termination might be procured.

Keun's novel also acknowledges the barriers to accessing safe abortion for women without financial means. Gilgi responds to her socialist friend Pit's assertion that it is irresponsible for Hans and Hertha to continue to have children they cannot afford by emphasising that the couple's economic circumstances also prevent Hertha from terminating the pregnancy safely: 'Sie haben kein Geld, Pit.' (IK, p. 221) Keun's novel therefore mirrors the criticisms in Kienle's *Frauen*, Leitner's 'Wo gibt es Hilfe? Opfer und Schmarotzer um den §218', and Brüning's *Kleine Leute*, as well as Baum's *Helene*, that working-class women cannot access the same reproductive services or choices as women with greater financial means. Furthermore, Gilgi alludes to feminist arguments in her statement to her doctor (IK, p. 176), thereby going beyond the left-wing economic arguments and the essentialist arguments put forward by Kienle and in *Frauenwelt*, which assume women's desire to mother. Gilgi frames her assertion that women should be able to choose simply not to have children because they do not want them as a moral issue and adopts a radical perspective that, of the other texts considered in this thesis, is only found in Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*. Yet, the discussion of abortion is not expanded further in *Gilgi*: Keun assumes her readers will be familiar enough with the topic to negate the need for more detailed explanation, which indicates the prominent place of abortion in public discourse.

Baum's *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* offers a more detailed and critical portrayal of Helene's challenges when trying to abort her pregnancy, as Boa and Harrigan have commented.[47] As a Chemistry student, Helene initially attempts to terminate her pregnancy alone at home. When Helene comes to borrow a pot in order to make a 'medicine', Frau Grasmücke, her landlady, realises what is happening and indicates that Helene's story is not unusual: 'Schaut komisch aus, meine junge Dame, denkt Frau Grasmücke hinter ihr [Helene] her.

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[47] Boa, 'Women in the 'Golden' Twenties', p. 124; Harrigan 'Die Sexualität der Frau', p. 427.

Jajaja. Liebe zehrt, das ist eine alte Geschichte.'[48] When Helene's attempt at a home abortion is unsuccessful, Frau Grasmücke recommends a local provider, citing other women who have taken advantage of his services: 'Da weiß ich Fälle – noch im vorigen Monat hat einer [ein richtiger Doktor] unsrer Milchfrau geholfen' (VB, p. 106). This episode underscores the common nature of abortion during the Weimar era: Cornelie Usborne asserts that 'in female working-class culture [abortion] widely featured as a fairly routine event'.[49] Frau Grasmücke shares information about abortion provision as a sisterly act of solidarity, which reveals how women supported one another in terminating unwanted pregnancies: 'die Grasmücke hielt ihre Augen noch immer ganz fest und mit einem wunderlichen, frauenhaften Einverständnis auf sie gerichtet.' (VB, p. 106)

The most explicitly feminist element in Baum's novel, as critics, including Bland,[50] have identified, is the narration of Helene's experiences of attempting to obtain an abortion. In addition to Frau Grasmücke's non-judgemental advice, Helene also experiences, as Barndt notes, a feeling of solidarity with other women while waiting in Doctor Gropius's waiting room.[51] This contrasts with Helene's frequent isolation in a male-dominated environment throughout the rest of the novel. In the waiting room Helene observes how the women share opinions and experiences with one another: 'Es sind Schwestern! denkt Helene Willfüer, mit einem plötzlichen, überflutenden Gefühl des Dazugehörens' (VB, p. 133). However, the women in the waiting room are united by suffering, which, as Barndt highlights,[52] is a result of their biology: 'Frauen, Frauen aller Alter, aller Kasten sind hier zusammengedrängt und sprechen von ihrem eigensten Gebiet: dem Leiden.' (VB, p. 133) This recalls an episode in Else Kienle's *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, discussed in Chapter Two, in which a mother and daughter are united in solidarity by their shared experiences of male violence. Both texts offer a feminist criticism of the serious implications for women of limited access to contraception and abortion.

Yet, while Kienle's book presents an alternative vision for women's reproductive health and choices, Baum's text is reluctant to endorse the legalisation of abortion and, despite warning against the dangers of illegal abortion, presents a positive image of single motherhood. King suggests that Baum's own view of abortion reflects that of Doctor Gropius, who, while

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[48] Vicki Baum, *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1928), p. 103. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation VB.
[49] Cornelie Usborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2007), p. 24.
[50] Bland, 'Through Science to Selfhood?', p. 58.
[51] Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, p. 79.
[52] Ibid.

sympathetic to Helene's situation, refuses to provide a termination.[53] Helene visits Doctor Gropius after finding her details in the local directory: '[Helene] sucht eine Frau, eine Ärztin, irgendein Wesen, dem man sich anvertrauen, bei dem man seine Angst ausschütten kann.' (VB, p. 132) Helene's desire to visit a female doctor to discuss her unwanted pregnancy indicates her feelings of vulnerability and her isolation, as well as representing a call for female support and access to empathetic advice. Doctor Gropius draws Helene's attention to the rights of single mothers: 'Wir haben es Gott sei Dank durchgesetzt in den letzten Jahren, daß die uneheliche Mutter ihr soziales Recht erhält. Sie wissen, daß es Ihnen auch gestattet ist, den Frauentitel anzunehmen?' (VB, p. 135). Through Doctor Gropius, Baum also informs her readers of the rights of single mothers, thus echoing the educational approach of the political texts discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Furthermore, Baum, via Doctor Gropius, promotes access to contraception: 'Ich – wenn es nach mir ginge! Da wäre bei den Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen längst eine, in welcher der Kindersegen offiziell geregelt würde.' (VB, p. 137) However, Doctor Gropius refuses to perform an abortion both on the grounds of the risk to herself of performing an illegal procedure and on the grounds of the potential of Helene's unborn child: 'Denken Sie, daß in Ihnen ein Mensch wächst, der vielleicht einmal Ihr ganzes Glück sein wird. Vielleicht ein Genie, ein Dichter, ein Entdecker, etwas Großes. Die Möglichkeit, die in Ihnen wächst, darf nicht zerstört werden.' (VB, p. 137) Baum's book therefore offers a less radically feminist and somewhat pronatalist and eugenic engagement in the abortion debates of the Weimar era. Helene's attempts to obtain an abortion are ultimately presented as a mistake, as Bland notes, reflecting a refusal on the part of the novel to advocate unconditional access to abortion.[54]

Baum does nevertheless demonstrate the specific challenges faced by women seeking an abortion and Helene's encounters with various abortion providers parallel Trude's experiences in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*. Like Trude, Helene visits unlicenced, illegal providers and is uncomfortable with the unsanitary, unsafe setting. Waiting in Frau Friedrichs's house, Helene is disturbed by the sounds she hears: 'Das Schlimmste sind die Wände in diesem Zimmer. Sie lassen alles durch, Gerüche, Menschendunst, Stimmen. Und dann etwas Unheimliches, etwas Angsterregendes und Grauenvolles.' (VB, p. 141) Like Trude, Helene flees as a result of overhearing another woman undergo an abortion. While Helene does later return, she is greeted by a doctor who advises her to leave, as the police are on the way to investigate an abortion which has gone wrong (VB, p. 144), thus making explicit the risks associated with illegal abortions. Paralleling Trude's case, Helene's emotional response promotes normative

[53] King, 'Vicki Baum and the "Making" of Popular Success', p. 156. King cites an article by Baum entitled 'Frauen unter Frauen', which was published in the *Vossische Zeitung* on 5th April 1931, as evidence of Baum's own views.
[54] Bland, 'Through Science to Selfhood?', p. 58.

ideas about women's psychology and implies an inherent desire to continue pregnancies even when social circumstances leave women without the necessary resources to raise a child.

Baum also reveals a class awareness in *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* which mirrors Trude's experiences in *Kleine Leute*, Maria Leitner's observations in her journalistic series 'Wo gibt es Hilfe? Opfer und Schmarotzer um den §218', and Gilgi's rebuttal of Pit's suggestion that Hertha obtain an abortion. Helene visits Professor Riemenschneider in a private clinic, where abortions can be obtained for a fee of one thousand marks. Trude likewise visits a doctor who is willing to perform an abortion for a fee greater than Trude's entire monthly income,[55] and Leitner describes the carefree attitudes of the wealthy women she witnesses arriving at and leaving an expensive private clinic.[56] These examples demonstrate the class inequality dictating women's access to reproductive care and highlight the injustice that women with financial means could safely bypass the law, while women without means had to resort to unsafe, amateur abortions or continue an unwanted pregnancy.

Ultimately, like Trude, neither Helene nor Gilgi undergo an abortion, as their rational concerns about their financial precarity and unmarried status are overwhelmed by an innate wish to persevere and continue their pregnancies. Helene, overcome by an inherent desire to live, decides not to go through with the suicide pact that Rainer proposes after learning both of his father's terminal illness and Helene's pregnancy, and Gilgi realises that, despite her initial response, she does want the child and fails to return to the doctor for her abortion appointment. Gilgi's change of heart is prompted by her encounter with Hans and Hertha's daughter, whose 'winzige zärtliche Tierchenbewegung treibt Gilgi beinahe Tränen in die Augen' (IK, p. 204), as well as her renewed affirmation of her desire to live after briefly considering suicide due to her feelings of guilt after the death of Hans, Hertha and their children (IK, pp. 249-50). Gilgi's decision is sentimental but also prompts the return of her rationalism and resolve. Yet, unlike Trude, neither Gilgi nor Helene marry the fathers of their unborn children, opting instead for single motherhood. Baum's novel continues to show Helene's obstacles and successes as a single mother. *Gilgi*, by contrast, ends while the protagonist is still pregnant and questions about how Gilgi negotiates the challenges of single motherhood in the context of the depression and political upheaval of the late Weimar period are left unanswered.

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[55] Elfriede Brüning, *Kleine Leute*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1988), p. 62.
[56] Maria Leitner, 'Wo gibt es Hilfe? Opfer und Schmarotzer um den §218', in *Mädchen mit drei Namen: Reportagen aus Deutschland und ein Berliner Roman 1928-1933*, ed. by Helga Schwarz and Wilfried Schwarz (Berlin: Aviva, 2013), pp. 63-92, (p. 92).

<u>Single Motherhood</u>

In her analysis of *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* and *Gilgi – eine von uns*, von Ankum argues that single motherhood is presented as emancipatory in these two novels, belying the reality of unmarried mothers experiences in Weimar Germany and continuing to constrain women's social role to a maternal one.[57] It is certainly the case that Gilgi's experiences her decision to leave Martin and have her child alone as liberating but I follow Capovilla and Barndt in reading the presentation of single motherhood in *Gilgi* as more progressive than von Ankum does.[58] Gilgi's decision enables the return of her rationality displayed in the novel's opening passages and she claims that only by leaving Martin can she have the work and order that she needs in her life (IK, p. 256). Indeed, Barndt argues that 'Keun's text imagines motherliness as an autodidactic care of the self',[59] indicating, as Woodford also notes,[60] how Gilgi expresses her autonomy and takes steps to build a life according to her own priorities and principles. Single motherhood is, thus, presented as a way to integrate mothering into the lifestyle of the new woman.

