

# *The End and the Beginning*

by

Hermynia Zur Mühlen

## On-line Supplement

Edited and translations

by

Lionel Gossman

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# I

## Feuilletons and fairy tales. A sampling

### Editor's Note

The following short stories and newspaper *feuilletons*, all translated by the editor, have been selected from among the hundreds published by Zur Mühlen because of the light they throw on her inspiration and motivation as a writer. Their themes and topics pervade her entire *oeuvre*: the injustice, violence, and cruelty of modern capitalist societies; the miserable lives of the poor and downtrodden; the way a patriarchal culture prevents women of all classes from developing into full human beings; and, not least, the tensions within her own utopian aspirations. On the one hand, for example, the conviction that it is a human responsibility, and especially a responsibility of the artist, to confront an ugly and unjust world and rouse others to confront and combat it, so that a better world may come into being; on the other, nostalgia for the beauty, peace, and harmony of the *hortus conclusus*, the protected childhood paradise that Zur Mühlen herself once knew in her grandmother's villa in the little lakeside resort town of Gmunden. On the one hand, the writer's moral responsibility to create a literature of combat, a *littérature engagée* ("We Have to Tell Them"); on the other, the temptation of estheticism, of excluding ugliness from one's writing in order to create a manageable and esthetically satisfying imaginary world ("Painted on Ivory"). In her *feuilletons* as well as in her novels, Zur Mühlen suggests that withdrawal from the world of conflict and violence is not only immoral, but may result, for the artist, in an impoverishment of her art, and that, in addition, an individual who has shut herself off from the everyday world of passions and desires or who has been protected from it, is rendered defenceless against the world ("Death of a Shadow" – recognizably contemporary with the novel *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen*). One of the *feuilletons* seems to suggest, however, that any career as a writer requires sacrifice. To the degree that sympathizing

and identifying with others is the condition of her ability to create fictional characters, the writer may find that her own life has been diminished as well as enriched by her capacity for empathizing and living vicariously (“A Secondary Happiness”).

Like everything Zur Mühlen wrote, these short pieces are rooted in her own experience and that of her time. Thus, for instance, the three samples from the collection entitled *Der rote Heiland*, which was published soon after the First World War (the little dramatic scene that gave the collection its title, together with “Confession,” and “High Treason”), reflect the widespread pacifism, the revulsion against war, and the demand for radical social change in Germany in the years following the country’s disastrous defeat. “Miss Brington” and “The Señora,” both published in 1941, reflect the experience of exile. The former evokes the characteristically drab, run-down English boarding-house with which many exiles, who were accustomed to a very different kind of life, became unhappily all too familiar after fleeing Hitler’s Germany and Austria. At the same time, Zur Mühlen manages to transform the watchful, frugal, hard-working, and worn-out landlady, Miss Brington, who is always on the brink of falling from respectability into poverty, into a universal figure of emotional and physical deprivation and loneliness. “The Señora” dramatizes the dilemma faced by refugees, particularly those who happen to be writers in a language other than that of their country of asylum. Should they adapt to their new environment and risk losing the anger and indignation, the passionate opposition to tyranny that is the core of their identity, the most precious possession left to them? Or should they nurture their hatred and risk losing their humanity?

To the feuilletons have been added two samples of the “socialist” fairy tales for which Zur Mühlen achieved a degree of international renown – one (“The Spectacles”) in a new translation by the editor, and one (“The Sparrow”) in Ida Dailes’ translation (considerably revised by the editor) for a collection of four of Zur Mühlen’s tales published by The Daily Worker Publishing Company under the title *Fairy Tales for Workers’ Children* (Chicago, 1925). A short essay by the editor on the fairy tale and its use for propaganda purposes has also been included among these supplementary on-line materials.

# 1. The Red Redeemer

(A church. The candles on the altar have been lit. Above the altar there is a large black wooden cross. In front of it, on the steps, a man in rags, barefoot, with a worn, tormented expression. He is leaning on one arm, which rests on the altar.)

**The priest** (in his vestments, enters through the open church door, followed by two altar-boys in surplices. He marches up to the altar, suddenly stops in his tracks, and stares at the man in rags): A man in front of the altar. Unconsecrated hands touching the most holy. Sacrilege! Away with you! Away with you!

**The man in rags:** This is my house.

**The taller altar-boy:** (shyly pulls at the priest's vestments): Reverend Father, the cross...

**The priest** (quickly turns to look at the cross and cries out): Gone! Where is the Redeemer?

**The smaller altar-boy:** On the altar, don't you see?

**The man in rags:** Blessed are they who are pure in heart, for they shall behold the Lord.

**The priest** (glares at the man in rags and seems gradually to recognize him. He is horrified.) What? What is going on here? The Redeemer belongs on the cross.

**The man in rags:** And if he got down from it and came among the living? Don't you yourself teach that your God is not dead? Now you can see that he is alive.

**The priest** (confused): The Redeemer's place is on the cross... The faithful will be coming to Mass... If they find the cross empty... and the Redeemer here, alive, like a man.... (Shouting) Get back on the cross. We need a God that is dead.

**The man in rags:** Yes, a God that neither sees nor hears, a lifeless piece of wood.

**The priest** (desperate): Such disorder! You get up off the cross like a man getting out of bed. You sow confusion in people's minds... This conduct does not become our Redeemer...

**The man in rags:** Aren't all of you celebrating my Resurrection today? So you know that I am alive.

**The priest:** That's what we teach the ignorant, the people.

**The man in rags:** Why?

**The priest:** They yield to our wishes better when they believe in you.

**The man in rags** (astonished). I don't understand.

**The priest:** They are afraid of angering you if they oppose us.

**The man in rags:** That is not what I taught.

**The priest:** Your teaching is a distorting mirror. Everyone finds a distorted image of himself in it.

**The man in rags.** The lesson of my life is something quite different.

**The priest:** Your life? Do we know that you ever lived?

**The man in rags:** So you teach something you yourself don't believe in?

**The priest:** Who believes in fairy tales today?

**The man in rags:** What do you call a fairy tale?

**The priest:** The Resurrection.

**The man in rags:** You are all blind! I rose from the dead a hundred times before your eyes and yet you didn't see it?

**The priest** (correcting him sternly like a schoolmaster): You appear not to know the legend that was spun around your name. You arose from the dead only once. In Jerusalem.

**The man in rags:** No, a hundred times, in everyone in whom love was stronger than death. I lived in every rebel languishing in prison in his chains. I was crucified in everyone who was hanged on your gallows.

**The priest:** Blasphemy!

**The man in rags:** Can God himself be guilty of blasphemy?

**The priest:** Your divinity is questionable. You yourself described yourself as the son of man.

**The man in rags:** There is only one God: the man who loves.

**The priest:** You speak of love. Did your rebels love the victims they killed?

**The man in rags:** In pure hands, killing can be good.

**The priest** (outraged): Criminal! Murderer! Communist!

**The man in rags:** Are you going to call the police?

**The priest:** Why am I talking to you? You don't exist. You never really existed.

**The man in rags:** For you and your like, I don't.

**The priest:** No one may arise from the dead. That is not permitted by law. A dead man must stay dead. Get back on the cross!

**The man in rags:** Doesn't the Church teach that with the commission of every sin the Redeemer is crucified anew?

**The smaller altar-boy** (eagerly): Yes, that is what I learned in Sunday school.

**The man in rags** (suddenly fearsome): You all crucify me every day, every hour. Wherever someone suffers because of you, wherever a child cries because it is hungry, wherever someone sick dies in misery, wherever someone is worn out by daily drudgery, I am crucified.

**The priest:** You are a dead, lifeless piece of wood. You cannot see.

**The man in rags:** Your guilt is so enormous that dead matter acquires eyes to see it and a mouth to scream in protest against it.

**The smaller altar-boy** (begins to cry): I'm scared.

**The man in rags** (gently): You need not be scared. (He kneels down next to the boy). Look, now I am smaller than you, and that is as it should be, for you, little Man, little God, are the future.

**The priest** (shrieks): Blasphemy!

**The man in rags** (rises): It is all of you who blaspheme against God. Every act of yours, every gesture is blasphemy. The potbelly that waltzes past the hungry, the silk dress that rustles past the half-naked, that is blasphemy. The factory that reaches to the heavens and devours its workers is blasphemy. The foul-smelling hovels where the poor are housed, that is blasphemy. The brothel, where love is put up for sale, that is blasphemy. The battlefield where human beings die like dogs so that you all can line your pockets, that is blasphemy. You yourselves, your very being, your persisting, that is blasphemy.

**The priest** (mockingly): You won't ever be able to rid the world of us.

**The man in rags:** You think not? Perhaps you aren't aware that I have already come down from every cross you all have nailed me to. Perhaps you don't know that I have risen from every grave you all buried me in.

**The priest** (bewildered and unsettled): You speak like a madman. Who are you?

**The man in rags:** I am the Resurrection and the Life in Humanity.

**The priest** (dully, as if he had lost his wits): What is the Resurrection and the Life?

**The man in rags** (in a strong, clear voice): The revolution!

**The priest** (shrieks): Revolution... Help... Police... (To the altar-boys): Run! Call the police! I always suspected that if Jesus did really exist he had to have been insane. Normal people don't get themselves crucified.

**The man in rags**: No, they look around for ministerial positions.

**The priest** (in despair): Nothing is sacred for this individual. Now he is maligning the government! That is more dangerous than blaspheming against God, for God doesn't have servants with rubber truncheons and machine-guns that he can call into action. Get a move on, boys, run. Get the police. (The two altar boys rush off. The church bells begin to ring.)

**The priest**: The faithful will be here in a moment. The empty cross above the altar... All this disorder... If the Bishop hears of it... Why did all this have to happen in my parish? ... (Pleading) Get back on the cross and I will be your servant for the rest of my life.

**The man in rags**: How often have you said that same thing to the people?

**The priest** (at a loss): The people, the people! What does the people matter to me?

**The man in rags**: I am the people, the people that you all have crucified. I am the people that was killed and that has arisen from the dead. Woe unto you. (Two policemen rush into the church,)

**The priest** (panting): Here... This is the man... Blasphemy... Incitement to class hatred... A Communist...

**One of the policemen**: That's enough.

**The other policeman**: Wait. (To the man in rags) Do you have identity papers? Who are you?

**The man in rags** (rises to his full height). I am the red Redeemer who has come to pass judgment.

**The first policeman**: There you have it. A Red. (The two policemen take hold of the man in rags and drag him out of the church)

**The priest** (confused): A bad dream... a terrifying nightmare. Didn't someone come and say that the story we tell about Christ is true, that God is alive?

(The organ begins to play. The choir is heard singing lustily: Christ is arisen. Halleluja! Halleluja!)

## 2. Confession

Dear Doctor:

When you left my cell an hour ago, you were extremely irritated and told me angrily that no one would be able to make any sense of what I had been saying; that my violent outbursts were making things even more difficult for you; and that in light of my behavior it had become impossible for you to build a case for my defense. You are quite right. Although I did try very hard to explain the matter to you, I could not find the right words, and it was impossible for me, without flying into a rage, to say the one thing that holds the key to the whole situation. If that thing were to cross my lips, I felt, a dam would burst somewhere inside me: despair, hatred, fury, and an uncontrollable desire for revenge would surge like storm waves over my brain and completely overwhelm any rational thought. Maybe I can present my case better in writing.

I am accused of murder, of the murder of an honorable citizen of our town – and a good friend.

I know how people see me. They think I am a bloodthirsty monster still greedy for blood after three years at the front and ready to commit murder to get it.

Three years at the front, doctor – do you know what that means? It means three years of misery, horror, despair – and blood! Three years of living in mortal fear, three years of committing murder! This can change a man. And yet when I came home after having been lucky enough to get shot in the leg and invalidated out, I immediately took up my old life again, went to the office, worked, and lived contentedly with my wife – as though nothing had happened.

From time to time, at night, in my dreams, I heard the thunder of artillery fire and the groans of the wounded, but those phantoms vanished with the dawn and everything was normal again.

Until one summer evening, when the horror that seemed to have been

forgotten opened its hellish maw and belched its stinking, diabolical breath in my face.

I was sitting with my wife at dinner. The last rays of the setting sun were streaming through the red curtains of the dining-room. Suddenly my wife cried out: "Look at your hand. It looks as though it was covered with blood!" I glanced down at my hand and all at once felt cold shivers run down my spine. When had I seen this before? Yes, it was during a bayonet attack, I remembered. I also remembered my horror and disgust as I tried to wipe off the sticky gore. My wife laughed and placed her hand on mine for a moment. How white that hand was, how pure and unsullied. But mine?

From then on I had the feeling that my hand could never be washed clean again. The sickening smell of blood hovered around me day and night. Grisly images would spring up before my eyes. There was now a hole in the curtain that had come down between me and the things I had experienced.

Perhaps I could have borne all this. Perhaps I would have sunk back again into my blissful mindlessness. But I noticed something else: *All the people around me had clean hands*. In the office I would stop in the middle of writing as I observed my fellow-employees' hands gliding white and spotless over white paper. I no longer saw people's faces or bodies, I saw only hands.

Gradually a hatred of those with white hands began to stir in my heart. Repressed and concealed, it grew more and more fierce. I had had to commit murder, I had had to besmirch myself with the blood of my fellow-man; while they had stayed home, innocent and good, with their clean hands.

In order not to have to see those accursed white hands, I withdrew from all human company. My lovely wife became abhorrent to me. I was overcome by disgust whenever she touched me.

The man I murdered had been my friend. He tried to shake me out of my depression, he made every conceivable effort to distract me. There were times when I was touched by his goodness and kindness, times when I felt aching compassion and fervent love for all human beings, when I wanted to help them and liberate them. But no sooner did my glance fall on their hands than hatred boiled up in me again and poisoned my soul.

This situation may have lasted for about three months. Finally, I reached a point at which I no longer saw human beings, only spotless white hands

fluttering derisively before my eyes and pointing accusingly at my guilty, bloodstained fingers.

A new thought had wormed its way into my brain: that the world will not be redeemed until all human beings have had their hands dipped in guilt and blood, until there is nobody who can go about bearing the mark of innocence. Everybody must be driven into guilt and smut so as to be made aware of his or her wickedness and led to do penance for it. Anyone who refuses must be eliminated.

One evening my friend came to visit me and would not be put out by the surliness with which I received him. He chatted animatedly about all kinds of things, including attacks on him by his enemies in the newspaper. Suddenly he uttered the fateful words. Laughing, he raised his hand and said: "Their attacks don't bother me in the least. My hands are clean!"

In that moment all the horror I had experienced raced through my brain, I saw the chaos of combat, heard the screams of the wounded, the death rattles of the dying, I saw on both sides a huge mass of innocent murderers rushing into battle, goaded on by whips wielded by clean, white hands.

You know the rest; there was a revolver in my desk drawer. But now you will understand a detail that puzzled the police; namely that the victim's hands were smeared all over with blood.

I have confessed to the murder and I am ready to pay with my life for my crime— not, however, for the crime that the court will condemn me for, but for the killing of my brothers at the front. I was a murderer long before I used my revolver against my friend.

One more request, dear Doctor. If the death sentence is carried out on me, please see to it that my hands are not washed. I do not want to appear before my eternal Judge with the mark of inexpiable guilt – white hands.

With the deepest respect, Doctor,

I am,

Yours truly,

Karl David.

*Der rote Heiland* (Leipzig-Plagwitz: Verlag Die Wölfe, 1924), pp. 71-74.

### 3. High Treason

The uniform hung loose on his long, skinny body. He walked with his shoulders hunched, like some one carrying an enormous load and he shuffled about in his heavy army-issue boots. Everyone made fun of him, mocked his slow speech, the strong Jewish accent with which he spoke Russian, the awkward movements of his perfectly beautiful hands. Impatient officers would yell "Durak" (Dumbell, Fool) at him more than at anyone else and the name stuck to him. Soon no one knew his real name. In the entire regiment he was known only as "Durak."

And yet he was well-liked. If you did not feel well or were homesick, you could go to "Durak" and get consolation. If you were hungry, you could be sure that "Durak" would share his skimpy ration with you. And rumor had it that you could die more easily, even joyfully, if "Durak" sat at your bedside and held your hand.

The officers considered him a halfwit. Yet he obeyed orders willingly, if clumsily, and he was touchingly eager to oblige. Once, however, there had been a painful incident. The lieutenant, a good-natured young fellow, ordered "Durak" to do night duty in the sick bay, and "Durak" went there as commanded. He cast a glance at the long row of sighing, groaning bodies and quietly asked the doctor:

"Nikolai Ivanovitch, would you kindly tell me if these men can be made well again?"

The plump doctor laughed.

"Hopefully they can. You must just take good care of them."

"And when they are well again, what will happen to them?"

"What will happen to them? Why, they'll be ready to be put to work again."

"What for?"

"What for? Why, for the war, you idiot!"

"I take care of them and make them better, so that they can kill and be killed themselves?"

"Quite so," the doctor said, somewhat perplexed.

Suddenly, in mounting rage, "Durak" tore off his white overall and threw it at the doctor's feet.

"I won't cure murderers!" he screamed in a shrill, breaking voice. I won't cure sacrificial animals for the false god Baal." And he rushed from the room.

Some time later, his regiment came under fire. A major offensive was ordered for the next morning. The soldiers slunk around despondently. In the general melancholy no one noticed "Durak"'s somber fury. At eight in the evening a solemn religious service was held. In his gleaming robes the orthodox priest came out of his tent and took up a position on an elevated spot surrounded by the soldiers. After the prayers he began a speech. He spoke of God's goodness and the loyalty each soldier owed to the top war commanders. He spoke of the army's courage. "You are marching forth to destroy the enemies of God and Man," he said unctuously. "The battle that lies before you is pleasing to God, and..."

He was interrupted by a piercing cry of "No." "Durak" was pushing his way through the motionless crowd, a riding whip in his raised hand. He threw himself like a madman on the priest and a whistling sound filled the air as the whip tore through it.

"You lie, Priest. You blaspheme against God. You turn a place of prayer and spiritual healing into a den of murderers." He had pushed the priest down and taken his place, His voice rent the darkness.

"I kept silent because I was afraid, because I knew what would happen to me if I spoke out. But now I have to speak. Hear me, brothers. The battle that lies before us is the work of the devil. We are murderers. We march out with intent to murder. To murder other men. Men like ourselves. And we blaspheme against God when we pray to Him – from Whom we received the command 'Thou shalt not kill' – and ask Him to help us murder other human beings. They lie to us when they tell us that the others are our enemies. There are no enemies, only other human beings, children of God, brothers and sisters. March out tomorrow morning, brothers, and when you see the others, throw down your weapons, stretch out your arms to them, and call out "Peace be with you."

Led by the lieutenant, several soldiers had pushed their way through the confused crowd of men. "Durak" was set upon and overpowered from behind. Half smothered, his voice still rang out through the hall. "Do not kill! Love one another!"

This time it was not possible to excuse his behavior on the grounds that he was mentally confused. Certainly the man was crazy, but on the eve of battle he had called on the soldiers to mutiny. For that there was no pardon. When he was informed that he would be shot within the half-hour, he smiled like someone hearing something old and familiar and spoke the following strange, incomprehensible words:

“The Third Day is still a long way off. But in the far distance I can already see it dawning.”

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A short time later a soldier called the lieutenant from his tent. “Sir, come and see the dead man!”

“Why? What’s up?” The lieutenant looked in astonishment at the man’s pale, distraught face.

“It’s...a miracle...I don’t dare to tell you. We pulled off his boots. For it would be a shame to let them go into the ground with him...”

“And?”

“Come and see for yourself, Sir.”

The lieutenant followed the soldier. “Durak” lay stretched out on the ground, his feet bare and his arms spread out. A bullet had hit him on the left side and opened up a gaping wound. With a flashlight, the lieutenant bent over the dead man, then drew back in terror. “Durak”’s hands and feet bore bloody stigmata as if they had been pierced through by something sharp.

In the darkness a few soldiers fell on their knees and prayed.

*Der rote Heiland* (Leipzig-Plagwitz: Verlag Die Wölfe, 1924), pp. 67-70.

## 4. Death of a Shade

"Have you heard," I was asked by an acquaintance, "that Perdita W. shot herself?"

I nodded. "I've been expecting it for months."

"You were expecting it? I don't understand. She was so, so..."

He looked for the right word. Revealingly, it did not come to him.

"The truth is that she was not so..." I replied. "And that's why she shot herself."

"You don't seem very upset." My acquaintance was rather indignant. "I had always thought you and she were close friends."

"That's exactly why. I know she had no other option. It was the only possible thing she could do."

He looked at me uncomprehendingly.

"Let me explain. The Perdita you knew was not the real Perdita. The woman who was passionate about politics and ran to all the public meetings of her Party was not the same woman as the one who reached for a revolver the day before yesterday... Outwardly she had no reason to commit suicide. She was financially secure, she was in good health and, for a person of forty-three, she looked very good, which even today is still one of the most important things in life for a woman. And yet, there was simply no other way out for her."

"I really don't understand you."

"We were school friends and I often spent the holidays with Perdita's parents so as not to have to stay on at the convent. Perdita's parents had a large villa in a health resort, a short way out of the little town itself. It was surrounded by a wonderful, beautifully tended garden. I can still remember the large beds of roses in front of the house. The garden was set back from the road, and the life Perdita's parents led was set back a little from real life. I have never since come across anything quite so harmonious. No voice was ever raised in that house. The servants came and went without a sound.

No door was ever slammed shut. On Sundays no one in the family ever left the garden. 'There are so many people on the road on a Sunday,' Perdita's father used to say.

"Perdita was an only child. Though she was not spoiled, everything revolved around her, and for her there was really nothing in this world except the two quiet, distinguished people she called Papa and Mami. Don't imagine that Perdita's parents were boring or uncultured. Her very name reveals her father's love of Shakespeare. During the holidays, when it was raining, the old gentleman – he had married late in life and when I got to know him, his hair was already grey – would read to us from the works of classical German literature or, from time to time, from those of other writers – Stifter, Dickens, Bulwer Lytton. Those were lovely quiet hours that we spent in the large library. We sat up very straight in the high mahogany chairs – for 'ladies do not sprawl on furniture.' I sometimes had the feeling that the raindrops fell more gently here, around this house, than anywhere else.

"Later, when we were grown up, we drifted apart, as often happens. Once Perdita wrote me about a rather vague love affair, of which nothing came, because Papa and Mami found the young man 'loud and vulgar.' Perdita appears not to have taken the matter very much to heart. She was happy enough with Papa and Mami. Being separated from them would have caused her much grief.

"The years passed. The World War broke out, then came the Revolution. From time to time I paid a visit to Perdita and her parents. Here, nothing had changed. The same stillness, the same harmony: three people who loved each other and had shut themselves off from the world. No, that is not quite right: three people who had absolutely no idea that there is another world than theirs.

"Five years ago Papa and Mami died, the one soon after the other. It turned out that Perdita still possessed a considerable fortune – not large enough, however, for her to hold on to the spacious villa and the numerous servants needed to maintain it. She sold the villa and moved into town. Here, in her pretty house, she lived as she had lived at home. Quiet, refined people came in the afternoon for tea or in the evening for dinner. She had kept on the cook, who had been with her parents for twenty years, and the food was always excellent. But Perdita did not feel right. She always went around a little lost. She missed Mami's love and Papa's kindly authority. At thirty-eight, she faced life like an eighteen-year old.

“She had brought much of the old furniture with her as well as an enlarged photograph of the villa, showing, in front of the house, next to the large bed of roses, Papa, Mami, and Perdita at the age of ten.

“I liked visiting her. The quiet did me good, even though I found it unnatural in our present day and age.

“Then came the great experience that completely altered Perdita’s life and finally drove her into the arms of death. An acquaintance took her ‘for fun,’ wanting to see how she would react to something of that kind, to a political gathering. At first Perdita felt uncomfortable, because of the large numbers of people, the countless loud voices. She could not quite understand the speech but when it was followed by wild applause and shouts of ‘Heil’ from all present, she suddenly noticed that she too had raised her voice in loud, unconstrained yelling, as she had never done before in her entire life. For forty years, she had conducted herself quietly and with dignity, but now suddenly she could shout, scream, clap, stamp her feet. The primitive and the elemental broke loose in her and she experienced something she had never experienced before: an overwhelming feeling of being one with the screaming, yelling mass. Beside her stood an elderly little man with fanatical blue eyes: he gave Perdita a benevolent look and whispered: ‘Yes, indeed. The Führer gave a great speech.’

“The Führer, the Leader, that was just the word Perdita needed to hear. She had found the authority that she substituted for Papa’s, she had found the man who gave orders and who had to be obeyed without one’s ever having to think for oneself.

“I met Perdita a few weeks after this political gathering. She had already joined the Party. I hardly recognized her. She seemed a good few years younger, she moved freely and gracefully, her eyes had a sparkle in them, she was a different person. In an earlier time, when people were still romantic, young girls in love looked like that. And the comparison is apt: Perdita was in love with the Party. Perdita gave the Party all the overflowing love she had stored up within herself for years. She could speak of nothing else. She could think of nothing else.

“As you know, I am on the opposite side politically and it came to an argument between us. ‘You have no notion of what is at stake here,’ I said to her. ‘Do you have any idea what your program is?’ ‘Program?’ She stared at me. ‘When we come to power, everything will be right again.’

“Despite my irritation with her, I felt that for Perdita what really counted was the ‘we’ and not the ‘power.’ She had been lonely for so long, and now

she belonged to a great Party which took the place for her of everything she had lost or had never possessed. 'Read your pamphlets,' I said impatiently. 'I'd like to know what you think of their tone.' She smiled. 'I will do that.'

"As I said, we parted at odds with each other and for a long time I did not see Perdita again.

"Then one day I ran into her in the street. She had become quite white and went about just as lost and alone as before her 'conversion.' She greeted me shyly, as if she feared I might not return her greeting. That sent an arrow through my heart. 'May I stop by and pay you a visit?' I asked. Her mouth formed into a smile, which truly was not one. 'Yes, do. I would like that very much.'

"The house had not changed a bit: the elegant Empire style chair still stood in front of the tiny, un-practical ladies' writing desk, the same silk cushions still lay on the Empire chaise longue, albeit somewhat faded and worn, and the enlarged photograph of Perdita's parents' house still hung on the wall, above the chaise longue. But it had faded; it was almost impossible now to discern the individual figures on it.

"Conversation was somewhat strained at first. It wasn't until Perdita made us tea in the old silver teapot I had known as a child at her parents' house that we began to unbend. 'Are you still in the Party?' I asked her. 'No.' Her soft voice sounded even softer than usual. 'I couldn't take it. All the noise, the shouting and bawling, and the newspapers. They shout too, just like the people. I had to have quiet about me again.' 'Have you found it?' Her pale face became sad. 'No. There is no quiet any more. Even when I don't actually hear the shouting, it rings in my ears. The whole world is shouting...'

"A car passed in the street, honking its horn; Perdita twitched nervously. 'On Sundays,' she said, half dreaming, 'we never left the garden, because of the crowds of people. I don't go out on Sundays now either, but the noise comes right through my windows...I can't get away from it.' I felt sorry for her. 'You live too much on your own. You have to spend some time with friends, as you used to do.' She smiled. 'I don't live altogether on my own,' she said. 'You see, when I can't stand this whole world any more, I gaze on the picture of our villa and I can feel the deep peace and the quiet happiness of those times. You remember, don't you? – my bedroom was here, and here, under it, was the verandah and the main drawing-room, and over there you can see the window of the library where Papa used so often to read to us. But' – here her voice became filled with sadness – 'the

picture is fading. The house looks a bit like a house of ghosts now. The figures of Papa and Mami are almost impossible to make out. Only mine is still really there. When it too fades...'

"She fell silent, and something in the expression of her face frightened me. 'Don't be childish, Perdita. The picture is old and the photographer used matt paper. Matt paper doesn't hold the image well.' She again smiled. 'Matt paper that doesn't hold the image well. A down-to-earth explanation. You're probably right. But we are like the photograph. We have turned out matt too. We couldn't tolerate the real sun, real life, and we faded as soon as we came into contact with them.' She looked over at the picture: 'I'm curious to know how long I will still be recognizable in it.'

"My visit to Perdita took place on a cool day in February. I had planned to go back and see her again soon, but something always came up – work, sickness, something. In May – it was an especially hot, sunny May – I drove off to the country for a month. I came back a week ago and resolved to visit Perdita the following day.

"On that next day, I received a registered letter. When I opened it, the photograph of Perdita's parents' house fell out. Undoubtedly the maid had forgotten to close the shutters on one of the hot days, for shadowy outlines were all you could now make out in the photograph. The three figures had totally vanished. I am a down-to earth person, a realist, but a cold shiver ran down my spine as I looked at that picture: I knew what it meant.

"Perdita saw herself fading away and vanishing from this life; she watched herself growing more and more shadowy and unreal with each passing day... On that same day I was informed that she had shot herself the night before."

"It really was the photographer's fault," my acquaintance suggested. "If only he had used glossy paper..."

"He couldn't use glossy paper if he was to get the right tone for this house and these people. He was a good photographer with genuine artistic sensitivity. You really shouldn't blame him."

I took the picture from the writing desk and showed it to my acquaintance.

"You can still make out the bed of roses," he said.

"Yes, but that's all. Everything else has vanished, as if it had never been. And when I look at that picture, I wonder whether Perdita W.'s world was ever real, whether everything in it was not a shadow, everything – except for the roses."

"Tod eines Schattens," *Der Wiener Tag*, 8 December 1932, reprinted in *Fahrt ins Licht. Sechshundsechzig Stationen. Erzählungen* (Vienna: Verlag Ludwig Nath, 1936; reprint Klagenfurt: Sisyphus Verlag, 1999), pp. 167-173.

## 5. A Secondary Happiness

Christine was fourteen years old when the World War broke out – a quiet, well brought up, shy girl with long brown braids and large, grey, somewhat startled eyes.

“She won’t be as pretty as her mother,” people said in the little provincial town where her father was the mayor. “But there is something very sweet about her, and she is so touchingly unselfish.”

Christine owed her selflessness to her upbringing by her mother. From earliest childhood, it had been impressed on her that she herself was completely unimportant, whereas everybody else was enormously important. One should not think about oneself but only take a keen interest in the lives of others.

Little Christine was constantly being asked the same question: Aren’t you pleased that Mama can go to the beach? Aren’t you thrilled that your dear Papa has received a decoration? Isn’t it wonderful that your friend has won first prize in school?

At first Christine would dutifully answer yes. She would never have dared to contradict her attractive, strong-willed mother. Then gradually this automatic yes turned into a yes that expressed conviction. She had no pleasures of her own, but as she was nonetheless eager, being young, for a little happiness, she participated in the pleasures of others the way a smoker, whose doctor has ordered him to give up smoking, sits beside cigar and cigarette-puffing strangers so as to get a whiff, at least, of the smoke. She took pleasure in her girlfriends’ new clothes. She herself wore her mother’s cast-offs which were altered to fit her, for Madam Mayor needed the family money for her own purposes. She took pleasure in the good marks of her school friends. That she too had all A’s in her report card was simply a matter of course; she had her dear parents, who had done so much for her, to thank for it. And as she grew older, she took pleasure in the engagements and marriages of the other girls and then, later, in the

babies and the *maternal joy* of her former school friends. Everything came to her second hand, as her clothes had done. She knew no happiness of her own, only a secondary happiness; no joy, only the joy she got from the joy of others; no pain, only the pain she felt at the pain of others. And when the thought did strike her that she too could have a personal life, she was alarmed by it and rejected it brusquely, feeling that she had committed a sin. To everyone in her small circle she was “dear, good Christine,” to whom one came when one was in trouble or had some overflowing happiness that one simply had to tell someone about.

She lived many lives; the life of her best friend Mira, that of her parents, that of her brother and his young wife. She fell in love along with others and lay awake at night thinking of the tender words some male friend had whispered to some female friend, she experienced the feelings of the bride standing at the altar, she watched, full of joy, as the *young couple* set off on their honeymoon. She was a bride, a wife, a mother, and a widow through others. But at no time, not for a single hour was she ever Christine, a person, a pretty girl with a right to her own experiences and her own happiness.

She grew older, yet she looked younger than all the others. She walked dreamily through the narrow streets of the little town – no, not she herself, but Mira or Trudy or Sylvia. Her father died, her mother re-married and Christine took pleasure in her mother’s new happiness, in the proximity of which she was given the privilege of living. Later she took pleasure in a little step-sister and as the latter learned to speak and to walk, she took pleasure in the pleasure this gave the little one. Without ever having had a life of her own, Christine was happy. Was so, until happiness of her own approached in the shape of the new pharmacist. The tender words addressed to her, the kisses that seemed almost brutal to her and a lot less blissful than those her friends had told her about, filled her with alarm. Her mother, to whom Christine had begun to be burdensome, insisted that her daughter marry the pharmacist. Christine, who as a bridesmaid, smiling happily, had so often accompanied her friends to the altar, wept bitterly as she herself stood in the church in her bridal veil. Everything was so alien and yet so close, so unbearably close. The honeymoon trip to Venice was a nightmare. She had the feeling that she was a shade forced into becoming a living human being. She remembered her friends and the happy times when she had followed them, in her thoughts, on their honeymoon trips. She remembered the daydreams in which she had imagined for herself the happiness of the young couple. How different that had been. Her own

happiness strutted around prosaically in his slippers in the evening, drank rather more beer than he could hold, snored loudly next to her in bed, woke up unexpectedly in the middle of the night and pulled her into his arms. In vain Christine told herself: He is a good man, he loves me, I have to be happy. She had grown too used to a secondary happiness to be able to bear her own. Little by little she was assailed by tormenting doubts: Had it been the same with the others too? Had they been lying to me when they said: It was heavenly.

She had been thrilled by the picture postcards of Italian cities that she had received from her girlfriends. Now that she could view the churches and palaces with her own eyes, she saw only lifeless stone; the sea struck her as a desolate watery waste; and she became homesick for the little grey town where she had lived for thirty years. But she was also fearful of returning to a home of her own. She who had so willingly helped others set up house, felt only exhaustion and a leaden sadness when she thought of furniture of her own, a household of her own – and of the life, the life of her own, that she would now have to lead as Frau Grunder. She will no longer be “dear, good Christine,” she will no longer be the person people come to so that she can take part in their joy or their sorrow; she will no longer be absorbed completely in the lives of others and thus escape from her own. The thought of all this was unbearable, and with each passing day it grew still more unbearable, until one evening, when the pharmacist was asleep, she packed her little travel bag and took the next train to Florence.

From here she wrote to her husband, asking for a divorce. The pharmacist would not agree to it. He could not understand what Christine had against him and he was fond of her.

But Christine knew that if she wanted to go on living, she had to get free, at all costs. With the help of an impoverished young Italian, who was ready to do anything for a little money, she set up an adulterous affair that was no more real than all of Christine’s earlier life.

The marriage was dissolved. For a month the little town had a topic of conversation that mostly began with “Who would have thought it of that well brought up girl? That’s the way it is, that’s the way it is. Still waters run deep.”

Christine, who had been left a small inheritance by her father, did not return to her home town. She settled down in a different part of the country. Within a few months people here also spoke of “dear, good Christine,” and came to her to tell her of their joys and sorrows.

After a year Christine had almost completely forgotten the dreadful episode of her marriage. She went on living the lives of others and once more enjoyed the secondary happiness that is without a dark side.

She was happy again.

“Nebenglück,” *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 28 November 1933.

## 6. The Señora

From time to time, some old, long forgotten image suddenly emerges, unsolicited and for no apparent reason, from the picture gallery of a memory stretching back over many, many years, and springs to life. A ray of sunlight shines on it, colors we thought were faded revive, and the subject of the image – a person or a landscape – pushes its way into the forefront of our mind, obscuring everything else.

That is what is happening to me these days with the Señora. The frame of the image is springtime in Switzerland, blossoming fruit-trees, the blue waters of a lake, and a large, bright hall. In the hall, always in the same corner, a slight, gaunt woman, whose thin tapered fingers work on netting day in, day out, restlessly, almost without a moment's pause.

No one could have told how old the Señora was. Her dark, shining eyes suggested a woman of twenty; the hard, embittered lines around the mouth a woman of sixty. Her husband, plump and bald, seemed to be a man in his fifties. As girls in South American countries were usually married to older men at the time, the Señora could well have been about thirty.

To the children playing in the hotel garden the two of them were romantic figures: refugees! In one of the many revolutions, the party of Señor Geraldo had been overthrown and his enemies in that unhappy land on the other side of the ocean were able to wield their power with unspeakable harshness and cruelty. That had happened five years before. And for five years the Señora and her husband had been living in Switzerland and waiting. Waiting for the day when they could return to their liberated homeland and when that homeland would once again live and breathe freely.

Señor Geraldo had settled down in Weggis. The Señora, in contrast, seemed to have no idea where she was living. Her dark eyes looked right through the people who passed by her and though she spoke English and French fluently, if anyone spoke to her, she understood not a word of what was said.

Señor Geraldo would probably have been happy to mix more with the other residents of the hotel; he would have enjoyed a game of cards from time to time, and he would have very much liked to make an occasional trip to the casino in Lucerne. But his wife would not let him leave her side. He had to sit with her and read to her from the many newspapers piled up on the table before him. The Señora had no interest in European politics. What did Europe matter to her? She could think only of her enslaved homeland, of the terrible things that were happening there. She did not notice the scent of the purple lilac blossoms; her nostrils were filled with the choking smell of homes set on fire; their leaping flames drew a red curtain between her and the blue, spring sky.

The Señor read to her, reported on the South American republic through lead articles and items of daily news. Now and again the Señora would smile, pull the knots of her netting tighter as if she wanted to draw the noose tighter around someone's neck, and ask the Señor to read a particular paragraph again.