Although Gilgi is positive about her decision to become a single mother, Keun's novel nevertheless acknowledges the challenges faced by unmarried mothers during the Weimar period. Pit, for example, upon hearing of Gilgi's plan exclaims: 'Und du willst ganz allein mit dem Kind… Oh, du hast Mut!' (IK, p. 256) Yet, Gilgi dismisses Pit's concerns: 'Ich sehne mich krank danach, endlich mal wieder Schwierigkeiten zu überwinden.' (IK, p. 257) Keun presents Gilgi's approaching single motherhood as a means for Gilgi to take back control of her life and rediscover herself after losing her sense of self in her relationship with Martin. Through Gilgi, Keun criticises the strict social morality that leads to discrimination against single mothers: 'Warum ein uneheliches Kind was Unmoralisches sein soll, versteh' ich einfach nicht.' (IK, p. 258) This criticism of conservative attitudes toward single motherhood aligns Keun with the political left, recalling the appeals for expanded rights for single mothers featured in *Frauenwelt*, Kienle's *Frauen*, and Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*. Yet, Gilgi's approach is rather idealistic and her dismissal of the difficulties she will undoubtedly face as an unmarried mother is naïve. Gilgi overlooks the challenges of discrimination, the difficulties for unmarried mothers to find work and issues of childcare that are criticised in, for example, *Frauenwelt* and *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, to focus instead on the perceived advantages that Gilgi asserts single parenting has for children: 'es gibt so viele Ehen, wo Vater und Mutter sich

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[57] von Ankum, 'Motherhood and the "New Woman"', p. 173.
[58] Capovilla, 'Irmgard Keun', pp. 145-46; Barndt, '„Eine von uns?"', p. 156; Barndt, 'Aesthetics of Crisis', p. 87.
[59] Barndt, 'Aesthetics of Crisis', p. 87.
[60] Woodford, 'Women's Autonomy', p. 43.

widerlich zanken – na, da hat's ein Kind, das nur 'ne Mutter hat, immer noch besser.' (IK, p. 257) However, her argument leaves unchallenged the assumption of women's mothering by failing to consider a scenario in which a child may be advantaged by being raised by a single father. Thus, the emancipatory presentation of single motherhood in *Gilgi* is not as radical as it initially appears and glosses over the reality of the hardship faced by many unmarried mothers, who, as the non-fiction texts discussed in this thesis have emphasised, experienced reduced rather than expanded opportunities. Nevertheless, as Lorisika emphasises in her analysis of *Gilgi*: 'An Gilgi führt Keun <u>eine</u> Möglichkeit vor [...]. Gilgi ist keine Revolutionärin, keine 'Emanze'' [Emphasis in original].[61] In contrast to the political sources in Chapters Two and Three, which search for a collective solution, Keun offers a more individualised conclusion to her first novel.

While Keun presents single motherhood as an emancipatory possibility for a new woman character, she does acknowledge the challenges faced by single mothers in the Wilhelmine era in her depiction of Fräulein Täschler, the seamstress who agrees to present Gilgi as her own child in exchange for financial compensation from Frau Kreil, the upper-class mother of Gilgi's biological mother, Magdalene. Frau Kreil justified her demand that Fräulein Täschler adopt the baby by evoking class differences in attitudes to premarital pregnancies: 'Und da sagtse [Frau Kreil], dasse mit ihre Tochter son Mallör hätt, un das jing nich, ihre Zukunft wär ruiniert, wenn da was rauskäm, un bei mir käms nich so drauf an, die Männer in unsere Kreise, die wars ejal, wenn en Mädchen en Kind hätt.' (IK, pp. 50-51) While there may have been fewer barriers to marriage created by premarital pregnancies for working-class women,[62] Fräulein Täschler's experiences demonstrate how damaging pervasive attitudes towards single mothers were. I return to the portrayal of Gilgi's three mothers as class representatives in the next section of this chapter. After Gilgi's birth, Fräulein Täschler struggles to find accommodation or work:

ich hab' mir 'n Zimmer inne jute Jegend genommen, da bin ich hin mit dem Wurm. Aber da wolltense mich nich wejen dem Kind [...] Und dann jing ich wieder bei mein Kundschaft un saacht überall, ich hätt was Kleines jekricht, ich wär darum drei Monate fort jewesen, da wollten viele nichts mehr von mir wissen. (IK, p. 51)

Keun's novel thus engages with discourses around the rights of single mothers. She reveals the discrimination faced by unmarried mothers, which leads to Fräulein Täschler's decision to give

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[61] Lorisika, *Frauendarstellungen*, p. 142.

[62] Karen Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik: Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Dietz, 1990), p. 175; Alice Rühle-Gerstel, *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1932), p. 337. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation ARG.

Gilgi to the Krons, the couple who raised her to adulthood. While Gilgi plans to become a single mother around twenty years after Fräulein Täschler's experiences, Gilgi's positive expectations of single motherhood are still not reflective of pervasive attitudes during the Weimar period. Keun's novel imagines and advocates greater social acceptance of women who raise children out of wedlock.

Unlike *Gilgi*, which ends while the protagonist is still pregnant and therefore leaves unanswered the question of whether and how she overcomes the obstacles faced by unmarried mothers, Baum's *Helene* details Helene's struggles and later (rather far-fetched) successes as a single mother. Although Helene ultimately finds success and happiness, Baum acknowledges the difficulties faced by unmarried mothers, recalling the demands for improved rights and greater social acceptance for single mothers made in the non-fiction texts discussed in this thesis. Helene experiences prejudice both during her pregnancy and after the birth of her son. She is, for example, thrown out of the accommodation she rents from a Baroness in Munich while she is pregnant: 'Ich bin einfach an die Luft gesetzt worden, mit schnöden und rauhen Worten, welche sich auf meinen unmoralischen und ärgerniserregenden Zustand bezogen. Nein, ich passe nicht zum alten Adel, scheint es.' (VB, p. 215) Furthermore, Helene struggles to find work as a single mother after completing her doctorate. 'Dann kam die Stellung bei Werner und Höhne [...] Aber da wurde ich ja entlassen.' (pp. 237-38) Helene accepts work in a pharmacy, for which she is overqualified (VB, p. 232), underlining the barriers to her employment in the chemical industries both as a woman and as an unmarried mother. Baum's criticism of the workplace discrimination against single mothers forms part of a wider conversation, in which *Frauenwelt* and Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* also participated. Rühle-Gerstel, for instance, lists the professions typically closed to unmarried mothers, which included teaching, nursing, and domestic service, noting that these professions are generally associated with women's work and thereby emphasising the social hypocrisy of excluding mothers from the relatively limited number of jobs to which women had greater access (ARG, p. 340). In spite of her ultimate success, the detailed description of the difficulties faced by Helene as a single mother calls into question von Ankum's assertion that Baum's text presents single motherhood as unproblematically emancipatory.

Baum also brings to the attention of her readers the lack of dignity for unmarried women giving birth. In a letter to her friend Kranich, Helene describes her discomfort at the facilities available to single mothers in hospital: 'man muß in diesen Wochen [vor und nach der Geburt] als Studienmaterial dienen, man muß den Studenten zur Verfügung stehen, man besitzt nicht einmal die Stunde der Geburt für sich allein, und das ist, wenn auch notwendig, eine große, unerträgliche Grausamkeit.' (VB, p. 224) Helene describes how unmarried mothers are treated as 'ein Meerschweinchen oder eine Experimentiermaus' (VB, p. 225). Baum therefore criticises,

through Helene, the dehumanisation of unmarried mothers and, in line with her reservations about unlimited access to abortion, advocates greater rights for single mothers.

Yet, despite a realistic portrayal of the obstacles to obtaining an abortion and discrimination faced by single mothers, Baum's novel promotes an idealised image of motherhood that relies on essentialist ideas of women's maternal nature. Frame and Barndt both emphasise in their analyses that the presentation of Helene's sexuality and motherhood is non-threatening,[63] and Baum leaves essentialist assumptions of gender difference unchallenged. Helene's maternal qualities are signalled from the opening pages of the book. While on the train, returning from her father's funeral, Helene offers her seat to a mother with small children (VB, p. 5), revealing her caring and selfless nature. The mother falls asleep and her child risks sliding off her lap: 'Dann griff Fräulein Willfüer jedesmal zu und hielt den Absturz auf.' (VB, p. 5) Helene is thus shown to be alert to the needs of the child; indeed, she is presented as more conscious of the child's well-being than the child's mother. Barndt comments on the class coding in the opposition between Helene, who is introduced as an independent new woman, and the working-class mother, who is presented in the common framing of working-class women as struggling and exhausted.[64] Yet, the typical new woman figure is not generally associated with maternal characteristics and Baum repeatedly emphasises these qualities in Helene. For example, when the mother on the train asks Helene to hold her child while they are disembarking, the child is trusting of Helene: 'als ihr schüchtern hingestreckter Zeigefinger gar von der feuchten und winzigen Faust fest und vertrauensvoll umfaßt wurde, da verzeichnete ihr Herz dies mit einem kleinen innerlichen Schluchzen als ein besonderes und wunderhübsches Erlebnis.' (VB, p. 7) Furthermore, Helene finds joy in this experience, again emphasising her suitability and aptitude for motherhood. The caring and supportive qualities attributed to Helene from the opening of the novel reference normative ideas of a 'good' mother and present Helene in terms which foreshadow her own motherhood. This coding of maternal behaviour is also present, for example, in Elfriede Brüning's *Kleine Leute*, as Trude is alert to the needs of children playing outside as it begins to rain, and both novels fall well short of the radical rejection of women's inherent maternal instinct found in the theoretical works discussed in Chapter One.

Moreover, Helene's motherhood is idealised, and Helene is presented as an exceptional figure. During her pregnancy she is approached by a painter, who asks her to act as a model for him: 'Er suche die jungfräuliche Mutter, er wolle die Madonna malen, mit gesegnetem Leib, bevor sie Jesus gebärt, und so, genau so sähe sie aus wie ich.' (VB, p. 224) The comparison of

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[63] Frame, 'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne', p. 32; Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, p. 100.
[64] Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, p. 68.

Helene to the Madonna equates Helene, rather unsubtly, with the most idealised mother figure in Western culture and distances Helene from both sexuality and moral reproofs arising from her premarital pregnancy. Moreover, after the birth of her son, Helene is shown to be a conventionally 'good' mother, further protecting her from reproach. As von Ankum notes, Helene subordinates her own needs to those of her son.[65] For example, in an important business meeting, in which Helene negotiates a high salary and access to her own research lab, her thoughts repeatedly return to her son: 'Helene in ihrem Klubstuhl dachte: Tintin muß neue Schuhe haben; er wächst so schnell.' (VB, p. 271) Furthermore, securing a comfortable life for her son is indicated as her motivation for negotiating a higher salary: 'Guter Tintin! Er wird neue Schuhe bekommen. Er wird Schlittschuh laufen, und er soll zu Weihnachten einen großen Baukasten haben. Malee [wie Tintin Helene nennt] kauft alles.' (VB, p. 281) The notion of maternal selflessness, embodied in Helene and implied repeatedly in *Frauenwelt*, reveals an expectation, which is critiqued in Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, that women put the needs of their family ahead of their own. Nevertheless, while Helene's priority is shown to be her son, Helene's professional and personal life exist compatibly alongside each other, in contrast to the portrayal of the double burden in, for example, *Lina* and *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, which suggests that long hours of work diminish women's ability to mother in an idealised manner. Like Keun, Baum does not seek to present a collective story or shared solution to the challenges faced by the protagonist to the same extent as the socialist fiction discussed in Chapter Three.