Every disaster, every epidemic reported in the newspapers made her happy. She would pull her knots tighter, say "muerto," and smile. Every now and then she would point with her gleaming netting needle at an obituary notice and repeat it out loud. At such moments her face became beautiful, transfigured, like that of a blessed spirit that has seen the heavens.

She would put her netting aside, reach for a little diary, and write in, under the appropriate date, the name of the deceased enemy. She would laugh on days when she was able to write in more than one name and would show the little green leatherbound book to her husband: "Muerto, muerto, muerto."

For the Señora there was no more beautiful word in the whole wonderful language of her native land. One enemy had died. Or his son – a youngster who, if he had grown to manhood, would also have tortured their homeland and reduced it to slavery – had been killed in a serious riding accident. Now he could no longer do that. He lay stiff and dead. Muerto, muerto, muerto. And she smiled when she read the obituaries of the enemies' wives: they would bear no more children for the hated regime. Muerta, muerta, muerta. A house had collapsed, burying thirty workers under the rubble – renegades who had cheered as the enemy made his grand entry. Now they would cheer no more; now their dead mouths, which had betrayed the homeland, were stopped up with dust and plaster. Muerto, muerto, muerto. A ship had gone down; from its stern the new flag

of the old homeland had fluttered. The Señora tapped the table impatiently with her needle. She could not wait to hear how many had perished in the disaster. The captain – good; and the first officer – good; and twenty sailors – only twenty sailors? And the second officer had been saved along with the rest of the crew? The Señora wrinkled her brow: “Poor show,” she muttered to her husband. “What was God thinking of, allowing all of those to be saved?”

She reached for her netting again and pulled the knots tighter and tighter, as though she was tying a noose around the neck of one of those who had been saved and drawing it ever tighter.

“Yes,” Señor Geraldo said to an acquaintance one day. “She has been like that for five years now. At night she gets up, turns on the light, and re-reads the old newspapers from the first to the last page. She is afraid that I may not have reported all the deaths to her. And then she comes back to bed and whispers the names of the dead to herself. No she doesn’t need sleep. One or two hours are enough for her. At the crack of dawn, she wakes up and shakes me to awaken me also. She asks how long it will be before the newspaper comes. Every day she again believes that the front page will carry the news of the fall of the regime. And in the meantime, she contents herself with deaths and catastrophes; she collects them and reads them out to herself from her diary. As if to pray. Then she knots her netting. I have no idea how many pieces of netting she has stored in her trunks or how large they are. Yes, in her trunks. In the five years we have been here she has never unpacked her trunks. “What for?” she would ask. “Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow we could be going home. And it would be a shame to have to waste time packing.”

In a frame of springtime in Switzerland, blossoming fruit-trees, the blue waters of a lake, and a large, bright hall, I see before me the long forgotten image of the dark-eyed woman whose fingers work restlessly on her netting and on whose thin pale lips a smile forms from time to time as she whispers to herself “Muerto, muerto, muerto!”

“Die Senora,” *Die Zeitung* (London), 1 April 1941; *Zeitspiegel* (London), 8 June 1946; *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Vienna), 18 February 1949.

## 7. Miss Brington

Every evening, when the residents of the boarding house, with unshakable optimism, tried to turn on the radio, the landlady appeared and, with a deep sigh, said: "Do give the machine a rest."

Miss Brington – no one knew her by her first name; she was one of those people from whom one gets the impression that in their entire lives no one ever called them by their first name, let alone by a friendly nickname – Miss Brington had raised the art of sighing to a level perhaps never attained by any other human being. Her scale of sighs embraced not just eight tones, but twenty-four at least. It began with an exhalation that wafted through the dining room like a gentle spring breeze whenever one of the residents asked for more bread, increased in volume and intensity with each new request, until, if someone reached for the knob on the radio, it became so strong, deep, and sustained that you were reminded of autumn gales blowing through the moonlit ruins of old castles on eerie nights.

Miss Brington was not unfriendly and she was not friendly. You could almost say that she simply was not. Something swept out the rooms and dusted, something cooked the meals in the kitchen no one was permitted to enter, something laid the table and cleared it afterwards, something served the food, something worked in the little house from morning to night – you could see hands, feet going up and down the stairs, a brown dress, and a yellow sweater – and the name of this something was Miss Brington. But what might lie hidden behind the expressionless face, whether Miss Brington had any idea of what went on around her, whether she could feel happy or angry, whether she liked people or hated them – *that* there was no way of knowing.

She seemed possessed by a single idea: the idea of rest. If the water heater broke down – which happened often – she would write on a slip of paper not, as other people would: "Do not turn on the water heater," but "Please give the water heater a rest." Even the broom, which she grudgingly

let people borrow, sometimes had a notice stuck to it: "Please give the broom a rest." And one Monday morning, after the residents had had more visitors than usual on the preceding Sunday, a slip of paper was found tied to the door knocker with a little piece of blue ribbon: "The door knocker needs a bit of rest."

Once and once only Miss Brington made a comment about the political situation. She stood in the garden and looked up into the bright sky in which gleaming barrage balloons floated like giant silver fish, uttered one of her middle-range sighs, and declared: "They ought to bring the barrage balloons in. After all, they have to get a bit of rest."

You were tempted at first to laugh at this endlessly repeated, hackneyed expression. But you soon came to see that it was the hole in the curtain behind which was concealed the inapprehensible, toiling, sighing something that was known publicly as Miss Brington. Through the hole you could glimpse the scene of a life which in fact had never been a proper life.

Thanks to a faded photograph marked with a date that hung in the dining room, you knew that Miss Brington's father had died when she was ten years old and that at that point she already owned the little house. A little house of one's own – the dream and pride of every family on King's Row. A little house that widow and daughter had to hold on to if they were not to slide down into the lower ranks of society where people have no home of their own and have to live in rented rooms.

Perhaps little Miss Brington learned to utter some of her lighter sighs when, instead of playing with her school friends, she had to stay home and help her working mother. Perhaps coming home from school as it was already getting dark and having to deliver the sewing her mother took in (the later the better; the neighbors don't have to know we need to earn money this way), perhaps that is what first gave her the idea that it would be nice to sit still and rest a while. Perhaps it was when she was scrubbing the outside steps that she first began to feel it would be good to give the wash-rag and the broom a rest, so that even they could enjoy a little peace and quiet after what, for a child, had been an over-full day.

And so life must have gone on. Times did not get easier. The mother aged quickly and the daughter was left with all the work. At first she rented out one room, then two, then three. But at least they still owned the house and, as night began to fall, could go into their own little garden and breathe in the fresh air. And that was worth all the sacrifices.

Doubtless the two women never spoke to each other. What was there

to say? They worked away side by side and each of them longed for night to come and with it, finally, rest and sleep. Possibly, for a while, night time was also a time when the young Miss Brington allowed her imagination to wander: other girls go dancing, gossip and laugh with each other, people fall in love with them and marry them... But, of course, other girls are not so constantly tired and do not carry the weight of a whole house on their shoulders. Perhaps there were nights when the young Miss Brington hated the house that deprived her of rest and happiness, but if so, it was likely to be an impotent hatred, the kind of hatred people feel for an invincible, all-powerful tyrant. And her stone tyrant made ever more demands on her. Her tyrant was often sick and in need of a great deal of care and attention. The roof needed to be repaired; the gutters had started to leak. All that cost money, lots of money. The rooms became shabby; the old furniture needed a rest too, and if it did not get it, became sullen and difficult, let its legs and arms break, and in anger spewed horsehair and kapok out of its cushions. And so it caused more work.

The war came. Miss Brington hardly noticed it. She had no relatives or friends to worry about. She only had her old mother, who was becoming meaner by the day, and the ageing, ever more demanding house.

She had become almost completely unaccustomed to speaking. As her mother was now stone deaf, it was pointless talking to her, and her lodgers appeared strange and incomprehensible to Miss Brington – noisy people who always wanted something and were never at rest, not even on a Sunday. It was better to communicate with them through sighs and little slips of paper. It was around this time that Miss Brington developed sighing into an art; around this time too, perhaps, that for the first time in many years a feeling was aroused in her: a feeling of compassion for things that are used every day, often enough every hour, and that – who knows? – were perhaps as weary as she. She was unhappy when someone forced the broom, which had already put in a morning's work, to sweep again in the afternoon. She was firmly convinced that the water heater had given up out of weariness and would return dutifully to work if it were granted just a few days' rest. As for the radio, it had to be protected from the heedless residents who kept wanting to turn it on.

She herself could not ask for protection, she herself could not give up working; but she could stretch out a helping hand to dumb, helpless things, and this capacity gave her something she had never had before: self-awareness and confidence. She – who in her entire life, had never had

enough money, who in her entire life had never been able to exercise her will on anything – had the power to grant rest to someone or something; she had the power to give the most precious gift she could imagine.

And so she lived on, a something that worked and sighed and, if only from time to time, quite rarely, smiled to herself when she thought of the day that house and garden, people and things would disappear and she would wake up in a more beautiful world and discover that an angel had tied a broad blue ribbon around her, to which was attached a slip of paper that said: “Please give Miss Brington a bit of rest. She has worked enough.”

“Miß Brington,” *Die Zeitung*, London, 10 November 1941, p. 3; *Zeitspiegel*, London, No. 23/24, 8 June 1946, p. 6; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, Vienna, 30 July 1949, No. 176, p. 5.

Translator’s note:

This little story obviously reflects the author’s many years of familiarity with boarding houses. At the time of its publication it must have been especially meaningful to the readers of *Die Zeitung* – largely middle-class German and Austrian refugees in England, many of whom had had to settle in such boarding houses. In England, as is well known, the boarding house is a peculiarly drab and depressing institution.

At the same time, Zur Mühlen was clearly able to identify with the downtrodden, narrow-minded, deprived landlady. She too knew what it was to have to toil ceaselessly and she too transcended her own miseries to some extent by seeking to lighten the burdens born by others and placing her hopes in a better world to come.

## 8. We Have to Tell Them

By June the little girl was beginning to count the days until the vacation. At eight years of age, she had made the discovery that all days are not equally long. Toward the end of the holidays, they rush by like crazy, faster than horses, faster than cars – but just before the holidays they creep along like snails or like the old man who stood outside the Church on Sundays begging, and to whom the little girl was permitted to give a few pennies. The little girl spoke to her father about this curious discovery of hers and found it hard to believe him when he told her that all the days are of equal length and that it is only fear or longing that makes one hour stretch out to two, sometimes even three or, in contrast, makes the same hour shrink to half an hour or even just a quarter of an hour. She did understand about longing, however. Had she not been longing for months now for the day when she would be told: “Tomorrow we are leaving for Wognin.” Wognin was the family estate in Slovakia, but it might just as well have been called “Heaven” or “Paradise.” Perhaps it wasn’t so much the old castle and the property itself that she loved – though the paddock was every bit as beautiful as the Garden of Eden could have been. It was the little village itself, with its brightly painted houses, its little shops, and its weekly market. That was even more marvellous, alluring, and exciting. And this year everything was especially wonderful, for poor nanny had gone off to see her sick mother, and the little girl, who was now ten, was allowed to go into the village by herself and play with the village children.

Early one bright, sunny day she set out, neat and clean, in a white dress, beaming with joyful anticipation. But as she turned into the little street by the brook, she heard terrible screams. She ran in the direction the noise was coming from. Half an hour later, she was heading home, beaten up, panting, crying, red-faced, her white dress torn and dirty.

Her parents were still sitting at the breakfast table when she burst onto the veranda.

"What you look like!" her mother said sternly. "Go and get changed immediately."

Her father, however, glanced at her little face and said, "Sit down, Nina. Tell us what happened."

Still panting and sobbing, Nina struggled to get her breath back, and finally let out a string of unconnected words: "Jan and Hanus and Svata and miller Nedbal's big son..."

"Yes?" her father asked gently. "What about them?"

"You've got to give them a hiding, father. Right away. Let's go. You've got to give them a good hiding."

"Why so?"

The little girl blew her nose. Her voice trembled. But it was with anger now.

"Do you know what they did? All four of them, such big boys, and Nedbar's son is already a grown-up, all four of them jumped on little Heini – you know who I mean, father, Heini Neuwirth – and beat him up, four against one, and Heini is still so small, and then they threw stones at him and screamed *Zid* (Jew) at him..."

Nina's mother wrinkled her forehead. "I keep telling you, Nina, you should not be playing with the brats from the village. That's what happens. Just look at your dress..."

"Brutes," her father said crossly. Then: "And what did you do, Nina?" he asked in a tense voice.

"I hit Jan a good clip round the ears," said Nina. "He is the smallest of them. Then I yelled at them and threatened them. And they all ran away. They're cowards into the bargain, the brutes."

"Don't use such common expressions, Nina," her mother interjected reprovingly.

"But even father said... And anyway they *are* brutes. Four against one. All the stronger ones against one weak one. Come on, father. Let's go and give them a good hiding."

"We can't do that, Nina."

"But someone has to do something. There was no one on the street at the time. No one saw what those wicked boys did. Father..."

"Look, Nina, I can't do anything about this," said her father, and if it had not been so unthinkable, Nina might have thought he was embarrassed.

She reflected for a moment. "Someone has to do something."

Her mother chimed in. "Don't get mixed up in things that are none of

your business. And now go and change.”

“Look, Nina, such things happen,” her father said soothingly. “People don’t know...”

“They don’t know?” The bright summer’s day that had so suddenly become dark and sad for Nina grew light again.

“Well, then, if they don’t know about it, then they’re not so bad. But we have to tell them.”

Her father looked at her with a worried expression. “You have your work cut out for you, child.”

“Go and change,” her mother repeated.

Nina nodded and went, but she had no intention of changing. Beaten up and dirty, she ran back into the village in her torn dress. She would tell everybody what happened and everybody would be outraged and angry and the bad boys would be punished. If such things happened only because people did not know about them, it wouldn’t be difficult to set matters right. Someone just had to tell them. And she would do it.

Her first stop was at the priest’s. Nina didn’t care for the young reverend who had come to the village after the good old priest died. He looked stern and mean. But he is a big man and everyone listens to him. The priest himself opened the door. Nina didn’t even wait for him to ask her in. Still standing in the corridor, she recounted to him what had happened. “Reverend Father,” she concluded, “you have to ex-com-muni-cate these boys!” And she thought of the Emperor Henry at Canossa, the subject of her last religious instruction period before the vacation. The priest wrinkled his forehead. “These things happen,” he said testily. “There’s no need to make such a fuss about a little Jew-boy.”

Nina stared at him. Cold shivers suddenly ran down her back.

“You... you know that such things... You really know?”

“Naturally. There’s absolutely no reason for you to get so worked up.” Nina noticed that the priest no longer used the familiar “du” form with her, as he had in the past. He was speaking to her now as he would to an adult who had displeased him. Her little face turned pale and hard. “You have always known that such things happen – among us, in our village?”

“I am busy right now. I have no time,” the priest replied.

“No time! But that is like... like the people who passed by until the Good Samaritan came along.”

The priest’s face became red with anger.

“I will report you to your father,” he said and pushed Nina out the door.

She walked on slowly. She felt as though someone had struck her a blow on the head. He knows about it, our priest knows about it, and he doesn't do anything!

She clenched her little hands into fists. He is a wicked man. He will go to hell. Or at least be sent to purgatory for a thousand years. And when he dies, I will not pray for his soul.

Somewhat consoled by those thoughts, she went to the next house to tell the people what had happened. She went from one house where she knew the people to another. She pleaded, then she got angry, then desperate. She, who had always loved everyone, began to hate the people in the village. Everybody knew, it seemed, and no one did anything.

The sun stood high in the heavens. The air shimmered from the heat. Nina dragged herself along, her weary feet sending up little clouds of fine dust. Now she had stopped at the home of everyone she knew. So many houses, she thought, so many people, and they all know, and no one does anything, no one. What kind of a world is this? Father was wrong about people not knowing. But father himself won't do anything.

She struggled slowly, very slowly homewards. They will still be sitting at their breakfast as though nothing has happened, she thought, utterly bewildered. And all mother could speak of was my dress. I don't want to go home.

All of a sudden, everything appeared strange to her. And then she had an insight. It was so terrible that she sank down on the edge of a ditch, as though she had been struck by a blow, and held her head in her hands. If that's the way it is everywhere, all over the world, if injustice happens everywhere and everyone knows and no one does anything...no one...

The sun shone brightly, spreading its warmth over the land; the sky was clear and blue; all around there was beauty and peace. At the edge of a ditch a little girl sat and stared into a black, impenetrable night of horror. Tears streamed down her cheeks as, full of despair and apprehension, she kept repeating amid sobs: "They all know about it, they all know about it."

"Man muß es ihnen sagen," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, Vienna, 12 December 1948, p. 5. For comment on this story, see Gossman, "The Red Countess: Four Stories," *Common Knowledge*, 15 (2009), pp. 82-91.

## 9. Painted on Ivory

October had turned the leaves yellow and red. In the afternoon sun their colors glowed brightly. The approaching evening had sent a gentle wind ahead as its messenger. Yellow and red leaves were swept into the pond [the pond in front of Chawton Cottage, where Jane Austen lived – L.G.] where they sailed for a while over the grey water, like tiny boats, until they sank.

Jane Austen stood by the pond and observed the little performance. How often she had done that in the seven years since 1809 when the three of them, the widow and her orphaned daughters – Jane, her two years older sister Cassandra, and their mother – had moved from Bath to the country at Chawton House.

Strange that she was affected for the first time, today, by the melancholy of autumn. Until now autumn had been only a time of transition to Chawton's cosy winter warmth, which in its turn held out the promise of spring. Today, however, she felt a leave-taking in the air and she shivered slightly. But only for a moment. Impatiently she threw back her head with its dark curls and straightened her tall slim body. A smile formed on her small mouth and danced in her hazel eyes as she chided herself for having yielded to *sentimentality*. For there was nothing she hated so much as exaggerated feelings. She had not tolerated them in any of the heroines of her novels. All the young females in her books were complete mistresses of their hearts.

As she often did, she thought of these figures as if they were living creatures. Among them were several of whom she was fonder than of friends and relatives – Cassandra, the cleverest and best of sisters, excepted. Above all, Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*. She had never been able to forgive anyone for not loving Elizabeth. Perhaps because there was a good deal of herself in Elizabeth – the keen eye for human weaknesses, the energy, the

wit. She remembered exactly how she had written the book as a twenty-one year old in her first, beloved home, Steventon Rectory, where her father had been rector. It had come out three years ago in 1813; anonymously, of course, as a *Novel by a Lady*.

Could there have been a finer pseudonym for her? Were not the “lady” and the “gentleman” her ideal – people with good manners, a solid education and culture, like her father, and a select social circle. That circle might be a trifle narrow perhaps, but it was harmonious. Only the ridiculous traits of a few arrogant aristocrats and the naïve snobbery of a small number of social climbers heightened its color somewhat. How well she knew those people. She had spent her entire life among them. Was it not natural that they figured in all her books?

Now the *Big House* on the hillside [Chawton House – L.G.] was turning red in the light of the setting sun. Even the lower lying church was touched by its wine-dark rays. On the other side of the valley the small, thickly wooded hill could be seen fading into the darkness, and the breeze had become cooler.

Jane strode through the carefully tended garden into the house. She entered the large living-room, where her mother and Cassandra were already waiting for her. Jane loved this room, she loved the walled up window that had once looked out on to the street and was now transformed into a bookcase. Perhaps, she reflected – and her own thought startled her – perhaps in my books too I always walled up the window opening on to the street. The street means the larger world out there with its noise, its loud pleasures, its unconcealed tragedies. It means people and more people, people who are different from me, people passionate about politics – and I have always hated politics. It means the tragic condition of poverty in the big cities, about which I know nothing and want to know nothing – though I have never neglected our own worthy, well brought up poor. There was one time when the street reached right into our lives. That was years ago when my cousin Elizabeth’s husband was guillotined in France. But that was so far away and so much less real than my books or than a malicious smile espied in company, or a clever turn of phrase, or a gesture revealing a person’s whole character. Yes, even tragedy once came quite close – that was in 1805 – through my brother Frank who was serving in the Navy. In one of his letters he described Nelson’s death at Trafalgar which he had witnessed personally. How much better it is to fill up the window that looks out on to the street with books and to see out only through the

other window on to the garden, on to lawns and trees and on to the high wood fence that cuts us off from others, on to the hedge of hornbeam with its delicate leaves...

She gave her sister a smile and walked over to her writing desk. From the drawer she pulled out some small loose sheets of paper, so small they could easily be hidden if company came, sat down, and began to write. She loved working quietly in the large, handsome room, she loved to look up and see Cassandra's gentle gaze turned on her, and the still sturdy figure of their mother, who on days when she had spent the morning working in the garden, often dozed off on the sofa in the twilight hour. These two people, along with her brothers and their children, and her work, made up her world.

But her books too meant something different to her than to most women writers. She smiled as she thought of Fanny Burney, who was so ambitious and set such store by the judgment of others, and of that dreadful Madame de Stael whose heroines revealed their feelings so shamelessly and seemed to know of nothing but love – not a tender love respectful of the boundaries that preserve a certain distance between people, but a wild, vulgar, at times ridiculous passion. In London once, when the secret of the “Lady” who had written *Pride and Prejudice* was no longer a secret, an attempt had been made to bring her together with Madame de Stael. But she had explained that she could not accept an invitation to a house where she was to be welcomed, not as Jane Austen, but as the author of *Pride and Prejudice*. Besides, Madame de Stael had said that Miss Austen's books were “commonplace.”

She began to write, quickly, as was her manner. Her energetic yet fine handwriting filled one loose sheet of paper after another, until darkness forced her to stop.

Cassandra, who sensed all the moods of her sister, did not hurry to light the lamps. She knew that Jane continued to spin out her stories in the semi-darkness and that she was not to be disturbed by a single spoken word.

Today, however, Jane's thoughts were not about the new novel *Persuasion*, on which she had been working for months. Something or other was leading her to reflect on her own life. What was it exactly? Normally, for her, the past was truly past, and she was not especially interested in her own person. Impatiently she straightened the little cap she wore. (Years ago – far too soon, according to their mother – she and Cassandra had decided to cover their curls with the headgear of elderly women.) She hated every kind of obscurity, in words as in feelings. In her books too every word had to be

the *mot juste*, the only right one. She loved words, and she loved an orderly, clear, rather sober style, a style that – so it seemed to her – best reflected life, at least the life of her caste. Now she was tormented by the question why, today, as she stood at the pond, she had for the first time felt the sadness of autumn, why, as she thought about her books, she had suddenly felt a desire to defend them – not in the eyes of others, but in her own. She wrinkled her forehead and reflected strenuously. Everything was caused by something and until that something had been identified, one was obliged to wander around in a fog and could not find one's way into the bright, somewhat cold, somewhat harsh light of day that, for her, was the only proper light. Why?... Her sister, only a shadowy outline in the darkness, looked over toward her, and all at once she knew what the something was. This morning, in the bedroom they shared, while Cassandra was combing her hair, she had seen, for the first time, a white strand in the dark locks, and had thought, slightly shocked: Cassy is getting old; we are both getting old. Afterwards she had laughed at her own silliness: old at forty and forty-two! How much time do we still have, how much time do I still have to write my beloved books?

Now this thought occurred to her again and she smiled at her own silly sentimentality. I have written only five novels so far! Like a child, she enumerated them on the fingers of her left hand: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*. The smile on her finely shaped features grew broader. Dear, good Mrs. Radcliffe had forgiven her the parody of her famous book *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and had even laughed at it herself. It had been too tempting to make a fool of those popular horror stories with their dark dungeons, spirits, murders, cruel villains and supernaturally virtuous heroes and heroines. Real life was something altogether different, something quiet and peaceful. Even death was not too frightening when one had faith in an afterlife.

The index finger of Jane Austen's right hand still rested on the palm of her left hand. Suddenly she felt how skinny it was. She raised her hand and held it in front of her face, but it was too dark to make anything out and now she grasped one hand with the other a little more vigorously, a little more impatiently than was her wont. Yes, her hand is skinny, and her round face has become long and narrow. That she could see in the mirror. She always feels tired now and rather often she is visited by pains that she hides from her mother and Cassandra...

Time – to write more books... Who knows how much time has been granted to us? It occurred to her that Cassandra, to whom she read each new chapter aloud, had said: "I don't know what it is, Jane, but this book is different. There are none of your dear little malicious comments and gestures. Your heroine, Anne Elliot, strikes me as the most interesting of your female characters, she is gentler, more sensitive..." "Please, Cassy," she had interrupted her sister. "I beg you, don't tell me that Anne is sentimental." "No, but somehow, I'm not sure how, she is more connected to life out there than your other heroines." "I don't understand you. Elizabeth and Elinor and Emma also fall in love, are loved, and get married. Isn't that what happens to everyone?" Cassandra had not answered and had left the room almost in anger. Now as Jane stared at the loose sheets of paper lying in front of her, she admitted that her sister had been right. But she had been right too, for it was the first time that she had allowed feeling to have the leading role in one of her books. Perhaps the world did not consist only of country gentry, middle-class landowners, vicars, and their daughters. Perhaps, after all, there was something else, something that had remained foreign to her.

"Cassy," she called out in the darkness, "do you know what my books are? Little ivory pieces, two inches high, painted with such a thin brush that all my work, in the end, has only a quite slight effect."

"Jane," Cassy cried out in shock. "What has got into you? What are you thinking of?"

"I don't know myself. Perhaps it is better to paint large pictures. Pictures that encompass everything. But I wasn't capable of that. I could only portray the world I knew. Perhaps I was wrong not to want to get to know the other world."

"I don't know what you mean, Jane," Cassandra said uncomprehendingly. Jane Austen laughed, softly, gently, as a lady should laugh.

"Forget about it, Cassy. It was just a thought. I've already chased it away. Light the lamps. As you well know, darkness confuses people and makes them sentimental. Do light the lamps please, quickly."

"Auf Elfenbein gemalt," *Die Zeit* (Vienna), 15 December 1948.

Translator's note:

Zur Mühlen's interest in and knowledge of Jane Austen were unusual in the German-speaking world. Until fairly recently, Austen's work was virtually unread and untranslated in Germany. Even academic studies of it by German scholars of English literature were extremely rare.<sup>1</sup> Zur Mühlen may have been introduced to Austen by her Anglo-Irish grandmother, Isabella Louisa Blacker, or she may have discovered her during her years of exile in England. For obvious reasons, she must have been intrigued by Austen's status as a woman writer whose class and gender identity was in conflict with her literary ambition and by the way she chose to resolve that conflict. But she may also have felt that she shared with Austen a peculiarly feminine way of attending to speech, gesture, and other characteristics of class and individual personality, as well as to the complexity of human relations in general. In addition, her fictional portrait of Jane Austen provided an opportunity for reflecting on the role and responsibility of the writer. Her late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century English predecessor is presented as having deliberately chosen to restrict herself, for the sake of her art, to the portrayal of the world she knew well and never left – in marked contrast to Zur Mühlen's own decision to break out of her world in order to address a wide and varied audience on the pressing political and social issues of her time. What is an author's obligation? Should she write finely observed, literary pieces on domestic themes, as Zur Mühlen with her novel *Der Riesenrad* had demonstrated she was quite capable of doing, or should she look out on to "the street, with its noise, its loud pleasures and its unconcealed tragedies" – which to Zur Mühlen had meant writing about pressing social and political problems, in particular the dangers of National Socialism – and get her readers to do likewise? Zur Mühlen's choice was never in doubt. But she was not unaware of the sacrifices, literary as well as pecuniary, that her choice entailed. Finally, despite her political commitment, Zur Mühlen, who had struggled with ill health for most of her life, was acutely conscious of the fragility of existence and, in general, of the transitoriness of everything. In this feuilleton she projects that consciousness, not implausibly, on to her heroine. Apparently her knowledge of Austen's biography extended to the illness of which Austen began to be aware when she was about forty, not long after she had begun work on *Persuasion*, and which carried her off less than two years later. In Zur Mühlen's autobiographical memoir, *Ende und Anfang*, written and published in 1929, when she was in her mid-forties, there is a short passage that is quite similar in tone to the tone set at the very opening of the feuilleton. It evokes the feeling of melancholy that overcame the future

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1 See Annika Bautz, "The Reception of Jane Austen in Germany," in *The Reception of Jane Austen in Europe*, ed. Anthony Mandal and Brian Southam (London and New York: Continuum, 2007), pp. 93-116. Zur Mühlen's feuilleton is not mentioned in this otherwise well documented article.

writer as she watched darkness gathering over the small town of Gmunden in Austria, where, in the company of her beloved grandmother, she spent her happiest childhood years:

I loved our mountain, the pride of the little town, rising up on the opposite shore of the lake. On fine summer evenings the whole mass of stone turned pink, like the finest marble, and then, when it was already dusk all around, the Traunstein (as our mountain was called) shone forth out of the shadows like an undying flame. Gradually, however, it paled and turned cold and dead, and everything lost life and became suddenly old and joyless. At that moment, without knowing why, I felt a deep sadness. A day was dead, a day of childhood was irrevocably gone.

The fact that this little feuilleton was published in the Vienna *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, the socialist newspaper with which she had long been associated, on the occasion of her own 65<sup>th</sup> birthday is an indication of how keen and personal Zur Mühlen's interest in Austen was.

## 10. The Sparrow

Quarrel and disagreement ruled in the Sparrow family. Mother Sparrow squatted in her nest all day and Father Sparrow swore and grumbled and found fault with everything. The family that had once been so happy was completely changed. And for all this misery the youngest Sparrow was to blame. One evening at supper he had declared briefly and boldly, "I am not going to school any more. I am not putting up any more with all the insults I receive. I am tired of our whole life here. I want to go out into the world." He stuck up his bill cheekily and gave his parents a defiant look.

Mother Sparrow was so shocked that all her feathers stood up. She stared helplessly at her ill-mannered son, and all she could do was to say weakly, "Peep, peep." But Father Sparrow opened his beak so wide in horror that the long worm he had been about to eat fell out of it and slithered away as fast as it could. This made Father Sparrow even angrier. Now, on top of everything else, his supper had got away. Father Sparrow was a man of action. This time too, as in the past, he bent down and beat his son in the face with his sharp beak.

Sparrow screamed more defiantly than ever, "I won't stay here any longer. I've had enough. I'm going out into the world."

Then Mother Sparrow found her voice again and said tearfully, "You wicked child! Is that how you thank your parents for the love they have given you! Have we not brought you up well and provided you with everything? You are the first sparrow in our village to attend Professor Swallow's school and learn how to build artistic nests. You move in the best circles. You mix with the Swallows, the Starlings, and the Yellow-bills. And this is how you repay us!"

"I don't care a straw about the best circles," Sparrow replied rudely. And he opened his beak and whistled defiantly, "Tweet, tweet!"

"No other sparrow is studying for such a respectable profession," piped Mother Sparrow despairingly.

Then Sparrow Junior began to make such a rumpus that the whole nest

shook. "A respectable profession, yes, truly a beautiful profession. Building nests for others to live in. Slaving in the heat of the sun, carrying straws from all over, weaving them together, making sure that everything is just perfect – only to have the fine ladies and gentlemen move in and throw me a little worm for my wages, barely big enough for a decent meal. Fine people, indeed! The Swallows, always dressed up in their frock-coats; the Yellow-bills showing off all their gold. And the arrogance and scorn they treat us with! A common laborer, they call me contemptuously. I have had enough of it. I am as good as they are, and maybe better."

Mother Sparrow shrank back in horror, but Father Sparrow puffed himself up until he nearly burst and thundered, "Be silent, you rogue, you little scoundrel. You talk like a Communist. You forget that I am Chairman of the sparrow Village Council. My son may not rebel against the established order."

"Yes," groaned Mother Sparrow, "and what if the neighbours were to hear you! How dreadful!" Sparrow Junior laughed shamelessly, seated himself on the edge of the nest and whistled a revolutionary song.

Father Sparrow rose hastily and muttered in an undertone to his wife, "See to that young fool and get him to behave. I have to go now. There is a meeting of the Choral Society." He flew away without one look at his naughty son.

Mother Sparrow sighed deeply and asked in a plaintive voice, "Now what is it you really want?"

Sparrow Junior came closer, nestled against his mother and said with a sweet smile, "I want to go away, little Mother, far away. To foreign lands where it is always summer."

"But Son of my Heart, you know that even the stupid children of humans are taught in their schools that the sparrow is not a migratory bird."

"What is that to me? I can't stand it here any longer. I am tired of always seeing the same things: the old church steeple in the distance, the farmhouse and the dung-hill right here in front of our noses. No, I want to go away, far away."

At that he spread out his wings and pushed himself head first out of the nest into space. It seemed very dangerous, but his wings carried him safely through the air.

Still, Sparrow Junior was by no means as joyous and light-hearted as he seemed. His parents' words had raised all sorts of doubts in his mind. "Mother was really right," he said to himself. "The sparrow is not a

migratory bird. No one has ever heard of a sparrow flying across the great ocean and going to distant lands. But why," he asked himself, with defiant courage, "shouldn't I be the first one to do this? Some one always has to be the first. If my venture succeeds I will have proved to the entire sparrow people that they don't have to freeze and starve in the winter-time, but can move to warm countries and live well there. To be sure, the ocean..." Sparrow Junior became disheartened. He remembered what his teacher, Swallow the master builder, had once told him about the great, wild stretch of boundless water with its angry, foaming waves that you had to fly over day after day. If the strength of your wings failed, you plunged down and were lost. You were swallowed up by the waves.

Beset by these thoughts, Sparrow Junior almost wanted to give up the idea. He felt completely deflated and began to tremble. Then suddenly he thought how many wretched sparrows had died of hunger and cold in past hard winters.

"No, no," he said to himself. I mustn't be so cowardly. This is not just about me. It's about all my brother sparrows, about all the future generations of Sparrows who will be around when I am long dead. If I can help them to a happier life, it will be worth every effort and every sacrifice."

And brave Sparrow Junior resolved to strike out the very next day.

He spent that night in his parents' nest, huddled close to his mother, and wept a little in secret, because it was hard for him to leave her. Father Sparrow got home late and quite drunk from the Choral Society meeting, threw himself with such force on his bed that it creaked noisily, and immediately fell asleep.

The grey-white sky began to turn rosy. Morning came flying in on the wings of the wind and brought light to the world. Sparrow Junior awoke, looked for the last time at his sleeping parents, and flew away. He knew which direction to fly in, for he remembered the stories that the swallows had told. Now he flew exactly that way.

The sun climbed higher into the heavens, it became hotter and hotter, and poor Sparrow could scarcely breathe. His wings were so sore that he could hardly lift them. Still, he flew on. He had resolved not to rest until the shades of night fell on the earth.

Never had Sparrow Junior lived through such a long day. In vain his bright little eyes explored the heavens; the great golden sphere of the sun shone brightly and would not go down.

"I was a fool," thought Sparrow. "At this moment I might be sitting

comfortably at home in our nest, or bathing in the big puddle by the cherry-tree. Oh, how pleasant it would be to bathe. Even the ocean would not be too big for me right now."

Still, he did not lose heart but flew steadily on. True, he was now flying very slowly. Every beat of his wings caused him terrible pain. He began to hate the sun, the merciless red sphere that would not go down. To give himself courage he made up a little song, sang it very softly, and flapped his weary wings in time to its rhythm.

My cause is the cause of my brothers,  
My strength must save them all;  
If I fail, I do wrong to the others,  
And their chains will never fall.

At last, at long last, great black shadows fell upon the earth. A refreshing breeze came flying in, coolly fanning Sparrow, who was very weary, and bearing him gently along on its mighty wings.

As the sun went down behind a blue hill, Sparrow alighted, utterly exhausted, on a large meadow. He lay panting in the tall grass. The soft chirping of the crickets lulled him to sleep; his eyes closed.

Rough, loud voices, human voices, awakened him. He peeked out through the tall blades of grass and saw two ragged, dust-covered men seated under a knotty old nut-tree. One of them was pulling his torn boots off and, looking woefully at his blistered feet, said: "I can't go on any more. I have to rest for a day."

"Just another half hour," the other man said comfortingly. "Just to the next railroad station. There we will hide in a freight car and ride until morning. Then it will not be far to the sea."

"All right, then," the first man mumbled grumpily. "But I can't go a step further than that today." Slowly he pulled his boots on again.

Sparrow Junior had listened attentively to their words. "So humans get tired too," he thought, "and then they ride. I don't know what that means, but I know that you don't tire yourself out that way. If humans ride, why shouldn't sparrows ride too?" He decided to follow the two men and not to let them out of his sight. As they left soon after, he flew after them.

They arrived at a house. On the ground in front of it stretched two gleaming ribbons. Now night had really come. Everything was hidden in darkness. Only the stars shone faintly in the sky. Sparrow stayed near the two men and waited.

Suddenly something dreadful happened. Through the darkness a

gigantic black beast came rattling along, its red eyes shining so brightly that you could see them from a great distance. It puffed and panted, and the earth shook under it. As it came near, it let out a frightful shriek. Then suddenly it stopped. Clouds of smoke poured from its long black nose.

Sparrow was astonished that neither of the two men, nor the other humans who were there seemed to be afraid of the monster. On the contrary, they ran up to it and disappeared into its maw. Then Sparrow noticed that the monster pulled a large number of little black houses behind it. He saw the two men sneak into one of those houses and flew on to the roof of the same house. Scarcely had he settled down when the monster again began to puff and pant and started to move.