The fulfilment that Helene finds in motherhood underscores Baum's somewhat pronatalist stance, exposed through Doctor Gropius's suggestion, 'daß in Ihnen ein Mensch wächst, der vielleicht einmal Ihr ganzes Glück sein wird' (VB, p. 137). Through Helene's story, Baum makes the case for improved treatment of single mothers by relying on essentialist ideas of gender to stress women's aptitude for mothering regardless of their marital status. Even during the later stages of her pregnancy, Helene already finds great joy in her approaching motherhood. Upon receiving a gift of baby clothes from her friend Kranich, she writes:

Weiß ein Mann überhaupt, was es heißt, solch kleines Hemdchen auseinanderzufalten, anzustaunen, zu streicheln? Das alles lebt schon, ist schon warm, ich träume schon die kleinen beweglichen Glieder in die Jäckchen und Hüllen – ich bin sehr glücklich. (VB, p. 223)

The suggestion that a man could not respond to baby clothes in the same way as a woman assumes women's inherent maternal qualities. Helene also tells Ambrosius about the joy that

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[65] von Ankum, 'Motherhood and the "New Woman"', p. 177.

she experiences as a mother: 'Es ist so eine durchdringende Art von Freude, manchmal schmerzt es beinahe, es tut weh in den Kiefern und da, in den Ellenbogen – so stark kann ich mich freuen mit dem Kind' (VB, p. 237) Helene's happiness presents her as an idealised mother figure, who finds contentment in her caring role and whose own needs are subordinated to those of her son. As in Keun's novel, the protagonist is individualised and Baum's titular character is presented as an exceptional, aspirational figure rather than an 'everywoman'. The gender essentialism in *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* was not however an exception in Weimar-era writing about motherhood. As shown in preceding chapters, left-wing publications such as *Frauenwelt*, *Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute*, and Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute* also relied on normative assumptions about motherhood. Although the novel resolves in a fairytale-like 'happy ending', in *Helene* Baum echoes discourses found among the political left, which advocate greater rights for single mothers but leave unchallenged essentialist ideas about gendered personality.

Part Two: Psychoanalysis, Personality Types, and New Women's Attitudes Towards Family

As I discussed in Chapters One and Two, psychoanalytic ideas reached an increasingly public and lay audience during the Weimar period. Social norms that presumed inherent gender difference were substantiated by the mainstream presentation of psychoanalytic theory and, although Rühle-Gerstel challenges gender essentialism in *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*, she also suggests that women internalise expectations of their nurturing, maternal social role. The works of popular fiction analysed in this chapter indicate how psychoanalytic ideas had entered mainstream vernacular. In the following, I consider how references to psychoanalysis are incorporated into these texts and examine the influence of psychoanalysis on the presentation of the characters in these novels as widely recognised social 'types'. As I demonstrate, there are tensions between the literary and sociological typology used as shorthand by authors to reveal aspects of their characters to readers, and the theoretical, psychological categories proposed by Rühle-Gerstel to better understand the behaviour and attitudes of an individual. With reference to literary and psychological 'types', I show that competing attitudes towards relationships and motherhood were exhibited by characters labelled as new women.

The cultural awareness of psychoanalytic ideas is evidenced in the casual references to Freud's ideas in all three novels discussed in this chapter. For example, when Gilgi asks Pit what his parents are like, in a preamble to telling him that she was adopted, he responds: 'Hast du neuerdings den Tick, psychologische Studien machen zu wollen?' (IK, p. 57) Pit presents

psychoanalysis as a trend, alluding to the prevalence of these ideas in the public consciousness at this time. Similarly, the journalist Miermann tells Lotte Kohler that Käte Herzfeld has suggested he visit a psychoanalyst: 'Sie meint, wenn man heutzutage eine Wut auf jemanden hat, ginge ein moderner Mensch zum Psychoanalytiker. Dann erzähle man über die Art [seiner Kleinkindära] und ist die Wut los.'[66] While both Pit and Miermann express scepticism towards the legitimacy of the ideas, the fact that psychoanalysis is casually mentioned in these novels is testament to the widespread public engagement with the topic at this time.

Baum's novel also references psychoanalytic ideas in relation to Helene's sexuality. Helene's roommate, Gudula, for example, dryly observes that Helene should not tell any psychoanalysts about her dream, in which her father, Professor Ambrosius, and her future boyfriend, Rainer, all appear. Gudula's ironic comment is comparable to those made by Pit and Miermann but Baum's novel engages further with psychoanalytic ideas in the inclusion of an Oedipal triangle in Helene's relationships with Ambrosius and Rainer. Ambrosius appears as a father figure in the first part of Baum's novel, as Boa and Barndt observe, but, by the time of their romantic union at the close of the novel, as Barndt highlights, the relationship between Ambrosius and Helene is no longer 'incestuous' due to Helene's professional success and motherhood and Ambrosius's comparative weakness following his sight loss.[67]

Yet, while Ambrosius no longer appears as a father figure in relation to Helene, she remains a maternal figure, as she enters the romantic relationship with Ambrosius at a point where he requires her to adopt a nurturing role because of his vision impairment. The presentation of Helene as maternal in romantic relationships renders her sexuality in the novel non-threatening. Indeed, in her earlier relationship with Rainer, the text hints at an incestuous mother-son relationship: 'Firilei nannte sie ihn, es war ein Kindername. Er war ein kleiner Firilei, fast fünf Monate jünger als sie. Zuweilen fühlte sie sich wie eine große, alte und weise Mutter neben diesem schmalen, unfertigen, knabenhaften Menschen' (VB, p. 73). Rainer's emotional reliance on Helene is underscored after he learns of his father's terminal diagnosis: 'Kaum hatte Rainer den Bahnhof verlassen, als der Gedanke an Helene ihn ansprang. Wenn irgendwo, dann war bei ihr in diesem Augenblick Hilfe zu finden. Sie war stark, sie half tragen, sie konnte trösten und Mut machen, und bei ihr durfte man auch weinen' (VB, p. 124). Rainer's dependence on Helene contrasts in this moment with her independence, as she is seeking an abortion alone without having told Rainer about the pregnancy. Furthermore, Barndt notes how Helene's son Tintin later declares his intention to marry Helene when he is old enough, thus

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[66] Gabriele Tergit, *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*, 3rd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Schöffling, 2016), p. 109. Subsequent references to this text follow citations in parentheses and are identified by the abbreviation GT.

[67] Boa, 'Women Writers in the 'Golden' Twenties', p. 124; Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, pp. 84-85.

completing the Oedipal cycle suggested in Helene's relationships with Rainer, Tintin and Ambrosius.[68] In all of her relationships with men, Helene is presented as protective and suited to meet the needs of these male characters. In fact, Ambrosius has experienced health benefits since using the rejuvenation serum, which was developed by Helene and led to her professional success, suggesting that even Helene's work in the chemical industry supports the needs of the men in her life. The novel thus leaves unchallenged expectations of women's supportive, familial role and, by positioning Helene as an aspirational figure, contributes to discourses that limited women's opportunities beyond the domestic sphere.

Helene's non-threatening sexuality and maternal, nurturing qualities align her largely with the type of woman described by Rühle-Gerstel as 'die Ideale'. Rühle-Gerstel's social psychology, discussed in detail in Chapter One of this thesis, offers a psychological reading of the social roles that women pursue, identifying thirteen 'types'. Rühle-Gerstel's 'types' strive to varying degrees towards female-, male-, or non-gender-oriented goals of differing attainability within contemporary society. While Helene finds professional success in a traditionally male-dominated field, she is not presented as threatening to the success of the men around her or, in Rühle-Gerstel's terminology, she does not strive for a goal of superiority at the expense of her male colleagues and acquaintances. According to Rühle-Gerstel, 'die Ideale' is maternal, altruistic, and 'stellt sich [...] erfolgreich und konkurrenzlos neben den Mann' (ARG, p. 89). Rühle-Gerstel also asserts that the goals of superiority to which 'die Ideale' strives are close to the contemporary reality of the family in Weimar Germany. Thus, Helene is able to reintegrate unproblematically into the conventional family unit at the end of the novel in a way that does not threaten the wider social gender hierarchy but does, as Rühle-Gerstel asserts, pose a risk to the psychological welfare of other types of women who are unable to live up to the unattainable standards set by 'die Ideale'.

Rühle-Gerstel's thirteen psychological 'types' represent a rather more sophisticated breakdown of personality that the characteristics suggested by the shorthand references to literary or sociological 'types', such as the new woman or the Americanised 'Girl', that were common in Weimar culture and indeed feature in the texts discussed here. Keun's novel particularly includes characters who embody 'types' recognisable to her readership: Gilgi's adoptive mother, Frau Kron, is a lower-middle-class housewife, while the woman Gilgi initially believes to be her birth mother, Fräulein Täschler represents working-class women who are trapped in poverty, and Frau Greif, Gilgi's biological mother, lives a lonely life as the upper-class wife of an unfaithful husband. Gilgi's friends Hans and Hertha, meanwhile, are a lower-middle-

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[68] Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit*, p. 84.

class couple who have been impoverished by the mass unemployment that gripped the final years of the Weimar Republic. Gilgi's friend Pit is a socialist intellectual, who enjoys the safety net of a wealthy father and whose ideology is criticised as out of touch with reality, while another of Gilgi's friends, Olga, and Gilgi's boyfriend, Martin, are artistic individuals, who work only when they need to or, in the case of Martin, happily live off borrowed money. As several critics have commented, the inclusion of these 'types' contributed to the success of Keun's novel, as readers were encouraged to recognise themselves and the people they may know in their private and professional lives in Gilgi and the people around her.[69] Keun's novel captures these 'types' as features of urban Weimar society but, in contrast to the socialist fiction discussed in Chapter Three, does not seek to offer solutions to the hardship faced by characters such as Fräulein Täschler or Hans and Hertha who find themselves in comparable situations to Zur Mühlen's Lina or Brüning's Hermann and Anna.

Gilgi is frequently labelled as the archetypal new woman but critics have also identified Baum's Helene, and Tergit's Lotte and Käte as new women. As we have already seen, however, there are a number of striking differences between the presentation of central female characters in these novels that complicates the labelling of them simply as new women. In her chapter 'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne? Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman', Lynne Frame references sociological 'types' to differentiate between the women in Baum's novel, noting the idealisation of Helene, who, Frame asserts, resists categorisation.[70] By contrast, Frame identifies Ambrosius's wife Yvonne as a 'Girl' and Helene's roommate Gudula, who Frame notes is also coded as homosexual and Jewish in the novel, as a 'Garçonne'.[71] Frame rightly concludes that Baum's novel does not undermine gender essentialism by presenting a radical portrayal of modern womanhood,[72] although Frame's conclusion understates the more progressive elements of Baum's novel. By relying on cultural 'types', Frame's analysis focuses on the perception of these characters by others and the appeal to scientific discourse. Referring to the psychological 'types' identified by Rühle-Gerstel facilitates a consideration of the portrayal of the motivations for the characters' decisions and behaviours, too. While Rühle-Gerstel's identification of thirteen categories of female personality is not itself unproblematic, as discussed in Chapter One, her framework offers the possibility of an alternative to the new woman label and a psychological explanation for the differences, particularly in attitudes towards family, between characters identified as new women.

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[69] See, for example: Ritchie, 'Irmgard Keun's Weimar Girls', p. 70; Lorisika, *Frauendarstellungen*, pp. 126-28; von Ankum, 'Motherhood and the "New Woman"', p. 180.
[70] Frame, 'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne', p. 28.
[71] Ibid., pp. 25-27.
[72] Ibid., p. 33.

Tergit's Lotte Kohler, for example, like Helene Willfüer, achieves professional success as a journalist, yet her attitude towards her relationship with fellow journalist, Oskar Meyer, contrasts with Helene's maternal approach but does not reflect the typical notion of new women as interested only in casual relationships, either. Using Rühle-Gerstel's framework, Lotte could be considered an example of 'die Tüchtige', whose motto, according to Rühle-Gerstel is: 'Ich will soviel leisten wie ein Mann!' (ARG, p. 101). Indeed, Lotte and her friend Fräulein Dr Wendland sought equality through higher education and professional activities (GT, pp. 99-100), rather than on the basis of female particularity, as was the strategy of prominent branches of the bourgeois women's movement. Lotte is, however, presented as somewhat naïve in her relationship with Meyer. Lotte Kohler remains loyal to Meyer despite long periods of separation while he is working as a correspondent in Paris, which is consistent with Rühle-Gerstel's assessment that, for women like Lotte: 'Sexualität ist eins unter anderen Lebensgebieten, nicht die Hauptsache' (ARG, p. 226) and Lotte and Meyer's relationship certainly does not have the intensity of, for example, that of Gilgi and Martin. Lotte is receptive to Meyer's repeated use of work commitments as an excuse for missing their meetings (GT, p. 97), revealing the significance of work in her own life. She assures her colleague Miermann: 'Nie würde ich einem Mann nachlaufen, der sich nichts aus mir macht. Aber er liebt mich, glauben Sie's mir.' (GT, p. 112) However, her acceptance of these repeated excuses also betrays her naivety and apparent inability to communicate her wishes clearly to Meyer. While marriage is not presented as a central goal for Lotte, she admits to Miermann that she would like to marry: 'als M. das letztemal in Berlin war, fuhren wir im Auto, sagte er plötzlich, ob eine Heirat alles lösen könnte. Ich sagte: vielleicht, weil ich zu dämlich war, ›ja‹ zu sagen.' (GT, p. 113) Schüller identifies Lotte as belonging to a generation which sought greater access to public and professional space than their mothers did but had not embraced the sexual liberation of younger women of, for example, Gilgi's age group and her rather ambivalent attitude towards marriage is certainly an illustration of this.[73]

Lotte and Meyer's relationship eventually collapses due to his refusal to commit to her. Rühle-Gerstel notes that women like Lotte Kohler may struggle to find suitable partners since they are looking for an equal relationship, while, Rühle-Gerstel asserts, men's attitudes towards relationships are limited by their internalisation of '[d]ie Legende von der Frau als Heilige oder Hure' (ARG, p. 227). Meyer's rejection of commitment is most clearly exemplified in an episode in which, after a meeting with Lotte Kohler, he engages in a brief casual encounter with a woman he meets at a tram stop: 'Sie schloß die Wohnung auf. »Hier links«, sagte sie. Das war

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[73] Schüller, *Vom Ernst der Zerstreuung*, p. 205.

alles. Im weißen Zimmer zündete er die Bettlampe an. Das Mädchen kam. Er sah sie glühen. Es ging rasch. »Wie komme ich hinaus?« fragte er.' (GT, p. 102) The contrast of Meyer's behaviour with Lotte's excited relation of her evening with Meyer to her friend Wendland exposes the discrepancy between their commitment to and expectations of the relationship. Lotte's belief in Meyer's loyalty to her is revealed to be unfounded, while Meyer is exposed as insensitive and entitled, disclosing Tergit's feminist criticism of the ways in which women are used and disrespected. Tergit's criticism is again exemplified in the case of Ella Waldschmidt, discussed later in this chapter. Lotte's professional competence is juxtaposed with her naïve infatuation for Meyer and bashful hesitance to admit her desire for marriage.

By contrast, the attitudes of Käte Herzfeld and Gilgi towards relationships are more consistent with the archetypal portrayal of the new woman, termed 'die Überspannte' in Rühle-Gerstel's schema. At the beginning of Tergit's novel, Käte is recently divorced and declares that she will never remarry: 'Ich will nicht hieraten. Selbst mit dem geliebtesten Mann könnte ich das nicht aushalten!' (GT, p. 59) Meanwhile, the opening pages of *Gilgi* establish the protagonist as a young woman who is experienced in relationships and has little interest in a serious commitment: 'Die Jahre der Wahllosigkeit zwischen siebzehn und neunzehn sind vorbei. Der Junge war nett. Der Kuß war nett. Nicht mehr. Er brennt nicht nach. Gut so.' (IK, p. 8) This echoes Rühle-Gerstel's assertion that new women, or 'Überspannte' are not predisposed to marriage and suggests that their expectations of their partners are unfulfillable (ARG, p. 221). Indeed, Gilgi appears to recognise this in her decision not to tell Martin about her pregnancy due to her concerns about how he will react (IK, p. 177). Gilgi's decision to become a single mother, rather than form a traditional family unit with Martin, also represents a rejection of the social expectations of family. Rühle-Gerstel suggests: 'Die „Überspannte" steht über der Familie – es kommt nun darauf an, ob dieses „Über" ichhaft oder sozial, neurotisch oder zukunftsweisend ist' (ARG, p. 376). She identifies the goals of 'die Überspannte' as the most removed from contemporary reality and asserts that this group of women is therefore among the most likely to experience conflict in the family (ARG, pp. 372, 374). Viewed in light of Rühle-Gerstel's analysis, Gilgi's decision to raise her child as a single mother in spite of the difficulties she is likely to face is consistent with the characterisation of her as an archetypal new woman and underscores Keun's criticism of what she deems to be an outdated morality. Within Keun's novel, Gilgi's decision is presented as 'zukunftsweisend' rather than 'neurotisch'.

While Gilgi optimistically embraces single motherhood at the close of the novel, Hertha, the wife of Gilgi's former boyfriend Hans, stands as a warning about the social and psychological impact of marriage and motherhood. Rühle-Gerstel argues that, due to the frequent frustration of her goals, an 'Überspannte' is more likely to experience neurosis. Although Hertha does not appear as such an archetypal new woman as Gilgi, her membership of the same swimming club

indicates her participation in the youth culture of the Weimar era and implies that she may have shared comparable expectations and aspirations to Gilgi that have been thwarted by her descent into poverty, alongside many other lower-middle-class people in the years of the depression. She is, as I discuss in the next section, unfulfilled and unhappy as a married, unemployed mother. Moreover, Kosta notes that Keun's novel includes no positive portrayals of traditional family life,[74] and, in the following section, I argue that Keun combines political and social commentary in her portrayal of Hertha and the presentation of Gilgi's three mothers to illustrate the impact of social circumstances on women's attitudes towards motherhood and ability to mother.

Part Three: Motherhood and Class

As has been seen in their engagement with discussions of access to abortion and the rights of single mothers, the examples of popular fiction discussed in this chapter are socially critical. Like the socialist fiction analysed in Chapter Three, they recognise the impact of class and economic circumstance on women's mothering in Weimar Germany. Unconstrained by the party political agenda of the socialist fiction, these works of popular fiction broaden their depiction of family relationships to consider the impact of social factors on women's mothering across classes. In the following, I argue that *Gilgi* and *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* eschew idealised images of motherhood, represented by characters like Baum's Helene. Although the barriers to their maternal behaviour are different, neither working-class nor wealthy women conform to a romanticised (middle-class) version of motherhood.

The Demystification of Motherhood

Gilgi's optimism regarding her decision to become a single mother comes after she witnesses the misery and hardship faced by Hertha. Gilgi meets her former boyfriend Hans again by coincidence when he comes to Gilgi's door as part of his work as a salesman, and responds to Hans's request that she visit his wife Hertha, who he knows is lonely at home. Hertha's motherhood is not idealised and draws to the attention of the reader the emotional struggles that can accompany women's domestic role. Hertha is honest in her experiences of pregnancy and childbirth, highlighting the challenges: 'Ich hab' die Kinder so gehaßt, wie ich sie getragen habe' (IK, p. 204); 'die Wehen hatten zu früh angefangen – den Leib zerriß es mir [...] Die Schmerzen, Gilgi! – ich dacht', ich würd' wahnsinnig' (IK, p. 206). In contrast to the

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[74] Barbara Kosta, 'Unruly Daughters and Modernity: Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi – eine von uns*', *The German Quarterly*, 68.3 (1995), 271-86 (p. 281).

contributions in *Frauenwelt*, for example, which frame willing acceptance of the challenges of motherhood as part of women's duty, Hertha is open about how unhappy and unfulfilled she is. Keun's depiction of Hertha's motherhood reveals the psychological impact of women's mothering, providing a literary illustration of Rühle-Gerstel's assertions that expectations and idealisations of women's primary role in the domestic sphere are damaging.

While Hertha is open about her unhappiness, there is no suggestion in *Gilgi* that Hertha is a 'bad' mother. She tells Gilgi: 'Weißt du, ich liebe die Kinder über alles' (IK, p. 207), thus fulfilling expectations of loving motherhood and she presents a certain hopeless selflessness when she says: 'Ach, für mich selber wünsch' ich nichts mehr – nur Kraft zum Durchhalten – sonst will ich alles nur für meine kleinen Kinder und für den Hans' (IK, p. 209). Hertha's prioritisation of her family's needs over her own corresponds to conventional notions of maternal sacrifice but in a more despondent manner than the typical presentation of willing fulfilment of perceived maternal duty in publications such as *Frauenwelt* or in characters like Baum's Helene.

While Gilgi's casual approach to relationships is consistent with the image of the new woman, Keun complicates the depiction of female sexuality in her novel through Hertha's disinterest in the physical aspects of her relationship with her husband. Hertha discusses with Gilgi the impact of her pregnancies on her sexuality: 'mein Körper ist so müde geworden – ich vertrage es nicht mehr, daß man ihn berührt. Früher was das mal anders – aber Krankheit, Müdigkeit und die ewige Angst vor dem Kind – das alles hat wohl gemacht, daß mir – das – eine Qual ist, eine entsetzliche Qual.' (IK, p. 207) This frank discussion of changing sexual desires recalls Anna's feelings about her changing relationship with Hermann in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*. Hertha is, however, younger than Anna and she explicitly cites fear of a further pregnancy as a reason for wanting to avoid physical intimacy. Hertha's story provides an example of the physical, psychological and financial consequences of repeated pregnancies that motivated authors and journalists, including in *Frauenwelt*, to use their writing to educate women about access to and use of contraceptives. Contraception is not explicitly discussed in Gilgi and, as Schüller writes: 'vermeintliche Freiheit im Bereich der Sexualität [geht] nicht unmittelbar mit dem Wissen um Aufklärung [einher].'[75] There is the implication that women were informed to some degree about managing their reproductive choices, exemplified through Gilgi's ability to find a doctor willing to offer an abortion and her friend Olga's referenced numerous sexual relationships that do not result in pregnancy. However, Gilgi's own unplanned pregnancy and

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[75] Schüller, *Vom Ernst der Zerstreuung*, p. 139.