Poor Sparrow thought he would die of fright. The monster rattled along at such speed that the little bird could neither hear nor see. At home he had often flown with the wind for the fun of it and had enjoyed the swift motion. But this was altogether different. A fearful wind storm beat on him and tried to blow him off the roof. He made himself as small as he could, clung on tightly, trembling all over, and was convinced that his last hour had come. If humans call this rest, they surely are strange creatures. It is true that, though he could see over all the roofs, he could not see a single Human on any of them. Perhaps it is not so terrible where the people are, as it is here. He was a clever Sparrow and when the monster stopped again to catch its breath, he flew down from the roof of the house and had a look at it from the front. The door was not quite closed. Sparrow squeezed through the crack, and entered a dark room piled high with crates. He squatted on one of them and waited to see what would happen.

The monster began to run again. Sparrow laughed with joy; he had found the right thing to do. He sat there at rest and the monster had to slave to carry him along. So this is what humans call "riding." Evidently, humans are not as stupid as he thought.

The countless feet of the monster pounded over the earth singing a rattling, rumbling, monotonous song. To Sparrow the words seemed to be: "Into the distance! Into the distance!" For a while he listened to the song, then he fell asleep.

He must have slept for a long time. When he awoke, the sun was high in the sky and its rays came through the narrow open crack in the door into the dark room. Sparrow saw his two acquaintances crouching on the floor, hidden between two tall crates. They seemed to be in good humour, chatting with one another and laughing.

"We have travelled a good part of our way without trouble," said the older one. "Now we only have to walk one more day and ride another night. Then we will have reached the ocean."

"How long will we have to swim?"

"About five days."

Terror seized Sparrow. For five days he would have to swim over the endless waters. For five long days he would not be able to rest if he was not to sink under the waves. How would he be able to hold out? He began to reflect anxiously. Could humans swim for so long in the water? He had seen boys bathing in the village pond, but they would come out of the water in a short time and none of them ever remained in it all day long. Perhaps there were also tamed monsters that carried humans over the water. Again he decided not to leave the two humans' side and to do everything they did.

When the two men jumped unnoticed off the freight car at a busy railroad station, Sparrow followed them. He flew very close to them. He felt that they were his friends and that as long as he stayed with them nothing would happen to him.

All day long the men walked, through fields and meadows, through little villages with funny pointed church steeples. The younger of the two men limped. He could only walk slowly. This pleased Sparrow, for it meant that he did not have to hurry but could fly along at a comfortable speed. When the men stopped, Sparrow followed their example, using the time to look for food, as the long journey had made him unusually hungry. He also chatted with a few foreign birds, all of whom advised him not to continue his dangerous journey. The migratory birds he spoke to looked him over scornfully. "Do you think you can do the same as high class people like us?" they said with a sneer. "Travelling, seeing the world, spending the winter in warm climates – that is not for common people."

An old blackbird minister, black-frocked and solemn, delivered a sermon to him from a high branch. "We must obey God's commandments. God has ordained that sparrows must spend the winter in the north."

"If your God has ordained that our entire people is to be destroyed by cold and hunger and that only the upper classes, the Capitalists, like the Swallows and the Starlings, can escape the harsh winter, I don't want to know anything about him!" cried Sparrow, and his feathers bristled up in anger.

The old blackbird minister primped his shining feathers with his bill and muttered something unintelligible. But Sparrow was sad. "How

cruel we birds are to one another," he thought to himself. "I am trying to do something that will be helpful to all, and I am just laughed at. Can't anybody understand me?"

"Yes, I can, I can!" called a sweet voice from a great height, and a young lark shot down, swift as lightning, and alighted by the side of the despondent Sparrow. "I understand you. Everybody jeers at me too because I don't fly close to the earth as they do, but always try to soar higher and higher into the blue heavens. Do not be downcast, dear brother, you will reach your goal."

The young lark flew close to Sparrow, looked at him and said: "Fly a little for me, brother, so that I can see how strong your wings are."

Sparrow flew up, hovering over the lark. As he returned, she gave him a sad look and said earnestly: "Your wings cannot carry you over the great ocean, my poor friend. But you must not give up on that account. You must do as humans do. They cannot fly at all, and yet they travel all over the world. They have invented a kind of house that swims over the water. They call it a ship. You must find a ship..."

Sparrow did not wait to hear the rest. The two men had left unnoticed while the lark was speaking and now Sparrow saw them in the distance like two dark spots. Frightened, he cried out: "My two humans have left me," and he flew after them as fast as he could.

When it grew dark the men once again sneaked into a freight train. Sparrow followed them and slept all night while the black monster again carried him over hills and mountains, past lakes and streams.

When dawn broke, the two men crept out of the train and Sparrow flew after them. They walked for a little while and then Sparrow saw an immense body of water that stretched before him. This blue-grey expanse of water extended infinitely outwards, far beyond the range of his vision, while terrifying high, wild, white-capped waves beat the shore.

So this was the ocean! Never had Sparrow felt so small and helpless as at the sight of this dreadful water. What was he in comparison? A poor helpless little bird, a tiny, anonymous something. From his little breast he heaved deep sighs, and tears rolled down from his bright little eyes. "If I were only safe at home, in our snug little nest," he moaned. "If only I could creep under Mother's wings as I used to do when I was small."

The waves roared eerily, threateningly; the white foam flew upwards. But the two men walked unconcerned along the damp, sandy beach. They seemed to have no fear at all of the raging sea as it lashed the shore. With

beating heart, Sparrow followed them. And then he saw an astonishing sight. In a great bay strange things were tossing about. They looked partly like houses, with tiny windows and tall chimneys, from which came a stream of heavy grey smoke, and partly like a forest in which bare trees without branches seemed to grow. Although these trees bore neither fruit nor leaves, Sparrow was delighted to see them. They seemed familiar. He began to feel at home. But how strange it was that these houses with the tall trees on them were on water and were being tossed up and down by the waves. Suddenly Sparrow remembered the words of the lark. "Humans call these houses that swim on the water 'ships.'" So these were ships! On one of these tossing, swimming houses he would travel to warm lands.

But which should he choose?

It occurred to him that at home it was the largest trees that were best able to withstand the wind. Probably the same was true of ships, and so he must choose the largest.

His two friends walked towards a small ship. Sparrow piped "Farewell! Farewell!" several times, but they did not hear him.

Sparrow flew on to an immense ship from whose chimneys great clouds of grey smoke were streaming, and hid himself high up at the top of one of the leafless trees.

What noise and activity there was below. Countless humans ran hither and thither, calling and shouting to one another; something rattled, something clattered, the great chimneys let out a loud shriek. A bridge that connected the ship with the land flew up into the air, then fell down with a bang into the ship. The ship started on its journey. Slowly, gravely, it cut through the water bubbling up on either side.. The large house with the leafless trees, the little bird's new home, swam away from the land.

All the noise and the hurrying and scurrying had left Sparrow in a state of great confusion. But another terrible fright was in store for him. Suddenly a young fellow climbed up his tree. Sparrow was convinced that he had come to capture him. But the fellow did not seem to notice him and after a while climbed back down. As it grew dark, the ship became quiet and only the sound of the waves could be heard. Sparrow flew down from his tree and sat down on the ground, where he soon fell asleep.

When he awoke in the morning, he thought he would die of fright. The land had disappeared. Wherever he looked, he saw only water. Great grey waves rolled sluggishly against the ship, causing it to sway slightly, as a gentle wind shakes the nests in the trees. Not a tree, not a shrub, not a

flower was to be seen anywhere. The ship swam all alone on the boundless ocean.

Poor Sparrow felt quite lonely and abandoned.. "If I could just find another bird, any bird," he sighed. "Even if it were a haughty swallow or a strict blackbird. I could at least speak with someone who knows my world and speaks my language." Once again, all his courage deserted him and he began to weep bitterly.

"Who are you?" suddenly asked a thin, piping voice, and when Sparrow looked up he beheld a little mouse standing before him and staring at him with large round eyes.

Sparrow was happy, for he was acquainted with mice at home. He bent down and politely answered the mouse's questions.

"You are a brave sparrow," she said, after she had heard his story. "I bid you welcome to my ship."

"To your ship?" exclaimed Sparrow. "I thought the ship belonged to the humans."

"That is what the humans think too," the mouse replied sharply. "But don't you know that humans always think everything belongs to them?"

"That is true. The farmer at home also thought that the cherry-tree was his, and yet it is quite obvious that the cherry-tree was made for us sparrows."

While they were conversing, a very old mouse came over and began to speak. "Not all humans believe that everything belongs to them," she said in a schoolmistressly tone. "There are also humans who do not possess anything. You can see that on this ship. On the upper decks people live in large, beautifully appointed, airy rooms, and eat all day long. My mouth waters when I smell the rich dishes that are set before them."

"But down below people are so crowded together that they can hardly find a space to lie down in at night, and many have nothing to eat on the whole journey but the dry bread that they brought along with them. That idiotic expression, 'my ship,' that too you learned from humans," she said, scolding the little mouse. "You know that among us everything is shared in common. Don't let me hear such words from you again."

"Forgive me, Grandmother," the young mouse begged.

"You are a stranger here," said the Grandmother mouse to Sparrow. "We will try to help you to survive the long journey. I advise you not to fly to the rich people. They will play with you for a day or two, and then forget you. The rich believe that everything in the world is there to serve and please

them. To be sure, you will only find a few breadcrumbs among the poor on the lower decks, but these humans will be kind to you, because they know what it is like to be a poor creature who has nothing."

Sparrow followed the advice of the wise Grandmother mouse and soon realized that she had spoken truthfully. The small children were delighted with him and they saved breadcrumbs for him from the few that were provided for their own little mouths. And as they were children, they understood Sparrow's language and chatted with him. In this way, Sparrow heard many very sad stories. The children told of need and misery, they told how hard their parents had to work and how, even so, there was often nothing to eat in the house. Our good-hearted Sparrow felt very sad when he heard about this. "There must also be a beautiful land for humans, where conditions are good and they do not have to be cold and go hungry," he said to his little friends.

"Perhaps," said a pale little girl. "But we have not yet found the way to it."

"When I am big," declared a dark-haired little boy, "I will go away in search of that land. And when I find it, I will lead all poor, deprived humans to it."

The two mice also visited Sparrow often. They always came towards evening, when everything was quiet.

And so quite a long time passed, until one day Sparrow saw land in the distance, with houses and trees, and knew that he had now reached his goal.

The grey ocean had become quite blue and gleamed in the sunshine. It was very hot, and Grandmother mouse said that this was the land where there is no winter.

When the ship docked, Sparrow tenderly took leave of his friends and flew ashore to inspect his new home.

All the humans had brown faces and wore strange clothes. The faces of the women were covered, so that only their large black eyes could be seen. He also saw funny animals that walked on four long legs and had a great hump on their backs. Even the trees were different from those at home. Some had long pointed leaves and sweet, brown fruit that tasted delicious to Sparrow. There was plenty to eat. Here no sparrow would have to suffer hunger, and snow and cold were unknown.

"Is this not also the right country for poor humans?" Sparrow wondered. But then he saw that in this sunny land too there were rich and poor, that

a few went richly clothed, while others wore rags, that a few lazy folk rode in handsome carriages, while others groaned under heavy burdens. And he thought, "It is much easier to find a sparrow paradise than a land where all humans live well." This pained him, because on his journey he had come to like humans. "But how strange this is," he thought in amazement. "Humans can tame wild monsters so that they will carry them all over, they know how to build houses that swim on the water, and yet they are poor and destitute and let a few greedy scoundrels take everything away from them."

Now that he had reached the warm country, Sparrow rested from his dangerous and wearisome journey, flew about lazily, and spent each night in a different tree.

One day he came to a beautiful stream and flew along its course. He came to a very great plain. At first he thought he had reached the ocean again, but then he saw that it was covered with fine yellow sand. In the distance he saw something rising out of the sand that looked like a monstrous animal. Out of curiosity he flew closer to it and realized that it was a gigantic creature with the head of a human and two huge paws. It was made of grey-brown stone and was partly covered with sand.

The ugly animal lay quite still and grinned evilly. Sparrow bowed anxiously: would the beast try to eat him in the end? But no, it graciously acknowledged his greeting and said: "I have been lying here for thousands of years, yet I have never seen a bird like you. Who are you? What are you doing here?"

Sparrow told his story and the great beast listened patiently. Then the little bird asked humbly: "Will you now tell me who you are? We have no animals like you at home."

The great beast laughed and replied: "Humans call me the Sphinx. I am so old that I have lost count of my age. I have seen everything, know everything."

"In my country the owls also say that," was Sparrow's pert response.

The Sphinx looked at him angrily. "The owl is a conceited braggart!" it exclaimed testily.

Sparrow was alarmed. "Forgive me!" he stammered. "I did not wish to offend you. " You also look much older than the owl."

"Indeed I am. I count my years only by the thousands."

"How much you must have seen!" cried Sparrow.

The Sphinx opened her gigantic mouth in such a huge yawn that the

sand flew about her as though a whirlwind had hit it.

"For millennia," she said, "I have always observed the same thing. I see humans who live amid riches and pleasures and who force their starving slaves to drudge. At first the slaves were driven with great whips which the overseer used to beat them with when they became tired from the heat of the sun. Often these slaves were kept at work with chains on their feet, so that they could not run away. Later the whips disappeared, and the masters boasted of their kindness, saying, 'In these enlightened times, no man is a slave.' But secretly they concealed an invisible whip, hunger, and this drove the people to slavery as surely as the terrible whip the overseers had used previously. I see humans pass here, rich strangers who visit this country out of curiosity, and I see poor Arabs, who work as muleteers, running alongside the mules of the rich, or dragging heavy stones, and barely keeping alive with a few dates and a little corn, just like their ancestors of thousands of years ago."

The Sphinx fell silent and gazed gloomily out into the desert. Finally, she spoke again: "Thousands of years ago, there were gorgeously dressed, jewelled priests here, who strutted around under the same canopy, next to the rich. They tricked and deceived the people, threatening them with the anger of the gods if they did not suffer their lot patiently. Today, these priests are dressed in black, but they still lie and still stand by the rich, although they worship a god who was a poor carpenter. It has always been the same, for thousands of years." And the Sphinx yawned once more.

"Can you also see into the future, wise Beast?" Sparrow asked shyly.

The Sphinx nodded her enormous head.

"Yes, I can do that too. Listen to my words, little bird. A day will come when all the slaves will rise up in a dreadful struggle against their oppressors. After a long and bloody struggle, they will be victorious, and then a new world will come into being, a world in which everything belongs in common to all, and all humans are free. Even today the earth is trembling in joyful expectation. In the quiet of the night I can feel it quivering. But now you must leave me. For thousands of years I have not spoken to any being. I will speak again only when the day of freedom dawns. Then my voice will join in the jubilation of the liberated peoples."

Sparrow flew out of the desert where he could find nothing to eat, returned to the green stream, and spent many glorious days there.

One day, as he was sitting on a stone by the banks of the stream, he heard familiar voices above him. "Tweet! Tweet!" he heard.

He looked up and saw three swallows who flew slowly down towards him and landed by his side.

"Are you here already?" Sparrow asked in surprise.

"We are, we are indeed," twittered the swallows. "At home rough winds are already blowing and there is frost in the meadows at night. Winter is coming."

How frightened Sparrow was when he heard that. Here in this beautiful land, where he had plenty of fat worms and warm sunshine, he had forgotten about his sparrow brothers. And in the meantime, death-bringing winter had come. He must hurry home to teach them how to get to the sunny land. Would he reach them in time? How selfish he had been; if many poor sparrows were freezing and starving at home, it was his fault.

Even as he was thinking these thoughts, he spread his little wings and flew towards the ocean.

In the harbour many silvery-white seagulls were flying about, crying with shrill voices, "A storm is coming! A storm is coming!"

"Which ship is heading north?" Sparrow asked hurriedly.

"None," one seagull answered. But this was not true. She was a mean bird and wanted to frighten Sparrow.

But he believed her. "Then I must fly over the ocean," he thought. "I must do it, for whether my brother sparrows live or die depends on me. I cannot leave them in the lurch."

Sadly, he looked back on the wonderland once more. Then he flew out over the great ocean.

Wild waves dashed up, the storm howled, and a fine rain fell. Within a few hours, Sparrow was so tired that he could no longer fly high. The huge waves wet his feathers, they became heavy with water and dragged him down, deeper and deeper. A monstrous wave reached out for him with its white arms and Sparrow fell into the ocean and was swallowed by the waves.

Because of that, sparrows must still freeze and starve every winter, for there has not been another courageous sparrow to show them the way to the land of the sun.

But did Sparrow endure so much suffering in vain, and die in vain?

No, for the little dark-haired boy on the ship had paid special attention to the story Sparrow had told him and had listened carefully to what Sparrow wanted to do for his sparrow brothers. And this the little boy wanted to do for his fellow-humans. He grew up, and wherever oppressed workers

struggled against their oppressors, he was their leader. But the tale of the dark-haired boy, of his life and his death, is another story and does not belong here.

Der Spatz. Eine Märchen. (Berlin: Verein Internationaler Verlags-Anstalten, 1922). Illustrations by Karl Holz.

# 11. The Spectacles

Once upon a time there was a big, rich country, where quiet and order always reigned. Although in this country too there were rich and poor and the poor were exploited by the rich, not a word of complaint was ever heard, let alone grumbling or threats. The King sat on his golden throne, fat, well-fed, and satisfied, the well-off citizens lived in their fine houses, fat well-fed, and satisfied, and the poor toiled patiently twelve hours a day in the factories and in the fields. If they did not get paid enough and went hungry, they seemed not to notice it.

Here is how this came about. Many hundreds of years before, a wicked magician, who was a friend of the King's, had lived in this country. This magician had the power to see into the future and he foresaw that the poor would not let themselves be treated like animals for ever, that they would one day demand their rights, and that the grand lifestyle of the kings and the well-off citizens would then become a thing of the past. He wanted to keep this from happening. All his life long, the magician sat in his workshop, cutting glass into little round discs, which he tinted with various colors and made into spectacles. Then he told the king that he and his successors should see to it that each newborn child was immediately fitted with a pair of the spectacles. These were never, on pain of death, to be taken off.

Countless pairs of spectacles, carefully placed on fine pine shavings, were laid out in a vast warehouse. A descendant of the magician was in charge of them. He was immediately informed when a child had come into the world; whereupon he selected the appropriate spectacles for it, and either fitted them himself on the child's tiny nose or had one of his underlings do it.

The spectacles were of very different kinds. The most complicated were those made for the children of the poor. The old magician had worked on them for almost fifty years, until he finally got them the way he wanted. The lenses were ground in such a way that, when they looked through them,

the poor saw their brothers and sisters as very small, helpless, and inferior creatures, but when they looked at the well-off citizens and especially at the King, they saw them through the spectacles as mighty, almost divine beings who were entitled to everything good in the world, whose power no one could resist, and who had the right to make all others into their servants. Finding the right tint for the lenses had also required the old magician to rack his brains for many a day. For the tint had to make the wearer of the spectacles see the wretched hovel he lived in as altogether cozy, comfortable, and agreeable; on the other hand, when he passed by the mansions and gardens of the well-off or the palaces and parks of the King, he was not to see how splendid and grand they were, since he would otherwise ultimately become dissatisfied.

The magician had an easier time producing the spectacles intended for the well-off citizens. Here he had only to mix a little gold or silver with the glass so that, wherever they looked, they would always see only gold and silver, never real living human beings. Moreover, the magician ground the lenses in such a way that the well-off saw the workers as machines made exclusively for their use and benefit.

Making the King's spectacles was the easiest job of all for the magician. They did not even have to be ground. They had only to be dipped once in the blood of the cruelest man who had ever lived and twice in the blood of the dumbest man who had ever lived. When he looked through them the King immediately saw all the things that kings customarily see, in exactly the way that it is fitting for a king to see them.

There were, in addition, a small number of large, rose-colored spectacles, which were used only very rarely. In the three centuries since the death of the old magician, his descendants had needed to fit them on only three people. These spectacles were intended for a few remarkable individuals who, though fitted with the usual spectacles, still beheld something of how things really are.

For example, there had once been a young poet, a court poet, who lived grandly amid the pleasures of the royal court and enjoyed the admiration and respect of all the better-off citizens. He wrote fine poems in praise of the King and the wisdom of his government and agreeable lyrics for the citizens, extolling their virtues. This young poet could well have been thought to be the happiest man in the world, and in truth he too looked out on it quite cheerfully through his silver-tinted glasses. The citizens were disturbed, it is true, despite their respect for him, by the fact that he did not

wish to become majestically fat like them, but as he was, after all, a poet, they forgave him.

But one day it happened that the poet wandered by accident into the section of town where the poor people lived. It was a beautiful summer's day and the sun's rays were so warm that the silver on one of the lenses of his spectacles melted. And so with one eye the poet saw how things really were, and what he saw so shook and scared him that he could not help crying out. He saw tired, toiling men; haggard, sickly women; starving, emaciated children. Except for him, he thought, no one had seen this, and he had to inform everyone. He ran to the better-off citizens, buried his head in his hands and, in tears, told them of the horrors he had seen. They laughed, figuring that he had gone off his head because of the hot weather. Then he looked up and with his one eye saw the reality. "Thieves! Murderers!" he screamed at the citizens, and ran to the King, hoping to get help from him. But when he found the King and saw him sitting on the throne, he had to shout: "You wicked, cruel fool! What right do you have to sit here on the throne?!"

The poet was put in chains, taken away, and would certainly have been executed, had not the magician, who was in charge of the spectacles, put in a good word for him and explained to the King how the mishap had occurred. And so the ranting, raging poet was dragged before the magician, who placed a pair of rose-colored spectacles on his nose and said: "Your old spectacles had become faulty, my friend, and that is why you thought you saw such terrible things. Go back on to the street now, look around you, and you will see how mistaken you were."

The poet did as he was asked, and now, seen through the rose-colored spectacles, everything once again appeared good and beautiful to him. Poverty seemed to him something sublime and holy. "Work dignifies and ennobles," he thought. "How fortunate are those who can be ennobled twelve hours a day." In the well-off citizens, he rediscovered his virtuous friends, and when he came before the King, he was dazzled by his splendor and fell on his knees in veneration.

After this incident the entire country once again enjoyed many, many years of quiet and order.

But when the young poet had become an old poet and lay on his deathbed, he pushed the spectacles away from his dying eyes, and in that split second thought he once again saw what he had seen on that summer's day many years before. By his bedside sat a young girl who had spared no pains to

take good care of him. The poet reached for her hand and stammered: "The spectacles! Take off the spectacles. Look!" Thereupon he died.

The girl went home to her family pensive and confused. She had not properly understood the dying man's words, for the spectacles affected not only vision but the brain. Yet they stuck in her memory and from time to time she wondered what the world might look like if it was looked at without spectacles.

Soon after, she was married to a shoemaker and when their first child, a sturdy boy, entered the world and she saw his large, shining eyes, she remembered the poet's words and, troubled and perplexed, thought it a shame to conceal those beautiful eyes behind an ugly pair of spectacles. Still, things followed their usual course, the magician came, fitted the spectacles on little Fritz's tiny nose, and so everything was in order.

But something strange happened: little Fritz could not abide the spectacles and kept trying to take them off, so that his parents had to be in constant fear that one day he might succeed in doing so, run out on to the street without spectacles, be caught by the forces of order and, in accordance with the law of the land, be put to death. All their pleas and threats were of no avail, however; as soon as Fritz was alone he would tear and pull at the hated spectacles which had been ingeniously tied to the back of his head.

When the boy was almost fully grown, he finally succeeded from time to time in pulling the spectacles off. And then his startled eyes beheld frightful things: misery, deprivation, and impotent helplessness on the one hand; wealth, high living, splendor, and injustice on the other. But he always caught only a glimpse of this, for on each occasion his mother or sister would soon come running after him, scolding and pleading, weeping and threatening, until they got the spectacles put back on him again.

The little he had been able to get a glimpse of was enough, however, to cause great sadness and also arouse great anger in the boy's heart. He constantly tried to figure out how the world might be rid of the injustice he had perceived. Finally he became convinced that the spectacles were chiefly to blame for it all. If his friends and playmates could only look out on the world without spectacles, they too would recognize the injustice that had been done to them and would also see that they were in no way as weak and helpless as the spectacles had deceived them into thinking they were.

So one day, when his father was away in the workshop and his mother

and sister were busy in the kitchen, Fritz tore the spectacles off, stamped on them, and smashed them to smithereens.

He was at first stunned, as if by a blow to the head, by what his seeing eyes now beheld. But then a fire blazed up in his heart that almost consumed him and he swore not to rest or relax until his comrades had also removed their spectacles and recovered their true sight.

But first and foremost it was essential to conceal what he had done from the well-off citizens and the King. Fritz tied a black cloth over his eyes and explained that the light hurt them. The citizens were satisfied with this explanation for they figured that it is even harder to see through a black cloth than through spectacles.

When the darkness of night provided its cover and protection, Fritz slipped out and went to his comrades. He recounted to them all that he had seen, and urged them to throw away their spectacles.

At first they laughed at him, but when he succeeded in talking a number of them into taking off their spectacles for a few short minutes, those who had done so took his side. With time their numbers kept growing, until finally three quarters of the workers had become "anti-spectacles" people.

One day, armed and ready for anything, the "anti-spectacles" people marched out toward the houses of the well-off citizens and the King's palace, pushed their way into the houses, tore the spectacles off the citizens and the King, and demanded their rights. The King was so terrified that he rushed onto the street, began to run, and ran and ran until he came to a country where everyone still wore spectacles and peace and order reigned. At first the well-off citizens prepared to defend themselves, but as they no longer wore spectacles, they could not fail to recognize the might of the "anti-spectacles" people and to acknowledge that they themselves were pathetically dumb scoundrels. Grumbling and with rage in their hearts, they acceded to the commands of the "anti-spectacles" people.

The latter now truly made order in the land: everyone who worked received sufficient pay, anyone who was too lazy to work received nothing. Arrangements were made to take care of the children, the sick, and the elderly, and no one possessed more than he was entitled to.

The country in which the events in this story took place lies in the East, where the sun rises. Perhaps the light is brighter there and so people have learned to see more quickly than in other lands. Yet we all know how fast light travels; it will travel to other lands too and people there will also smash their spectacles. For once they have learned to truly see, they will also

act. In those lands that are still in darkness every individual must help by tearing off his own spectacles, informing his comrades of what he has seen, and recruiting people to the “anti-spectacles” party, until their number is so great that they can become the masters of a happy and free world.

*Die Brillen in Es war einmal...und es wird sein. Märchen.* Umschlag, Initialen und Bilder zeichnete Heinrich Vogeler (Berlin:Verlag der Jugendinternationale, 1930), pp. 27-31. [First published in *Ali der Teppichweber*. Mit Zeichnungen von John Heartfield (Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1923), pp. 34-38]

## II

# *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen (Our Daughters the Nazi Girls).* A Synopsis in English (Prepared by L. Gossman)

The conditions in which this novel was written, published, and subsequently banned, are briefly described in the essay “Remembering Hermynia Zur Mühlen” in the main volume.

Zur Mühlen and Klein both gave their own accounts of the novel’s genesis and subsequent fate.

Here is Stefan Klein’s as it appeared in the *Österreichisches Tagebuch* soon after Zur Mühlen’s death:

When we returned on April 1, 1933 to Vienna, her native city and mine, Hermynia was deeply shaken by all the things she had witnessed and experienced in the Third Reich, and as she observed the general lack of concern among the Austrians, she became truly obsessed with the desire to tell them what was really going on in the ‘fraternal’ German land and what Austria, which she still thought of as her beloved homeland, should expect. The only way she could do this was by writing. But ‘in the shadow of the Third Reich,’ some ‘democratic’ editors – men who, in their snobbery, would otherwise have been flattered by a visit from a countess – refused even to receive ‘the damned Red.’ Even a truly dear and decent features-page editor told her that he could do absolutely nothing with the sort of thing she had written and that she should bring him humorous sketches that would make readers ‘split their sides laughing’ (his very words). When we got back to our rented room in the Alserstrasse, Hermynia, in despair, flew into a rage. In the three weeks that followed, she did not write a single humorous sketch. Instead, she completed at one go the novel *Unsere Töchter, die Nazinen*, which was published by the Gsur Press of Dr. Karl Winter, a leftwing

Catholic former vice-mayor of Vienna and a critic of the Dolfuss dictatorship,<sup>2</sup> only to be banned two weeks later at the behest of Hitler's ambassador to Austria, Franz von Papen.<sup>3</sup>

In a supplementary chapter written in 1950 for a post-war republication of *Ende und Anfang*, Zur Mühlen had already given her version of the circumstances in which she wrote her novel and of the difficulties she experienced as she tried to get it published:

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2 Klein's brief characterisation of Winter needs to be nuanced. See "Notes on the Persons and Events mentioned in the Memoir" under "Gsur Verlag" and the essay "Remembering Hermynia Zur Mühlen: A Tribute," note 33, following the text of Zur Mühlen's *The End and the Beginning*.

3 Klein's testimony is quoted in Manfred Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, pp. 140-141. The text of the German Embassy protest (dated 17.XII.1935) is reproduced in facsimile on <http://www.literaturepochen.at/exil/multimedia/image/hzm2.jpg> Roughly translated, it reads: "The German Embassy has the honor to inform the Foreign Affairs section of the Chancellor's office that among the anti-National Socialist writings published by the Gsur Publishing Company a book has recently appeared, the overall content of which is full of derogatory and defamatory comments about the National Socialist movement in the Reich. Worse still, there are seriously offensive remarks about the Führer and Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler and members of the government of the Reich in innumerable places, and also insulting statements about the German Ambassador von Papen. The book is 'Unsere Töchter die Nazinen,' listed as a novel, by Hermynia zur Mühlen. The aforementioned directly offensive comments appear on pp. 20, 32, 47, 50, 80, 125/26, 138, and 155. For example, p. 20: 'The swindler, the charlatan, the guy who can only open his mouth and yell and who is in the pay of heavy industry, Hitler'; p. 32: 'What this Party (the NSDAP) is made up of – the leader, the members, the fellow-travellers – is scum.'" The Austrian government official's comments on the note (marked "Urgent") read as follows: "The novel that appeared with Gsur Verlag, Vienna, contains a series of severe personal attacks and insults directed against Reichskanzler Hitler, as well as Goering and Goebbels. There are also some remarks about Herr von Papen on p. 103. Apart from its hostile attitude to National Socialism, the novel is marked by a strong Marxist, indeed Communist orientation (pp. 112, 127, etc.), along with comments indicating a free-thinking, anti-religious position. All 'good' characters in the novel are for the most part members of Communist organizations, some are Social Democrats. The Soviet Union is the object only of friendly comment. One of the leading characters in the novel, an old Countess, is converted to Communism and indeed to active terrorism at the end. It almost seems as though a clear line of social revolutionary propaganda is being pursued beneath the mask of hostility to National Socialism." The recommendation is that the book be immediately banned and all copies confiscated, "less on account of the offences to Hitler, [which would be punishable] in virtue of the law protecting the honor and respect due to foreign heads of state, than on account of the virtually unconcealed marxist-communist propaganda in it (see, for instance, pp. 112, 123, etc.)." See <http://www.literaturepochen.at/exil/multimedia/image> under "hzm1" through "hzm5" for relevant documents.

I immediately got it into my head that the people here had to be warned. We had to write the truth about National Socialism, we had to write it day and night, we had to write it when it was convenient for us to write and when it was not convenient for us. Somehow we had to get the indifferent to open their eyes to the frightful truth – and to the terrible danger threatening Austria. But in this enterprise I was not very successful. Only very few newspapers – among them the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* – agreed from time to time to publish an anti-Nazi short story. Most wanted humorous stories. When one features-pages editor explained that he did not want anti-Nazi things and that I should bring him entertaining little sketches that would make readers split their sides laughing, I flew into such a rage, that I went home, sat down at my desk, and in three weeks wrote my anti-Nazi novel *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen*. It took a good deal longer than three weeks to find a publisher for it. This novel had a strange fate: every publisher who was given a copy to consider, declared he was willing to publish it – on condition that certain passages were altered or eliminated. Every one of them was bothered by something different. But I was unwilling to make the demanded changes, since I believed they would result in a false representation of the way things truly were. Then I took the novel to Schiller Marmorek, the Socialist, who, with his genuine friendship and infinite willingness to come to the assistance of others, was helping greatly to make our lives easier. (In my first youthful enthusiasm for socialism, I had imagined all socialists were like him.) I shall always think of him with love and gratitude.<sup>4</sup> He read the novel and recommended it to Julius Braunthal. Braunthal did not let himself be put out by certain esthetic shortcomings, from which, from his point of view, the book unavoidably suffered, and he agreed to publish it. Naturally, I was delighted – but he wrote at the end of January 1934. Then February came,<sup>5</sup> and the manuscript disappeared without a trace. After the assassination of Dollfuss, the book was finally put out by the publishing house of Gsur, without any changes, only to be banned two weeks later at the behest of Von Papen. Proceedings were instituted against me, the sole effect of which was that from that time on I received a monthly visit from a detective, who inquired in a friendly manner how I was getting along, said: “You haven’t gotten up to anything, have you?”, politely kissed my hand, and left. The good man must have been very well informed, moreover, for about a month before the *Anschluss* he advised us to move to Czechoslovakia where the climate, he said, might well be healthier for us. Even after the Liberation the unfortunate little book still could not find a publisher. Although the spirit of National Socialism is by no means dead, publishers once again prefer humorous novels.<sup>6</sup>

4 On Schiller Marmorek, see “Notes on persons and events mentioned in the memoir,” following the text of Zur Mühlen’s *The End and the Beginning*.

5 In February 1934, weapons searches by the extreme rightwing Dollfuss regime among members of the already outlawed “Republican Defense League” [*Republikanischer Schutzbund*] and the arrest of many well known Social Democrats led to calls for nationwide resistance to the government. A limited civil war broke out (February 12 - February 15), with some of the fiercest fighting in the districts in Vienna where the celebrated workers’ apartments built by the leftwing municipality were situated. The resistance was put down by the police and the military; the Social Democrats were outlawed; and their leaders were imprisoned or fled abroad. On Braunthal (b. 1891), who, like Marmorek, was Jewish, see “Notes on persons and events mentioned in the memoir,” following the text of Zur Mühlen’s *The End and the Beginning*.

6 Final chapter of the serialized republication of *Ende und Anfang* in the socialist woman’s magazine *Die Frau* October 6, 1949 – April 20, 1950, reprinted in *Nebenglück: Ausgewählte Erzählungen und Feuilletons aus dem Exil von Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, ed. Deborah J. Vietor-Engländer, Eckart Früh and Ursula Seeber (Bern: Peter Lang,

Finally, Klein gave an even fuller account of the episode in a letter to Wilhelm Sternfeld, dated 18.4.1951:

When we came back to Vienna in April 1933, my wife tried to place anti-Nazi pieces warning people in all possible newspapers. People laughed at her and made fun of her warnings, just as they did later in Slovakia. ('Such things can't happen here!'). When the feuilleton editor of an otherwise uncompromisingly anti-Nazi paper told her he wanted not horror stories from her but humorous sketches that would make readers split their sides laughing, she flew into a rage, came home, and wrote the novel *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* in the space of three weeks...The Allert de Lange firm (Amsterdam) [an important publisher of "exile" German literature – L.G.] said it was willing to publish the novel if my wife would present the workers in a less "positive" light. My wife refused. The Malik-Verlag (Wieland Herzfelde), then located in Prague, was ready to print the novel if a female character in it, a Communist who becomes a Nazi, were recast as a Social Democrat who becomes a Nazi. My wife again refused. The Oprecht firm in Zurich [another major publisher of exile literature – L.G.] declared it would publish the novel if my wife – a penniless writer – would guarantee the translation fees of 800 Swiss francs. That was impossible for financial reasons. The editor-in-chief of the Social Democratic *Kleines Blatt*, Julius Braunthal, accepted the novel and planned to bring it out in a large, popular edition at a low price. . . . Then came February. The novel could not be published. The manuscript vanished from the printing press of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. After the assassination of Dolfuss, it was published by the left-wing Catholic Gsur Press of Dr. Ernst Karl Winter, but, within two weeks, at von Papen's behest, all copies were confiscated and proceedings instituted against my wife. However, as she had voluntarily renounced all royalties from the book, even though she was in financial straits, in order that the book might be sold at a very low price, 'idealist motives' were acknowledged...and the proceedings were dropped. (But the book was still banned and all copies were destroyed.)"<sup>7</sup>

*Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* – the term "Nazin" or "Nazine," modeled no doubt on other German nouns with feminine suffixes, such as "Pianistin" (woman pianist), "Verbrecherin" (female criminal) or "Kindermörderin" (child murderess), was an invention of Zur Mühlen's and has a satirical ring to it – did in fact make its way into print two years before its short-lived publication in 1936 by the Gsur Verlag in Vienna. It appeared in installments in the Social Democratic Saarbrücken newspaper *Deutsche Freiheit*<sup>8</sup> between

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2002), pp. 243-55.

7 Quoted by Beate Frakele, "'Ich als Österreicherin...'" Hermynia Zur Mühlen [1883-1951], in Johann Holzner, et al., eds., *Eine schwierige Heimkehr. Österreichische Literatur im Exil, 198-1945*, [Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik, 1991], pp. 378-379).

8 The editor-in-chief of *Deutsche Freiheit* was the Socialist Wilhelm Sollmann. A member of the National Assembly in Weimar in 1919, Sollmann was elected to the German Parliament in 1920, served on its foreign affairs committee, and was the founder and director of the Social Democratic Press Service. He sat on the executive board of the SPD and was one of the first Socialists to be beaten up, imprisoned, and tortured by the Nazis in 1933, but managed to escape to Luxemburg and then to the Saar, against the French occupation of which, ironically, he had demonstrated in the early 1920s. After the referendum of 1935, he fled to England and from there to the United States. He taught international affairs at Haverford, Swarthmore, and

June and August 1934 – a few months before the referendum of January 13, 1935, in which the Saar voted overwhelmingly to rejoin the German Reich.<sup>9</sup> It thus formed part of the campaign to persuade the Saarlanders to reject reincorporation in the Reich. It was also published that same year (1934) in a Norwegian translation by the Tiden Norsk Forlag in Oslo, a new press founded by the Norwegian Labor Party. (Tiden Norsk was the only publishing house shut down by the Germans during the occupation of Norway.)