Hertha's repeated, unwanted pregnancies expose the need for greater access to contraception and reveal inconsistencies in women's ability to control their reproductive choices.

Keun's portrayal of Hertha both draws on and undermines dominant discourses of motherhood in Weimar Germany. Her ambivalent portrayal refuses to idealise Hertha's motherhood and is honest in its description of the psychological and physical impact. Yet, the image of the mother suffering in poverty was widely used during the Weimar era by the political left and Keun's depiction of Hertha recalls such imagery. The portrayal of Hertha can therefore be seen as a critical commentary on the impact of financial hardship on mothers and a challenge to the discourse which framed maternal sacrifice in idealised terms.

Mothers, Daughters, and Class

In *Gilgi*, Hans and Hertha are presented as victims of the financial crash and their suicide follows their inability to repay a falsified 1200 mark bill of exchange. Hans and Hertha's economic hardship parallels that of Zur Mühlen's Josef and Martha or Brüning's Hermann and Anna, who illustrate the financial precarity of the middle classes during the Weimar era. Yet, as well as exploring the impact of economic circumstances on family life, Keun also considers how social class shapes mothering practices through the inclusion of Gilgi's three mother figures: Magdalene Greif, Gilgi's wealthy biological mother, Fräulein Täschler, the working-class seamstress who agrees to present herself as Gilgi's mother, and Frau Kron, her middle-class adoptive mother. Gilgi's interactions with these women, and the classes they represent, enable Gilgi to reflect on her place in society and where she feels she does, or indeed does not, belong. As a number of critics, including among others, Horsley and Capovilla,[76] have noted, Gilgi's class awareness and understanding of privilege increase throughout the course of the novel.

Frau Kron, as a representative of the petit bourgeoisie, is shown to be preoccupied with appearances and to follow a set of values that she does not herself truly understand (IK, p. 9). Frau Kron is keen to present an image of conformity, exemplified in her attempt to mimic her husband's dialect: 'Frau Kron ist gebürtige Hamburgerin, ahmt aber aus ehelicher Anpassungssucht mit gutem Willen und schlechtem Erfolg den rheinischen Dialekt ihres Mannes nach.' (IK, p. 13) In line with her desire to fulfil social expectations, motherhood is presented as important for Frau Kron, as Fräulein Täschler explains: 'Da lag die im Wochenbett, un ihr Kleines war tot, un der Herr Kron war da un war sehr unjlücklich, weil sein Frau sich so sehr eins jewünst hätt' (IK, p. 51) While Frau Kron expresses a strong desire to become a

[76] Ritta Jo Horsley, '«Warum habe ich keine Worte?... Kein Wort trifft zutiefst hinein»: The Problematics of Language in the Early Novels of Irmgard Keun', *Colloquia Germanica*, 23.3-4 (1990), 297-313 (p. 299); Capovilla, 'Irmgard Keun', p. 144.

mother and appears happy fulfilling this role, it is also part of her correspondence to petit-bourgeois values, and her preoccupation with domestic matters presents her in the mould of conventional middle-class womanhood.

The depiction of Fräulein Täschler, the working-class seamstress that the Krons initially believe to be Gilgi's birth mother is uncomfortable in comparison to the homely, unthreatening portrayal of Frau Kron's middle-class motherhood. When Gilgi arrives at Fräulein Täschler's apartment, Gilgi is disgusted by the dirt and smell of rancid food: 'ich kann den Geruch nicht mehr vertragen' (IK, p. 42). Gilgi perceives Fräulein Täschler as having no face (IK, p. 41), revealing an inability, or perhaps refusal, to connect with or see any of herself in Fräulein Täschler. Gilgi is even less able to identify with the environment in which Fräulein Täschler lives than she is with the old-fashioned decoration of Frau Kron's dining room (IK, p. 8).

Fräulein Täschler does not have biological children of her own and, although she agreed to present Gilgi as her child, she is not portrayed as a conventionally maternal figure. Like the working-class women in Leitner's *Mädchen mit drei Namen* and Zur Mühlen's *Lina: Erzählung aus dem Leben eines Dienstmädchens*, Fräulein Täschler is forced to make decisions based on financial considerations, compromising her ability to appear in the mould of idealised motherhood. The question of whether Fräulein Täschler would have liked to become a mother is not discussed in the text. Fräulein Täschler agrees to pretend that the baby is hers in exchange for 10, 000 marks: 'Na, un für hundert Mark hätt ich schon allerhand jetan, aber noch lang nich alles, aber bei zehntausend Mark!' (IK, p. 50) This financial offer was made by Frau Kreil, the mother of Magdalene Greif, to Fräulein Täschler before the hyperinflation of 1923 so represents a substantial sum of money that would have enabled Fräulein Täschler to live a comfortable lifestyle. Yet, Fräulein Täschler loses this money in the hyperinflation, pushing her back into poverty. Keun echoes the criticism advanced in the socialist fiction discussed in Chapter Three that fulfilling the image of a 'good' mother is predicated on sufficient financial means; poverty appears to make Fräulein Täschler uncaring and even greedy in her desperation when she hoped that the newborn baby, who the attending doctor and Frau Kreil recognised as unhealthy, would not survive: 'Son mickriges Ding war's, wir dachten, es stirbt, das wars beste jewesen, dann hätt ich die zehntausend Mark janz allein für mich jehabt un nich davon für das Wurm sorgen müssen.' (IK, p. 51) Fräulein Täschler is presented as a grotesque character, whose attitudes and behaviour are shaped by her financial hardship. Keun's novel makes clear that, in the case of Fräulein Täschler, economic considerations were the driving force in her decisions regarding her adoption, and later giving up to the Krons, of Gilgi. This contrasts to the Krons' decision to adopt Gilgi, which was based on Frau Kron's desire to mother. As Boa notes, Gilgi's encounter with Fräulein Täschler increases her class awareness and signals Gilgi's own

social and economic vulnerability, as, over the course of the novel, Gilgi herself 'threatens to topple into the abyss of poverty'.[77]

After meeting Fräulein Täschler, Gilgi abandons her search for her biological mother until the closing section of the novel, when she resolves to visit the wealthy Frau Greif to ask for money on behalf of Hans and Hertha. As with Fräulein Täschler, Gilgi does not feel connected to her biological mother when she meets her. While Gilgi notices some physical similarities between herself and Frau Greif, she is keen to emphasise the differences between them: 'dieselben großgeschnittenen Augen, dieselben hoch angesetzten Brauen, dieselbe kurze gerade Nase und das etwas kantige Oval des Gesichts. Trotzdem ein sehr fremdes Gesicht – und wenn man will – einem gar nicht ähnlich.' (IK, p. 228) Indeed, the word 'fremd' is repeatedly used to describe Frau Greif, emphasising the lack of shared experiences between Gilgi and her biological mother. Gilgi further maintains distance between herself and Frau Greif by insisting on the use of the formal 'Sie' address: 'Ich würde nie Du zu Ihnen sagen können' (IK, p. 230); 'versuchen Sie nicht, mich Du zu nennen – das wäre so beschämend und peinlich, denn Sie können jetzt noch gar kein Du für mich fühlen...' (IK, p. 232) Gilgi's refusal to consider using the informal address with Frau Greif reflects her lack of interest in forming an ongoing relationship with her biological mother. She explicitly rules out further contact with Frau Greif: 'Ich werde nie mehr zu Ihnen kommen [...] Ihre Welt ist mir fremd und zuwider, ich will nichts mit ihr zu tun haben.' (IK, p. 235) The novel thus rejects a notion of motherhood that is necessarily biological and when Gilgi refers to her mother throughout the book, she is typically referring to Frau Kron.

In Gilgi's meeting with Frau Greif the typical mother-child relationship is inverted, as Gilgi is positioned as the more dominant of the two women during their encounter. Barndt notes that, while Gilgi has previously struggled to express herself linguistically, particularly in relation to Martin, in this encounter Gilgi takes control of the conversation.[78] She also feels the need to help Frau Greif, who is struggling to respond to Gilgi's revelation that she is her daughter: 'Ich muß ihr helfen – es muß furchtbar für sie sein, nichts sagen zu können' (IK, p. 232) Barndt underlines that Gilgi's support is linguistic, 'ein Trösten in Worten',[79] and indeed Gilgi further attempts to reassure Frau Greif by filling the silence when Frau Greif is unable to speak: 'Weinen Sie doch nicht – Sie haben sich Ihr Leben nach eignem Geschmack aufgebaut – verleugnen Sie den jetzt nicht.' (IK, p. 233) Thus, Gilgi leads the conversation in a way that would usually be expected of a parent in a parent-child exchange. Frau Greif is described as 'klein' (IK, pp. 233, 236) and her voice is 'kindlich' (IK, pp. 234, 236), emphasising her lack of autonomy and

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[77] Boa, 'Women Writers of the 'Golden' Twenties', p. 129.
[78] Barndt, '„Eine von uns?"', pp. 152-53, 155.
[79] Ibid., p. 155.

independence. Although Frau Greif is Gilgi's biological mother, her presentation in Keun's novel does not correspond to the typical expectations of mother figures, underscoring Keun's rejection of idealised, biological motherhood.

Frau Greif's isolation and lack of autonomy are presented as consequences of her upper-class environment. The decision to give up her child to Fräulein Täschler was taken by Frau Kreil, out of concern for the consequences of a premarital pregnancy in their social circle (IK, p. 49). Moreover, Frau Greif lacks meaningful relationships, surrounded by her unfaithful husband and engaged lover, which parallels the shallow or trivial relationships of the wealthy society women in *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*. Ella Waldschmidt, for example, like Frau Greif, is taken advantage of by those around her. In the case of Ella Waldschmidt both her first and second husband use their relationship with her as a means to access the influence and wealth of her industrialist father, highlighting Tergit's criticisms of exploitative or disrespectful treatment of women in relationships. Ella's father also considered her first marriage in terms of what her husband would contribute to the family's business and reputation, as Ella's aunt, Eugenie, relates: 'mein lieber Bruder ist ein geistvoller Mann und sagte mir damals, es sei ganz gut, wenn frisches Blut in eine Familie kommt' (GT, p. 267). Ella Waldschmidt divorces her first husband as his business fails, reflecting a relaxing of the strict moral code of previous generations, but it is implied that her decision is made to protect her own reputation, which remains tied to her father's financial and social power. Ella's wider choices and opportunities are restricted. Tergit's descriptions of the ways in which Ella Waldschmidt is used as a form of social currency reveals the continued limited opportunities available to upper-class women in Weimar Germany, whose families would have disapproved of them working, leaving them reliant on marriage for financial means. It also forms part of Tergit's wider parody of the superficial, appearance-oriented behaviour of the upper class.

Tergit critiques economic and class inequality by exposing the attitudes and behaviour of the wealthy. She satirises the upper-class members of Berlin society who engage only in superficial relationships and prioritise the advancement of their social standing. Yet, Tergit's depiction of the wealthy shows that, in their preoccupation with appearance, the upper classes do not conform to the idealised (middle-class) model of family life and no doting mother figures can be found among Tergit's high-society women. The women who attend society events, including Margot Weißmann, Frau Thedy Muschler and Käte Herzfeld, repeatedly have the same conversation, revealing their lack of investment in their relationships. A typical conversation occurs at the premiere of the Käsebier theatre: '»Ich freue mich so, daß ich Sie mal treffe, ich wollte Sie längst anrufen. Ich hatte schon ein ganz schlechtes Gewissen.« […] »Wir telefonieren einmal«, sagte Margot. »Rufen Sie mal an«, sagte Käte. »Wir telefonieren einmal«, sagte Frau Muschler.' (GT, p. 336) Through this presentation of the wealthy, Tergit demystifies their

lifestyles, showing that, despite their access to luxury, they are isolated in a social setting in which everyone is interested only in themselves.

The superficiality of this class is further exemplified in Käte Herzfeld's political stance. She expresses socialist views but is exposed as a hypocrite. She aligns herself with the political left and repeatedly criticises Käsebier for performing unpolitical shows (GT, pp. 138, 333). The narrator ironically comments, however: 'Sie war eine Revolutionärin des Salons. Sie war für Kommunismus, aber sie hätte sich in einer Schilfleinenjacke höchst unglücklich gefühlt.' (GT, p. 51). Tergit suggests that Käte is merely adopting socialist values in word but not in action and does so only to project a certain image of herself. This contrasts to the sympathetic portrayal of communist characters in the socialist fiction discussed in Chapter Three, whose actions rather than words create a welcoming, familial community that persuades the protagonists of the merits of socialism.

The privileged figures in *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* are out of touch and detached from reality. The Muschlers, especially Frau Thedy Muschler, refuse to understand the economic reality of the late Weimar period. For example, when Herr Muschler reports that an architect contact, Oberndorffer, believes that people are beginning to look for smaller apartments than in the past, Frau Muschler replies: 'Ach, Unsinn. Unsere Bekannten leben doch alle noch so wie früher.' (GT, p. 196) Frau Muschler thus shows herself to be unaware of the impact of the financial crash and uses her own social circle as a measure for wider society, revealing a (possibly wilful) ignorance of, or lack of care for, the living conditions of less privileged communities. References to Frau Muschler's nanny (for example, GT, p. 198) underscore how a woman's financial situation impacts her mothering. Several of the high-society women in *Käsebier* have children but mothering plays a central role in none of their lives. Thus, while the working-class mothers I have discussed struggle under the weight of the double burden and are prevented from meeting an idealised model of motherhood by their poverty, the wealthy are able to outsource the day-to-day care of their children and do not conform to the dominant romanticised image of mothering by choice.

Part Four: Generational Tensions and Absent Mothers

Conservative Mothers of the Pre-World War One Generation

The theme of intergenerational tensions that arise as the developing attitudes and priorities of younger women clash with those of their mothers is present in *Gilgi* and *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm*, echoing the portrayal of Anna and Trude's relationship in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*. Keun's use of shorthand literary 'types' emphasises the generational tensions that developed during the Weimar era, as Frau Kron is a representative of the

traditional petit bourgeoisie while Gilgi is presented as the archetypal modern new woman, who emerged among the middle classes in the post-World War One period. Their differences are revealed in their contrasting tastes, exemplified in the old-fashioned picture that Frau Kron gifted to Gilgi: 'ein harmlos umrahmtes Genrebildchen […] diese[r] sentimental[e] Farbfleck […] Mutter hat's ihr mal geschenkt, das Ding.' (IK, p. 7) Gilgi's dismissive attitude towards the picture aligns her with the rationality associated with modernity, while Frau Kron's choice of 'sentimental' picture locates her within the older generation. Likewise, taste in material possessions features as an indication of generational divides between Fräulein Dr Lotte Kohler and her mother, Frau Geheimrat Kohler in *Käsebier*. Frau Geheimrat Kohler, for example, 'trug [immer] eine graues Moiréband mit eine Brosche um den nackten Hals' (GT, p. 120) while Lotte opts for the fashions (and luxuries) of the period: 'Sie kaufte ein: Zwei Paar seidene Strümpfe, zwei Paar rosa Seidenschlüpfer.' (GT, p. 181) These contrasting tastes are a cause of disagreement between the mother and daughter: 'Daß Lotte Farbiges und gar Seidenschlüpfer tragen wollte, entsetzte sie [Frau Geheimrat Kohler] tief, und sie nannte es nur die Lumpen.' (GT, p. 182) Their clothing choices are a superficial indication of the more profound changes in attitudes between these generations.

Frau Geheimrat Kohler is attached to old-fashioned material possessions, which, for her, are representative of social status. When she learns that they have lost their remaining savings in the collapse of Muschler's bank and will therefore have to leave their apartment, she asks: 'Und wenn wir uns zwei Zimmer nehmen, wo soll ich denn dann hin mit den Sachen?' (GT, p. 343) The possessions to which she is so attached include examples of Rococo style furniture and old-fashioned Baroque cupboards, which are now, as an auctioneer explains, worthless (GT, pp. 343-45). As Boa comments, for Frau Geheimrat Kohler, '[l]oss of the home which the Geheimrat provided and of furniture cherished over a lifetime signifies loss of identity.'[80] In contrast to her mother, Lotte recognises that their possessions must be sold: 'Aber man kann doch nicht wegen der Wäsche und des Silbers und Porzellans in Not geraten. Wegen der Schränke braucht man eine große Wohnung! Das ist zu irrsinnig.' (GT, p. 343) Lotte's attitude towards her family's material possessions is shown to be shaped by the experiences of her generation: 'Ich habe gar kein Gefühl mehr für Besitz! So beweglich sein wie möglich!' (GT, p. 343) She remembers the inflation of 1923 and is concerned by the worsening economic crisis triggered by the Wall Street Crash. At this point in the novel, she has also recently ended her relationship with Meyer and her attitude towards material possessions reveals a more generally weakened sense of belonging. Lotte Kohler's uncertainty about where she belongs alludes to the attempts by

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[80] Boa, 'Urban Modernity', p. 26.

women of her generation to forge a new social role in the context of political and economic instability and increasing opportunities for women alongside ongoing conservative attitudes towards gender.

The generational divide in the novels of Tergit and Keun is most clearly illustrated in the mothers' and daughters' attitudes towards marriage. Changing approaches to relationships were the source of wider intergenerational tensions during the Weimar era, as Usborne writes. She suggests that '[n]ew sexual mores were the easiest targets for criticism [of younger women] because they were the most obvious indicators of change.'[81] Usborne concludes that 'a radical shift of behaviour *had* taken place and [...] a clear generation gap did exist in attitudes towards sexuality' [Emphasis in original],[82] and Keun, Tergit and Brüning therefore draw on wider public conversations in their depiction of mother-daughter relationships. While Lotte Kohler expresses a desire to marry Meyer, this is explained by her infatuation with him as an individual rather than with the idea of marriage. Indeed, she is more ambivalent about marriage than her mother, who ponders: 'Warum heiratete die Tochter nicht? Sie war sehr verbittert. Alle andern hatten geheiratet und gut geheiratet, wie gut die meisten! Mit Lotte mußte etwas nicht stimmen.' (GT, p. 124) For Frau Geheimrat Kohler, marriage is a signal of social status and she feels that her daughter's marital status reflects on the family. The differences in attitudes towards marriage are revealed in Frau Geheimrat Kohler's assumption that there must be something wrong with her daughter and she does not consider the alternative professional and social opportunities available to women of Lotte's generation.

Similarly, Frau Kron is concerned to learn that Gilgi has begun a premarital sexual relationship, and the gulf between Frau Kron's and Gilgi's views of relationships lead Gilgi to leave the Krons' house to move in with Martin. Gilgi is embarrassed by Frau Kron's attitude: 'Gilgi schämt sich unbegreiflicherweise – für die Mutter. [...] Alles zwischen Martin und mir, das geht doch nur mich an.' (IK, p. 108) Gilgi refuses to discuss her relationship with Frau Kron, labelling the conversation 'unmöglich' (IK, p. 108). This incident exposes the rift between Gilgi and her mother: 'Ein böses Gefühl steigt in Gilgi auf: Fremdheit – Abneigung – Feindseligkeit' (IK, p. 109), which comes to a head when Frau Kron raises the question of marriage: '»wird er dich heiraten?« [...] Gilgi steht auf: »Ob – er mich heiraten wird? Weiß ich nicht. Ich werde ihn nicht heiraten – das weiß ich.«' (IK, p. 109) This exchange signals the change in attitudes which has occurred between the generations to which Gilgi and Frau Kron belong; the older woman is,

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[81] Cornelie Usborne, 'The New Woman and Generational Conflict: Perceptions of Young Women's Sexual Mores in the Weimar Republic', in *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany, 1770-1968*, ed. by Mark Roseman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 137-63 (p. 147).
[82] Ibid., p. 157.

again, preoccupied with appearances and attached to the traditional values of marriage. Gilgi, meanwhile, is not interested in formalising her relationship with Martin and emphasises her autonomy by stressing that Martin's attitude towards marriage is irrelevant as she herself is not interested in marrying him. This conversation between Frau Kron and Gilgi mirrors the conversation between Anna and Trude in Brüning's *Kleine Leute* when Anna learns of Trude's pregnancy. Anna immediately asks whether Trude will marry Hans, exposing her shared generational mindset with Frau Kron and Frau Geheimrat Kohler. Yet, unlike Gilgi, who firmly rejects the morality of her mother's generation, and Lotte Kohler, who does not reject marriage as emphatically as Gilgi but does reject the notion of marriage simply on the grounds of appearances, Trude agrees to marry Hans to placate her mother, thus preventing a rift between her and Anna of the scale of that which develops between Gilgi and Frau Kron. Anna and Trude's reconciliation results in the recreation of the traditional family across generations, while Gilgi's dismissal of Frau Kron's values persists in her decision to become a single mother.

Despite the tensions in their relationships, the mother-daughter relationships in *Gilgi* and *Käsebier* nevertheless include moments of closeness and reconciliation, just as in Anna and Trude's relationship in *Kleine Leute*. For example, on the morning of Gilgi's twenty-first birthday, Frau Kron wakes her adoptive daughter: 'Die vertraute Körpernähe der Mutter, der leichte Kernseifengeruch ihrer Hände versetzen sie in einen Zustand animalischen Wohlbehagens und nestwarmer Geborgenheit.' (IK, p. 29) Here, a more traditional picture of a mother-child relationship is presented, and the references to nature contrast with the previous portrayal of Gilgi as rational, modern and machine-like. Furthermore, after leaving home following her argument with Frau Kron about her relationship with Martin, Gilgi attempts to repair the rift between herself and her adoptive mother by sending a gift: 'Kauft ein halbes Pfund Mandelsplitter – Frau Krons Lieblingskonfekt – und eine vernickelte Kaffeekanne – die alte Porzellankanne hat gestern einen Sprung bekommen.' (IK, p. 115) The gift is thoughtful and, as Feldhaus notes, reveals Gilgi's desire to maintain her relationship with Frau Kron,[83] despite their different outlooks. This contrasts to Gilgi's brief encounters with her other two mother figures, Fräulein Täschler and Frau Greif, with whom she makes no attempt to build a lasting relationship, and underscores the novel's position that mothering does not need to be exclusively biological.