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As a deliberately political and polemical work, *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* does not have the nuanced historical and psychological depth and richness characteristic of Zur Mühlen's major works of narrative fiction, such as *Das Riesenrad* (1932), *Reise durch ein Leben* (1933), and *Ewiges Schattenspiel* (serialized in the Bern newspaper *Der Bund*, 1938-39) or even of lighter works that Deborah Vietor-Engländer, one of the Austrian writer's few champions, has described – somewhat unjustly in my view – as “potboilers,” such as *Nora hat eine famose Idee* (1933) or the quite witty and ingenious *Vierzehn Nothelfer* (serialized in the Vienna *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 1933).<sup>10</sup> It does not move the reader and provoke a wide range of reflections, as those other works do. Instead, it is narrowly focused on exposing an immediate political situation and on provoking a practical response to it. One might say that it is related to the author's other works as a political cartoon is related to an oil painting.

Its structure is unusually tight, clearly outlined, and symmetrical for a work by Zur Mühlen. It consists of six interlocking parts, each of which is a first person narrative. The narrators are three women, three mothers

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Reed Colleges and became an American citizen. Sollmann died in the U.S. in 1951.  
 9 “I believed that even at very worst, a bit more than 50 percent of the Saarlanders would vote for the status quo, that is for anti-Fascism,” the Austrian writer Manès Sperber wrote. “The fact that in this free election 98 percent had hurried to the polls made us even more hopeful. This made the results even more terrible; they were shattering.[...] We had not been defeated but [...] pulverized: 90.3 percent wanted to ‘come home to the Reich’ immediately, and only 8.8 percent had voted against it. In that region of miners and industrial workers, the Catholics, Socialists and Communists had not even been able to induce 10 percent of the electorate to oppose solidarity with Nazi Germany.” (*Until my Eyes are Closed with Shards*, trans. Harry Zohn [New York and London: Holmes & Meier 1994], pp. 61-62)

10 Deborah Vietor-Engländer, “Hermynia Zur Mühlen's Fight Against the ‘Enemy Within: Prejudice, Injustice, Cowardice and Intolerance’,” in *Keine Klage über England? Deutsche und Österreichische Exilerfahrung in Großbritannien 1933-1945*, ed. Charmian Brinson et al. (Munich: Iudicium, 1998), pp. 74-87.

of three daughters in a small town on the shores of Lake Constance in Southern Germany, representing three major social classes – Kati Gruber, a working class widow and staunch Social Democrat like her late husband Anton; Countess Agnes, the widowed descendant of an old aristocratic family, who has withdrawn, after a lonely childhood and an unhappy marriage, to a villa by the lakeside where she spends her days in a world of her own; and Frau Doktor Feldhüter, the socially ambitious middle-class wife of a scheming, equally ambitious doctor, who has a club foot, like Goebbels, and whose practice lags far behind that of the long-established and caring local Jewish doctor.

Each of the women has two narratives – an earlier narrative (just prior to the elections of March 1933, which gave the Nazi Party a majority of seats in the Reichstag), and a somewhat later narrative (shortly after the elections). These are arranged symmetrically in the following sequence: Kati Gruber (first narrative), Countess Agnes (first narrative), Frau Doktor Feldhüter (first narrative), Frau Doktor Feldhüter (second narrative), Countess Agnes (second narrative), Kati Gruber (second narrative). The novel thus turns full circle, opening and closing on the testimony of the Social Democratic working-class woman. The testimony of the ambitious and opportunistic middle-class Frau Doktor Feldhüter occupies the center, where it stands in striking contrast to the accounts of the other two women.

While Zur Mühlen is often ironical in her writing, here, in the testimony attributed to the Doctor's wife, she exhibits a remarkable talent for sustained and vigorous satire. The distance between the narratorial voice of the novel and the voice of the character as narrator of her testimony is minimal in the first and last two testimonies; in the case of the two central testimonies by the scheming but unintelligent Frau Doktor, in contrast, the narrator of the novel maintains maximum distance from the voice of the narrating character. This stylistic feature unites the Frau Doktor's two testimonies, which are otherwise given a formal distinction intended to reflect the fact that the electoral triumph of the National Socialists, which occurred between the first and the second, significantly affected their content and tone. Whereas – appropriately in view of her social class and her self-described impulse to express her feelings openly – both Kati Gruber's testimonies are represented as spoken and both Countess Agnes's testimonies – appropriately in view of her social class and reclusive life – are represented as written into a personal diary, Frau Doktor Feldhüter's two testimonies are delivered differently. The first – before the elections

confirm the Nazi hold on power – is said to be “whispered” (“Frau Doktor Feldhüter erzählt flüsternd”). This corresponds both to the opportunistic Feldhüter’s insistence that his wife keep her mouth shut prudently in public until the political situation has become absolutely clear and to the Frau Doktor’s feeling that she counts for nothing, either in society or in her own family, where she is respected neither by her husband nor by her daughter. Her thoughts and her feelings of frustration, rage, and resentment must be concealed not only from the public but from her family and may only be “whispered” to herself. The second testimony – after the Nazis are securely entrenched in power, the super-cautious Feldhüter has publicly declared his family’s support for the movement, and the Frau Doktor has finally realized her dream of being respected as “somebody” in the small town – is represented, in contrast, as told “out loud.”

There are already signs in the first testimony of the Frau Doktor’s capacity for rewriting her own history and of her quite extraordinary Sartrean bad faith. For instance, by the time Hitler has been appointed Chancellor, she has reinterpreted her previously avowed attraction, when she was still an unmarried hospital nurse, to a handsome, young, and, above all, very well-to-do Jewish patient, and her eagerness to marry him (the marriage was frustrated by the opposition of the young man’s parents to their son’s marrying a non-Jew) as a – fortunately unsuccessful – attempt by a filthy Jew to sully a pure German maiden. Likewise a fleeting night of love with a handsome young Austrian – her unique, barely confessed infidelity as Feldhüter’s wife – is recalled at a later point in the narrative as a cunning attack on her Protestant virtue by a Jesuitical Catholic foreigner, while the young man’s lack of interest in pursuing the relationship is explained as the consequence of the awe inspired in him by German womanhood. In the second testimony, however, not only does the Frau Doktor appear as a changed person, sure of herself and increasingly aggressive, but the feelings, situations, and events recounted in the narrative that she “whispered” are totally reconfigured. The hatred, contempt, and physical repulsion she feels for her physically impaired, mean-spirited, ever calculating, and affectless husband and admits to in the “whispered” narrative is suppressed in the second narrative and replaced by expressions of admiration, love, and devotion. The abortion Dr. Feldhüter performed when his flirtatious daughter, who is chiefly interested in having a good time, had “ein Malheur” vanishes from memory in the second narrative as the Doctor and his wife loudly champion the breeding duty of healthy

Aryan German women and condemn the selfishness of those who avoid this obligation. Upper-class and aristocratic ladies, whose recognition had been craved – vainly – in the “whispered” testimony, are loudly suspected in the second narrative of having Jewish ancestors. With the electoral victory of the National Socialists, in sum, the Frau Doktor’s covert narrative of repressed envy, resentment, rage, and frustrated ambition explodes into a triumphant, exemplary, narrative which is not only adopted by the speaker herself but offered for public consumption in the new German Reich. The ugly reality of envy, resentment, and rage underlying the heroic “Aryan” façade of National Socialism is thus exposed through the Frau Doktor’s double narrative of the life of the Feldhüters and in particular of her own relation to her husband, her daughter Lieselotte, and other members of the community.

Zur Mühlen also uses the successive testimonies adroitly to advance the narrative gradually through time. Each one reflects a slightly later stage in the historical evolution toward total Nazi dominance of the life of the little town; each one bears witness to the lawlessness and organized violence that increasingly characterize everyday life. At the same time, there is sufficient overlap to allow for anticipations in one narrative of what will be developed more fully in the succeeding one as well as for contrasting versions of the same events by different narrators.

The tour de force of *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* is to have located the complex issue of the rise of National Socialism not only in the social history of the time – war, revolution, inflation, economic depression, unemployment – but in the personal life experiences and family relationships of the characters, which are, in turn, seen as influenced by social class and class ethos. The focus of the novel might be said to be, in short, on the way family relations both affect and are dramatically affected by politics.

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The opening narrative by Kati Gruber provides the basic historical background for the novel – and at the same time the elements of a general historical explanation of the rise of National Socialism. While in service as a maid with Countess Agnes, we learn, Kati met and married Anton, a good-looking working man with a steady job as a typesetter. The marriage is soon blessed with a child. Kati might have died giving birth to her daughter, however, had not the Countess called in her own doctor, the compassionate Jewish Dr. Bär, who often treated the poor of the little town without charge and who, it turns out later, is a Social Democrat

like Anton. Kati, who is not well-read and does not know much about politics, greatly admires her husband, a model of the serious, self-educated, and well-informed member of the working class. She shares his Social Democratic political convictions, partly because she trusts his judgment and partly because her common sense and her instinct, as a woman and a mother, tell her what he has learned by reading and reflection. Like all Social Democrats, Anton believes in a new and better world in the future, after a time of struggle and hardship. The War comes, however, and with it the first significant setback to Social Democratic hopes. Anton had long foreseen that the ruling class would instigate a war, Kati recounts, but he had been convinced that in every country the workers would refuse to serve. Normally strong and in full control of himself, he wept when the Social Democrats in the Reichstag voted the necessary credits for the Kaiser's war and when workers' organizations everywhere went along with the policies of their national governments. Women might have been expected to be opposed to the war, Kati reflects, but in fact many women, no less swayed by nationalist fervor than their menfolk, enthusiastically supported it. Anton, in contrast, predicted that it would be a bloody and ugly affair. And so it was. Many local boys who had been fired by patriotic zeal never came home from the front, many others returned maimed and incapable of supporting themselves or their families. For those behind the lines, the problem was the ever worsening shortage of food. Kati's daughter Toni began to look like a starving stray cat. Once again Countess Agnes helped her former servant out as much as she could, but her resources were stretched as she was trying to help others too. Her own daughter Claudia, nineteen years old by then, was nothing but skin and bone. Only the ten-year-old daughter of Dr. Feldhüter had fat, rosy cheeks, Kati reports. That, she explains, was because, with Dr. Bär serving at the front, Feldhüter, who had been exempted from military service because of his club foot, was temporarily the only doctor in town.

Anton is one of the lucky ones who return from the war unharmed. But once again he is disappointed. The war is over, Germany has become a republic, and the Social Democrats are in power. But they do little to bring about the far-reaching social changes they advocate. As a result, there is a splintering of the left into rival groups – Communists, Independent Socialists, and Social Democrats. Anton is concerned that in its eagerness to establish its credentials as a responsible defender of the new constitution, the Social Democratic government has adopted harsh policies toward its

rivals on the Left, while pursuing a more accommodating and lenient policy toward its opponents on the right – even though the irreconcilable hostility of the latter was clearly demonstrated by the failed Kapp putsch. On the material side, the war reparations are a heavy burden on the defeated country and the uncontrolled hyperinflation of 1922 makes life extraordinarily hard for working people. Kati finds some solace in Toni's growing up to be a fine young woman, tall and reflective like her father, and like him, an avid reader and stalwart socialist. She and her father march in the May Day parades, proudly bearing the red flag. Toni's boyfriend at this time is a young Communist and Toni is soon touting the merits of Soviet Russia and comparing it favorably with Germany. Anton worries about his daughter: he fears that she is in for a hard time because of her idealism and her unwillingness to recognize that the road to socialism will be accompanied by many setbacks and disappointments, which it will take patience, determination, and shrewdness to overcome. Kati, for her part, notices with some misgivings that Toni has inherited her father's undemonstrativeness and laconicity, his way of keeping his thoughts and feelings to himself.

Meantime there is a new development in the little town. The National Socialists are gaining ground, making new recruits, parading noisily through the streets, claiming they are the only party that is both socialist and German, fostering enmity between Christians and Jews, and announcing their intention to get rid of the Marxists along with the Jews, since both groups, according to them, are behind Germany's misery. When Kati calls a young Nazi recruit – the errand-boy from the local dairy-farm, whom she has known since he was a child – an utter idiot for being taken in by the Nazi propaganda about "internationalist," un-German Jews and Marxists, she finds a large swastika painted on her door the next day.

After Anton falls sick and dies, Kati takes in washing and mending clothes to make up for the loss of his wages. Toni's communist boyfriend Seppel wants to help out but Toni rejects his offers and Kati notices that the two are no longer on as good terms as they once were. Meanwhile the depression has hit the little town and there is rising unemployment. Of the many who are let go at the factory where Toni is employed, most of the white-collar workers and a fair sprinkling of blue-collar workers join the Nazi Party. Street fights between Nazis and Social Democrats and between Nazis and Communists erupt more and more frequently. On January 3, 1931, the factory is closed altogether and Toni too is out of a job. She looks

desperately for work, but in vain. Kati finds employment as a cleaning woman for a couple of middle class families and with the income from that and Toni's unemployment benefits, she says, the two of them could have scraped by. But Toni is restless and frustrated, like a caged animal. She spends her time studying the books in Anton's little collection and she and Seppel quarrel more and more frequently and heatedly. She also begins to quarrel with Kati too, as well as with her long-time friends from the Social Democratic movement.. "I did not hold it against her," Kati explains. "I knew that idleness and anxiety about the future were eating away at her." (18)<sup>11</sup>

As the 1932 elections for Reichspräsident approach, Kati is surprised that "our Party" (i.e. the Social Democrats) has pledged its support to Hindenburg. "After all, the old man is still a Junker and isn't a proper President for a workers' party." Still, she reflects, he had held to his oath to defend the constitution. "He may not be very smart, he may not sympathize with the workers, but he is an honorable, decent man and he will keep his word." (19) Seppel tries to persuade them both to vote for the Communist candidate, Ernst Thälmann. Kati sticks loyally to the Social Democratic party recommendation. Toni's unexpected and vehement reaction, however, hits Kati like a thunderbolt and opens the central scene of her first narrative.

"Your Thälmann has to dance to Moscow's tune," Toni objects. "I wouldn't dream of giving him my vote." Seppel gets angry. He can understand that Kati, a loyal Social Democrat for so long, will follow the party line and vote for "the old man," but Toni? Toni responds that she has no intention of voting for the old man. "I have to tell you something," she adds. "This international socialism doesn't mean a thing to us Germans. We've seen how much help we got from the International. What we need is German socialism, a socialism that is right for *our* country." Seppel stares at her: "What do you mean by that?" Toni looks at her mother, then at Seppel. "I don't know yet," she replies, somewhat embarrassed. "But when I vote it will be for a leader of the workers." "So you mean Teddy [Thälmann] after all," Seppel cries. "Silly girl, why didn't you say so right away?" But Toni answers: "There is someone else." For a moment, Kati does not understand. But Seppel immediately grasps who is meant: "That swindler, that charlatan? Have you lost your mind? A lowdown bum who can only shout and scream and is in the pay of the big industrialists – Hitler?" Kati feels a weakness in

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11 Page references are to Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1983).

her knees. That cannot be what her Toni means, what Anton's child means. Seeing how pale Kati has become, Seppel sits down beside her and tries to comfort her. "She is just having us on, comrade," he says. "She's far too smart to do anything like that." But after a moment's silence Toni gives her response in a tormented and sad tone of voice: "I have so much time to think about things now, Seppel," she says. "And I've realized that none of the promises of 1918 have been fulfilled. Our Chancellor is a man of the Center and the Party [the Social Democrats] lets him get away with everything he wants, every single emergency decree, everything. The Communists yell, but do nothing. The others [the National Socialists] have a program that is right for Germany. No, don't say anything yet. I'm not completely sure yet where I stand. But I have a sense that the real revolutionary energy is now with them. And that's what it's all about. All the parties have disappointed us. We have to give the National Socialists a chance to show what they can do. They'll help the German worker, they'll get rid of the greedy capitalists, and they'll nationalize the big industrial companies. They'll release us from the peace treaties and our country will become strong again, a strong workers' state." (20) Kati is flabbergasted. "My God, Toni, where did you get all this?" Toni answers in her quiet, serious way ("as though trying to excuse herself," Kati thinks): "I have so much time on my hands, so many vacant hours. And I know that if things go on the way they are, I will never find work again. But I want to work. I've read the National Socialist newspapers, I've spoken with National Socialists, and just recently I went to a meeting and heard the Führer speak." Seppel strikes the table with his fist. "The Führer! The Führer! If you already speak like that, you're a lost cause. You...you Nazi Girl!"<sup>12</sup> Whereupon he picks up his cap and runs out of the room without a good-bye.

Kati now questions her daughter. "You can't be serious, Toni? You can't, I won't let you do that." "Let me be, mother," Toni replies. "We all have to work this out for ourselves." Suddenly Kati is overcome by rage: "You are not going to any more Nazi meetings, do you hear. You will have nothing more to do with that mob." But Toni has her answer ready. "Many years ago the Social Democrats were also called a 'mob,' mother. I read that in father's books. Besides, I'm not a child any more. No one tells me what to do and what not to do." Kati resorts to pleas and what few arguments she can muster, but Toni is unmoved. "Don't torture me, mother, please. It's no

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12 The German reads "Du...du Nazine!" The term Nazine, inadequately translated here as "Nazi Girl," was a quite effective invention of Zur Mühlen's.

use...Do you think it was easy for me to break with everything I've believed in for so long? Look, I'm a working class girl. I have to be on the side of those who side with us. Not with a Herr von Hindenburg and not with a man who takes his orders from a foreign country and from the Jews, but with an honest German worker and with a party that is being persecuted just because it is revolutionary."

After this exchange, Kati and Toni grow more and more estranged. Toni keeps reading Anton's old books, but also the new books and pamphlets being put out by the Nazis. Kati does not know how her daughter voted in the April 1932 runoff elections for President and does not dare to ask. (Hitler had placed second behind Hindenburg in March but as Hindenburg had not won a clear majority the constitution required a runoff election.) Meanwhile the situation in the little town is going from bad to worse. The Nazis are attracting more and more supporters, especially after the lifting of the ban on uniforms. There are more and more threats and attacks against Jews and Socialists. Two workers are killed; the culprits never found. One evening after dinner, Toni puts on her coat and goes out. Kati knows she is going to a big Nazi rally. "If only Anton were still alive" she thinks, "our Toni would not be where she is today. He would have explained everything to her and she would not have let herself be taken in by stupid slogans. I know my Toni. I know she acts only out of conviction. But she is just not as smart as her father was. Still, she is smarter than me, and so she doesn't listen to me." (24) At this point, Kati hears shouting and bawling from the street: "Heil Hitler!" "Deutschland ewache!" [Germany awake!]. "Juda verrecke!" [Death to the Jews!] Then comes the Horst Wessel song "and then another with the line 'Wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritzt!'" [When under the knife spurts the blood of Jews] She thinks of Dr. Bär, who lives in the same street and must also have heard it. What must he feel, she wonders, after spending his life taking care of the sick in the little town and never sending a bill to the poor?

Suddenly the door opens and Toni enters wearing a swastika badge. She greets Kati with a "Good evening, mother," then hangs up her wet coat. Kati cannot respond. Words stick in her throat. She looks at the Swastika sign and her thoughts course wildly through her brain. Toni nods. "Yes, mother," she says, "it's our only salvation, even if you don't believe it. When the Führer comes to power, there will be jobs for everybody." Kati is overcome by rage: "I was never so angry in my whole life. I berated my child as though she were the lowest of the low. I spoke the coarsest

and harshest words. I wanted to give her a thrashing. Finally I screamed. 'Get out of this house and don't come back, you swastika trollop, you are a curse on me.' Toni does not answer. "She has a way of keeping silent that reminds me of Anton," Kati explains. "She just stood there, then turned and went for her coat, bending down first to wipe up the little pool of water that had dripped from it. 'I'll just wipe this up, mother, then I'll go,'" she says. Suddenly Kati feels a sharp pain shooting through her heart. "What am I doing? Driving out my child, our child, my Anton's daughter? Yes, she is Anton's daughter. But she is also a swastika type, she has become our enemy. She has betrayed us. Still, she is our child. Who else should try to have patience with her, if not me?" At that point, though Toni never cries, Kati sees two tears running down her daughter's cheeks. She relents. "Stay," she says, "stay, I spoke in anger." Toni looks at her, her eyes still full of tears. "I don't want to leave you, mother," she says. "But you need to think this over. I'm in the National Socialist Party now. I'll often act in ways you can't understand. But, believe me, as soon as the Führer comes to power, everything will be all right, and you too will see where the workers really belong." (26) "She spoke so earnestly, so from the heart, my Toni," Kati notes, "that I knew no words could get her to change her mind....Maybe later on she will see that she has been bamboozled by liars and cheats. But I'm not the one who can get her to see it." She simply tells Toni to go to bed. Toni "came over to me and wanted to kiss me – which normally she does only on my birthday. Even as a child she was never demonstrative." But as Toni bends down to kiss her – for she is a head taller – Kati sees the swastika sign again and turns her head away, "as though I wanted to look at the clock to see the time." Toni, however, is not fooled and quietly sighs. Suddenly Kati reflects that Anton's photograph is hung over Toni's bed and she has the feeling that he will see the swastika and be upset. She tells Toni to wait a moment while she goes into the room and stealthily removes the photograph. "My Anton should not be in the same room with a swastika," she thinks. (27) Nevertheless, "from that day on I never again had a swastika painted on my door; for I had one right here in my own home."

A few days later she has a momentary pleasure. The "old man" [Hindenburg] seemed to want to keep his oath to preserve the constitution – albeit not much of it remained – for he had refused to accept Hitler as Chancellor. But the Nazis only laughed. They demanded nothing less than total power, they jeered, and they would get it. By now it had become

dangerous to show the Social Democratic three arrows sign in the street.<sup>13</sup> Kati shows it all the same, partly out of fidelity to the party but also a little, as she says, “because nothing mattered much to me any more and I wouldn’t have cared if I had gotten beaten up by our enemies.” (28) The only thing that now worried her was that Toni might get hurt by “one of our people” when she was marching in one of the frequent Nazi processions. Toni, she knew, had the same worry about her, for she kept trying to keep her from going out and wanted to pick up and deliver the washing she did for people. But that was not possible, Kati, explains. All her clients were opposed to the Nazis and would have refused to do business with a girl wearing a swastika. In any case, the danger was not so great in daytime for the Nazis preferred to beat up people at night, when they could easily slip away, and were satisfied with verbal abuse at other times. Though mother and daughter, while still living under one roof, now communicated little, Kati could not refrain, on one occasion, from bringing up the way the Nazis fall upon defenceless people: “Don’t you see what a bunch of cowards they are. They attack people who can’t defend themselves and they do all their shooting and stabbing in the dark. And this is the crowd you belong to!” (28). Kati can spot that Toni is upset. “The daughter of my Anton could not justify such actions; and she did not try. She said nothing and looked depressed.”<sup>14</sup> Kati wonders what will happen when Toni’s eyes are finally opened to the truth about the Nazis.

At the same time she derives some consolation from the fact that Toni acts out of conviction, not opportunism – unlike most of those who join the Nazi Party, according to Kati. For of the large numbers who were now flocking to the Nazis, “most were doing so because they expected to get something out of it” or because, if they were young, they could strut around and be important in their Nazi uniforms, or if they were workers, because they were desperate after having been out of work for so long and because the Nazis promised them jobs.

Still, her unhappiness weighs on Kati and she goes to the villa by the sea

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13 A circle with three arrows shooting downward through it to the left was the symbol adopted by the Social Democrats in opposition to the Nazi swastika and the Communist hammer and sickle.

14 Outrage at attacks on the weak and defenceless is a recurrent motif of Zur Mühlen’s writing – both in longer works like *Reise durch ein Leben* and *Ein Jahr im Schatten* and in short feuilletons like “Man muß es ihnen sagen.” It can doubtless be traced to the stories of chivalrous knights that she read with her grandmother as a child. As often happens, an old aristocratic virtue is reinterpreted by Zur Mühlen as universally human.

to unburden herself to her old employer Countess Agnes, who has always been kind to her. After Kati tells her story, the Countess is silent for a moment. "Then her face turned deep red. 'Your Toni, with that rabble?' she said. Whereupon her face grew even redder and she looked apologetically at me. 'You know what I mean by that rabble, don't you, Kati? I don't mean the workers. Everyone in that party is rabble – the leaders, the members, the fellow-travellers.' Heaven knows the woman was speaking what was in my own heart, but somehow it bothered me that she had thrown my Toni to the rabble, so to speak, and so I said maliciously: 'There are quite a few aristocrats in it.' The old woman laughed. I think she knew why I had made the comment. They are the worst rabble of all,' she said. 'The very worst. For they have no excuse.'"

At this point the Countess's still unmarried, thirty-year old daughter Claudia, whose sullenness and resentfulness had given her mother so much to worry about over the years, came into the room. Kati was surprised and pleased to see how well the once plain, discontented young woman now looked. "How good Claudia looks," she says. "She seems ten years younger." The old woman laughs joyfully. "Yes, I'm so pleased about it. She no longer avoids people. She runs into town every day. And everything interests her. She reads the papers, she listens to the radio. I think she is normal again at long last." (30-31)

For their part, Kati and Toni continue to live together. When Kati's rheumatism flares up, Toni helps out by taking over the housework as well as the washing Kati takes in to earn a few pennies. Kati has only to pick it up and deliver it. Toni does the rest. But they cannot communicate with each other. By Christmas, because of rheumatism in her hands, Kati has not been able to finish a sweater she was knitting for Toni. She has dusted off a little Christmas tree and lit the candles on it – "not because I am religious, but because we always used to do it for Toni when she was little" – and she is upset that without the sweater she now has no Christmas present to put under the tree. When a package arrives for Toni, Kati is relieved. It can go under the tree. Toni tries to reassure her that she doesn't mind if there isn't anything under the tree. But Kati insists, gets hold of the package, and opens it. Toni snatches it out of her hands, but it is too late. Kati has seen that it is a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The evening on which she had hoped she would be able to forget her worries for a while and which was to have been like old times is spoiled. Toni senses what she is thinking. "I told you not to open the package, mother," she says. "I felt as if I had received

a blow to the head," Kati relates. "I wasn't angry. Just sad and confused. I had only one thought. 'Just don't put it in Father's bookcase, Toni, just not in Father's bookcase.' Toni only nodded and then we sat for a long time in silence by the side of the tree, with its burning candles – mother and child, and yet two strangers who can no longer understand one another. The candles began to sputter. As each one went out, I had the feeling that my Anton had died again and taken my Toni with him."

On the first of January, Kati pays a New Year's call on Countess Agnes, as she does every year. The maid opens the door and looks pleased and relieved to see her. "'Good that you have come, Frau Gruber,' she says. 'I'm at my wits' end. The dear old lady' – Marie the maid, a young thing of nineteen, finds it beneath her dignity to refer to the Countess by her title," Kati explains; "Countess Agnes knows Marie calls her 'the dear old lady' and laughs about it – 'the dear old lady has been sitting there all morning crying. She won't tell me what is wrong. I'm worried that she might be falling ill on me.'" Kati runs into the living room and finds "the Countess huddled near the fireplace weeping so much that her body is shaking. 'What happened?' Kati asks. The old woman looks up, her face contorted, as if she were in acute pain and stretches out her hand. 'I came to wish you a Happy New Year,' Kati says. 'Make your wish that I should die soon, Kati,'" the old woman answers. "That's the best thing you can wish for me." Kati is surprised that the Countess has reverted to the familiar "du" form of address which she used when Kati was a young girl in service with her but has not used since. The old woman tries in vain to control her tears. Kati thinks that perhaps she has lost all her money "since that happens quite often these days, and then what would she do, since she has never had to work and Claudia has no experience of working either." She asks if that is what is wrong. The old lady shakes her head. "If that were all it is, Kati," she answers. Kati feels truly sorry for her, though she also thinks inwardly that people who have money don't understand how important it is. Even Countess Agnes, who is so completely unpretentious, has no idea what it means to be really penniless. "That would be a serious blow, I know," the old lady says at last. "I'm old and can't work. But at least, there would be no disgrace. And I wouldn't have to wonder whether I might not be partly to blame." To all Kati's efforts to find out what the problem is, she responds only that it is "the worst thing, the very worst thing that could have happened, the most terrible disgrace that could have befallen me." For over an hour, Kati tries to get her to tell her what is wrong. To no

avail. "I can't Kati, I can't, I'm too ashamed," is the only reply she can elicit. "Maybe tomorrow. I just can't talk today, I can't." The Countess clasps Kati's hand tightly in hers and suddenly bursts out: "We were always decent people, always. When I think of my father and my grandfather and their womenfolk, I have absolutely no reason to be ashamed. My grandfather served time in Spielberg prison because he fought for freedom." Then she begins to cry again, uncontrollably and desperately. Finally she says: "This is not a good start to the new year for you, Kati. Go home. You can't do anything for me. Come back tomorrow. Maybe I'll be able to tell you what it is then."

Kati did not have to wonder what the old woman's problem was for long. On her way home along the lakeside promenade, she sees Claudia walking ahead of her, briskly, like a young girl. A local lawyer's son who has become a Nazi comes toward her and Claudia raises her arm. "Heil Hitler!" she says "in a loud voice audible to everybody around." He responds in kind, and the two of them go off together. Kati feels her legs weakening under her. "I thought of Countess Agnes and of what she had said about aristocrats who join the Nazis – that they are the very worst kind of rabble. And now the old woman has to go through it herself with her Claudia – she who is so proud that her grandfather fought for freedom. My Anton fought for freedom too – and now our Toni...Toni and Claudia, our children, our daughters, the Nazi girls. Such was our New Year's Day." (35)

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Countess Agnes's narrative describes a much more fraught mother-daughter relationship than that of the working class Kati and Toni Gruber. The very first lines hint at the reclusive nature of the old Countess and her estrangement from her child. "I always used to hide from my daughter Claudia when I wanted to write in my diary. There is something ridiculous about it after all – an old woman writing down her thoughts and feelings like a teenager. And Claudia's scornful laughter always hurt me. She never understood that a lonely person has to share her thoughts, feelings, and anxieties with someone, even if that someone is only a blank piece of paper." (35) Further reflections fill in the picture of the Countess – a lonely childhood as a sickly little girl, set apart from her boisterous and healthy brothers and sisters, always being warned that she has to be careful not to overexert herself, always being forbidden to go riding, play tennis or join the others on trips. "I was always 'poor Agnes,' too frail to hold up." Yet she also hints at a tough fibre in her frail body. Strange," she reflects, "that of all

of us I am the only survivor. Both my brothers fell in the war and my sister died ten years ago." We learn how, from an early age, she sought refuge from the humiliating and unpleasant reality of her life in books and that these offered her another world in which she felt more at home and happier than she ever did in the real world:

This cowardly fear of reality has pursued me all my life. I shut my eyes when I should have opened them; I stopped up my ears so as not to hear the discordant sounds of life. I did so as a child, as a growing girl, and as a grown woman. And now that I am sixty-six years old, reality is suddenly staring me in the face, horrifying and threatening – an enemy I can't deal with, an enemy that comes in and out of my house and shouts and screams so loudly in the street that the racket comes all the way through the garden into my quiet living room. I am old and I tremble before this enemy.

But no, I won't paint myself worse than I am. A life that has never been besmirched, a long line of honorable ancestors, pride, aristocratic distinction, are these not weapons too? And did I not use these very weapons as a young woman to hold out in an unhappy marriage. Neither my parents nor my relatives nor any of my acquaintances ever knew how unhappy my marriage was. I always appeared content, always had a smile on my lips, and when my husband stayed away for months at a time, I always had an explanation to give for his absence. (36-37)

These reflections provide Countess Agnes with an opportunity to unburden herself to her diary (and tell the reader of the novel) about her unhappy marriage and to explain why her relations with her daughter Claudia were always distant and difficult.

To tell the truth, it was hard for me at first. I could not and would not believe that the handsome young officer, six years my junior, had married me – I was thirty at the time – for money. I loved him, and when I became his wife I thought I was about to begin the life of bliss I had read so much about in the books of the Romantics. But after six months, I had to acknowledge that I bored my husband to death. All the quiet pleasures that made me happy – books, beautiful landscapes, paintings – meant nothing to him. Horses, gambling, and women – other women, women bursting with life – that was all he was interested in.

When our daughter was born, he insisted that we name her Claudia. I knew very well that he was then in love with a beautiful Roman woman by the name of Claudia, and that his love had not gone unrequited. That name and that memory created a wall between me and my child. Long after Ferdinand had forgotten his Roman Claudia [...], I still thought of that woman who had dealt me the first blow in my marriage whenever I spoke my daughter's name.

Perhaps Claudia felt this instinctively. Who knows what children experience? In any case, she was not the same with me as other children are with their mothers and I often secretly envied my sweet Kati who got on so well with her little girl. But that came later, after we gave up our house in Munich and bought the villa on Lake Constance.

At first Ferdinand was against this move. But I was strongly drawn to this place – perhaps because Annette von Droste-Hülshoff lived, suffered, and wrote her books nearby. She too had been unhappy, sickly, and frail, but what power is expressed in her work!