Lotte Kohler is likewise considerate of her mother's feelings and their relationship is built on reciprocal concern. After learning that they will need to leave their apartment following the loss of their savings, Lotte is worried about how her mother will react: 'wie wird Mutter das

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[83] Feldhaus, 'Not without My Mommy', p. 523.

aufnehmen? Versteigerung! Wohnungsaufgabe! Es wird ihr gleichbedeutend sein mit dem Abgrund, mit dem Ende.' (GT, p. 343) Thus, the generational tensions in their relationship are countered by moments of affection between the two women. The relationship includes examples of mutual care, despite disagreements that arise due to the women's generations, which are overlooked, for example, by Schüller, who suggests that Frau Geheimrat Kohler speaks to her daughter in the tone typically used to address young children.[84] Like Anna and Trude, Fräulein Dr and Frau Geheimrat Kohler are able to live together largely harmoniously and Tergit, like Brüning, offers a nuanced depiction of mother-daughter relationships.

Moreover, strained generational relationships are not exclusive to mothers and daughters in Tergit's novel: Changing values are also the cause of tensions between generations of men and groups of younger women. For instance, after the collapse of Muschler's bank, Muschler's uncle-in-law, Onkel Frechheim, and Herr Waldschmidt discuss the changing morals of the younger generation of businessmen. Frechheim complains: 'Muschler hat meinen Namen mit kaputt gemacht' (GT, p. 360). He is concerned that Muschler's generation do not take the same degree of pride or responsibility in their work, prioritising personal gain over the growth and reputation of the business: 'Es ist doch heutzutage ein Zeichen ganz besonderer Anständigkeit, wenn einer arm aus einem Bankrott hervorgeht und sich nicht am Geld seiner Gläubiger gesund macht.' (GT, p. 361) Meanwhile, Lotte Kohler's friend, Fräulein Dr Wendland discusses how women's aspirations have altered over the course of the early twentieth century. She and Lotte Kohler are in their early thirties and thus at the higher end of the age range with which the typical new woman was associated. Wendland even positions herself in opposition to younger women, coming across, as Schüller notes, somewhat older than her years.[85] She says:

Als wir auf die Universität kamen, war es eine große Seligkeit und wir hatten Ehrgeize und wollten was leisten und hatten unsern großen Stolz. Und was ist kaum fünfzehn Jahre später? Das Girl ist gekommen. Wir wollten einen neuen Frauentyp schaffen. Wissen Sie noch, wie wir gebrannt haben vor Seligkeit, daß wir an alles heran konnten, diese ganze große Männerwelt voll Mathematik und Chemie und herrlichen historischen Offenbarungen in uns aufzunehmen. [...] Es ist eine Enttäuschung, die wir erlebt haben [...] Die Enttäuschung an der nächsten Generation. (GT, pp. 99-100)

Wendland's assertions demonstrate the rapid rate of social change during the Weimar era but also suggest that, from the perspective of women like Wendland who were among the first generation of women to attend university, some of these changes seem regressive. As Woodford comments, Wendland 'looks with scepticism on *Girlkultur* with its focus on body image and sex

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[84] Schüller, *Vom Ernst der Zerstreuung*, p. 211.
[85] Ibid., p. 207.

appeal', seeking instead 'autonomy through educational equality and entry into the professions'.[86] Wendland's conception of progress as women's access to male-dominated fields corresponds to the presentation of Helene's success in Baum's novel. To underscore her professional achievements, Wendland is always referred to by her academic title in the novel, and her first name is not revealed to the reader. The use of Wendland's title, however, also forms part of Tergit's satire, which throws into stark relief the personal frustrations of women like Wendland and Lotte Kohler. Tergit's novel remains rooted in a reality, in which young women's hopes of gender equality are frustrated as they continue to face limited access to professional opportunities and unfulfilling personal lives. By contrast, in Baum's novel, which is set in a fictional Germany devoid of references to political or economic events such as the First World War or hyperinflation, Helene overcomes the challenges she initially faces to achieve the professional and private success that remains out of reach for Lotte and Wendland.

The Trope of the Absent Mother

Although Gilgi may appear to have an abundance of mothers, at the close of the novel she walks away from all three, choosing instead to begin a life alone in Berlin. The revelation of Gilgi's adoption drives the plot in the first half of Keun's novel but the mother figures do not play a significant role in later sections, reflecting Gilgi's independence and rejection of the models of motherhood offered by Frau Kron, Fräulein Täschler, and Frau Greif. The second half of the novel focuses on Gilgi's relationship with Martin and she only seeks out contact with her biological mother in her bid to obtain funds for Hans and Hertha. The withdrawal of the mothers into the background of the narrative corresponds to a trope of absent mother figures of the pre-World War One generation in fiction from the Weimar period. In her analysis of Keun's Weimar-era novels, Feldhaus, building on von Ankum, argues that Gilgi's decision to continue her pregnancy, despite initially considering abortion, indicates a return to the social roles of her mother's generation.[87] Feldhaus makes helpful observations about class, noting Gilgi's growing recognition that 'her [adoptive] mother's socioeconomic background had greatly influenced her own standing in life.'[88] Yet, Feldhaus overstates the connection between the new woman and her mother. She argues that there is 'emotional dependency'[89] between new women and their mothers and claims that '[m]ore often than not, the New Woman reaches out to her mother, seeking advice and trying to find support for managing a lifestyle that is new and rapidly

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[86] Woodford, 'Women's Autonomy', p. 37.

[87] Feldhaus, 'Not without my Mommy', p. 514.

[88] Ibid., p. 520.

[89] Ibid., p. 512.

changing.'[90] This assertion is not born out in the texts discussed in this thesis. In fact, many of these texts include the trope of the absent mother of the pre-World War One generation, representing a rejection of the model of motherhood embodied by these women. Gilgi's decision to leave Cologne to raise her child as a single mother in Berlin is not a return to the patterns of the previous generation but rather a rejection of the models of motherhood provided by her three mother figures and an attempt to forge a new model that is compatible with her modern lifestyle and aspirations.

The trope of the absent mother is not only found in Keun's *Gilgi* or the socialist novellas discussed in Chapter Three. In Tergit's *Käsebier*, none of Käte Herzfeld's family members feature in the narrative. Similarly, it is revealed in the opening chapter of *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* that Helene's own mother is dead and Helene's relationship with her stepmother, who does not feature in the novel beyond this reference, is poor. The only character who represents a somewhat maternal figure in Helene's life is her widowed landlady in Heidelberg, Frau Grasmücke. Frau Grasmücke, however, is never shown outside her rooms, in contrast to Helene and her roommate Gudula Rapp, who both move independently within and beyond Heidelberg. Frau Grasmücke instead vicariously shares the experiences of her tenants: 'Grasmückes seelige Witwe hatte kein eigenes Leben, sie war auf die Erlebnisse ihrer Mieter angewiesen und nahm mit einer inbrünstigen Erregung daran teil.' (VB, p. 69) The portrayal of Frau Grasmücke therefore reinforces the association of older women with the domestic sphere, while younger women enjoy greater access to the public sphere and greater freedom of movement, mirroring the unequal entry into public space of Anna and Trude in Brüning's *Kleine Leute*. To cite just two further examples not discussed in detail in this thesis, in Keun's second novel, *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932), the protagonist Doris travels to Berlin alone to seek out a new life as a 'Glanz', leaving her mother behind in Cologne. As in Leitner's novella, after the protagonist arrives in Berlin, her mother does not appear again in person in the narrative. Marieluise Fleißer's novel *Mehlreisende Frieda Geier* (1931), like *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*, centres around a new woman figure whose own mother is entirely absent from the story. There are no references to Frieda's parents in the novel and, as Frieda funds her younger sister Linchen's education and Linchen returns to stay with Frieda during school holidays, it can be assumed that the sisters have no living immediate family. Frieda's lack of family emphasises her own independence, and, mirroring *Gilgi*, Fleißer's novel implies that a break between female generations is necessary for women to live a modern lifestyle.

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[90] Feldhaus, 'Not without my Mommy', p. 517.

Rather than turning to their mothers, as Feldhaus asserts, young women in these novels instead turn to women of their own generation for advice and support. For example, upon learning of Meyer's unannounced departure for America, Fräulein Dr Kohler turns to her friend Fräulein Dr Wendland, who comes immediately to Lotte when she calls and advises that she go away alone to get over Meyer (GT, p. 286). Their relationship is close and, earlier in the novel, after disagreeing in their attitudes towards relationships, Wendland comments: 'so ein richtiges Frauengespräch ist eins der besten Dinge der Welt. Und was die Männer davor für eine Angst haben!' (GT, p. 101). Fräulein Dr Wendland's comment alludes to female understanding and the interactions between the two women exemplify a female support network.

Similarly, Gilgi turns to her friend Olga for support and advice. For instance, Gilgi arranges for Olga to interrupt her dinner date with her boss in order to deflect his unwanted attention (IK, pp. 24-25) and, at the close of the novel, Gilgi intends to live with Olga in Berlin, taking up Olga's earlier offer: 'ich hab' in Berlin viele Bekannte, könnt' dich da unterbringen als Sekretärin – auf jeden Fall' (IK, p. 149). Barndt suggests: 'Olga, die Freundin im Hingergrund, wird als rettender Engel, als die eigentlich ‚gute' mütterliche Instanz idealisiert'.[91] Indeed, Olga is older than Gilgi, Gilgi's admiration of Olga is clear, and Olga acts in a protective and comforting way to Gilgi when she is confused about her priorities upon beginning a relationship with Martin: '[Olga] kniet neben der Kleinen, legt ihr den Arm um die Schulter, spricht gute Worte' (IK, p. 147). However, I read this relationship as an example of sisterly solidarity. In fact, echoing Wendland's comments, Olga explicitly mentions the importance of female friendship as she departs for Berlin: 'Ist dir nicht auch schon aufgefallen, Gilgi – daß wir in einer Zeit leben, wo's mehr wirkliche Solidarität unter Frauen gibt als unter Männern?' (IK, p. 201). A feminist perspective is, as Capovilla notes, revealed in the novel's assertion of a 'need for solidarity between women'.[92] These examples of female solidarity also echo the relationships between Anna and Lina in *Mädchen mit drei Namen*, Trude and Martha in Zur Mühlen's *Kleine Leute*, and Kati and Lina in *Lina*, as well as recalling the advocation of female collaboration through, for example, the 'Wer weiss Rat?' advice column in *Frauenwelt* and in the closing line of Kienle's *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*.

The absence of mothers of the pre-World War One generation represents a refusal by the authors to endorse traditional models of women's social role and an attempt by these authors to distance the new women, who came of age in the post-World War One era, from the previous generation. While the absence of older women betrays a reluctance to explicitly criticise their generation, the omission of such characters also creates space for authors to

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[91] Barndt, '„Eine von uns?"', p. 156.
[92] Capovilla, 'Irmgard Keun', p. 148.

imagine a new model of womanhood that corresponds to the developing opportunities and rights of women in the Weimar period.

Preliminary Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed the portrayal of motherhood, intergenerational female relationships, including the striking lack thereof, and the impact of economic circumstances on women's mothering in three examples of popular fiction writing by women in Weimar Germany. I have shown that, while these texts advocate greater acceptance of single motherhood and bring to the attention of their readers the barriers women face in accessing safe abortion provision, they also reference normative assumptions of motherhood, like the left-wing writing analysed in Chapters Two and Three. Both Gilgi and Helene base their decisions to continue their pregnancies on sentimental reasons and Helene particularly is an idealised mother figure. The presence of notions of inherent gender difference and maternal instincts in these novels reveals that the more radical theoretical ideas examined in Chapter One were not taken up by authors who could explore them in texts aimed at a wider audience.