Unfortunately, Countess Agnes reflects, "I was not creative like her. I

could do nothing, nothing. I was a woman who had failed to hold on to her husband, and a mother who did not know how to make contact with her own child." (38)

With the years the distance between mother and daughter only increased. "There was a restlessness in the grown girl that was completely foreign to me," the Countess notes. "As though she was looking for something she could not find." She had become quite good-looking,

but there was an off-putting coldness about her. I had no idea what lay hidden behind this coldness. I only noticed that she had neither friends of her own sex nor any of the innocent little flirtatious relations with boys that girls of her age usually have. For a time, when she was about twenty, she became very religious. Her room was filled with pictures of saints and she spent hours at church. She fasted like a Carmelite nun. But this seemed not to satisfy her in the end.[...] One day all the pictures were gone from her room and she stopped going to Church. She wouldn't even visit her father's grave. For me she had nothing but scorn and contempt. [...] And she made no secret of it. She laughed at my books, mocked my love of the flowers in the garden and made a fool of me for my pathetic efforts to be of help to others. She laughed at my passion for reading, though she read quite a bit herself at this time. Once I took a look at her bookcase and I was horrified. I had no idea that such books existed – ugly, vulgar books that were about nothing but sex. Not serious or scientific treatments of the subject, but revoltingly frivolous and cynical trash. But the worst was yet to come. These books must have worked like a poison on Claudia, for one day the young gardener who worked for me asked if he could have a word with me. (38)

It turns out that Fritz, the gardener, whose skill and personal good nature the Countess has come to value, wants to hand in his notice. The Countess refuses to accept it. Believing he is reacting to disagreements they have had over the garden, she offers to allow him to cut down a large pine tree, even though she is attached to it, since he insists it is necessary to do so. She makes other concessions on the management of the garden. But Fritz only becomes more and more embarrassed. "For God's sake, please try to understand me, Countess Agnes," he blurts out finally. "It's way too difficult for me to have to tell you this, but my wife has noticed it and has become jealous. Countess Claudia will not leave me in peace. [...] The other day, in the early morning, she came into the garden in her night gown and asked me whether she wasn't attractive and whether I mightn't..." (39-40)

The Countess finally has to understand. Fritz looks away in order not to embarrass her but, overcome by shame, she becomes unsteady on her feet. The young man puts his arm around her and leads her back into the house. She begs him not to stop working for her and promises to deal with the situation. Fritz leaves and she sits motionless. "I am an old woman," she thinks. "A very old woman. I don't understand the young people. I don't understand Claudia. I am certainly to blame. How old is Claudia

now? Thirty. I was thirty too before I got married, but then I was always so sickly and frail, whereas Claudia is a healthy girl...Maybe...Still, to throw yourself at a man, a married man into the bargain." At this point Claudia comes into the garden. "What's the matter," she asks. "You are so pale." "If I could only find the right words," the Countess reflects, "if I could only get Claudia to feel that I understand her, perhaps everything could still be right between us." "Fritz has spoken to me," she says. "He..." She notices that Claudia does not blush and is not ashamed: "She only gave a wicked laugh. 'Is he scared of me, the chicken? And you mother, of course you are morally outraged. But it is all your fault, you know. I have to hang around here, in this godforsaken hole, where one never meets anyone and hasn't a chance in China. What kind of life is that for a young person? Young, did I say?' She laughed, a cold, cutting laugh. 'Young? I turned thirty last month. What have I gotten out of my youth? Just take a look at me? Can any man find me attractive? But you wouldn't understand any of this.'" Countess Agnes's desperate response that she wants so much to understand her child falls on deaf ears. "You, you're not a real woman, and you never were," Claudia replies. "That's why poor father couldn't stand to live with you. That's why he needed other women." The Countess is stunned. She always thought Claudia knew nothing of her father's affairs with other women. "He was a real man, that's what," Claudia continues mercilessly. "A man like that is what I need. All the young men you used once to invite over – yes, I know you were trying to find a husband for me – what kind of men were they? They were all the kind of men that would have suited you – bookworms, poets, people you could at best carry on a sentimental correspondence with, like your beloved Annette with her Levin Schüking. But I want a real, strong man, not someone refined and sensitive. I am not a half-woman like you... Do you know how it feels on these summer nights, when the air is filled with the scent of jasmine and the nightingales sing in the garden. No, you don't. You only find it poetic. But I don't want poetry; I want life, real life." (41-42)

The Countess senses that if she fails to come up with the right response, Claudia will be lost to her for ever. "Would you like to travel, dearest?" she suggests. "We could spend the winter on the Riviera." Secretly, she almost hopes that Claudia will say no, because she loves the quiet winters in the little lakeside town, the mists that roll in off the lake, the snow-covered garden paths, the leafless tree branches standing out delicately against the sky as in a Japanese drawing, the long evenings by the fireside plunged

in a book that opens up another, free, beautiful, secret, yet familiar world. She did not have to worry. Claudia is scathing: "The Riviera? What would I do there? Compete with the cocottes? Or move in the same circles as here, among quiet, refined people of the kind you like, shadows, ghosts from another age that vanished long ago. No, mother, it's too late for that." (42-43) Thereupon she turns on her heels and leaves the room. "I remained sitting there," the Countess notes in her diary, "with a leaden weight pressing on my heart and frightful feelings of guilt in my head. I hated myself because I had never understood Claudia and I hated my dead husband from whom she had inherited everything that I could not understand in her." (43)

Countess Agnes now remembers Claudia's attempt at suicide and the months she spent in a psychiatric institution. On her return home, she recalls, it was not Claudia herself she feared, but the unidentified thing living inside her and driving her, the thing she, her mother, was incapable of understanding.<sup>15</sup> This thing had now returned, she reflects, and destroyed the peaceful world she had created for herself by retreating into her garden and her books. The reality she had feared and tried to shut out of her life had invaded her house and it was impossible to ignore it any longer. Anticipating later developments in her narrative, Countess Agnes associates the frightening demonic force that she cannot understand in her daughter with developments in the street and the political arena, from

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15 The simmering of unruly, irrational energies in women, in whom natural impulses have been unnaturally repressed by culture and convention and who have never been permitted to confront and deal with their own emotions, is a theme that recurs in much of Zur Mühlen's writing. It informs, for instance, two striking short stories in the collection *Fahrt ins Licht* (Vienna: Ludwig Nath, 1936, rpt. Klagenfurt: Sisyphus Verlag, 1998). In "Kultur" (pp. 148-53) Edith, the wife of the psychiatrist Sir Percy Langton, is known for the impeccable taste with which she creates her surroundings and her own social persona. Sir Percy, however, tells how he once deliberately removed his wife from an environment, in which the shutting up of their bodies in "corsets, tight-fitting clothes, and long dresses" was emblematic of the general condition of women, and took her to Africa in order to shake her out of the "harmonious monotony" of her existence. The explosion of passion that occurred in the new environment taught Edith to revise her understanding of human nature and, in particular, to come to a better understanding of her own nature. "Tod eines Schattens" (pp. 167-72) has a less happy outcome. Perdita W. has been brought up in a highly civilized and controlled environment. Her adoring and cultured parents allow nothing vulgar or dissonant to enter the refined world they have created and share with their child. After their death, Perdita loses her bearings and is easy prey to the wild enthusiasms of National Socialism. When she realizes the utter vulgarity of what she has succumbed to, she is totally disoriented and kills herself.

which she had also always held back. This allows Zur Mühlen to develop one of the few passages of explicit political rhetoric in the novel. In politics too, Countess Agnes reflects, an ugly reality had intruded into her world and was destroying the modest hopes for peace and a more just social order that, as an aristocrat with a conscience and a descendant of brave men who had sided in their time with the forces of emancipation, she had hoped would follow the end of the World War in 1918. A new Germany was indeed emerging now, but it was neither “the cultivated, perhaps no longer viable Germany of the poets, nor the decent, realistic Germany of the immediate post-War years. A fraudulent, barbarous mass had begun to take control of the street.” She remembers the beautiful autumn day when the results of the elections of 1930 were announced and she could not understand how “liars, cheats, and murderers” had won so many votes. “What is the use of all our culture when such people can come to power, led on by a dodger, a crazy megalomaniac, a charlatan without a conscience?”<sup>16</sup> Dr Bär, the Jewish doctor who was her regular physician had been on a house call and had tried to calm her down. “It’s the unemployment, the economic crisis,” he had said. But she did not accept this explanation. These rowdies were no revolutionaries, she had insisted, their motivation was only envy and deceit. Some members of her own class supported the National Socialists, she admitted to herself, with a feeling of shame. “They did so not out of conviction, not even out of foolishness or ignorance, but because they hoped this would enable them to protect their own fortunes. They seemed to me – and still do – more vulgar and more despicable than the murderers and criminals in the S.A. For there was no way for them not to have seen the truth. And if there is one unforgivable sin, it is to know the truth and reject it.” To Countess Agnes, unpolitical as she says she is, no aristocrat worthy of his or her class could possibly support the National Socialists. Aristocrats have a special obligation to humanity. “I thought of the bad days of serfdom. How many men and women suffered so that a single class of people might have the opportunity to develop culturally, what a debt this class owes to mankind, and how is it repaying it now? I am an unpolitical woman and I am not very worldly-wise, but I would have liked to be the head of state of our country so as to take the most energetic action possible against this party. As for the members of my own

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16 These were obviously fighting words in 1934 when Zur Mühlen’s novel appeared. They were also the words to which the German ambassador, von Papen, objected in his diplomatic note to the Austrian authorities, on the grounds that they were insulting to the leader of a neighboring power.

class, I would gladly have sent them to the guillotine. But such betrayers of humanity, who were perfectly aware of what they were doing, would not even have been able to die with dignity." (44-45)

The year 1932, the Countess continues, looked at first as though it would be a better year for her. Claudia suddenly became more cheerful; there was color in her cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes. She even behaved in a more friendly manner toward her mother. The two women no longer sat together at mealtimes in oppressive silence. Claudia went out a lot and had started reading again – not the horrible pornographic books of the past, which had now disappeared from her library, but all kinds of pamphlets. To the Countess's inquiry as to what these were about, Claudia replied off-handedly, but in a friendly way, that they would be of no interest to her and that she would not understand them anyway. During the wonderful spring and summer of 1932, the Countess spent entire days in the garden, reading. Sometimes Claudia would come and sit by her. "Your Romantics, as usual," she once said teasingly, with a smile. "I think you haven't a clue, mother, what century we are living in. What counts today is strength, toughness." "There is also a quiet kind of strength, dear, and in my view it is more unshakable than the noisy variety," the Countess countered. But Claudia, paying no attention, went on enthusiastically: "Strength, mother, and the power to win people over, the power to mean everything to them. That's what counts. A name that fires up whoever hears it." As she said that "her cheeks glowed; she looked beautiful; and her blue eyes shone mysteriously." Countess Agnes recalls that once, many years before, being in love had given her too a glow that had transformed the rather plain girl she was in reality. She wonders what had magically transformed the expression on Claudia's face, but does not dare to ask, for "a single thoughtless word might disturb our good relationship." She cannot help imagining, however, that Claudia might be in love and be loved in return. She lets herself hope that "perhaps everything will still work out for her."

Once again, however, she notes in her diary, she had only allowed herself to flee reality. "In the long run, however, reality cannot be banished. In vain we wrap ourselves in the rose-colored dream clouds of other times and other places; in vain we shut our eyes and stop up our ears to keep out the harsh sounds that destroy all harmony. One day the clouds break, one day something forces us to open our eyes, and the shrill scream of reality shatters everything." (47) What awakened the Countess and shattered her dreamworld was no loud scream, however, but a low moaning that she

heard in her room one October evening and that seemed to come from beyond the garden wall. It turns out to be Fritz, the gardener, who, it transpires, is a Communist, and who has been shot in the leg by a Nazi gang.

Countess Agnes interrupts her narrative at this point to provide the background of this event. She tells of the increasing political prominence of Hitler; of the possibility – in March and April 1932 – that he might be elected President of Germany, “which would be laughable if it were not so shameful” (47); of her own support of Hindenburg, which, like Kati Gruber’s, was unenthusiastic, motivated only by a residual trust that he would at least respect the constitution; and of her failure even to consider the third (Communist) candidate, since – perhaps wrongly, she reflects – she knew nothing about the Communist Party and, in any case, disliked every form of dictatorship. She notes that she is herself surprised that she is constantly writing in her diary now about politics, whereas in the past she had always written about books, about quiet walks, about beautiful landscapes. “At first my dislike of the National Socialists had been a matter of esthetics,” she observes, “the repugnance with which a cultivated person reacts to barbarism, the repugnance of a quiet, peace-loving person when she is confronted by noisy ranting and raving. I still remember the first time I saw a picture of their *Führer*. He was in the midst of a rant and his mouth was wide open. Instinctively I felt, at the time, that whoever rants so much must have something to hide. The truth expresses itself quietly because it is the truth. As for their constant refrain of ‘*Deutschland erwache*’ [Germany, awaken], Germany *had* awakened after the terrible war; it *had* opened its eyes and it had seen that great things can be achieved only in peace. The Germany of this new party was not my Germany; it was not the earnestly struggling, hard working land that in my mind resembled a good man who has made a serious blunder and tries as hard as he can to repair the damage and change his ways. That was my Germany, the Germany I knew and loved, a noble Germany that behaved chivalrously to its enemies.” The thought of chivalrousness sends the diary-writer back to the attack on Fritz, the gardener.

After she finds Fritz lying on the ground beyond the garden gate, unable to move because of the bullet wound in his leg, Countess Agnes runs back to the house to fetch Claudia and the maid. Together the three of them manage to get the young man into the house. The maid calls Dr. Bär who comes over immediately. To Fritz’s repeated statements that he was set upon

by ten men, Claudia responds in disbelief and anger, repeatedly claiming that it is not so, that it cannot be true. Countess Agnes is so busy tending to Fritz and so pleased by her daughter's outrage at the "unchivalrousness" of an attack by ten men against a single one that she does not pay attention at the time to Claudia's retort to Fritz: "That's what you all say," or to the meaning of the "you" in that remark. Instead, she and Dr. Bär commiserate on the increasingly dangerous situation in Germany. The good doctor tries, without much success or conviction, to reassure his aristocratic friend that "perhaps" the country won't get to the point where "these people" actually come to power. But Countess Agnes notices that he seems to have grown years older in a few weeks and gives the impression of a man who has seen an abyss opening before him.

The next weeks are spent in growing agitation and horror as Countess Agnes reads the newspapers and listens to the radio, mostly alone, for Claudia is now very often out. She cannot understand why all decent people do not overcome their differences and unite in opposing the monstrous thing that threatens them all; she cannot understand what magic the Nazis use to entice so many people into their ranks – "people like my dear Kati's daughter, that good and clever Toni." (52) She can understand why certain lower middle-class people are drawn to them – employees or struggling small shopkeepers who have had to cringe and cower all their lives. The Nazis make them feel they are somebody. But the workers and so many people who struggled for culture and human rights even under the old Kaiser, how can one explain the attraction National Socialism has for them? The question turns out to affect the Countess more directly than she had realized. One day Claudia develops a fever and her mother says she will call Dr. Bär. Claudia tells her she should not. "Why not, dearest. Just to put my mind at rest." "Well, not Dr. Bär" Claudia answers. "If you really must, call Dr. Feldhüter." Countess Agnes is surprised: "But why? He has never treated you before." "Because I do not want to be treated by a Jewish doctor [...] The Jews have brought ruin to our country. It will not develop to its full greatness until we have driven them all out." The Countess cannot believe her ears. "How can you say such things," she cries. "Isn't Dr. Bär one of our best friends? Haven't the Jews helped to make Germany into a country admired everywhere for its culture? Where did you learn this kind of talk?" Claudia tries to avoid an argument. She does not feel well, she protests, she is too weak to discuss the matter. But Countess Agnes "felt no sympathy for her. I think I did not realize at that moment that I was speaking to my

own child," she writes in her diary. "The individual lying before me was a stranger. The thought ran through my mind: What is this person doing here in my house? 'We *have* to discuss it, Claudia,'" she retorts, barely recognizing the harsh, unforgiving tone of her own voice. In the ensuing conversation, she learns that her daughter has become a Nazi. She is beside herself. The aristocrat in her is outraged. "It was impossible, it couldn't be, my daughter and that scum." Hard words follow and she leaves the room. Neither mother nor daughter has the courage to pursue the matter. Countess Agnes then relents somewhat. Perhaps it was because of the fever, she thinks. When Claudia gets over it, they will both laugh at the whole episode. It is impossible that her Claudia "who was so haughty and who set such store by good manners and chivalrousness" should have become a Nazi. She remembers her as a little girl of six responding with pride and joy to the stories of her honorable and brave ancestors, especially the one about her great-grandfather who had been imprisoned for his independent stand. Her husband had wanted a son, the Countess recalls, but she had felt that a girl can carry on family traditions of honour, courage, and principle, just as well as a boy.

Her tactic is to keep out of Claudia's way. She does not go to her room. For days, the two women hardly see one another. On the rare occasions when they do run into one another, they exchange politenesses like two strangers. On New Year's Eve, Claudia announces that she is going out. "Won't you catch cold again?" "No, I'll wear the fur." "Do you have to go out? It's New Year's Eve. Are you going to leave me here all alone?" "I have to go." Claudia turns to the maid and tells her that a man will call for her and that he should be brought into the living room. She then looks challengingly at her mother. "Don't you want to know who the man is that will be calling for me?" Countess Agnes does not respond. "My friend," Claudia says. "My Party comrade. He is with the S.A." The Countess feels she has been slapped in the face. At one time, she reflects, the term "my friend" would have shocked her, old-fashioned as she was, but by now she might have been pleased for Claudia, had her daughter not added that the "friend" was her Party comrade and was with the S.A. "Something stirred in me," she writes,

something stronger than all acquired good manners, stronger than all our culture. "So that's what it's all about?" I asked scornfully. "Because that's the only way you can get a man. [...] I'd rather you had gone on the street. I can live with a whore in my house but not with what you have become." "I should go then, and not come back?" Claudia asked quietly. Something in her tone of voice reminded me of the child that I had loved in my way – no doubt it wasn't the right way. Did I really want to send that

child away? What trouble would she get into without a home to come back to? "You can stay here," I said. "But I don't want to see you. I don't want to sit at the same table with you. You are a stranger to me, no, an enemy." Claudia paled. "If only you would try to understand, mother." "I understand only too well. Put your coat on and go now. I won't have your friend, your Party comrade, in my house."

Claudia goes to the door slowly, "as if she were waiting for me to call her back." But I could not, Countess Agnes writes, and thought of Kati who had acted differently with her child. "Perhaps she was wiser than I; but I could not call her back." (55)

Countess Agnes is now alone with her anger. She was prone to outbursts of anger as a child, she remembers, but became gentler and calmer during the difficult years of her marriage and then, later, age brought further calm. Now she is overwhelmed by anger and shame, far greater shame even than she had felt when Claudia had tried to seduce Fritz.

I hated Claudia, but not only Claudia, I hated myself because I had brought her into the world, I hated my body and my womanhood, I hated the hour when I had been impregnated with her and I hated the hour when I gave birth to her. I felt as though I was sinking into filth and slime and could never be clean again. I had tried to live a decent, honorable life, causing pain to no one and bearing my own with dignity. But what was the value of such a life now that Claudia had gone over to those who, to me, were the very essence of scum and vulgarity. Where in me did the evil that had come to light in Claudia lie hidden? (56)

She felt ashamed in front of the maid, who almost certainly knew about Claudia's activities. She wished the maid, a decent upstanding girl, were her daughter instead of Claudia. She remembered how Claudia had nearly died of scarlet fever when she was ten years old and how she had been saved only thanks to Dr. Bär who had come three times a day to see her. "If she had only died at that time... I shuddered: is it possible for a mother to think such thoughts. But I am not only a mother. I am also a human being, a thinking, feeling human being terrified by something unfathomable." (56) The night passes for Countess Agnes in nightmarish imaginings. This is how the men and women of the Middle Ages must have felt, she reflects, when a devastating plague, the cause of which they could not understand, overwhelmed the land. At times she wanted to rush out into the street crying "Save yourselves, save us all, while there is still time." But she could not move. "My legs were like lead and what I saw was a fearful Dance of Death." In the morning – it is New Year's Day – the maid brings her hot tea and forces her to drink some. Her kindness moves the Countess to tears. Then Kati calls on her. "She wanted to know why I was crying so. But I could not tell her. I could not bring myself to. She will find out soon enough." For the next few days she keeps to her room so as not to run into

Claudia. Kati visits her, Dr. Bär visits her. They are worried about her, she can see that, but they seem like ghosts. Endless days and endless nights pass, full of anguish and anxiety. From time to time she hears Claudia's footsteps. "It is as though she was treading on my heart. I knew where she was going." (58) For almost a month she does not see Claudia. "It was strange, this living under the same roof, without exchanging a word, without any contact. Like two dead people in a family tomb. I wondered if Claudia felt this too. If she sometimes had a longing to see me. There was no way for me to know. What did I know of my own child?"

On January 30<sup>th</sup> 1933 the Countess finally enters the living room in order to listen to the news on the radio. Claudia had the same idea, for as the Countess enters the room, Claudia is switching on the radio. The two of them sit, one on either side of the radio, two people who had become strangers to each other and each of whom hoped to hear something different. The music stops and the announcer's voice is heard. A tremor goes through Claudia's body as the news is broadcast. Hitler has been appointed Chancellor of Germany. "Hitler is Chancellor and I see opposite me a face glowing with happiness and I hear a voice say 'Now everything will go well. You'll see, mother.' Whose face was it? Whose voice? Who was this person who was exulting over the ruin of our country? The face, the voice came closer. 'Mother, you're not going to pass out?' Everything had gone black, but who was this stranger? 'Don't touch me,' I said. 'Don't touch me.' The blurry figure stood for a moment, then disappeared. A few moments later, I heard footsteps in the garden. Claudia was going out to celebrate victory." (59) The Countess returns to her room, thinking that this is now the end for her and all who think and feel as she does. "But for the others it was the beginning. About an hour later, the street was ringing with their hateful songs and cries of 'Heil.'...And I thought, Claudia is there with them...I no longer wept. I stopped trembling. I stared into the dark night and saw the wounded champion [of freedom] lying on the ground. Will he be able to rise again?"

On that despairing note, the Countess concludes her first diary entry.

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The third testimony now opens – that of Frau Doktor Feldhüter "whispering to herself." The tone is set immediately in the first few paragraphs:

I would like to know if there are other women in our town who have as many worries and vexations as I have? The maid handed in her notice today – she is the fourth in

three months. And she has absolutely nothing to complain about. I work my fingers to the bone keeping the house in order. [...] Yes, it would really be good if my husband had a better practice and we could afford two maids.

To tell the truth, when I married Arthur I had a very different idea of how things were going to be. I was a pretty girl and at that time a nurse had opportunities to make a good match. I would have much preferred to marry into industry. I still remember young Kurt Frankfurter, the son of super-rich parents. I took care of him after his appendectomy. He was a good-looking, likable, generous young fellow and he would have married me if his parents had not objected to his marrying a Christian. These Jews are so intolerant. It was not easy for me to accept that I was not about to become the wealthy Frau Frankfurter. And the other nurses, the dears, made merry over my misfortune. Women are so mean. I was so disappointed, that I consented to marry Arthur, who was then working in the hospital. It certainly wasn't an easy decision – a cripple, with a club foot, crabbed, always grumpy, and, as I could easily tell, being a nurse, a bad doctor as well. Still, he seemed to have prospects. He wanted to settle down in the little town by Lake Constance because at that time there was only one other doctor there – a Jewish doctor, quite well on in years. One thing I have to admit about Arthur: he looks intelligent. Whether he really is I have not been able to tell in all the years of our marriage. In general, I would have to say that I do not really know him. At times, when I was still not long married to him, I would ask myself, somewhat anxiously, what there is behind the mean mask of his face. I know only one thing for sure: that he is ambitious. In fact, I had counted on that ambition when I became his wife. And yet the nurses and the patients in the hospital did not call him "Dr. Wait-and-See" for nothing. He was always for "waiting and seeing" and that has been a real handicap to us, both financially and socially. I remember the time just before war was declared. We were all up in arms against the enemy powers and enthusiastically supporting our fatherland. I wept when I heard the national anthem played. And my little Lieslotte sang "Deutschland über alles" so touchingly in her bright child's voice. Only Arthur refused to reveal where he stood. "Wait and see," he would say. "It may not come to a war and then we'll be considered warmongers."

Then, when it did come to war, he was as patriotic a German as any, I have to grant him that. Except that he wouldn't buy any war bonds. But he made speeches, excellent speeches, about our invincible army and about Germany's mission in the world. In 1916 he began to hold back again. I could not understand him. It made a bad impression – just at the point when I was finally succeeding in gaining entry into the local officers' wives' circles. It was my hope that by war's end our position in the town would finally be secure; that old Dr. Bär's patients would come over to us; and that I would play the role in our town that the local doctor's wife has a right to play. Even that arrogant old woman, that Countess Agnes who lives in her lakeside villa and has always kept me politely at a distance, will have to invite me over, I thought. I could already see us moving out of our rented apartment into our own house, I could see our mixing in the best society, Arthur's becoming rich, and Lieselott's making a better match than her poor mother did. I complained to Arthur that he was spoiling all this for us with his behavior. He cast a strange look at me out of his small, sunken eyes.

"Wait and see," he said. "No rushing into anything."

In the summer of 1918 he suddenly began to express pacifist views and to lament the sacrifice of so many young lives on both sides of the conflict – though I knew perfectly well that he had no interest in anyone on the planet except himself. (60-62)

Then comes the collapse. The Frau Doktor is deeply distressed and weeps profusely at the news that "our poor Kaiser has had to flee to Holland." But soon enough she realizes that the officers' families and many of the better

class of people in town have a less generous view of the Kaiser's flight than she and so she too begins to see the matter differently. The repression of the Spartacists by the Social Democratic government leads her to take a more favorable view of the new republican regime. "It wasn't easy to look up to a former saddler as the head of state, but he seemed like a decent man, and after all, one has to adapt to changing circumstances." She now pleads with Arthur to join the Social Democratic Party as the party in power. But his response is, as usual, "Wait and see. I'm not joining any party. I am for peace. That's enough." (62) In the same breath he forbids his wife – "in the intolerably bossy tone that I hate in him," as she reports – to join any party. "Don't make any ill-considered move, Martha. I will not stand for my wife joining a party and inevitably involving me too." "Whenever he spoke to me in that vein," the Frau Doktor "whispers," "I had to get a good grip on myself so as not to scream in his face: 'You cripple, you dwarf' (I am nearly a head taller than he is), 'how dare you speak to me in that tone of voice?' And I would be overcome by the utter physical disgust I feel in his presence and would remember my fear, during my pregnancy, that my child would also come into the world as a cripple." Fortunately, Lieselotte did not. She is a strong, healthy girl.

At this point we are given a glimpse of Lieselotte's character. There was a moment, the Frau Doktor recalls, when her daughter wanted to marry a poor engineer. For once Arthur and she were of one mind – in their opposition to this marriage. Lieselotte yielded, but warned them angrily that she proposed thenceforth to live her life as freely as she chose, and wanted no comments or interference from them. The Frau Doktor was incensed. "How can you speak in that tone to your parents?" But Arthur only replied icily: "So long as your behavior doesn't damage my practice, you can entertain yourself in whatever way you please. Appearances must be kept up, however, you understand?" Lieselotte did precisely as she said she would and when on one occasion "she got into some trouble," Arthur took care of the problem. "Well, why else does one have a doctor for a father...?" the Frau Doktor comments. "After that, Lieselotte was more careful." (63) In fact, Lieselotte despises her father's ambitious scheming and annoys her mother by mocking her small-town social ambitions and hypocrisies. In contrast to Claudia and Toni, she is interested only in having a good time. As a result, while she is incapable of any generous action, she is also unmoved by grand phrases and heroic posturing and, unlike her mother, does not lie to herself. To the despair of the Frau Doktor, Lieselotte

will not pretend to be other than what she is: a self-centered young woman who is out for a good time. Her refusal to participate in the hypocrisies of her parents – even later in the narrative, after her parents have become leading Nazis – is Lieselotte’s form of revolt against them, but the simple egoism that is the source of her revolt – also sets its limitations. Even though, in contrast to Claudia and Toni, she is not deluded by ideology and propaganda, Lieselotte is never remotely tempted to openly question them, much less to offer any form of resistance or to seek and support an alternative. She has no ideals of any kind, but is totally focused on her own self. On the contrary, as soon as it suits her to do so, she follows her father into the Party. In her own way, she is an opportunist like her parents – in the cold, calculating style of her father rather than the deliberately self-deluding style of her mother.

In the little town, things are not going too well for Feldhüter. His patients are leaving him. Only those who for one reason or another don’t want to go to a Jewish doctor have stuck with him. It is his own fault, the Frau Doktor observes impatiently. “If you aren’t a good doctor, you should at least show some interest in your patients.” She also notes that he conceals his hatred of his rival, the elderly Dr. Bär, beneath a mask of admiration and courtesy. Dr. Bär, she remembers, helped them out during the worst of the inflationary period, and though they still owe him money, he never asks for it. “Well, my God, he had plenty,” she thinks, “and these Jews always want to maintain good collegial relations.”

As the political climate shifts, the Frau Doktor comes to acknowledge that her husband was right about not joining the Social Democrats. She begins to have some success in cultivating the officers’ families she considers the leading families of the town, and is eager to enhance her standing with them by joining the political party they support – if only she knew which of the conservative parties that was. Was it the *Deutsche Volkspartei*, or the *Zentrum*, or the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei*, she wonders. As this milieu is also strongly Protestant (hence probably not *Zentrum*, she guesses), the Frau Doktor takes care to assure the officers’ wives of her own and her family’s strong commitment to the Evangelical Church, expresses her distrust of Catholics, and, conveniently forgetting an early relationship that she would have liked to see blossom into a marriage, confides to them her conviction that “mixed marriages are extremely dangerous” and that she could “never in her life have married a member of another faith.” (65)

Arthur allows her to join the monarchist *Luisenbund*,<sup>17</sup> to which most of the officers' wives belong, but insists that he not be involved, evoking his usual wisdom: "Wait and see." Lieselotte, for her part, refuses to join: "What is there for me among all those old wives?" she objects. To her mother's response that there are also young women in the association, she has an easy answer: "Yes, but what sort of young women! I know the routine: you sit around endlessly drinking bad coffee, knitting or doing embroidery, lamenting the collapse of the monarchy, and composing congratulatory telegrams to send to the Kaiser and his wife. Thanks very much. I don't belong in that crowd." (67) She raises her eyebrows in a gesture that irritates the Frau Doktor intensely because it reminds her of her husband. "You and your good society, mother!" she goes on. "First you ran after Countess Agnes and wanted me to become friends with her daughter, that old maid. And when that didn't work out, you got on your middle-class high horse and started running down the aristocracy. Later, after the revolution, you changed your tune again. Now it ran: 'Lieselotte, don't be so stuck up, speak to that dear, sweet Toni. Everything has changed; we have to see that we get into the best social democratic circles.' But you had no luck with the best social democratic circles either. And now you are on to me with your *Luisenbund*. Let me tell you something. I don't give a damn what party anybody belongs to. I want to have a good time, that's all. I'm not here to help you get into 'good society.'"<sup>18</sup> She concludes with a comment that could well also have reminded the Frau Doktor of her husband: "Anyway, no one knows how things are going to work out. I have no intention of taking a position." (68)

In her *Luisenbund* circle, the Frau Doktor does her best to explain Feldhüter's unwillingness to declare himself politically on the same side as the officer's families by invoking his noble professional conviction that, however much he may sympathize with a particular political position, as a doctor he must remain neutral publicly and see in others only the sick or suffering human being. (66) Lieselotte for her part, she explains, so admires her father, that she follows his example in everything and feels that a doctor's daughter must stand above all parties. The Frau Doktor is not at all pleased, however, that she is constantly being placed in a difficult situation by her husband and her daughter: "It is really hard for me to maintain our social position with a husband and a daughter like mine." (68) Finally, in

<sup>17</sup> A women's group founded in 1923 and named for the revered Queen Luise of Prussia in Napoleonic times. The group supported the Nazis at the time of the *Machtergreifung*, but like other monarchist groups was disbanded in 1934.

face of their constant mockery of her, she gives up communicating honestly with them both. She feels oppressed by being unable to express her real feelings to anyone.

I can't really say out loud what I truly feel. My whole life has become a kind of whispering, a fruitless conversation with myself. Watching every word and gesture, hiding one's true feelings, making sure to tell everyone what he or she wants to hear, what kind of life is that? How I would love to belong to the crowd that is in power and be able to shout out my opinions as I wish. The terrible thing is that you never know who will ultimately be in power. Now, there's this new party, under Hitler. I don't care much for him because he is an Austrian and a Catholic, but at least he lets the Jews have it.[...] Sometimes I wonder whether we shouldn't join this new party [...] rather than the Deutschnationalists. If only I were sure that the new party isn't serious about socialism. (69)

Besides, Lieselotte is not altogether wrong about the Luisenbund. It is boring. She has been a loyal monarchist all her life, the Frau Doktor reflects, "but do we have to talk all the time about Doorn!" And "the old goats" – the term she now uses to refer to the two leading members of the circle, a Major's wife and a baroness Hellsdorf (whose son will later become engaged to marry Lieselotte) – "never let me get in a word." Because they once visited the Kaiser in Doorn they never stop talking about how graciously they were received. Everyone else, she observes resentfully, is made to feel small and insignificant. (71)

Feldhüter is somewhat less resistant to his wife's new political enthusiasm for the National Socialists. He reassures her that the National Socialist leaders are unlikely to build a socialist system. "That is only to get the workers to go along with them," he explains. But when the Frau Doktor asks whether they shouldn't encourage Lieselotte to join the party, since its leader is now the new Chancellor, and cites the example of Claudia, who has been a member for a month already, Arthur again says no. "A lot of hysterical women have joined," he replies. Lieselotte should not join – not at least for now. "First we have to wait and see the results of the elections." (70) The Frau Doktor is beside herself: "Wait and see, Doctor Wait-and-See. God, how I hated him at that moment. Wait and see. He wouldn't even have married me, the hideous clubfoot, if I hadn't talked him into believing I was pregnant." (71)

The Reichstag fire provokes a violent outburst in the Frau Doktor, a family row, and an unexpected reconciliation with her husband. She is more and more drawn to the National Socialists as they talk of closing down the department stores – where ordinary Germans, she notes, are sold shoddy goods at high prices, like the summer dress, bought only the

year before, that became unwearable after the first wash – and getting rid of the Jews and the Communists. When she reads of the Reichstag fire in the newspaper, she immediately announces to Lieselotte that it was the work of the Communists. Lieselotte, however, only yawns and observes that it was an ugly building anyway. The Frau Doktor is enraged: “Our Reichstag, the embodiment of Germany!” “We have to destroy them, root and branch,” she declares. “Who?” Lieselotte asks in a bored tone. “The Communists naturally.” “Is that what the old wives in the *Luisenbund* say?” Lieselotte asks, yawning again. Feldhüter himself now chimes in. Raising his eyebrows in the way that infuriates the Frau Doktor, he gives her a harsh look and tells her to stay out of politics. “Politics are men’s business. Why don’t you see to it instead that the soup isn’t burned again today. I don’t know any woman who talks so much about how well she runs her house and puts such terrible food on the table.” (72) She was used to Feldhüter’s meannesses, the Frau Doktor relates, and usually bore them in silence. This time, however, what with the burning of the Reichstag and the new maid’s handing in her notice, she could no longer contain herself.

I gave vent to all the bitterness in my heart: the Reichstag fire, the summer dress that shrank in the wash, the maids who are becoming more insolent and demanding by the day, Arthur’s lack of success, the affection Dr. Bär is held in, the inner loneliness to which I am condemned, the way I am treated by the ladies in the *Luisenbund*, as if a former nurse were of no account, a nobody, the worry Lieselotte causes me, and the price of butter that keeps going up, the vicious Russians who got the German Communists to set fire to the Reichstag, the kitchen stove that needs to be repaired, Arthur’s meanness to me, Lieselotte’s lack of respect, the two genuine Meissen cups that the maid broke yesterday, and our poor Kaiser...it all poured out of me... Lieselotte was staring at me, Arthur smiled mockingly. I myself could hear that my voice was becoming ever louder and more shrill. Suddenly Arthur banged on the table with his fist. “Will you shut up!... The window is wide open. Anyone who happens to be passing by can hear every word you say. Can’t you learn to wait and see? Do you have to blurt out all your opinions right away? Do you want to spoil everything for me?” Lieselotte got up from the table. “Nice family breakfast,” she drawled. “Really heart-warming. Thank God I am not married.” (72)

Then the unexpected happens. Feldhüter looks at his wife, leans forward, and places his hand on hers. “Just be patient for a little longer, Martha,” he says. “Then maybe you will get everything you have wanted for so long: the house, the second maid. Then maybe the ladies in the *Luisenbund* will learn to be humble. Then maybe, as my wife, you will play the role in our town that you have always wanted to play.” The Frau Doktor looks at him in astonishment. “Had he lost his mind?” He notices her reaction and smiles: “Only, for now, no rushing into anything. Not a careless word. When one has two irons in the fire, Martha, one has to watch both of them. Today

is February 27<sup>th</sup>. Can you not wait until the end of March? Then we will know."

The weeks go by. Finally it is election day. Feldhüter disappears in the early morning. Unable to ask him how she should vote, the Frau Doktor simply does not vote. With her customary indifference, Lieselotte also does not vote. As the radio is out of order, the Frau Doktor decides to wait up until her husband returns to hear the results of the election. The hours pass. It is late at night. Lieselotte wants to go to bed, but the Frau Doktor is too anxious and worked up and will not allow her to. Lieselotte stretches out on the sofa with a novel and falls asleep. Finally at one in the morning Feldhüter appears. "His sallow complexion had become red with excitement," the Frau Doktor relates.

He slammed the living-room door shut. "We won!" he shouted at me. I looked at him in puzzlement. "We won" – what can it mean when Arthur says "we"? And then I noticed a large swastika in his buttonhole and I knew who "we" meant. Lieselotte had awakened and she was also staring at the badge. She had never seen her father wearing one. "Since when have you been a Nazi, father?" she asked in a sleepy voice. "Talk respectfully when you speak of the mightiest party in the land," he commanded her, "– of the party you are also a member of." "I am a member of?" "Yes, you. I signed you up months ago." "But I don't want to be a member. All that marching and shouting is a bore. What does it have to do with me?" (77)

Feldhüter goes up to her. At first the Frau Doktor thought he was about to strike her. Instead he says:

"I've been in the National Socialist Party for months. But I explained to the district commander that, as a doctor, I couldn't declare myself openly a member. Now, however...Now everything is different. And you will do as I say, Lieselotte." She shrugged. "Well, all right then....So long as I don't have to sleep with proletarians." Arthur laughed. I don't know why, but a cold shiver runs down my spine when Arthur laughs. "That won't be necessary. It wouldn't hurt, but if you insist on the more distinguished types, some SS man will surely turn up. You're still a good-looking girl." Lieselotte now laughed too, like an echo of her father. I was of course completely forgotten. Neither of them had a thought for me.

It turns out, however, that there is something for the Frau Doktor too. "Now you will get your house," Feldhüter tells her. "What would you say to Dr. Bär's house?" The Frau Doktor feels her heart pounding in her breast. "I had never felt so German, so German through and through," she relates. "Yes, everything was working out as it should, The Jew yields his place to the German whom he has held down for so long. The German woman takes over where once the Jewess was mistress. I almost felt love for my husband. He is after all a good and clever man. Smarter than I am. Now let the Major's wife dare to call Dr. Bär! Now let Countess Agnes dare go past me on the street with only a curt greeting! Now, I looked at Arthur, now we

are the masters. And woe to them who stand in our way." (78)

As cries and songs of jubilation resound through the street, Feldhüter goes to the window, throws it open, takes Lieselotte by the arm and stands with her looking out at the scene below. The marching men come to a halt and shout up: "Sieg heil! Germany awake!" Feldhüter and his daughter respond with the Nazi salute and the cry of "Heil Hitler!" Not to be left out, the Frau Doktor hurries over to the window, places herself beside her husband and daughter, raises her hand too in the Nazi salute and echoes their shouts of "Heil Hitler." That evening, as the couple gets ready for bed, the Frau Doktor's heart is so full, she feels she has to kneel in prayer and thank God for all He has done for them. Feldhüter asks her what is keeping her from coming to bed. "I am praying, Arthur," she replies. He shrugs and by the light of the night lamp she catches a glimpse of a mocking smile on his pallid face. (79)

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The Frau Doktor's second testimony, which follows immediately on the first, is no longer one of whispered frustration and resentment but an outspoken expression of triumph and satisfaction. The opening sentences again set the tone.

My beloved husband, my good, clever Arthur, how right he was with his "Wait and see." Only the individual who submits patiently and humbly to God's will receives his reward here on earth. I never asked anything of life. It was always enough for me to have a good husband, an obedient daughter, and a modest home which I looked after lovingly and joyfully. I was never one of those who demand a lot from life and for that reason, now that everything has turned out so splendidly for us, I am entitled to rejoice with a good conscience. (79)

She goes on to tell how her "dear husband" and her "good Lieselotte" accompanied her to Church where they heard an edifying sermon about the world mission of the "deutsche Christen"<sup>18</sup> and the duties of the German "Frau und Mutter" [wife and mother]. She notices how at Church the Frau Major waved to her eagerly from afar and tried, albeit without success, to

<sup>18</sup> There had been agitation in German Protestant circles since the end of the nineteenth century for the freeing of German Christianity from its alien, "oriental" origin in Judaism. In his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899), Houston Stewart Chamberlain had argued that Christ was not a Jew but an Aryan. In May, 1932, with National Socialism going from strength to strength, a group calling itself the "deutsche Christen" (German Christians) was formed within the German Protestant Church. It excluded baptised Jews, endorsed the "Aryan paragraph," and generally pursued a racist and anti-Semitic agenda. It soon dominated many of the local *Landkirchen* and emerged as the clear winner in the Church elections of July, 1933.

get her mother, the haughty old Frau General, to follow suit. She admires the SA and SS men in their handsome uniforms.

I felt real love for those brave lads who for years were persecuted, treacherously attacked, and murdered, and who now stand before us as conquerors. I also thought of the boycott of Jewish businesses the week before and how the SA marched up and down in front of the department store (where, by the way, I had bought another summer dress a week earlier, the prices being so low that it would have been a sin not to take advantage of them). The owner, chicken-hearted as all the Jews have now become, had had the window shutters rolled down. One delivery boy was late, however, and tried to slip out of the building without being noticed. But our fearless SA men caught him and gave him a proper beating. It was fun to watch. (80)

The reader is given a hint of what is to come in the later testimonies of Countess Agnes and Kati Gruber when the Frau Doktor tells how she recognized “that crazy Claudia “ in the crowd, standing “pale as death and as if turned to stone.” The “awful Toni, whom I never could abide” was standing next to her, holding her tightly by the arm. At one point it looked as if Claudia was about to dash forward, but Toni pulled her back. “These aristocratic women are frightful,” the Frau Doktor comments. “Degenerate and neurotic. They can’t even stand to see a harmless scrap. In general, that Claudia ought not to be in the Party. They say she had something going with a Jewish doctor in the psychiatric clinic she was once sent to. I took good care to see that that information got spread around. We don’t need women who are so shameless that they let men of an alien race... I simply can’t understand how an Aryan woman doesn’t feel utter disgust when a man of an alien race touches her. It would never have occurred to me, when I was young, to even glance at a Jew. I still remember how hard it was for me when I had to take care of one in the hospital.” During the church service she reflects how she “had to laugh with delight, like a child, when the airplanes flew overhead and dropped white leaflets calling on the population to observe the boycott” and how wonderful it had been, even though there were only three Jewish businesses in the little town. “In Berlin and the other big cities it must have been grand.” She also begins to “wonder” whether the elderly, aristocratic Frau General, who has always studiously avoided greeting her and who had expressed skepticism at one of the *Luisenbund* gatherings about the responsibility of the Communists for the Reichstag fire, might not have Jews among her ancestors. All in all,

it is wonderful to feel oneself one with the entire Volk and with all classes of the people. One Germany, united against the enemy within and against the enemy without. And for this we have to thank our great Führer. His picture hangs in our living room and I never tire of gazing on his noble, thoughtful features. A man of the people, no Kaiser and no prince, just a simple human being who raised himself up. That is the strength of the German people – that it always recognizes true greatness even when it appears

in the humblest guise. I never really could understand the circle around the major's wife with its glorification of the Kaiser. I was always a good republican – though not, for sure, at the time of the old republic that has now collapsed. For I found the Social Democrats as repulsive as the Jews. (81-82)

The Frau Doktor notes with satisfaction that her husband's waiting-room is now always full, people having "finally realized who the better doctor is," whereas "only a few proletarians" with workers' insurance "and that stupid Countess Agnes still go to Dr. Bär." (82) And there is "something fishy about her. Everybody knows about the fine morals of aristocratic women. Their menfolk are unable to satisfy them, and so there is always a Jewish tutor around. Not hard to imagine the outcome. I always thought that that Countess Agnes didn't look like a true German woman. That's why for years I refused to have anything to do with her, even though she kept trying to become friends with me."

Given Feldhüter's position in the town now, it is unacceptable, according to the Frau Doktor, that he should have only a miserable five-room apartment. For herself, she declares, she doesn't care, but she has to think of Arthur and Lieselotte. She types up an anonymous letter warning Doctor Bär that he is in danger and sends it to him in several different mailings. Others in the town do the same. But nothing happens. Then some lively lads throw stones at Dr. Bär's windows and smash them. A little later stories begin circulating about concentration camps. "I was thrilled. Our revolution isn't carried out barbarously, like the Russian one. We don't murder people. We place even our enemies in secure places and give them the chance to correct their ways. No other nation would be capable of such a thing." (83) Still, Dr. Bär does not try to leave as so many other Jews have.

The stubborn old man just wouldn't let himself be helped and his equally stubborn workers' insurance patients still went to him, even though SA men were stationed outside his office warning people politely that he is a Jew and that Germans should have themselves cared for by an Aryan doctor.[...] On the very day of the boycott a boatswain, a Communist, even had the nerve to go to Dr. Bär to get help with an infected finger. But the fellow got the same treatment as the delivery man for the Jewish department store. The fact that things turned out badly wasn't the SA men's fault. How were these poor young fellows to know that the boatswain had come back from the war with a heart condition and couldn't tolerate even a little thrashing. Naturally, they were all shocked when he suddenly lay on the ground, stiff and still as a stone, and never regained consciousness. They carried him back into Dr. Bär's house and some communist provocateur placed a note on his chest that read: "Dr. Bär, this is what happens to the patients you treat." (84)

But after all, "he would most likely have died of a heart attack anyway, even without the couple of blows he took. God has marked the appointed end for each one of us and the boatswain's last hour had struck. Perhaps

if my Arthur had gotten to him, he might have lived a little longer. For Dr. Bär is now in his seventies and such an old man sometimes doesn't quite know what he is doing."

The Frau Doktor's house problem is finally resolved when Dr. Bär and his wife commit suicide. Feldhüter at first only tells his wife that they will be moving into Dr. Bär's house in a week. The Frau Doctor thinks at first that Bär has finally given in and decided to emigrate. Then suddenly she thinks of the doctor's wife and her high spirits drop. "Maybe she will stay on here," she says, somewhat crestfallen. "Don't worry," Feldhüter reassures her. "You can begin packing tomorrow [...] Dr. Bär and his wife shot themselves a couple of hours ago." "I always told you, Arthur," the Frau Doktor responds, "that the two of them were not quite in their right minds these last weeks." "And then," she adds in her testimony, "I was overcome by joy." Feldhüter warns her, however, that the whole town does not have to know about the suicides; the story is being put out, he says, that Bär accidentally shot himself while cleaning his gun and that when his wife saw what had happened she took her own life. "My good Arthur!" the Frau Doktor comments. "When I think of the harm the Jew did to him all those years and now he is concerned about saving his reputation. But Arthur was always like that – good-hearted and considerate." (84-85) As if to confirm her judgment of him, Feldhüter announces that he is "glad the old man has croaked." "May that be the fate of all enemies of the fatherland," the Frau Doktor responds. "Who knows how many crimes Dr. Bär committed in his long life," she thinks. "Illegal operations and the like. I know that he was always against Paragraph 218 [the law prohibiting assisted abortions]. Unlike my Arthur, who has always believed that the living embryo was especially sacred." (Lieselotte's "Malheur" is thus conveniently erased from the Frau Doktor's new consciousness as the wife of the town's prominent National Socialist doctor.)

The narrative continues in this vein. The Frau Doktor would have liked to refurbish the Bär's villa with furniture bought from a fellow Party member, but "the good man was so expensive that one evening as it was getting dark I went to the store of the Jewish furniture dealer Kohn. To tell the truth, I went out of compassion, for old man Kohn is seventy-five now and what is the old man to do if no one buys from him any more? Naturally the Jew first tried to cheat me. He wanted to charge nearly as much as our good Party member. I gently pointed out to him that from a person of alien stock that is simply not acceptable. I was irritated that the man seemed not

to have appreciated my kindness in coming to him. 'My prices have always been firm, Frau Doktor,' he said in his shameless Jewish way. 'Yes, before,' I answered quietly. 'I can't sell the furniture for less,' was the response. But anger now overwhelmed me. 'Don't you know that it's all over now with price-gouging.' I exclaimed. 'I am duty-bound to report you for trying to sell at higher than the set price.' [...] The old man stood trembling in a corner, staring at me with his huge black eyes. Even if he is a sub-human," the Frau Doktor reflects, "the Bible tells us we must have compassion with animals. 'So, Herr Kohn,' I said encouragingly, 'we can surely come to an agreement. I will pay you half of what you are asking. And you will still be making a good deal.' [...] At the time I still did not know that I would not have to pay the Jew anything at all. He delivered the furniture, but even before I got the bill he had been sent to a concentration camp for engaging in Communist plots." (93-94)

Two episodes recounted by the Frau Doktor anticipate the later narratives of the Countess and Kati. According to the Frau Doktor,

despite the seriousness of the times, there are all kinds of things that make one laugh, as, for instance, when the Social Democratic Mayor of our town was made to march through the streets carrying a Swastika banner.[...] If he slowed down he would get a good-humoured shove from one of our good SA men. He would then run for a bit, which sent the young people in the crowd into fits of laughter. The day after that the story went around that treasonous documents had been found in his home and that he was to be arrested. But suddenly our Mayor was nowhere to be found. [...] Everyone in the town wondered where he could have gone, for the Swiss border was strictly guarded. I had my suspicions. There is only one person who can have hidden him. So I said to my future son-in-law, Baron Hellsdorf, "If I were you, I would do a house-search at Countess Agnes Saldern's place. I know for sure that that woman is a fierce enemy of our movement. So much so, that she no longer even greets me when we meet on the street. Besides, I suspect that there are Jews in her family line." (89)

The story of the search is then told from the point of view of the Nazi investigators in anticipation of its subsequent retelling from the point of view of the anti-Nazi resistance, to which the reader has now been given good reason to suspect that the Countess has gone over. We learn that Countess Agnes adopted a haughtily correct, even provocative aristocratic tone with the men, that the Frau Doktor's future son-in-law, Baron Hellsdorf, was so incensed by it that he had to restrain himself from striking the old lady, and that Claudia was furious at the indignity done to her mother.<sup>19</sup>

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19 Zur Mühlen's choice of the name Hellsdorf was probably not arbitrary and was curiously prescient. The similarly named Wolf-Heinrich, Graf von Helldorff (1896-1944), was a relatively well-known figure of an "aristocrat" turned Nazi. He had taken part in the failed rightwing Kapp Putsch against the Weimar Republic and joined the SA in 1931. Zur Mühlen could not have known in 1934, when she wrote

A side-issue, satirizing the Nazi obsession with race, is introduced at this point when Feldhüter warns his wife against spreading a story about there being Jews among Countess Agnes's Saldern ancestors. He has already checked the matter out, he tells her and found – doubtless to his regret – that the family is 100% Aryan. "However, if this question interests you..." he adds maliciously, pulling out of his pocket a sheaf of papers containing the results of years of inquiry into the racial ancestry of prominent people. The Frau Doktor notices to her delight that the great grandmother of the Frau Major was a baptised Jewess. But to her consternation, Feldhüter's continued research into the racial ancestry of prominent local figures turns up evidence soon afterwards showing that the maternal great-grandfather of her future son-in-law Baron Hellsdorf, "that splendid, blond, typically Germanic young man," was a baptised Jew. Lieselotte is already thirty, the Frau Doktor reflects, and it will not be easy for her to find another man. Fortunately, the situation is saved when letters are discovered in the Hellsdorf family archives "demonstrating beyond doubt that his great-great-grandmother had had an affair with a Freiherr Elz von Rübernach and that her one child was the child of their love." Happily, therefore, there is not a drop of blood from an alien race in Hellsdorf's veins. The Frau Doktor allows herself to feel sympathy and admiration for the ancestor of her future son-in-law. Forced out of financial necessity to marry a man of alien race, she had had the courage to preserve the purity of her family's blood by engaging in an adulterous relationship. (96-97)

A second episode anticipating the crucial, culminating event of the later narratives of Countess Agnes and Kati Gruber concerns the pursuit of a Communist by twenty young club-bearing Nazis. The Frau Doktor admits in her second testimony that some improper things have happened under the SA. The other day, for example, when about twenty club-bearing young men were running after a Communist, she relates, they paid no attention to the fact that she was also in the street. She had to dart quickly into a doorway to avoid getting hurt herself. "Cowardly, like all Marxists," as she puts it, unaware, as usual, of any irony in her words, "the Communist was

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*Unsere Töchter die Nazinen*, that the National Socialist government would appoint him Chief of Police in Berlin in 1935 and that he would play an active role in the harassing and plundering of the Jewish population, or that, if Goebbels is to be believed, he proposed the construction of a ghetto in Berlin to be financed by the rich Jews themselves. He is also said to have been the brains behind "Kristallnacht" in November 1938. (All this did not prevent him from participating in the failed plot to assassinate Hitler – for which he was put to death in 1944).

running away as fast as he could. The whole lakeside square was full of running, shouting men." She admits that she was extremely frightened. But once she was out of danger, she relates, everything looked different.

Goodness gracious! One has to have some understanding of the people's spirits and how fired-up they are. And in the end it really was a funny spectacle. Unfortunately, the Communist got away. But that was only because of that crazy Claudia, who stood in the way of the brave young lads, shrieking, and yelling out something about the dignity of the movement. For a moment, she made them hesitate. And that moment was enough to give the Marxist his chance. Claudia's lover was in command of the SA men. He laughed loudly at the frenzy of the old spinster and pushed her gently but vigorously aside, so that she collapsed against the wall of a house. I wondered about this event later. [...] Was it possible that this man-crazy woman was also involved with the Communist? The Salderns are Catholics and it is well known that the Jesuit poison has infected these people and made them thoroughly immoral. In a neighboring town, for instance, a priest, speaking from the pulpit, dared to slander our glorious Führer. The old man must have known he was not telling the truth. But naturally these international brothers, who let themselves be told what they are to do by a foreigner and who live in sin with their housekeepers are almost as un-German as the Jews. The old man is in a concentration camp now and it serves him right. Why doesn't he follow the example of our good Herr von Papen, who submits to the authority of the Führer in everything. (95)

In gratitude for the many benefits that have now come her way – in her own words: "I am now much sought after and honored" – the Frau Doktor ends her second testimony on words of praise for her fatherland – "the only land where true service is rewarded and where, as it is said in the Bible, 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree,'<sup>20</sup> and on a prayer of thanks to God and to "the chosen instrument of His will, our Führer Adolf Hitler, the most German of Germans." (100)

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The broad satire, for which Zur Mühlen reveals a striking gift in the testimonies of the middle-class Frau Doktor, gives way in the concluding two testimonies by the aristocratic mother and the working-class mother to dramatic and pathetic narrative. Countess Agnes opens her testimony with an avowal and a commitment: "I am only a simple mortal, an old woman, who has perhaps sinned throughout a lifetime by withdrawing from everything. Now however, at seventy, despite my age, I would like to make up for all that I failed to do, I would like to help and to rescue people, and I would also like to witness the fall of those who currently wield power." The aristocrat has thus realized that it is time to leave the glasshouse in which in her 1929 autobiographical memoir Zur Mühlen had accused her class of

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<sup>20</sup> In the original: 'Er stößet die Gewaltigen vom Stuhl und erhebet die Elenden.' The passage, unattributed in the text, is from Luke, 1:52..

having shut itself up, go beyond distaste and disdain, and join forces with the Social Democratic working class in active opposition to a regime that is the enemy of all humanity. Not surprisingly, therefore, it transpires that it was Countess Agnes who carried out the rescue of the town's Social Democratic mayor and ferried him in her motorboat to the safety of Switzerland on the other side of the lake, that – at great risk to herself, obviously – she has been providing temporary sanctuary in a well concealed room in her house for many other Communists and Social Democrats on the run from Nazi persecution, and that, affecting deep piety, she has been storing weapons for her new friends under piles of prayer books in an old prayer-stool that she brought out expressly for the purpose and ostentatiously placed in a prominent position in her living room. Despite searches of the house, the old lady's skilful planning, resourcefulness, sang-froid, and expert play-acting effectively thwart the Nazis' best efforts to locate an elusive loophole in their surveillance system. Her success is all the more remarkable as she does not conceal her contempt for them and their movement and appears to do nothing to allay their suspicion of her. In fact, she uses her aristocratic hauteur as a useful disguise. Even Claudia's membership in the party becomes a situation to be exploited: it is invoked, for instance, to underline the unlikelihood that a resister is being concealed in a house inhabited by a Nazi.

What remains for a time unclear is whether Claudia knows more about her mother's activities than she lets on. Her disaffection from the party, or from its violent and "unchivalrous" tactics, already hinted at in her heated denial of Fritz's account of having being set upon by an entire gang of National Socialists in the Countess's first testimony, is hinted at again, twice, in the second testimony of the Frau Doktor. On the first occasion, Claudia wanted to jump in to stop the attacks on the delivery boy from the Jewish department store, and had to be held back by Toni; on the second, as we just saw, she tried to stop a crowd of club-bearing Nazi youths from beating up a lone fleeing Communist and was pushed aside contemptuously by her SA lover. The reason for Claudia's behavior is made clear on that occasion by Claudia herself: the beatings of lone, defenceless victims by gangs of SA men, she shouts, are a discredit to the party and are inconsistent with what she takes to be its ideals.

That Claudia is deeply troubled by the actions she has witnessed emerges in Countess Agnes's second testimony from changes the Countess notices – and for which she has, as yet, no explanation – in the young woman's appearance and behavior. Mother and daughter have by now

been partly reconciled. They take their meals together and talk about indifferent matters, avoiding the topics that divide them. Countess Agnes notices, however, that Claudia has become thin and pale, has dark rings round her eyes as though she has difficulty sleeping, hardly eats, but smokes one cigarette after another. Sometimes, when she thinks she is unobserved, there is a look of despair on her face, and her hands shake. On one occasion when the Countess, thinking she has gone out, enters Claudia's room without knocking, she finds her daughter stretched out on the sofa, weeping profusely. A little later, Claudia comes home deathly pale, with a troubled expression that Countess Agnes recognizes from when she was little. Suddenly she falls to her knees and buries her face in the Countess's lap, saying only "Mother, mother." As the Countess strokes her hair, she notices that it has become quite grey. Claudia does not appear that evening for dinner. When she goes in to say goodnight to her, Countess Agnes finds her lying in bed staring at the ceiling. There is a pool of water in front of the washbasin. "You certainly gave yourself a good wash this evening, Claudia," Countess Agnes says, partly to distract the young woman from her thoughts. "Not good enough, mother, not good enough," Claudia replies, looking with disgust at her hands and her thin body. "I shall never be clean again, never." Countess Agnes notices that she did not sleep that entire night for the light was burning in her room until dawn.

Claudia now begins to urge her mother to cross the border and settle in Switzerland, indicating on one occasion that she knows it was the Countess who made it possible for the town's mayor to escape over the lake into Switzerland. The Countess is puzzled. "Why do you want to get rid of me, Claudia?" she asks. The answer comes hesitantly, in a monotone, like something rehearsed: "Because a lot of shady elements have infiltrated the SA and it's not impossible now that, against the wishes of the leaders, those agents provocateurs..." Suddenly she breaks off and says in a whisper: "Go to Switzerland, mother, I beg you. Something could easily happen to you. Those people who claim to be National Socialists and in reality are something entirely different..." Countess Agnes looks at her and asks: "Since when have you started to lie, child. I always consoled myself with the thought that however you acted, you were always upright and honest at least.. Have you now lost that one good quality too?" Claudia turns a deep red. Her hands shake and her lips tremble. She places a hand on the image of the Madonna on the prayer stool (in which the Countess stores the weapons of the resisters). "You have become religious again, mother.

Pray, pray that everything doesn't..." Unable to complete her sentence, she simply stands still, looking lost and helpless. Countess Agnes feels a pain in her heart. "Come here, Claudia," she says softly. "I want to tell you something." Claudia comes over and sits beside her. "We don't see eye to eye on anything, my dear," Countess Agnes continues. "We have almost become enemies in these last months. Perhaps I was too hard on you. I'll stop reproaching you. Just do one thing for me. Be true to yourself. Don't ever do anything that goes against your better judgment and your truest convictions." Claudia gives a bitter, desperate laugh: "My better judgment, good God, my better judgment." Suddenly she seizes her mother's hand: "Mother, how did you, you of all people, come by such a daughter. How is it possible that a child of yours is a coward, a pathetic coward?" "The bravest of us can feel fear," the Countess answers. "It's a question of overcoming it." Claudia gets up from the sofa and goes to the window. Yet Countess Agnes feels her daughter is closer to her than she ever was and in the midst of all the anguish and distress, she experiences a quiet happiness. (107-108)

Claudia soon has occasion to follow her mother's advice when her revulsion at her Nazi comrades' tactics provokes her to make the final – and fatal – intervention that becomes the tragic climax and conclusion of Countess Agnes's second testimony. The Countess is at home one day when she hears shots. She wonders who is being attacked this time and thinks of the old man who is in hiding from the Nazis and whom she is supposed to help escape to Switzerland that evening. As she is reflecting on a conversation she had had shortly before with Fritz, the gardener, and Toni's former friend Seppel – a conversation in which she had asked why Russia has not intervened, and been told in response by the two brave young Communists that she doesn't understand anything about politics – Toni bursts into the house, pale as death and eyes red from weeping. The Countess thinks something has happened to Kati. Toni, who, she notices, is no longer wearing her swastika badge, replies that she has not come to tell her about Kati, but about Claudia. "My God, what has she done?" the Countess asks. "Has she betrayed someone?" Claudia has betrayed no one," Toni answers. "You can be proud of her. Claudia is dead." She then relates how it happened. His would-be rescuers had waited too long with their escape plans for an old comrade (in which, as the reader already knows, the Countess was to have played a major role); he had been discovered and arrested that afternoon. The Nazis had tied a placard round his neck that read "I am Huber, the old big shot" and had driven him through the

streets of the town, beating and shoving him as they went. Claudia had encountered the mob in the square by the lake. "I had already had to hold her back once before," Toni explains. "But today, she was alone. By the time I got there, it was too late." Claudia, it seems, stood watching the scene as though shell-shocked. "She saw how one young Nazi stuck out a leg in front of the old man, so that he tripped and fell, and how the lad then began to kick him as he lay on the ground. She saw how they raised the old fellow up and began beating him with their rubber truncheons. At that point she jumped forward and stood in front of the old man, shouting to the SA people: 'Leave the old man alone, you beasts, you murderers!'" Seemingly the old man told her she should go, for there was nothing she could do to help him. But Claudia stood her ground and shouted through the whole square: "Won't any of you step forward to help? Are you all cowards?" She then ripped the swastika from her breast and threw it in the leaders' faces, crying "The badge of murder, the badge of cowardice. Save the old man! Kill the beasts!" A big crowd had gathered, Toni went on. "One young man leaped from the crowd to stand beside Claudia and old Huber, pulling out a knife. A few voices struck up the International. The SA men were soon surrounded. But our people were unarmed. Then the shots rang out. I heard them myself. The young man was hit by the first, Claudia by the second. The Nazi procession moved on, leaving the two dead young people behind them. Our men picked them up and carried them away." (113-114)

Claudia's body is brought home that evening. The Countess has her child back. "In the midst of my pain, I also felt happiness," she writes in her diary. "Because now I could weep for my child...I held her cold hand in mine and I thought: 'How quickly she found her way back to me, my Claudia, much more quickly than I could have dared to hope ...She is the last of our line and in her death she has brought honor to it. Poor confused heart, poor mixed up head, when the light finally dawned in you, you could only die, but in the service of a good cause. Others might have been smarter and not allowed themselves to be carried away, so that they could live to fight the enemy. You, my child, could fight only through your death. But that is something too, it is a lot. And I am proud of you.'" (115)

Even as she expresses her pride in her child, the Countess thus hints at the limitations of aristocratic opposition to National Socialism. Claudia's objection is to the Party members' brutality and "unchivalrous" behavior: the reader of *Hermynia Zur Mühlen* is inevitably reminded of little Erika's

indignation at the fight of “four against one” in *Reise durch ein Leben*, Tante Aglae’s reaction to a similar situation in *Ein Jahr im Schatten*, the distress and anger of the child in a feuilleton entitled “Man muß es ihnen sagen” when she comes upon a group of boys bullying a single one. There is no indication that Claudia has understood how the behavior of the SA might be connected with a political program, the proclaimed ideals of which have a heroic and noble air. The goals Claudia took to be those of National Socialism – the transformation of a people, the building of a community united by the bond of brotherly love in which everyone has a part to play, escape from the lonely, alienated “ugly I” and rediscovery of the original “we” (in the words used by Erika in *Reise durch ein Leben*) – remain detached in her mind from any concrete analysis of social conditions, any consideration of the practical measures that might have to be taken in order truly to improve those conditions, any reflection on the measures proposed and carried out by the National Socialists. Claudia’s politics were and remain a politics of pure will. The essentially aristocratic notion of fair play, valuable as it might be on occasion as an obstacle to certain kinds of inhuman behavior, is not in itself, Zur Mühlen makes clear, a policy that can be the foundation of a new and better society. Aristocrats, as Countess Agnes points out several times, are literally a dying class: they are good at dying nobly for a cause; but “working people know how to live for one.” It is they, not the aristocrats, who have the qualities needed to envision and to build a truly new and better world: patience, diligence, resilience, and the capacity to think things through.

The Countess’s testimony does not therefore end with Claudia’s courageous act of self-sacrifice. On the morning after the death of her child, the Countess calls on the family of the young man who was killed along with Claudia. “I did not know their name, they knew nothing of me, but we felt somehow that we belonged together. I think I shed more bitter tears in the little room of those working people than at the bedside of my dead Claudia. The young man was not yet twenty.[...] In the quiet hours, as I sat next to my dead Claudia, I had the feeling that something had come to its proper end, the feeling of a life fulfilled. But here, next to this dead half-child who had not yet reached maturity and whose life would bear no fruit, I was overcome by a different feeling [...] – hatred and a desire for revenge...” But then, “my gaze fell on the parents of the young victim and my rage and hatred gave way to a feeling of shame. Their features expressed infinite pain, but also something I had difficulty

interpreting: a determination, a courageous, unyielding resoluteness that was stronger than death. I had the feeling that I was looking life itself in the face, unconquerable, indestructible life, the life that after the hardest winter frosts pushes forth buds that will become blossoms and fruit, the life not of individual humans but of an idea. What I found here was different from the unreflected outburst of my Claudia, who had thrown herself recklessly, following only her feelings of anger and disgust, into the arms of death. Nor was it the impotent rage of an old woman who, because she is descended from an ancient line that for centuries ruled over others, cannot believe that there is anything she cannot do. What I saw was the patient resilience of a class that is the bearer of the future and that for that reason, in spite of everything, cannot be vanquished. I spoke to these two people with the deepest respect. I felt that they stood higher than I, higher than the past." (117)

As the parents, fearing who might be laid next to him, do not wish their son to be buried in the local cemetery, the Countess suggests that the two children, "who had fought together and died together" – the aristocrat's daughter and the working-class couple's young son, *Ende* and *Anfang*, as the title of Zur Mühlen's autobiographical memoir runs – be buried alongside each other in her garden.<sup>21</sup> At the burial ceremony, held in secret and under cover of darkness, an old man briefly placed a red flag on the graves. Being an aristocrat, in Zur Mühlen's view, had once meant being the beneficiary of the labor performed and the hardships endured by millions, in order that human culture might be developed in one privileged group of people. The new bearer of human culture, as she saw it, was now the working class. It was therefore appropriate that the old aristocracy make for the working class the sacrifices that working people had once made for the aristocracy. Though it is no longer the destiny of the aristocracy to be the carrier of human culture it can and indeed should – *noblesse oblige* – be ready to sacrifice itself for the sake of the class now destined to assume that role. It cannot live the new human culture that is dawning, but it can die for it.

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21 Published by S. Bermann Verlag in 1929, *Ende und Anfang* traces its aristocratic heroine's development into a committed Socialist through a series of chronologically arranged anecdotes. It begins on an end – that of the old, cultivated, but decayed Austrian aristocracy which tries to protect itself from the world by shutting itself up in a "glass house" – and ends on a beginning, the Russian Revolution of 1917. The final section of the book is entitled "Strastwi Revoliutsia" (Hail to the Revolution).

Appropriately, therefore, the final testimony in Zur Mühlen's novel is not that of Countess Agnes but that of the working-class Kati Gruber. As usual, the new testimony advances the narrative itself beyond the point where it was left at the end of the preceding testimony. We learn that the Countess's motor boat has been seized, that Fritz has been arrested and taken away and that no one knows where he is or whether he is even alive, that the Countess herself is under so much suspicion that her villa can no longer be used as a hiding place for people, weapons, or documents, but that she still helps out in every way she can, often incautiously and at great risk to herself, that she was uncontrollably enraged when the workers' unions were banned – she who has probably lived a good part of her life, Kati muses, not knowing what a trades union is – and that she has become so unrelenting in her hatred of the Nazis that she is angry with Kati for having sheltered one of the leftwing SA men who had turned against his former comrades at the time of the murder of Ernst Röhm but managed to escape the fate intended for him. "She cannot or will not believe that beneath the brown uniform there can be a real human being who rues his error," Kati comments. "She, who used to be so much in favor of peace, has become unbelievably harsh and unforgiving in her hatred of the enemy. I think she would be capable of killing one of them with her own hands, quite calmly and in cold blood." (141)<sup>22</sup>

Toni, we learn, has now joined the resistance and is actively involved in dangerous activities such as the rescue of people who are under threat and the distribution of anti-Nazi leaflets. As more and more people, out of need or fear, come to support or join the Nazi Party (125) – at one time, Kati reflects ruefully, you could count the small number of Nazis in the little town but now that could be said of the Social Democrats – those who are opposed to the Nazis increasingly sink their differences and make common cause. Outside Germany the Social Democratic and Communist parties continue their bitter feuding (125-126), but within Germany Social Democrats and Communists work together, alongside anybody else who opposes the regime. These may include a few upper class people, like the Frau General – the same independent-minded old lady who had refused to believe that the Communists set fire to the Reichstag, who also obstinately resisted her daughter's urgings that she recognize Frau Doktor Feldhüter, and who now goes out of her way to tip Kati off about an upcoming house-

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22 The present-day reader cannot help thinking that, for once, the humanitarian aristocrat may well have been more realistic than the working-class Social Democrat!

search (123) – as well as some sincere Christians, chiefly Catholics, like the local priest, who ends up speaking out in his sermons against the National Socialists and is hauled off to a concentrations camp (125-126, 142). They may even include a few former National Socialists, who believed in a genuine German social revolution and have been disillusioned by the Party's denunciation of the "leftwing" faction within it and the murder of its leader. At one tense point in the narrative Kati is hiding in her apartment both one such disillusioned SA man and Toni's friend, the Communist Seppel (129-34).

Ultimately, in light of the failure of other countries to come to the aid of Germany and, most notably, the failure of the Soviet Union to support the beleaguered German Left (Toni attempts to persuade her mother that there are strategic political reasons for the inaction of the Soviet Union but Kati remains unconvinced), the message of Zur Mühlen's book is that the Germans must unite to save themselves. In 1934, Zur Mühlen appears not yet to have given up hope that the regime might be overthrown by disaffected groups from within. In her second testimony Kati refers with what we now know was completely illusory optimism to growing discontent among the peasants (138-39), workers, and small shopkeepers, and even among some Nazis who expected something different and now recognize that what they brought about was "no revolution for the people and the poor but a revolution for the rich and the 'leaders'." (142-43) "Our people were rounded up and murdered," Kati reflects, "but those [young Nazis] were deceived. What will happen when they grasp the extent of the deception. These men have been taught to kill defenceless people. What will happen when, having learned to despise human life, they turn against their leaders? Even the peasants, who were so strongly for Hitler, are beginning to have second thoughts..." (138)

The last words of the novel express – once again with what can now be seen to have been misplaced optimism – the patient determination of the socialist working class to keep up the fight and retain confidence that in time they will triumph. On a fine summer's day Kati and Toni are watching construction workers putting up a house in the street opposite them. "When you look at those piles of bricks and stones, it's hard to believe that a house will ever be made out of them," Toni says. "But in a month's time, it will be there. And that's the way it is with us too. From the ruins we drag one stone after another. We stack them. We sort them carefully. And a new, free Germany will arise out of the stones. We are building it, mother, we are

already building it." "Yes, Toni," Kati replies quietly. "You are right. We are rebuilding, we are rebuilding." (144)

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By making women – stereotypically impulsive and volatile but also focused on slow maturation and the long-term survival of the species – the central players in her political novel, Zur Mühlen may have intended to direct attention to one of the essential tensions of her narrative: the tension, within the opposition to National Socialism, between impassioned, almost instinctive revulsion and considered, clear-headed rejection, between impulsive, short-term protest and calculated, long-term resistance. By giving the last word to the patient, un-heroic, but resolute working class women, rather than the more reckless and heroic aristocrats, she gives precedence to the long objective view of historical action over the short subjective view of personal reaction. Kati and Toni look toward the future, their eyes are trained on the objective of a far-off final victory, not on short-term actions that make a largely ineffectual moral statement or afford a sense of momentary, purely subjective moral satisfaction at having done the right thing and been "true to oneself." Consequently, they manage their resources carefully, avoid unnecessary risk, and refrain from actions that will not contribute to their long-term goals and might even detract from the realization of these goals. Toni, who is no less repelled by the behavior of the SA than Claudia, does not sacrifice herself in noble protest, but withdraws in order to contribute to a larger, longer, planned struggle.<sup>23</sup> The two working class women thus become models of behavior for all the other opponents of National Socialism. Seppel, for instance, goes wild when he learns that his mother has been placed under arrest and thinks of turning himself in to obtain her release. He has to be persuaded that that will do no good and that far more will be achieved by his continuing to work in the resistance. Countess Agnes who behaves recklessly wherever only her own life is at risk, fails to understand that, as Kati puts it, "We cannot afford to lose the services of a single one of us." (126, 141). The Countess and Claudia, as Zur Mühlen repeatedly points out, act according

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23 As Kati puts it, "I thought how full of despair we two old women were when our daughters became 'Nazinen' and how differently the two of them broke with the party. Claudia, like a madwoman, consumed by shame and disgust, Toni calmly and quietly, but surely, having thought it all over. I see the same difference between my dear Countess Agnes and me. Whenever others are in danger, she is sly and shrewd, but when it is a matter of herself alone, she cannot control herself...She refuses to see that her very life is valuable to us and must be protected." (126)

to the old, by no means unworthy, but in modern conditions unpractical and unproductive principles and values of a dying caste. As the Countess herself says, "I think that we – members of my old caste – can die for a cause, but we do not know how to live for one. We don't have the right strength for that. Dying is also easier." (106)

Perhaps that was also how Hermynia Zur Mühlen understood her own behavior. Her heroines, usually aristocrats, are often portrayed as impulsive, moved by old aristocratic notions of chivalry and "fair play." To the degree that they identify with the workers' movement it is because that is the right thing for their dying caste to do. *Noblesse oblige*. Their historical role, in short, is to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the new rising class that is destined to be the living bearer of human values in the future. To this class they are joined by their shared rejection of the egoism, opportunism, and narrow utilitarianism that Zur Mühlen associates with the middle class and satirizes ferociously in the figures of the three Feldhüters.

### III

## A Recollection of Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Stefan Klein by Sándor Márai

One morning Klein, the translator – a plump young Hungarian writer, who is an emigree and constantly looks around him with Weltschmerz and a feeling of grievance – arrived from the Black Forest with his two dogs. His lady friend was with him – an Austrian countess who translated the works of the American writer Upton Sinclair into German and was subsequently active in German literature of the Left. I met them at the railway station. Their coming to Frankfurt created a stir.

In the boarding house where they rented rooms immediately on their arrival the dogs caused a lot of trouble. The owners refused to put up with them. So, soon afterwards, I let Klein and his friend have my apartment. For quite a while, by then, I had no longer been living at the sadistic tailor's. I now had three lovely bright rooms on the Escherheimer Landstrasse not far from the newspaper offices [Marai was employed at the time as a journalist for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*—L.G.] and even closer to a publisher by the name of Rütten and Loening. I had the entire second floor of a villa there to myself and was very pleased with my new living arrangements. So, when K. had a falling out with the owners of the Frankfurt boarding house due to their different ideas about the world and about canine upbringing, they moved in with me, and I withdrew to an attic room on the third floor of the villa. And so we lived together as a community of strangers thrown together by fate in a foreign land, feeling constantly aggrieved and irritated.

K. in particular was always ready to take offence. Yet, on the whole, we felt good. K. and the Countess worked a lot and even I began to be regular in my working habits around this time.

K. was by nature distrustful. He detected slights everywhere and from everyone, and he vented his distrustfulness in angry letters, which he fired off by registered mail, express mail, and air mail. He wrote the most registered and express delivery letters of anyone I ever knew. Later too, when I was living abroad, I continued to receive such letters from him. I would be awakened in the middle of the night with a registered, express delivery letter from him, in which all he had to say was that he was moving ahead with his work as planned, or that he was withdrawing his friendship from me, or that our misunderstanding had been cleared up and I should be reassured that our friendship was solid and unchanged. Everything with him required urgent attention. He had a quarrelsome disposition, often got into disputes with the Germans, wrote letters, and went to court. He had got to know the Countess in Davos during the War. Both of them had been sick and had developed an affection for each other at the sanatorium that was indestructible and purer and more powerful than any officially sanctioned union and that bound those two sick individuals together for their entire lives. They had two passions: literature and dogs. I never again met anyone who spoke with as much humility to dogs or writers as K. and his lady friend. Caring for dogs and translating books occupied their whole lives. They translated a great deal and were artists in the practice of their craft. Translation is a remarkable craft; it takes two artists to make a translation. The translator is always a writer *manqué*, as the photographer is a painter who has strayed from his *métier*. K. and the Countess devoted their talents, with the humility of true artists, to translating foreign authors. Every now and again we would argue for hours until we found an exact German equivalent for a Hungarian or English concept. K. translated from Hungarian. He was the first to introduce modern Hungarian literature to a world audience. He never received official support; on the contrary, he was denied any recognition. And so we lived in the villa in Frankfurt with the dogs, which K. spent hours examining for fleas and lice, with an angry stream of registered and express letters – I do not exaggerate when I say that half of K.'s income went for the postage on his furious letters – and in a strange condition of restlessness and excitement, for in K.'s proximity the air was always heavy with the smell of gunpowder. I lived in the attic room and wrote the whole livelong day – only poetry, as far as possible. Between

manuscripts and typewriters, K. prepared our lunch; mostly it was boiled beef and vegetables. He did not know how to cook anything else.