The socially critical nature of the examples of popular fiction discussed here and their engagement with conversations around women's reproductive choices and the rights of single mothers demonstrates that the left-wing political writing considered in previous chapters was participating in and seeking to influence mainstream discourses during the Weimar period. However, the popular fiction analysed in this chapter offers more individualised stories than the collective narratives presented in the socialist fiction analysed in Chapter Three. All three novels seek to demonstrate that young women in Weimar Germany could forge a path that differed from that of their mothers' generation and both Keun and Baum embrace single motherhood as a possibility for women to maintain their autonomy as mothers. I have argued that the absence of mothers of the generation who came of age in the pre-World War One period as central characters in these novels, forms part of a strategy for creating space to reimagine motherhood. The depiction of motherhood in these works of popular fiction shows that attempts to envision new models of mothering were not limited to the political left during the Weimar era.

Conclusions

This thesis has uncovered how women writers during the Weimar period sought to shape public discourses around motherhood during an era of both sweeping social change and persistent gender conservatism. By analysing examples of left-wing writing and popular fiction from this time, I have illuminated women's attempts to negotiate the tensions between progressive policies that broadened the reproductive rights of women and the unquestioned acceptance of women's desire to mother, highlighting that advocacy of greater access to abortion and birth control was based on economic grounds rather than the possibility that some women may not want to become mothers. The prevalence of motherhood as a theme in the socialist women's press underscores the extent to which gendered divisions of labour remained intact during the Weimar era and also reveals the politicisation of motherhood as a means to influence women's mothering practices. Psychoanalytic ideas featured heavily in mothering advice in left-wing non-fiction and underpinned the editorial claims to a position of authority in socialist magazines such as *Frauenwelt*. Changing attitudes and approaches to mothering in light of the scientific and social advances following the First World War contributed to the emergence of generational tensions, which appear particularly in fiction as the authors portray a younger generation of women attempting to develop new models of womanhood and motherhood.

By exploring the ways in women writers depicted and reimagined motherhood in Weimar Germany, this thesis has addressed a striking gap in Weimar gender scholarship. Previous studies have offered valuable insights into women's changing historical access to and experience of work and politics,[1] while cultural and literary studies have uncovered the characteristics of the ubiquitous Weimar new woman, who was typically presented as childless.[2] In literary scholarship, there has been some exploration of mother-daughter relationships,[3] while Katharina von Ankum considered the depiction of fictional new women as mothers in her article 'Motherhood and the "New Woman"' (1995). However, the analysis in these articles has been limited to a small and prominent set of examples, most frequently examining the bestselling works of Irmgard Keun and Vicki Baum's *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*.

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[1] For example: Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. by Stuart McKinnon-Evans (Oxford: Berg, 1989); Renate Pore, *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919-1933* (London: Greenwood, 1981).

[2] For example: *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[3] For example: Julia Feldhaus, 'Not without my Mommy: The New Woman's Mother Figure in Irmgard Keun's Novel's *Gilgi – eine von uns* (1931) and *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932)', *Monatshefte*, 108.4 (2016), 510-34; Barbara Kosta, 'Unruly Daughters and Modernity: Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi – eine von uns*', *The German Quarterly*, 68.3 (1995), 271-86.

By contrast, this thesis has expanded the range of primary sources to consider lesser-known left-wing writing on the topic and locate well-known popular fiction within the wider context of Weimar-era discourses around reproductive choice and motherhood. Through examination of a wider range of texts and genres, this thesis has provided new insights into the ways in which women writers approached questions of motherhood and sought to shape the political debates around the rights of single mothers and women's access to contraception and abortion during this time.

A number of key conclusions have arisen from the close reading of the literary and journalistic sources undertaken in each chapter of this thesis. The continued widespread gender conservatism during the Weimar period has been apparent across the primary sources studied, with the exception of Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart*. The presence of such conservatism confounds expectations based on the assumptions of new women's independence found in cultural studies, often exemplified with reference to fictional urban young women including Gilgi. The traditional views of gender roles considered here, however, substantiate the historical studies, including Rüdiger Graf's 'Anticipating the Future in the Present' (2009), that have concluded that the unmarried, childless new woman was largely a media and advertising construct whose real-world manifestation was severely limited. My analysis has shown that the ongoing assumption of gender difference and women's inherent maternal qualities pervaded the left-wing women's press, as well as left-wing and popular fiction by women. Although left-wing writing appears somewhat contradictory at times, as the authors seek to combine, for example, demands for safe, legal abortion provision with an idealisation of women's mothering, I read this as a pragmatic strategy to package the demands of left-wing women in a manner palatable to a society in which essentialist understandings of gender were widely held. By stressing women's inherent desire to mother, the authors aim to avoid alienating their readership when presenting their political demands and offering women a path to greater control over the circumstances under which they mother. Despite the authors' various affiliations to the SPD, KPD, and as independent left-wing writers, there is a greater degree of consistency in their approach than might be expected, given the fierce rivalries between these political groups that became particularly pronounced in the closing years of the Weimar Republic. The relative consensus on motherhood indicates that left-wing women writers were not only influenced by but also played a role in shaping socialist discourses of motherhood.

While assumptions of women's motherhood went largely unchallenged in the primary sources studied in this thesis, there is evidence that women were exploring new ways to mother. Positive images of single motherhood and detailed depictions of the dangers of illegal abortion are found across the fiction and non-fiction writing analysed here, as the authors argue for women's rights to choose when and how they mother. The use of literature to explore these

themes formed part of an established and international tradition of women's writing. From the nineteenth century onwards, women increasingly turned to fiction writing and journalism as a means to engage with political discussion and create space in which to reimagine women's social role. The works of fiction, as well as the narrative patient case studies in Kienle's *Frauen: Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ärztin*, individualise the political discourses of motherhood. Through characters like Brüning's Trude, Keun's Gilgi and Baum's Helene, the authors personalise their engagement with the topic of abortion and encourage their readership to approach the subject with an open mind. In these characters, who are presented as relatable or, in the case of Helene, aspirational, readers are offered new ways of imagining themselves as mothers.

The individualisation of politics in the fiction analysed in Chapter Three extends beyond the depiction of reproductive choice to include women's political participation more broadly. Via the positive portrayal of women's political activity through characters including Leitner's Anna and Zur Mühlen's Kati and Trude, these authors demonstrate that political engagement is not synonymous with attending party meetings or rallies, but also includes the emotional, practical, and financial help provided by members of the socialist community. By offering women routes into political participation based on caring or supportive activities, these texts do little to radically redefine gender roles, but they nevertheless seek to encourage women's engagement with politics in terms deemed more appealing to a demographic less associated with the more visible forms of left-wing activism, such as public demonstrations and strike action. By depicting a welcoming socialist family comprised of relatable individuals, these texts provide a model of political activism in which, it is assumed, women will more readily envision their own participation.

This research has also drawn attention to the striking absence of mothers from the pre-World War One generation in Weimar-era fiction written by women. Historical sources have shown that it was common for young women to continue to live in the parental home until the time of their marriage and for elderly or widowed parents to join the marital household of their children.[4] It is therefore notable that the protagonists' mothers are frequently entirely absent or feature only as secondary characters in much of the fiction discussed in this thesis. I have argued that the trope of the absent mother represents a refusal on the part of the authors to endorse a model of womanhood associated with the pre-World War One generation. The absence of older mother figures from these narratives enables the authors to create imaginative

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[4] Evidence of this can be found, for example, in the readers' letters submitted to the advice column 'Wer weiss Rat?' in *Frauenwelt*, as well as the reports written by women members of the German Union of Textile Workers included in *«Mein Arbeitstag – mein Wochenende»: Arbeiterinnen berichten von ihrem Alltag 1928*, ed. by Alf Lüdtke (Hamburg: Ergebnisse, 1991)*.

space to explore new models of motherhood that were unconstrained by the morality and expectations of the previous generation.

Yet, despite the positive depictions of female political activity and challenges to the status quo in the journalistic and fiction writing analysed in this thesis, the radicalism of Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* does not appear to have resonated with a wider audience. Drawing on left-wing political, feminist and psychological perspectives, Rühle-Gerstel rejected essentialist notions of women's inherent maternal instinct and emphasised the impact of social context on the psychological development of women. *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* demonstrates that it was possible during the Weimar period to thoroughly repudiate assumptions of women's mothering but, in the face of more prominent conservative views of gender promoted by political parties across the spectrum, as well as the publication of the text shortly before the National Socialist seizure of power, Rühle-Gerstel's radical, theoretical approach did not reach the mainstream of left-wing writing for women or popular fiction.

While the revolutionary perspectives on gendered personality development found in Rühle-Gerstel's work may not have reached a wide audience, her book nevertheless formed part of a vast body of work, written for both specialist and popular audiences during the Weimar era, which drew on psychological theories. Psychoanalytic ideas are visible in the advice for mothers found in the non-fiction texts and in the dialogue and behaviour of characters in the works of fiction analysed in this thesis. My discussion has illustrated the interaction between politics, psychology and discourses of women's mothering in the interwar period and revealed that ideas more commonly associated with post-World War Two feminism were already being explored in Weimar Germany. For example, the appeal to 'popularized Freudian ideas'[5] that Elisabeth Badinter identifies in the post-World War Two press in America and France was already developing in interwar Germany, as evidenced in my discussion of *Frauenwelt*, while Rühle-Gerstel and Schumacher anticipate concepts which authors like Simone de Beauvoir, Elisabeth Badinter, and Nancy Chodorow brought to the fore in feminist writing after the Second World War. As my analysis has shown, women writing in the Weimar period were already calling into question essentialist notions of gender and the existence of maternal instinct. Furthermore, left-wing writers stressed the interplay between class and gender in women's experiences as mothers, hinting at later feminist approaches which foreground the interaction between different forms of discrimination. Women's contributions to public conversations around motherhood during the Weimar period therefore anticipated themes that came to prominence in post-World War Two feminist theory.

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[5] Elisabeth Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct*, trans. by Roger DeGaris (London: Souvenir, 1981), p. 289.

The emergence of ideas more commonly associated with the post-World War Two feminist movements during the interwar period has largely been overlooked in previous scholarship, which tends to view the Second World War as a watershed moment rather than exploring continuities across the twentieth century. More detailed exploration of the continuities and comparable development of feminist and psychoanalytic ideas in the contexts of the interwar and post-1945 periods falls beyond the scope of this project, but would be an area for productive further study. These conversations were expanded principally by feminist theorists in the French and American post-World War Two contexts. The question of the extent to which women writers in Germany would have continued to explore and challenge the relationship between psychoanalytic ideas and motherhood had their work not been cut short by the National Socialist seizure of power must remain unanswered. It is nevertheless apparent from my primary sources that a significant intellectual and public appetite for such conversations existed in Weimar Germany.

Overall, my analysis has revealed a nuanced and largely pragmatic conversation, in which authors negotiated tensions between accepting essentialist assumptions of women's desire to mother while simultaneously imagining new models of motherhood. This research has advanced understanding of women's attitudes towards reproductive choices during the Weimar era by examining how intellectuals, political journalists, and fiction writers imagined and sought to guide the views and practices of their readership. By uncovering the influence of left-wing political and psychological ideas on the ways in which women framed the conversation around motherhood during the Weimar era, I have illuminated women's development and implementation of strategies to challenge normative discourses that continue to shape women's opportunities and experiences into the twenty-first century.

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