These two, K. and the Countess, stuck to one another and belonged together for better and for worse. I never saw such a strong human bond between any other couple since. I don't know whether they were "happy" together – what is commonly considered idyllic is probably not a characteristic of such relationships. They found each other as invalids; K. subsequently regained his health; she was never cured. No other woman ever made such a strong, soothing, and at the same time – in the full and complex sense of the word – stirring impression on me as that young Austrian aristocrat. She was tall in stature and unhealthily thin; in her face only her sparkling eyes were alive, ennobled by the anticipation of death and glowing warmly with human solidarity. She sewed her own clothes and went around in disturbing robes which the Germans stared at in astonishment. Wherever we appeared in the city, we were met with hostile looks, for something emanated from this woman that was not familiar, an alarming, enticing singularity, the radiance of a spirit purified by pain, passion, and understanding. People would fall silent, the moment we showed up anywhere. The Countess would walk on, without looking and with head lowered, and she moved the same way through crowds, incognito. Behind her would come K., holding the dogs in his arms, sizing up strangers with sullen and suspicious glances, full of distrust and bitterness, eager to start a quarrel, and ready, the very next moment, to write a registered, express delivery letter to the presumed, suspected offender. In this procession, I was no more than a kind of page, bringing up the rear with dignity.

Her father had been an ambassador [*sic!*] under the monarchy, her mother was an Austrian baroness [*sic!*]. Her childhood was spent wherever her father was sent on diplomatic missions, in a highly cosmopolitan milieu. She married a Baltic count [*sic!*], with whom she went to live somewhere in Lithuania [*sic!*]. One day, being sick, she got away, headed directly for Davos, and never returned to her husband's estate. She spoke and wrote German, French, Spanish, and English perfectly; she translated Upton Sinclair and Charles Péguy [?]; Sinclair once sent her a long letter, typewritten, in minuscule characters. Anyone who got to know her remained her friend for life. In politics she sided passionately with the Left. But I have never met any other woman who combined in her behavior as miraculously as she the hauteur of an individual of high social rank and

the unapproachability of a worldly grande dame with the passion and energy of a woman who is deeply engaged politically. Wherever she settled, a “salon” immediately blossomed around her; and those who gathered at it – at times those attending this “salon” included active anarchists who were under surveillance, for the politically “engaged” were drawn to K. in swarms – had no choice but to behave in a manner appropriate to a salon. So every afternoon, teacup in hand, we would sit in the Countess’s living room – writers, workers, revolutionaries, Frankfurt intellectuals and patricians, reconciled with each other by the atmosphere, the effect of which could not be evaded by anyone having come into close contact with the Countess; and we chatted as the invited guests might have done at an afternoon tea given by her father at the Austro-Hungarian Embassy in Cairo. The “conversation” was guided by the Countess – K. would occupy himself in a corner with the dogs, casting mistrustful glances around him – and the guests followed haltingly as that refined and restless spirit glided over the battlefields of life, literature and politics.

But she was no bluestocking. And there was such power in her fragile, sick body that it enabled her to disturb the peace of very large groups of people. Her lung had almost completely stopped functioning, yet she worked ten to twelve hours a day, bent, from early morning on, over her typewriter, a fat opium-charged English or American cigarette dangling from her lips and sending up clouds of smoke. She seldom went out into the street. She feared the way people looked at her. Their looks “hurt her too much,” she once said to me. She had a sharply critical view of her class and her past; she hated them out of nostalgic envy. The people who gathered around her from time to time, only to vanish later into the unknown, came mostly without giving their names; revolutionaries visited the Countess’s salon incognito, as if they were coming to a conspiracy, the precise details of which had never been discussed. [...] One day a man with the pale complexion of a woman and a chestnut-colored beard appeared in this society. He had long, white, soft, manicured hands, sat among us with a sleepy, sly look on his face, gave short, dry answers to our questions, and carefully preserved his incognito. There was talk that he was a worker in a Frankfurt automobile factory and he did indeed wear worker’s overalls but these had been masterfully tailored out of dark blue material and we never saw a trace of oil or iron filings on his snow-white hands with their clean, carefully cut and shaped nails.[...] From the shape of the head, the mouth and the forehead, he bore a striking resemblance to the Habsburgs,

and naturally legends soon grew up around him. There were many such nameless individuals who came and went in the Countess's magical circle.

She called me "my child," shared with me whatever K. prepared in the way of food, as well as her cigarettes and the books she was reading. I lived with docility in her proximity and put up with her aggressiveness and her eccentricities. Never again have I tolerated another human being – a woman, into the bargain – as selflessly and modestly and with such sadness as that extraordinary Countess. Fate had prepared painful life experiences for her, which she bore defiantly and rebelliously. In the core of her being, she was an aristocrat – in the broadly human sense of the word. One day we had a visit from Stefan Zweig. Afterwards we went walking for hours in the rain. Zweig told me the life story of the extraordinary Countess with the thoroughness of a biographer and with emotion and enthusiasm. That is the only way one can speak of people who have sufficient resources of strength and resistance to keep their balance when, all around them, social class, principles, and values have fallen off balance. Now and again we would drive to the surroundings of Frankfurt, to workers' housing projects; the Countess would give a reading at a social evening organized by the workers of the great Hoechst chemical factory; and there too the politically "engaged" would flock to her, drawn by the kind of embarrassed attraction that would pull them towards anyone they felt they had to support even though that individual did not fully belong.

Early that autumn, K. took offence at something or other and sent me a registered, express letter from downstairs to upstairs. The Countess naturally stood by him, as she did always, in everything, and perhaps the essence and the meaning of the relation between the two of them lay in the very solidarity that led one exceptionally sensitive soul to give unquestioning support to another wounded and discontented one. So I moved out and for a while lived the life of a transient artist in a hotel near the railway station...

(From Márai, *Bekenntnisse eines Bürgers. Erinnerungen*, translated from the original Hungarian [1934] into German by Hans Skirecki, ed. by Siegfried Heinrichs [Munich and Zurich: Piper-Verlag, 2000], pp. 250-56).

## IV

### *“Fairy Tales for Workers’ Children.” Zur Mühlen and the Socialist Fairy Tale. (By L. Gossman)*

Zur Mühlen’s fairy tales were a product both of her responsibility as breadwinner and of her conviction that the writer has a responsibility to open people’s eyes to injustice – the theme, as noted, of many of her shorter pieces and of various episodes in her longer novels. In the 1920s, as the correspondence with Sinclair shows, this conviction took the form of a commitment to what she herself described as “propaganda” – a word she appears to have understood in its literal sense. In short, it was her duty as a writer to spread the message of socialism, not least among those to whose hardships and humiliations socialism was expected to put an end.

In German culture fairy tales occupied a privileged position. They were perceived as the authentic repository of a native culture independent of foreign (classical or French) influence. At the same time, they had a literary pedigree, having moved back and forth between the oral and literary domains, and they continued to be cultivated as a literary genre by nineteenth and twentieth-century writers, from Clemens Brentano and E.T.A Hoffmann to Gerhart Hauptmann, Richard Dehmel, and Hermann Hesse.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, fairy tales were not thought of in the German-speaking countries as intended exclusively for children. Publishers and authors emphasized that their collections were for “Kinder und Eltern jeder Art” [children and adults of every kind] or for “große und kleine Leute”

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<sup>24</sup> Jack Zipes, ed. and transl., *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1989), Introduction, pp. 9-11.

[big and little people] alike.<sup>25</sup> In the period after the French Revolution especially, the fairy tale became a vehicle of social and cultural criticism. "The evil forces assume a social hue," according to one scholar, "for the witches and villains are no longer allegorical representations of evil in the Christian tradition but are symbolically associated with philistine society or the decadent aristocracy." The purpose of the tale was not "to amuse in the traditional sense of *divertissement*" but "to engage the reader in a serious discourse about art, philosophy, education, and love."<sup>26</sup> Around the turn of the century, in the heyday of Symbolism, "fables for adults were in fashion" again: "the tales of Oscar Wilde, Anatole France, and E.T.A Hoffmann enjoyed great popularity."<sup>27</sup> Fairy tale themes were also taken up in popular

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25 Richard Dehmel, *Der Kindergarten: Gedichte, Spiele und Geschichten für Kinder & Eltern jeder Art* [Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, n.d., vol. 6 of his *Gesammelte Werke*, 1906-1909]; publisher's notice for Ani Geiger-Gog's collection *Himmelschlüssel* (Gundert-Verlag, 1923), cit. Manfred Altner, *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main/Bern/New York/Paris: Peter Lang, 1991), p. 197. Likewise Lisa Tetzner included in the title of one of her international collections of fairy tales, *Vom Märchenbaum der Welt* (Berlin:Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1929), the notice that it was intended *Für Jung und Alt*. Her aim, she added in her Foreword, had not been to produce "ein kulturhistorisches Werk der Märchenliteratur" [a scholarly collection of tales]; on the contrary, she believed that the themes of the tales were of "general human interest" and that "their social resonance was relevant to our own times." The audiences at her popular readings were largely adult. Richard Dehmel and Friedrich Wolf also emphasized that their tales were for "older and younger children." Thus Dehmel writes that "Das Löwenherz" – truly a tale for adults – is "ein Märchen für Große, das aber auch den Kleinen mundgerecht gemacht werden kann." (*Der Kindergarten*, p. 167)

26 Jack Zipes, "The Changing Function of the Fairy Tale," *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 1988, 12:7-31, on pp. 18-19. Later, the Grimm brothers toned down certain features of their folk sources – notably the erotic element – so as to make their versions suitable for young eyes and ears; see the foreword to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1819) of their *Kinder und Hausmärchen*: "Dabei haben wir jeden für das Kindersalter nicht passenden Ausdruck in dieser neuen Auflage sorgfältig erlöscht." On their adaptation of "Rapunzel" from J.Chr. Friedrich Schulz's 1790 adaptation of "Persinette" (in Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de la Force's *Contes des Contes* [1698], itself adapted from G. Basile's "Petrosinella" in his *Cunto de li Cunti* of 1634-37), see Johann Powischer, *Märchen des deutschen Sprachraums und deren Illustrationen bis 1950. Der Weg des Volksmärchens von der mündlichen Überlieferung in die Literatur* (Vienna: Walter Drews Verlag, 1999), pp. 55-58. The process of "bringing the fairy tale into harmony with the middle class way of life and integrating it into that way of life" was carried further in the 3-volume *Maehrchen Almanach für Söhne und Töchter gebildeter Stände* (Stuttgart, 1826-28) of the prolific and popular Wilhelm Hauff; see Rüdiger Steinlein, *Die domestizierte Phantasie: Studien zur Kinderliteratur, Kinderlektüre und Literaturpädagogik des 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg; Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987), pp. 118-122.

27 Josef Zsuffo, *Béla Bálazs. The Man and the Artist* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London:

plays by Maeterlinck, which in turn inspired operatic compositions: *Pelléas et Mélisande* by Debussy in 1901, *L'Oiseau Bleu* by Albert Wolff in 1919. Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1918) was based on a fairy tale libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Before he became a Communist and illustrated Zur Mühlen's fairy tales, many of Heinrich Vogeler's etchings and drawings from his *Jugendstil* period (late 1890s until 1914) were on themes from folk and fairy tales (St. George and the Dragon, Melusine, The Frog King, The Sleeping Beauty, The Seven Swans); he had also designed the book decoration for Hofmannsthal's fairytale play *Der Kaiser und die Hexe*, illustrated Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die versunkene Glocke* and *Der arme Heinrich*; and collaborated with Rilke on a production, in the theatre in Bremen, of *Sister Beatrice*, "a miracle play in three acts" by Maeterlinck. In the 1920s the celebrated *diseuse* Lisa Tetzner – "eine ausgezeichnete Sprecherin und die beste Märchenerzählerin Deutschlands," in the view of Hermann Hesse – drew large audiences of adults to her performances of fairy tales. Her own collections of fairy tales – the two-volume *Die schönsten Märchen der Welt für 365 und einen Tag* (1926) and *Vom Märchenbaum der Welt* (1929) – were best-sellers. The success of the genre of the fairy tale was by no means limited to Germany. Tetzner performed successfully in Denmark, Holland, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, and both her collections and her own tales were translated into other European languages.<sup>28</sup> In Hungary, the writer and painter Anna Lesznai published several volumes of original tales, which she herself illustrated, between 1900 and 1918, and the *Seven Fairy Tales* (1918) of the future film-script writer

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University of California Press, 1987), pp. 66-67.

28 On Tetzner, see Manfred Altner, *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Weimarer Republik*, pp. 186-96. Tetzner's collections extended well beyond the brothers Grimm and Germany and included tales from every part of the world, including the Far East, Africa, and America. This was an early sign of the pacifist, internationalist, and in due course anti-Nazi orientation of her work. Even though, unlike Zur Mühlen's tales, those in her international collections did not directly address social issues, her own *Hans Urian oder die Geschichte einer Weltreise* (Stuttgart: D. Gundert Verlag, 1931), based loosely on the earlier children's play she wrote with Béla Balázs, *Hans Urian geht nach Brot*, did deal directly with issues of poverty, exploitation, colonialism, armaments manufacture, and war, and manifested considerable sympathy for the Soviet Union. As is well known, Walter Benjamin was interested in literature for children, sketched out a plan for a "proletarian children's theatre" (*Programm eines proletarischen Kindertheaters*, 1928), and assembled a noteworthy collection of illustrated children's books, now in the "Institut für Jugendbuchforschung" of the Johann- Wolfgang- Goethe University in Frankfurt-am-Main. (See Klaus Doderer, ed., *Walter Benjamin und die Kinderliteratur* [Weinheim and Munich: Juventa Verlag, 1988])

and theorist of cinema Béla Balázs, won the applause of Geörgy Lukács, who was to become probably the most influential Marxist literary critic and historian of the twentieth century. Balázs also provided the libretto for Bartok's opera *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911, first performed 1918) and the script for his ballet *The Wooden Prince* (1918). In Lesznai's autobiographically based novel *Spätherbst in Eden*, the heroine relates how, as a young woman on her father's estate, she was visited by a young man (identifiable as Balázs). "What is your name?" she asks the visitor, who is dressed in the style of the Romantic wanderer, with knapsack and staff. "György Vedres," he answers. "Saint George – who killed the dragon and released the King's daughter from the magic spell."<sup>29</sup>

The existence of anti-fairytales, such as Robert Walser's verse playlets *Schneeweissen* [Snow-White] and *Aschenbrödel* [Cinderella], both written around 1900, is itself evidence that the fairytale continued to be a working vehicle of literary expression.

It made perfectly good sense therefore for both the revolutionary Left and the revolutionary Right to exploit a genre that was seen as deeply rooted in national German culture and that enjoyed considerable popularity in order to influence not only the young (for whom countless youth groups were created by all parties in the 1920s) but adults as well. If they were to serve specific propaganda ends, however, fairy tales had to be reinterpreted or even completely reconceived. Left and Right had to substitute their own meanings for the conservative moral and political lessons conveyed by the traditional tales and for the mood of longing, the other-worldliness, and the estheticism characteristic of the more recent symbolist tales

Hubertus, Prince zu Loewenstein, recounts in his memoirs two instances of the use of fairy tales by the extreme Right in the 1920s. In the first, the local Nazi youth organization at Munich University gave him

various books to study, amongst others a volume of German fairy tales with a National Socialist interpretation, which explained everything very clearly. Little Red Riding Hood – she is the symbol of the German nation; the wolf who eats her up is the 'Jew' (the very fact that he was called 'Wolf' showed this) [...] The huntsman, on the other hand, is a brilliant prophetic vision of National Socialism.

When the Prince inquired "Why these parables?" he was given the answer that they were the disguise in which the German race had preserved its ancient native wisdom and transmitted it from generation to generation,

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<sup>29</sup> Béla Balázs, *Der heilige Räuber und andere Märchen*, ed. Hanno Loewy (Berlin: Verlag Das Arsenal, 2005), "Afterword" by Loewy, p. 183.

foiling the efforts of an alien (i.e. Judaic) Church to destroy it.

Our ancestors were obliged to be very cautious. In their desire to hand on their higher wisdom, they were hindered by the Church, which had always been in league with 'the Jew.' Only the fact that a means of expression had been discovered that remained incomprehensible to the Church prevented this heritage from being destroyed.<sup>30</sup>

The fairy tale, in sum, was part of a native culture that in the *völkisch* ideology which prepared the ground for National Socialism – had constantly been under attack from the enemies of the German race: Jews, Christians, rationalists, socialists, internationalists of every stripe.

In the second instance, the Prince was at a small reception given by supporters of the Ludendorffs – the extreme rightwing hero of the First World War and his fanatically anti-Semitic and anti-Christian wife, Mathilde – at the home of a Hamburg lawyer in 1924. After much discussion of the dangerous alliance of Jesuits, Jews, Free-Masons, and Communists, the lawyer concluded the evening with a fairy tale.

'Attend carefully. It is the story of Snow-White, who lived beyond the seven mountains with the seven dwarfs and her stepmother [who] hated her. What are those 'mountains'? *Montes* in Latin. 'Beyond the mountains'? '*Ultra montes*,' therefore that's where the stepmother is – Rome. That is obvious, isn't it? The stepmother hates the German Snow-White, who must die in order that Rome and Judah may live. The seven dwarfs are the German people, small as yet, because they are held down by conspiracy. Only Snow-White could make them into giants and then that would mean the end of Rome.'<sup>31</sup>

Crass as these interpretations of the fairy tale may be – and as the Prince obviously hoped his readers would find them – the fact remains that the Right used fairy tales along with other folklore materials to communicate its nationalist and racist message.<sup>32</sup>

Precluded from exploiting the *völkisch* dimension of the fairy tale, the Left had to be more inventive. New tales were created in the universal-mythical style of the traditional tale but with a radical, modern message, or – more rarely – familiar old tales were re-costumed in contemporary dress in order to give them a new socialist meaning and relevance. (Zur Mühlen's "Die Brillen" [The Spectacles] is an example of the first approach, her dramatization of "Aschenbrödel" [Cinderella] an example of the second.) Elements of fantasy appropriate to children's stories were combined with

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30 Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein, *The Conquest of the Past: An Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938), p. 165.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

32 See Christa Kamenetsky, "Folktale and Ideology in the Third Reich," *Journal of American Folklore*, 1977, 90: 168-78; see also Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*, pp. 24-25.

simple descriptions and explanations of real social conditions and calls to the children to help change the way things are.

In response to the “hurrah-patriotism” or jingoism of the First World War, German pacifists and social reformers had already enlisted the fairy tale and the fable in the service of anti-militarist ideas and propaganda. Edwin Hoernle, for instance, a critic of the War and of militarism in general – he was later to be a founding member of the German Communist Party and its leading authority on schools and education – had used the medium of the fairy tale to satirize the Kaiser and his policies at a time when strict censorship had made the expression of “unpatriotic” ideas virtually impossible. In the Introduction to a collection of his tales, entitled *Die Oculi-Fabeln* (1920), he emphasized that his tales, unlike those of the preceding generation, were “neither the product of idle moments, nor an expression of artistic playfulness.” To the contrary, “they arose at the same time as Ernst Lissauer’s ‘Haßgesang gegen England’ [Hymn of Hate against England] and the ‘Manifesto of German Intellectuals’” in support of the Kaiser and the War; that is, at a time when “free speech was prohibited in Germany and opinion was governed by the illusions of a war-induced hypnosis.” Some of the tales are critical of the socialist movement itself – especially the Social Democrats, whose representatives in the Reichstag had supported the War – and of a section of the working class for its timorousness, complacency, and failure to seize opportunities for effective action.<sup>33</sup> They were thus intended primarily for adults, rather than children. That was certainly also the case of *Das Märchen vom lieben Gott: Brief eines Unteroffiziers an den Kaiser im Januar 1918, als Protest gegen den Frieden von Brest-Litowsk* [The Tale of the Good Lord: a letter from a non-commissioned officer to the Kaiser in January 1918, in protest against the Peace of Brest-Litovsk] of Heinrich Vogeler, the former *Jugendstil* artist who later illustrated two of Zur Mühlen’s collections of fairy tales.<sup>34</sup> Duplicated on cheap paper, this simple anti-war morality tale caused the author, then serving in the military, to be interned for a time in an insane asylum. An adult public and not only a juvenile one was likewise the target, as the title

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33 For instance, “Der tapfere Hund” (pp. 32-33), “Der Riese und seine Rüstung” (pp. 36-39), “Das Halsband” (p. 51) in *Die Oculi-Fabeln* (Stuttgart: Oskar Wöhrle Verlag, 1920).

34 Bremen: Druck Arbeiterpolitik, 1919; reprinted in S.D. Gallwitz, *Dreissig Jahre Woprswede. Künstler, Geist, Werden* (Bremen: Angelsachsen Verlag, 1922), pp. 33-34.

itself states clearly, of a collection of stories and poems entitled *Proletarischer Kindergarten. Ein Märchen und Lesebuch für Groß und Klein* (Berlin: Buchverlag der Arbeiter-Kunst-Ausstellung, 1921) edited by the young Ernst Friedrich, who had been jailed for his anti-militarist activities during the War and went on to become a leading German pacifist and socialist. "These songs, poems, and stories should speak to children *and adults*, to young *and old*," Friedrich wrote in his Introduction (emphasis in text). Along with fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen and by Friedrich himself, the collection contained stories by Gorki, Zola, Turgenev, and Tolstoy, and poems by Richard Dehmel and the anarchist Erich Mühsam (murdered by the Nazis in a concentration camp in 1934). As head of the education section of the German Communist Party, Edwin Hoernle may thus have expected that the socialist fairy tales he advocated for the purpose of raising children's class consciousness, getting them to see how capitalism works to the detriment of the working class, and inspiring them with a desire to band together in order to change the world as it is, would also reach and influence their parents and adult readers in general.

Zur Mühlen's tales were designed to meet those social objectives. In 1919, around the time she joined the Communist Party, Zur Mühlen had voiced strong criticism, from a socialist point of view, of the prevailing literature for young girls. Superficially, the books seem quite innocent, she wrote, but

just leaf through them and take a look at who is being held up to these young minds for admiration – the man in the Emperor's cape, the officer, i.e. the professional murderer. The most virtuous heroine – always blonde, blue-eyed, and docile – is rewarded for her virtue with a lieutenant; the less virtuous – a lively dark-eyed brunette – must be satisfied with an assistant judge. Heroic mothers "joyfully" sacrifice their sons, heroic brides their grooms for Kaiser and Fatherland. Whatever is essentially German is presented, over and over again, as glorious; the non-German is at best an object of ridicule ... The more "ethical" books strike the charity note: the attractive, well-dressed young heroine goes down among the poor, honors helpless old women with a visit they do not want, and sews clothes for the children of the poor out of material the donor would not wear herself for anything in the world. Such socially inclined girls marry navy personnel or perhaps, if they are especially independent-minded, doctors. The reward of virtue is always, however, a husband.<sup>35</sup>

It was to be expected that the dark-haired, dark-eyed, rebellious Austrian countess, who had demonstrated a keen interest in education in her youth by training to be a teacher – a profession her parents considered inappropriate for a countess and did not permit her to practice – would have an altogether different idea of children's and young people's literature

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<sup>35</sup> "Junge-Mädchen-Literatur," in *Die Erde*, 1919, no. 14/15, pp. 473-74, cit. Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, p. 94.

and that she would set about realizing it. The "growing-up" novels she wrote in the early 1930s are in many respects a response to the works criticized in her 1919 article and were intended as a substitute for them. The fairy tales address their audience in the same spirit albeit with different means. They are likewise intended to open their young readers' or listeners' eyes to the real problems of their world and to teach them effective ways of responding to these problems.

Nearly all Zur Mühlen's fairy tales appeared first individually in Communist newspapers like *Die Rote Fahne* (founded in 1918 by Liebknecht and Luxemburg) or the young people's magazine *Der junge Genosse*. The first collection, entitled *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen*, was published by the Malik Verlag in 1921, with illustrations by George Grosz, as volume 1 of the series "Märchen der Armen" [Fairy Tales of the Poor]. A little boy is bed-ridden with a broken leg; his mother works in a factory and is away from home all day. There is apparently no father – an indication that the tale is set in the real time of the immediate postwar period when many fathers had been killed at the front and never returned to their families. Toward evening, as shadows lengthen and the lonely child begins to be beset by fear, various objects in the room come alive and begin to talk – among themselves and with the little boy. In the lively conversation, resumed every evening at dusk, each object – a piece of coal in the scuttle by the stove, a matchbox, a water-jug, a blanket, a pot, a snowdrop – tells the story of how it was produced. Zur Mühlen thus borrows a simple device used by Hans Christian Andersen in order to explain in lively, easily understandable terms how workers are exploited and crippled in the production process under capitalism – "the pain and misery of another human being," in the words of the matchbox, "sticks to every object used by humans" (p. 21) – and how the hell invoked to frighten people has nothing to do with God but is an invention of the rich to cow the poor into submission. The real hell, the water-jug explains in its tale, is the workplace. It "was not created by God, but by men; and children and grown-ups are sent to it not because they have forgotten to say their prayers" – as an old, witch-like woman, who regularly came among the poor to distribute religious books and pamphlets and visit the sick, had sternly warned the little boy – "but because they are poor." (p. 14) The story ends on the snowdrop's assurance that underground forces are gathering which will destroy this evil "system," just as in nature underground energies prepare the triumph, of which she is the harbinger, of Spring over Winter. (p. 32) The snowdrop

is doubly the harbinger of the coming springtime or rebirth of humanity. A gift to the little boy from a co-worker in the factory where his mother is employed, the snowdrop is not only a symbol of revolutionary change but a concrete expression of solidarity and brotherhood among the poor.

Several other collections, composed of previously published individual tales, followed in rapid succession.

In 1922, *Märchen*, containing "Der Rosenstock" [The Rose-Bush], "Der Spatz" [The Sparrow], "Der kleine graue Hund" [The Little Grey Dog], and "Warum?" [Why?] and illustrated by Karl Holtz, was published by the Vereinigung Internationaler Verlagsanstalten (VIVA) in Berlin.

In 1923, *Ali der Teppichweber*, containing, in addition to the title story [Ali, the Carpet-Weaver], "Die Störenfriede" [The Troublemakers], "Der Knecht" [The Servant], "Die Brillen" [The Spectacles], and "Aschenbrödel" [a dramatized and modernized version of the Cinderella story], appeared as volume 3 in the Malik Verlag's series "Märchen der Armen." The illustrations were by John Heartfield.

In 1924, *Das Schloß der Wahrheit*, with illustrations by Karl Holtz, was put out by the Verlag der Jugendinternationale in Berlin. This contained, besides the title story [The Castle of Truth], "Der Zaun" [The Fence], "Die Affen und die Peitsche" [The Monkeys and the Whip], "Die Bundesgenossin" [The Prince's Ally], "Der Droschkengaul" [The Droschke Horse], "Die Wundermauer" [The Magic Wall], "Der Besen" [The Broom], "Nachtgesicht" [Nocturnal Vision], "Die drei Freunde" [The Three Friends], and "Die Brücke" [The Bridge].

In 1927, *Der Muezzin* [The Muezzin], *Die Söhne der Aischa* [Aischa's Sons], and *Said der Träumer* [Said the Dreamer] were all published as separate volumes by the Verlag der Jugendinternationale in its series "Der rote Trommler" [The Red Drummer-Boy].<sup>36</sup>

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36 Another contributor to this series was Rosa Leviné-Meyer, the widow of Eugen Leviné, who had taken over the leadership of the Bavarian Socialist Republic after the assassination of Kurt Eisner, only to be himself shot by a firing squad on the collapse of the short-lived revolutionary regime. Her translation of *Lenin-Märchen: Volksmärchen aus der Sowjetunion* appeared in it as no. 7 in 1929. (See Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*, p. 16.) Leviné-Meyer (who probably met Zur Mühlen again during the years they both spent in exile in London) recalls in her memoirs that in the 1920s the German Communist Party "included some highly notable people, among them the Austrian countess Hermynia zur Muehlen." Zur Mühlen, she went on, not quite accurately, but not altogether inaccurately, "the sophisticated, witty countess, full of charm and vivacity, started her turbulent life by marrying a Baltic Baron who promised to use her considerable dowry to turn his estate into a Tolstoyan paradise. But when I came to know her she was

In 1930, *Es war einmal...und es wird sein* [Once upon a time there was... and there will be], with illustrations by Heinrich Vogeler, appeared, also with the Verlag der Jugendinternationale. It contained "Warum?", "Der Knecht," "Der Rosenstock," "Die Brillen," "Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen," and a new tale – "Die rote Fahne" [The Red Flag].

Finally, in 1933, the Verlag der Jugendinternationale published *Schmiede der Zukunft* [Forgers of the Future], again illustrated by Heinrich Vogeler, and containing "Der Muezzin," "Said der Träumer," "Die Söhne der Aischa," "Ali der Teppichweber," and "Der Spatz."

In addition, *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* and the 1923 collection containing "Ali der Teppichweber" were published in new editions by the Malik Verlag in 1923-1924.

Zur Mühlen's fairy tales were translated into many languages. Six separate collections appeared in Russian translation in 1923 and 1924, five in Moscow and one in Kharkov, and these were followed by many more in subsequent years. An English translation of four of the tales was put out as *Fairy Tales for Workers' Children* by the Daily Worker Publishing Company in Chicago in 1925. A Japanese translation of *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* appeared in Tokyo in 1924, a Hungarian translation in Budapest in 1926, a translation into Esperanto in 1928, a Chinese translation (from the Japanese) in 1929. Between 1930 and 1934, four volumes of Zur Mühlen's tales came out in French translation, one of which was introduced by the then celebrated Henri Barbusse.<sup>37</sup> *Das Schloß der Wahrheit* was published in Czech in 1928, *Schmiede der Zukunft* in 1936. *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* and the story "Warum" appeared in Spanish translation in 1931. The publishing houses that put out these translations were associated with the political Left. Even so, the dissemination of Zur Mühlen's fairy tales is impressive.<sup>38</sup>

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living with her not too successful literary Jewish husband in a dismal boarding house. She was frail, supporting herself by translations and by writing stories for Communist youngsters. Three dogs were the last relics of luxury which the once spoiled eccentric lady could not resist and which added endless complications to her hard life." Rosa Leviné-Meyer, *Inside German Communism. Memoirs of Party Life in the Weimar Republic*, ed. David Zane Mairowitz (London: Pluto Press, 1977), pp. 60-61.

37 Altner (*Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, p. 148) quotes Barbusse's judgment of Zur Mühlen's collection as "an original and charming little book that will deservedly be loved by children and thinking adults alike."

38 A complete bibliography (including translations and modern reprintings) is provided by Manfred Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, pp. 213-16. For an effective one-page description of the tales, see Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 2<sup>nd</sup>

Zur Mühlen used traditional fairy tale elements in her work, such as attributing human qualities to objects, integrating the fantastic into everyday life, and setting her tales in a history-less, universal context (often an undefined village, an island or a traditional Oriental fairy-tale locale, only occasionally – as in *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* – a contemporary industrial or historically identifiable environment<sup>39</sup>). She also adopted a direct, unadorned prose style, reminiscent of the traditional tale, and relied on simple moral categories to define her characters – greed and generosity, cruelty and kindness, haughtiness and modesty, hypocrisy and honesty, trickery and transparency. Inevitably this resulted in a considerable simplification of complex social and economic processes and situations. Nevertheless, Zur Mühlen’s fairy tales prescribe models of behavior radically opposed to those of traditional fairy tales, the basic lesson of which had been that all one’s wishes will come true if one overcomes temptation and faithfully observes established norms of good conduct. And she did succeed in communicating to her target audience of children and of adults with only a rudimentary education some of the essential lessons of socialism as she understood it: the injustice of the division of humanity into rich and poor, a leisured minority and a weary, hungry, toiling mass; the origin of private property in theft, deceit, and the building of walls and fences that destroy community life and the love and solidarity natural to human beings; the workers’ loss of control over the means of production and the vital importance of their winning it back; ideology and religion as instruments used by the exploiters to delude the exploited, conceal their true situation from them, and discourage them from trying to change it; the need, therefore, to recognize and understand the way things really are and to band together in the struggle against oppression by rediscovering the common interests of ordinary working people beneath the differences of

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ed. (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2006; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1983), pp. 155-56; see also the same author’s Introduction (“Recovering the Utopian Spirit of the Weimar Fairy Tales and Fables”) and translations of three of Zur Mühlen’s tales – “The Fence” (*Der Zaun*), “The Servant” (*Der Knecht*), and “The Glasses” (*Die Brillen*) – in his *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*, pp. 3-28, 53-70 and 185-192.

39 As noted, the fact that the mother is a factory-worker and that there is no father – a not uncommon condition in German families after the loss of over 3 million men in the First World War – locates this tale or series of tales in the immediate present. In *Der graue Hund* [The Little Grey Dog], the setting of plantations worked by negro slaves evokes the American South (hence, no doubt, the inclusion of this tale among the four translated into English for the Chicago Daily Worker publication, pp. 35-52), but the historical definition is quite vague and the plantation society functions chiefly as a symbol of exploitation and inhumanity in general.

language and culture that the capitalists promote as a means of preventing worker solidarity; the danger for the working class of complacency and sloth; and, worst of all, the temptation to solve the problem of poverty by becoming an exploiter oneself. In addition, many tales cleverly imply that children have a special role to play in the process of emancipation since they are not yet corrupted by the ideologies and prejudices used to blind and disunite the workers and can thus disclose the truth to their elders and bond naturally with the children of other communities in a common struggle against oppression. In a number of tales – most notably “The Red Flag” – children are presented as the pioneers, heroes, and earliest martyrs of the coming Revolution, pointing the way first to their own mothers, and then to all adults. The revolutionary function of story-telling is itself thematized, as in *Der Spatz* [The Sparrow], where the little sparrow, which is trying to lead its people to a better life, tells its story to a group of children; the sparrow itself is drowned as it returns to lead its brother and sister-sparrows to the land of warmth and plenty that it has discovered, but a little boy who had listened intently as the sparrow told its story, is inspired by what he has heard to become a revolutionary leader of the oppressed and exploited working class in its struggle to win freedom from oppression and exploitation.

Zur Mühlen was by no means the only writer of “modern” socialist fairy tales at the time, but she appears to have been one of the most successful.<sup>40</sup> Anecdotal evidence indicates that her tales were not ineffective. Erich Honecker (b. 1912), head of state of the German Democratic Republic from 1971 until the Berlin wall came down in 1989, recounts in his memoirs the effect on him, in the early 1920s, of “The Sparrow,” one of the first of Zur Mühlen’s tales (published 1922). “Even now,” he writes (1980),

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40 Of the four volumes published by the Malik Verlag in the series “Die Märchen der Armen” [Fairytales of the Poor] in 1923-1924 (each of which included tales previously published by the author as well as new ones), two (vols. 1 and 3) were devoted to the tales of Zur Mühlen. The other authors were Eugen Lewin-Dorsch and the Hungarian writer Maria Szucsich. (Several of her tales had been translated by Klein.) For samples of work by others, including the well-known writer Oskar Maria Graf and the Hungarian Béla Balázs, still highly regarded as a theorist of film, as well as brief biographical notices on each, see Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*. According to Zipes, “it was Hermynia Zur Mühlen who influenced other German writers to produce radical fairy tales.” (p. 14) The prolific *disease*, collector, and writer of fairy-tales, Lisa Tetzner, was strongly internationalist and became a committed opponent of fascism. Like Zur Mühlen, she left Germany in 1933 and her work was not published in Nazi Germany but, unlike Zur Mühlen, she did not, on the whole, use the fairy tale as an instrument of socialist education.

after a lapse of over five decades, I remember one of the earliest children's books I read. It was an amusing and yet thought-provoking story by Hermynia zur Mühlen, an authoress and translator who despite her noble birth sided early on with the revolutionary workers' movement. Her children's books were very much in demand. The story which I remember particularly well was entitled 'The Sparrow' and was published...by the Association of International Publishers in Berlin in 1922. The sparrows were described in the colourfully illustrated little book as the proletarians of the bird world. A Sparrow Junior went in search of a country where there was no hunger or cold. But everywhere it found the rich and the poor, experienced the solidarity of the poor and met a boy who would change this world.<sup>41</sup>

In the course of the 1920s, however, the use of fairy tales as an instrument of propaganda gradually fell out of favor.<sup>42</sup> Even leftwing papers like *Die Rote Fahne* did not always view them positively. Zur Mühlen's tales tended toward the moralizing and the sentimental, it was said; they appealed to the instinctive compassion of the child instead of disseminating truly revolutionary doctrine. Béla Balazs's charming, funny, and politically rousing fairy-tale play *Hans Urian geht nach Brot* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Max Reichard Verlag, 1929), written in collaboration with Lisa Tetzner, was said to have used "sugar water as political enlightenment" when "it [should have aroused] a storm of class hatred and revolutionary enthusiasm in the hearts of the children through a ruthless, harsh portrayal of the social reality over the surface of the entire world."<sup>43</sup> What was faulted, in short,

41 Erich Honecker, *From My Life* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981 [orig. German, Berlin: Diez Verlag, 1980]), pp. 18-19.

42 See Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*, p. 16. The use of tales to promote the education of the young in socialist theory and practice had always been controversial. Karl Kautsky had argued against it (1893-94) on the grounds that the proletariat was not yet in a position to create a truly proletarian literature, but Clara Zetkin had argued for it, especially after 1918, claiming that it would promote "the ideals of brotherhood, solidarity of all comrades in work and struggle, and proletarian love of freedom." (Gerhard Haas, "Kinder und Jugendliteratur in der DDR," in Gerhard Haas, ed., *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ein Handbuch* [Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1984], pp. 22-35.

43 See the critique of Zur Mühlen by Gertrud Alexander in *Die Rote Fahne*, cited by Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, p. 100. On Balazs's *Hans Urian* see the quotation from *Die Rote Fahne* in Josef Zsuffo, *Béla Balazs*, p. 167. A similar condemnation of fantasy in children's literature in the Soviet Union is reported by the great children's writer and poet Kornei Chukovsky. He was reading *The Adventures of Baron von Münchhausen* to some sick children, he relates, when the matron and "a young man in some kind of uniform" appeared on the scene, snatched the book from his hand and proceeded to scold him: "What right do you have to read this trash to our children!" On the "stormy fate of the fairy-tale since 1917," see Chukovsky, *From Two to Five* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963; orig. Russian, 1933), pp. 114-139, and Felicity Ann O'Dell, *Socialism through Children's Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 11-17. Whether socialism can effectively be taught to children through fairy tales

was the very humor, fantasy, and playfulness with which Balázs appealed to the imagination of his young readers and viewers. Presumably, what was demanded was a socialist-realist portrayal of everyday life. Equally, however, George Grosz's characteristically modern, angular, and caricatural illustrations for the Malik Verlag's edition of Zur Mühlen's *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* were judged unsuited to an audience of children.<sup>44</sup> The socialist fairy tale, these criticisms appear to imply, is handicapped by an internal contradiction: as a fairy tale, it has to appeal to the fantasy and the emotions of children and it has to simplify in order to be understood by them; but as a socialist tale, it has to be realistic and theoretically sound and informative. On top of that, it was sometimes objected, the books containing the tales were priced beyond the means of most people in the working class.

In fact, compared with that of other writers, the language of Zur Mühlen's tales, while transparent and accessible, is crisp and elegant, and the tales themselves effectively combine fantasy and realism in a lively and engaging narrative style. Zur Mühlen does not "write down" to her readers. In contrast, in Lisa Tetzner's *Hans Urian oder die Geschichte einer Weltreise* (Stuttgart: D. Gundert Verlag, 1931), for instance, ideas are reduced to their simplest component parts and expressed in simple sentences with as few subordinate clauses as possible,<sup>45</sup> while Berta Lask's *Auf dem Flügelpferde durch die Zeiten. Bilder vom Klassenkampf der Jahrtausende* [Through the Ages on the Winged Horse: Images of the Thousands-of-Years-old Class Struggle] (Berlin: Vereinigung Internationaler Verlags-Anstalten, 1925), which leads its readers through various stages of the class struggle – from the violent aggression of a hierarchical warrior society of hunters against a peace-

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continues to be an issue in socialist circles; see Dieter Richter, "Kinderbuch und politische Erziehung. Zum Verständnis der neuen linken Kinderliteratur," in Bettina Hurrelmann, ed., *Kinderliteratur und Rezeption: Beiträge der Kinderliteraturforschung zur literaturwissenschaftlichen Pragmatik* (Baltmannsweiler: Burgbücherei Wilhelm Schneider, 1980), pp. 210-246.

44 See the critique by Gertrud Alexander in *Die Rote Fahne*, cited by Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, p. 101. Other illustrators, notably Karl Holtz and Heinrich Vogeler, adapted their styles to the expectations and imaginations of young readers.

45 E.g. the opening sentences. "Hans Urian war ein armer Junge. 9 Jahre alt. Er wohnte vor der Stadt in einem kleinen Bretterhaus. Es hatte nur eine Stube. Wir können es auch einen Schuppen nennen. Die Stadt war sehr groß. Sie hatte viele hohe Häuser. Automobile. Elektrische Bahnen! Fabriken. Bergwerke und Hochöfen. Aber noch mehr Menschen! Für viele Menschen war kein Platz in den Häusern der Stadt. Es kostete sehr viel Geld, in Häusern zu wohnen. Die meisten Leute hatten kein Geld. Sie krochen eng zusammen in eine Stube. Manchmal mußten sechs Menschen in einer Stube schlafen und nicht jeder hatte ein eigenes Bett." (p. 7)

loving, egalitarian community of food-gatherers and the transformation of the latter into the workhorses of their new overlords in prehistoric Central America, through the revolt of the Israelites against their Egyptian oppressors (Moses as Revolutionary!), the Spartacus revolt of the Roman slaves, the German Peasants' War, the Paris Commune, and the Russian Revolution, to a contrast between the present situation in Germany and a future communist society there – is overwhelmingly didactic, despite the “golden hooves and silver wings” of the magic horse that carries the 15 year-old Karl back and forth through time and space.

In any case, criticism of the socialist fairy tale from within the ranks of the Left was more than matched by opposition from state and local authorities. School reforms, for which Hoernle and his comrades had campaigned and which the socialist Left hoped would integrate some of the new fairy tales into children's public education, never happened. On the contrary, a bill was introduced to the Reichstag in 1925 “for the protection of the young from obscene and indecent publications.” Despite the protests of Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, and many others, who claimed that the proposed law simply provided the authorities with a weapon they could use at will to silence any expression of the “free human spirit,” the bill passed into law in December 1926. Two months later the Hesse police authorities in Darmstadt were trying to establish whether Zur Mühlen's “Ali der Teppichweber” had been banned anywhere in virtue of the 1926 law or on any other grounds. Though the outcome of the inquiry was negative, its objective – to find a precedent that would justify harassment – is evident. But even before the passing of the 1926 law, the well known publicist Egon Kirsch informed an association of left-leaning publishers, called to protest the proposed law, that all copies of Hermynia Zur Mühlen's “schöne Märchen” had already been seized by a provincial authority somewhere in Germany.<sup>46</sup> Also in 1926 it was reported in *Der Schriftsteller*, the journal of the Association of German Writers [*Schutzverband deutscher Schriftsteller*], that “the Book of Fairy Tales of our member Hermynia Zur Mühlen with illustrations by George Grosz” had been the occasion of a court case in Budapest and that a Hungarian journalist had been condemned to a year's imprisonment for having translated it.<sup>47</sup>

Despite opposition from the authorities and growing misgivings within the Communist Party itself, left-leaning authors did not give up writing

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46 See Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, pp. 104-5.

47 See Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, p. 102.

socialist fairy tales. Major collections by Oskar Maria Graf and others continued to be published. Zur Mühlen's *Schmiede der Zukunft* appeared in 1933. As late as February of that year, Erika and Klaus Mann were using fairy tales and fables in their Pepper Mill cabaret as a cover for what they describe as their "campaign against the Nazi dictatorship" – to enthusiastic applause from their audience of "Catholics, liberals, and socialists" in "gay, defiant Munich." Soon, however, the wholesale arrests of "the communists, the Jews, the socialists, the pacifists, the free thinkers, the liberals" began.<sup>48</sup> Hitler's *Machtergreifung* effectively marked a turning point for the socialist fairy tale. Leftwing authors left Germany and many turned to directly political, activist writing, in the manner of Friedrich Wolf's play *Dr. Mamlock* (written in the USSR and first performed in Warsaw, Poland in 1934) or Zur Mühlen's own novel *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* (written in Vienna and first published in Saarbrücken in 1934). In a crisis situation, organizing for action and imminent struggle took precedence, for many of the exiled writers, over imaginative ways of spreading the word and educating the young. The career of Friedrich Wolf demonstrates, however, that even the most engaged leftwing writers among Zur Mühlen's contemporaries continued to write for children from time to time. Wolf's *Märchen für große und kleine Kinder* appeared in East Germany in 1946, *Kiki, Geschichte eines Hundes* in 1947, and *Bummi, Tiergeschichten für große und kleine Kinder* in 1951.

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48 Erika and Klaus Mann, *Escape to Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939), pp. 16-17.

# V

## *Zur Mühlen as translator of Upton Sinclair (By L. Gossman)*

Zur Mühlen's work as Upton Sinclair's translator, along with the correspondence to which it gave rise and on which the following account is based, is of interest for three reasons. First, it documents Zur Mühlen's esthetics, i.e. her determined rejection of literary estheticism and her insistence, in the socio-political conditions of her time, on the pragmatic function of writing and on the moral and political responsibilities of writers, even though, as some explicit comments in *The End and the Beginning* (e.g. pp. 23, 49) and, more tellingly and poignantly, several scenes in her novels testify, this commitment did not destroy her esthetic sensibility and was not untinged with longing for a condition in which the creation of beautiful works could be a legitimate goal of the artist. Second, it documents Zur Mühlen's principles as a translator. In the Introduction to his *West-östlicher Divan*, Goethe distinguished three types of translation: literal translation, as close to word for word as possible; translation that adapts the source language to the target language and the source text to the target audience (the French are particularly adept at this type of translation, Goethe notes, with a hint of malice); and a type of expansive translation, which strives to alter and expand the target language in order to accommodate the source language and to open the target audience's mind to unfamiliar concepts and experiences (the type preferred by Goethe himself). It is clear from Zur Mühlen's correspondence that she is chiefly a practitioner of the second type of translation. As the function of writing is pragmatic, to affect

people's minds and attitudes, she was always prepared – in translating her own work, as well as in translating the work of others – to adapt it to the intended audience. Finally, because she presents herself, in her letters to Sinclair and the “Maliks” (Wieland Herzfelde and his associates at the head of the Malik Verlag<sup>49</sup>), as a participant in a business and professional relationship, and not as the heroine of an autobiographical memoir or a fiction, the correspondence reveals aspects of her character and personality – her touchiness and her aristocratic pride, for instance – that she may not have chosen to exhibit as part of her public image or would at least have covered over with irony.

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Zur Mühlen had already tried her hand at writing before she came to Davos. In her early twenties, before her marriage, she had written two – by her own account – “atrociously bad novels and several equally atrocious short stories” and had submitted them to a local newspaper in Merano (still at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). Almost everything was rejected, but “the friendly fair-haired editor” did accept two feuilletons, which appeared “under a fine pseudonym” (countesses did not publish stories), in the winter of 1906-1907.<sup>50</sup>

In Davos, isolated from both her own family and her husband's, she undertook her first major translation project, a war story entitled *Igo Voyny* [*The Burden of War*] by the then much admired Russian writer Leonid Andreyev. Though she may have been commissioned to do this translation, she is also likely to have been motivated by the book's criticism of German militarism and by Andreyev's reputation, based on his earlier writings – notably *The Red Laugh* (1905), about the horrors of the Russo-Japanese War – as a pacifist and humanitarian. First published in installments in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* under the title *Unter dem Joch des Krieges* Zur Mühlen's translation was acquired in 1918 by the well-regarded Alsatian poet and novelist René Schickele, an ardent anti-militarist (later also anti-Nazi) and advocate of Franco-German reconciliation, for a series entitled “Europäische

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49 “People sometimes ask how the Malik Verlag came by its name. ‘Der Malik’ is the title and the hero of a novel by Else Lasker-Schüler [a poet long admired by Herzfelde], which first appeared in installments in the magazines *Der Brenner* and *Die Aktion* and finally, as of July 1916, in *Neue Jugend* [a monthly founded by Herzfelde in that year]. The word corresponds to the Hebrew *melech*. It means king, duke, leader.” (Wieland Herzfelde, in *Der Malik-Verlag 1916-1947: Ausstellung Dezember 1966 – Januar 1967* [Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Künste, 1966], p. 21)

50 *The End and the Beginning*, p. 68.

Bibliothek" that he was editing for a Zurich publisher.<sup>51</sup> An extract from it was also sold, under the title *Hinter der Front*, in an inexpensive series put out by the same publisher.

In that same year, 1918, the Zurich Internationaler Verlag published Zur Mühlen's translation of Upton Sinclair's *King Coal* [*König Kohle*], only one year after its appearance in the United States, with an introduction by the eminent Danish critic Georg Brandes. Thus was inaugurated the long series of Zur Mühlen translations of Sinclair and an intense transatlantic literary collaboration that occupied a good many of the years Zur Mühlen and Klein spent in Frankfurt. The first extant letter from Zur Mühlen to Sinclair (written in English, like all her letters to him) dates from the summer of 1919. Contact between the two had apparently been established some time before, even though the forms of address are still quite conventional and do not yet have the more comradely tone of later letters. Zur Mühlen expresses her enthusiasm for Sinclair's *Jimmie Higgins* (1919), reports that she has completed her translation of it, discusses options for publishing the book in Germany, informs Sinclair that she has found a translator for one of his non-fiction works, and inquires about various other novels of his that she might translate. It is clear from this letter that Zur Mühlen was not simply Sinclair's translator but was in fact acting as his literary agent – seeking out publishers, finding translators for books she could not or did not wish to translate herself, looking out for magazines interested in purchasing the rights to publication in installments, and generally promoting his work in every way possible.

Dear Mr. Sinclair,

I have been wanting to write to you for such a [long] time and to tell you what a wonderful book *Jimmie Higgins* is, I really think you never wrote anything better. J.H. is translated and I shall send him off to a publisher in a few days time. Please tell me, now that peace is signed, have you still any objection to being published by a German publisher? Of course a decent one, one who did not publish patriotic books during the war, I know of one who is greatly interested in the book. Switzerland is shaking in its shoes, in its well made bourgeois shoes, and the word Bolshevism is enough to

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51 Unlike Zur Mühlen, who welcomed the Russian Revolution, Schickele had serious reservations about it, fearing that achieving socialism through violence would simply substitute one tyranny for another. Likewise, though he welcomed the November revolution in Germany enthusiastically, he opposed what he saw as an appropriation of it by groups committed to a strict and exclusive ideology. Ultimately Zur Mühlen came around to a somewhat similar position. See Eric Robertson, *Writing between the Lines, René Schickele 'citoyen français, deutscher Dichter' (1883-1940)* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 91-94. It is worth noting that the translator of the Andreyev text is still given as "Hermynia von zur Mühlen." Within a year the "von" had been dropped and the "zur" had acquired a capital "Z."

make any book taboo.<sup>52</sup>

I have been asked by a Hungarian review, if you would undertake to let it have an article every month or so [...] and what your conditions would be. [...]

What about the *Journal of Arthur Stirling*, don't you think it would be suitable for translating?<sup>53</sup> As Mr. Curtis Brown [an American literary agent—LG] will have told you, I have found a translator for *The Profits of Religion* for the German language. I thought it an awfully good book, but I myself would rather stick to fiction.[...] A chapter of *Jimmie Higgins* (German) will probably appear next month in a magazine, [I] shall sent it to you at once. Could you let me have some dates [i.e. data – LG] about yourself, as I have been asked to write about you and your last [i.e. latest – LG] books?

I do hope you will see your way to writing for the Hungarian review, it's going to be an awfully decent review, and it wants to bring articles by the best socialist writers of all countries.

Hoping to hear from you soon,

Very sincerely yours, Hermynia Zur Mühlen.<sup>54</sup>

Other letters confirm that if Zur Mühlen benefited from having become Sinclair's "authorized" translator (as she was to be described subsequently in the translations put out by the celebrated Malik Verlag) and thus ensuring for herself a much needed, relatively steady source of income,<sup>55</sup> she was at least as strongly motivated – by her own account, primarily motivated – by her conviction that his work was capable of making a significant contribution to the cause she had now embraced wholeheartedly – that of international socialism. She does not disguise that she needs the money her work as a

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52 Like Andreyev's *Igo Voyny*, Sinclair's *Jimmie Higgins* is an ambivalent anti-war book. Its Socialist hero develops from an anti-war pacifist into a supporter of the war as he becomes convinced that the defeat of Prussian militarism must precede the overthrow of the class system. That was also Sinclair's view; hence Zur Mühlen's question about his willingness to be published by a German publisher who had not been an extreme nationalist and her warning about the difficulty of publishing socialist books in Switzerland.

53 Published in 1903, this autobiographically based novel was in fact never translated into German...

54 Letter dated "Davos, 9 July 1919" in Upton Sinclair, Wieland Herzfelde, Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *Werter Genosse, die Maliks haben beschlossen...Briefe 1919-1950*. Upton Sinclair, Wieland Herzfelde, Hermynia Zur Mühlen, ed. Walter Grünzweig and Susanne Schulz (Bonn: Weidle Verlag, 2001), p. 14.

55 "I'm really doing my best, and of course it's also in my own interest to place the two new books and *Jim Porter* [a play by Sinclair] as soon as possible," she replied on one occasion to a complaint from Sinclair about delay in getting his work published, "as I am in very bad financial straights myself." (Letter of 28 June 1926, *ibid.*, p. 28). Like the author and the publisher, the translator received not a flat fee but a percentage, albeit a fairly small one, of the income from sales. This may explain Zur Mühlen's preference for translating works of fiction, since, by her own account, these sold better than non-fiction works and were thus more profitable to everybody, including the translator. Nevertheless, Zur Mühlen's political commitment often overrode her financial interest and she was by no means consistent in passing non-fiction works along to other translators.

translator brings in. In fact, she makes it clear that she is dependent on it for her livelihood,<sup>56</sup> but she insists that financial considerations were not what drew her to Sinclair in the first place. "I firmly believe that [your work] has an enormous propaganda value," she tells Sinclair,<sup>57</sup> and she asks him for the names of other American writers "who have written socialist fiction," since she is "anxious to translate that kind of book."<sup>58</sup> It could even be said that Zur Mühlen regarded Sinclair primarily as a valuable propagandist for socialism. That was certainly the aspect of his work that she constantly emphasized in her dealings both with him and with the Malik Press.

In general, Zur Mühlen's attitude to literature, including her own writing, was functionalist rather than esthetic. She believed that writers have an obligation to enlighten their readers. "Man muß es ihnen sagen" [We've got to tell them] is the title of one of her many feuilleton sketches and that theme is repeated throughout her work. Her entire literary career demonstrates that of the two kinds of writer distinguished by Peter de Mendelssohn, the exiled German novelist, historian, and future biographer of Thomas Mann, in a lecture to the International P.E.N. Congress in London in September 1941 – the writer, to whom what matters most is language and who, forced into exile, has to choose between not writing at all and writing for an absent public that may never discover his work, and the writer to whom it is the content and effect of writing that matters most and who will therefore use any medium, including the language of the country of exile, in order to reach the public – Zur Mühlen belongs in the second category. She wrote in multiple genres to get her social and moral message across: the short story, the fable, the children's fairy tale, the novel, the

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56 In a letter to Sinclair of 16 December 1927, Zur Mühlen complained that while the Malik Verlag, which had become his main publisher in Germany, was reluctant to accept her translations of works by him that it thought would not find a ready market, it also tried to prevent her from placing those works with other publishers. "I am quite ready," she wrote, "to translate all the books you send me, also theoretical ones at the risk of not finding a publisher, but as I have to work for my living that way I simply cannot afford to let a book lie about for which I could find a publisher, only to please the Malik's vanity." (Ibid., pp. 71-72)

57 Ibid. Cf. letter of 23 November 1927 in which she repeats a frequent complaint that the "bottom line" has displaced politics as the top priority of the Malik Verlag, so that the firm is dragging its feet over Sinclair's more directly political, non-fiction writings: "I really do my best, and nobody can be more sorry if a book of yours does not come out here than I, because I believe they are the best propaganda we can have." (Ibid., p. 67)

58 Letter of 9 July, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 14. As Zur Mühlen went on to translate Nathan Asch, Max Eastman (during his long socialist phase), and Edna Ferber, her commitment to "progressive" voices in American literature would seem to be totally sincere.

detective story, the autobiographical memoir. She made her translations in the same spirit and with the same intent. Characteristically, when she had to seek refuge in England in 1939, she accepted that she had to write in the language of her country of exile – or at least to translate her work into that language and adapt it to a new reading public.<sup>59</sup> It should also be recalled that repudiation of “art” was by no means uncommon among left-leaning artists in Germany in the years following the war. Harry Graf Kessler tells in his diaries of visiting George Grosz, who, as it happens, illustrated some of Zur Mühlen’s translations of Sinclair, in his studio in Wilmersdorf: “He wants to become the German Hogarth, deliberately realistic and didactic; to preach, improve and reform. Art for art’s sake does not interest him at all,” Kessler noted. In fact, “Grosz argued that art as such is unnatural, a disease...Mankind can do without art.”<sup>60</sup>

After *König Kohle*, Zur Mühlen placed two of her earliest translations of Sinclair – *Jimmie Higgins* (1919) and *Der Liebe Pilgerfahrt* [Love’s Pilgrimage] (1922) – with the respected firm of Kiepenheuer in Potsdam.<sup>61</sup> She was also offered a contract on generous terms by the up and coming publishing house of Kurt Wolff in Leipzig,<sup>62</sup> which had asked her to recommend books by American authors. However, she chose instead, out of political solidarity, and on financial conditions less favorable to her (or so she claimed some years later), to link her fortunes and those of her American author to the Herzfelde brothers’ young, avant-garde, and left-wing Malik Verlag. By working with and for the Malik Verlag, and by adding Sinclair to its stable of authors, Zur Mühlen apparently felt she would not simply be earning a modest living for herself and her partner Stefan Klein but advancing the cause of socialism in Germany. Collaboration with Malik, she apparently believed, would focus public attention on the socialist message

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59 On De Mendelssohn’s lecture and on German writers exiled in Great Britain who chose to write in English, see Waltraud Strickhausen, “Schreiben in der Sprache des *Anderen*: Eine Vorstudie zu den Publikationsmöglichkeiten und der Wirkung englischsprachiger Exilwerke in Großbritannien,” in Dieter Sevin, ed., *Die Resonanz des Exils. Gelungene und mißlungene deutschsprachiger Exilautoren* (Amsterdam / Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992), *Amsterdamer Publikationen zur Sprache und Literature*, 99, pp. 369-96.

60 *Berlin in Lights: The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937)*, trans. and ed. by Charles Kessler (New York: Grove Press, 1999), p. 64 (5 February 1919).

61 Founded in 1909. After the Second World War, the firm of Kiepenheuer & Wirtsch was re-founded in Jena and became an imprint of the powerful East German Aufbau Verlag.

62 Obligated to flee Germany when Hitler came to power, Wolff subsequently founded the prestigious house of Pantheon Books in New York.

of Sinclair's work, while at the same time strengthening the reputation of the firm and virtually guaranteeing that everything Sinclair wrote (and that she translated) would be published in Germany. Accordingly, she reached an agreement with Malik, by which it was given the first option on all her "authorized" translations of Sinclair's works, while in return, as she understood it at least, Malik undertook to give her the first option on translating any work of Sinclair's that it was interested in publishing. Thus she could seek other publishers only for works that Malik declined to publish,<sup>63</sup> while on its side, Malik could seek the services of another translator only for works by Sinclair that she had declined to translate.

In the next five or six years a close collaboration of Zur Mühlen with Wieland Herzfelde resulted in the translation by Zur Mühlen and the publication by the Malik Verlag of a slew of Sinclair works:

- in 1921, the novel *100% Roman eines Patrioten* [*100%. The Story of a Patriot*, 1920] and the plays *Die Maschine* [*The Machine*, 1911] and *Prinz Hagen* [*Prince Hagen*, 1903] in the firm's "Collection of Revolutionary Stage Works."

- in 1922, the novels *Der Liebe Pilgerfahrt* [*Love's Pilgrimage*, 1911] and *Man nennt mich Zimmermann* [*They Call me Carpenter*, 1922] along with *Das Buch des Lebens* [*The Book of Life: Mind and Body*, 1921, *The Book of Life: Love and Society*, 1922].

- in 1923, *Der Sumpf* [*The Jungle*, 1906], Sinclair's first great success, reworked (and, as it turned out, considerably cut) by Zur Mühlen from Eduard Eugen Ritter's 1906 translation for the Hanover publisher Sponholtz.

- in 1924, the novels *Jimmie Higgins* [1919], taken over from the publisher Kiepenheuer, *Samuel der Suchende* [*Samuel the Seeker*, 1910], reworked from a 1911 translation published by Sponholtz in Hanover, and the 250-page tract *Parademarsch. Eine Studie über amerikanische Erziehung* [*The Goose-Step. A Study of American Education*, 1923].

- in 1925, the novels *Der Industriebaron* [*A Captain of Industry*, 1906], *Die*

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63 This was the case with her translation of *The Spokesman's Secretary* (1926), published by Universum Bücherei, Berlin, in 1927 as *Präsident der U.S.A. Roman aus dem Weißen Haus* and presumably also with her translation of *Manassas* (1904), which appeared as *Sklaverei* with the Renaissance Verlag in Vienna in 1923 – unless the second of these had been contracted for prior to the arrangement with Malik. In addition, her translation of a short play, *The Second Storey Man*, the original of which was first performed in San Francisco in 1909, was published in 1924 as *Der Fassadenkletterer* by Verlag Die Wölfe in Leipzig, which also published in that same year Zur Mühlen's own collection of adult fables entitled *Der Rote Heiland* [*The Red Redeemer*].

*Metropole* [*Metropolis*, 1908], *Nach der Sintflut* [*The Millennium*, 1924], and *Die Wechsler* [*The Money Changers*, 1908], the play *Die Hölle* [*Hell: a verse drama and photo-play*, 1923], and a second tract on education, *Der Rekrut* [*The Goslings: A Study of the American Schools*, 1924].

This astonishing productivity culminated in 1927 in the publication, in the same year as it appeared in America, of the greatest of Sinclair and Zur Mühlen's successes in Germany, the novel *Petroleum* [*Oil!*, 1927], along with the play *Singende Galgenvögel* [*Singing Jailbirds*, 1924], which was performed almost simultaneously with its publication, first in Breslau and then in a production by the celebrated director Erwin Piscator in Berlin, and of *Die goldene Kette oder die Sage von der Freiheit der Kunst* [*Mammonart*, 1925], a long 400-page tract on the subservience of art to power and money.

After 1927 there was nothing more. The Malik Verlag brought out a few more books by Sinclair to round out their 13-volume edition of his works, but these were not translated by Zur Mühlen.<sup>64</sup> Zur Mühlen, on her side, published her translation of Sinclair's 1926 satire *The Spokesman's Secretary: Being the Letters from Mame to Mom* [*Präsident der USA: Roman aus dem Weißen Haus*], which Malik had declined, with the Berlin publishers Universum Verlag in 1927 and Robinson Verlag in 1928. The events and conflicts that put an end to an unusually productive collaboration of author, translator, and publisher throw light on Zur Mühlen's situation in those years as a writer earning her living by translations, as well as on the changing literary situation in Germany in the 1920s and on the problems confronted by translators in general.

The turning point appears to have been 1925, when Malik, which was in constant financial difficulty, became a public company with Felix Weil, the son of a millionaire German businessman, as one of the largest shareholders. The new management was strongly sympathetic to the Left and Wieland Herzfelde was kept on as editor. (Felix Weil had financed the first "Marxist Workweek" at Ilmenau in Thuringia, in 1923, which was attended by Geörgy Lukács, Karl Korsch and Karl Wittfogel, and he had also provided the funds to set up, in the following year, the celebrated Institut für Sozialforschung in Frankfurt, with which notable Marxist scholars like Adorno, Borkenau, and Horkheimer were associated.) Nevertheless, Zur Mühlen alleged that financial considerations began to loom larger in the

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64 Most of the new translations were by Paul Baudisch, an experienced translator of Dos Passos, Bret Harte, and Zane Gray, but not a writer in his own right. One translation was by Elias Canetti.

operations of the firm to the detriment of its political mission.<sup>65</sup> Until then, author, translator, and publisher had indeed worked harmoniously and in friendship, as a team, supporting each other in every way possible. In 1922, for instance, as he was nearing completion of *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education* – a denunciation of American higher education as a system designed to produce conformist defenders of capitalism – Sinclair asked “Mrs. Zur Mühlen” to find “quotations on the subject of the Goose Step from German military authorities” for him. As he expected to finish this book “in about six weeks,” she should do this “as promptly as you can.” He was sure, he wrote, that “there must be a great many manuals and discussions of military affairs in which the moral and spiritual effect of the Goose Step is favorably commented on by writers of authority in that field.” In addition, he asked her to make a selection of appropriate texts – “I don’t want any long passages, just a few sentences” – and to “translate for me” what she finds, bearing in mind that he is “not familiar with military phraseology.”<sup>66</sup> Zur Mühlen was apparently happy to play the role of assistant to Sinclair as well as that of agent and translator.

On her side, as late as 1927, Zur Mühlen wrote Sinclair on behalf of the Malik Verlag about a possible film based on *King Coal*.

The Maliks...want to know right away whether they can have the picture rights for *King Coal*. The Prometheus people are the same who produced *Potemkin* and Eisenstein would stage [i.e. direct – LG] *King Coal*, so that it would be sure to be fine...The Maliks want to know if you agree to the conditions...; you getting 66⅔ % of the royalties, the Maliks who have to do all the agent’s work 25%, and I 8⅓ %... The Maliks want to insert in the agreement, that in case *King Coal* [is] produced, the propaganda must remain the same as in your novel.

As his agent, she urges him to accept a deal that she clearly finds fair and believes would promote the sale of his books. “It would mean a lot for all your books if the film were produced over here.”<sup>67</sup> In a similar spirit of friendly co-operation, she praises John Heartfield’s cover design for the forthcoming *Mammonart* [*Die goldene Kette*],<sup>68</sup> gives strong support to Wieland Herzfelde’s plan to write a biography of Sinclair, and urges the latter to assist Herzfelde in every way possible.

65 The growing conflict between Zur Mühlen and the management of the Malik Verlag may not be unrelated to tensions and disputes within the fractious German Communist Party in the 1920s. Unfortunately, in the absence of documentary evidence, this possibility could not be investigated.

66 Letter of 9 September 1922, in Upton Sinclair, Wieland Herzfelde, Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *Werter Genosse, die Maliks haben beschlossen...Briefe 1919-1950*, p.17.

67 Letter of 19 March 1927, *ibid.*, p. 35.

68 Letter of 7 May 1927, *ibid.*, p. 41.

The Maliks have decided not to take Floyd Dell's book about you.<sup>69</sup> I am sorry on account of Floyd Dell, but I believe they are right; the book is too American, written for the American public and the people over here have another idea about you, you are for them much more the Comrade and the agitator, than the writer. Comrade Herzfelde wants to write the biography himself; I believe he could do it well, he's a good writer and could bring out just the points we want over here. Do please send him all the dates [i.e. data – LG] he wants.

She then urges Sinclair to send photographs of himself, his parents, and his son, adding that "Comrade Herzfelde is here and we are going through *Oil!* once more; we want to make it *the* book of the season."<sup>70</sup>

The first sign of something's having gone wrong in the relation of author, translator, and publisher was a "confidential" letter from Sinclair to Wieland Herzfelde in October 1927, asking about "the literary quality of the German translations by Mrs. Zur Mühlen that you have been publishing." He had been informed, he wrote, by "several persons" that "they are not of good literary quality." One of his other translators into German had even claimed that his books had been "seriously mishandled" and cited one work that was "so badly mutilated, it was unrecognizable." Sinclair professed to feel bad about having raised this question: "Mrs. Zur Mühlen has worked so hard and been so enthusiastic over my books that you will understand I feel deeply grateful to her, and am extremely reluctant to do anything that would hurt her feelings." His primary concern, however, had to be "for the usefulness of my books in Germany."<sup>71</sup>

Herzfelde answered "confidentially" – though he too claimed to write with a heavy heart, for "Frau Zur Mühlen is a Comrade, is in very poor health, lives a hard life with great uprightness, and has broken with her husband and her wealthy family on account of her convictions" – that "we are *not* satisfied with the translations." Their deficiencies may be partly due, he suggested, again softening his criticism with professions of sympathy, "to Zur Mühlen's illness," which, along with some other things, puts her in need of considerable sums of money, so that "Comrade Zur Mühlen cannot devote as much care to her work as she might do in more

69 Floyd Dell, *Upton Sinclair: a Study in Social Protest* (New York: George H. Doran; London: Werner Laurie, 1927).

70 Letter of 18 May 1927, *ibid.*, p. 44. The comments on Dell's book throw an interesting light on Zur Mühlen's own translation practices. She was clearly acutely aware of the specific character of different reading publics: the German public was not the same as the American one. Books – and presumably translations also – must therefore be oriented toward a particular public if they are to have any chance of success and therefore also of achieving the political effectiveness that mattered so much to Zur Mühlen.

71 Letter of 9 October 1927, *ibid.*, p. 54.

favorable circumstances." The Press had, in fact, been so unhappy with her translations that it had got her to agree to their being reviewed and where necessary revised. This is costly, however, and also holds up publication. Had Sinclair not broached the matter first, therefore, the Press would have had to ask him to consider "a new arrangement" for the translation of his works, especially in view of the fact that business is expanding and that he, Herzfelde, can no longer devote "weeks and months to reviewing and correcting Comrade Zur Mühlen's translations." As, in addition, "Comrade Zur Mühlen has declared that she will no longer accept having her work reviewed and corrected by me, since this delays publication of the books...we request that you concede to us the right to appoint authorized translators."<sup>72</sup>

In the meantime Zur Mühlen is charging more and more angrily in her letters to Sinclair that "the bottom line" has replaced political commitment as the priority of the Malik Verlag since its take-over in 1925. "Am once again having a battle royal with the Maliks on account of your new book," she complains in October 1927. "They do not want it, as they believe it would not 'sell as well as your other books.' Since they have got more money they are frightfully commercial and have lost all love for propaganda. Besides they are very mad with me for having placed the *Speaker* [*The Spokesman's Secretary*]; their idea is that none of your books, which they won't publish for financial reasons, ought to be published at all, however good the propaganda might be."<sup>73</sup> A few months later she declares that the old spirit has gone out of the firm completely: "The Malik-Verlag has been a purely capitalist firm for the last three years."<sup>74</sup> Though he has been kept on as editor, Wieland Herzfelde is now no longer a free agent and does not have the backbone to stand up to the new owners.<sup>75</sup> The result is that "the Maliks" are now dragging their feet, asking her to shorten some of her translations – which "only means with the Maliks of today, cutting out the propaganda"<sup>76</sup> – and postponing or even turning down publication of Sinclair's non-fictional writing, which they fear will sell poorly. "I had to fight like a lion for each propaganda word in *Oil!* And the same with

<sup>72</sup> Letter of 9 November, *ibid.*, pp. 60-61. The request is confirmed in a letter of 12 November 1927, *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>73</sup> Letter of 29 October, 1927, *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>74</sup> Letter of 10 April 1928, *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>75</sup> "I must tell you that Comrade Herzfelde cannot help himself, because he dares not make a stand against those people of the firm who have the money." (Letter of 29 October 1927, *ibid.*, p. 58).

<sup>76</sup> Letters of 29 October and 16 December 1927, *ibid.*, pp. 58, 71.

*Mammonart*," she reports.<sup>77</sup> In the case of the latter, they keep putting off publication. In addition, they have been encouraging her to decline to translate works they think will not sell well.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, they do their utmost to prevent her from offering anything by Sinclair to other publishers, and they were angry when she succeeded in finding a publisher for *The Spokesman's Secretary*, which they had declined.<sup>79</sup> "Please stick up for me," she pleads. "I know they want to get the authorization for your books away from me." She will gladly give up translating his books "if it is better for them," but she "has done for them whatever I could and shall go on doing it."<sup>80</sup>

In the late fall of 1927 Zur Mühlen told Sinclair that "the Maliks" had begun to find fault with her translations. "The proofs of *Mammonart* come trickling in at last," she tells Sinclair, "but I have made myself enemies of Herzfelde and the rest. All of a sudden they pretend that the book is so badly translated that they must correct everything."<sup>81</sup> A few weeks later, however, she heard from Sinclair himself about letters "various persons" had sent him, "mentioning that the German translations of my books were not adequate and that the influence of the books was being diminished thereby." He has "attributed this to the fact that [she] was ill and unable to give the amount of time necessary to the work." As he does "not know how to decide such a problem, because [he] would not be unfair to [her] for anything in the world, [he has] submitted [it] to a German friend here in California, who is a competent man of letters and whose opinions of the translations will be useful to [him]." (68-69) He then shifts to the topic of his latest novel *Boston* (about the Sacco and Vanzetti case). The people

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77 Letter of 29 October 1927, *ibid.*, p. 58.

78 "Whenever they do not want to take a book, they come and tell me 'Don't translate it. It's not a good book.' It was the same with *Judd* [*Letters to Judd*]. But I know a good book when I see it and have told them that I shall translate all the books you entrust to me and find other publishers." (Letter of 16 December, 1927, *ibid.*, p. 71) It would be much easier to do this if she could also promise those other publishers "one of your next novels, but we are, alas, bound to the Maliks, who take the novels but do not take the other books." (Letter of 23 November, 1927, *ibid.*, p. 67)

79 Letter of 23 November 1927, *ibid.*, p. 67. Again in letter of 16 December 1927: "You must remember one thing: they want to prevent any of your books being published by other publishers. They told me I ought not to try and find a publisher for *The Speaker* as it was a weak book and would hurt your reputation over here. They wanted me to write and tell you that." (*Ibid.*, p. 71).

80 Letter of 16 December 1927, *ibid.*, p. 72.

81 Letter of 23 November 1927, *ibid.*, p. 66.

at Malik, he tells her, “thought they might be able to make arrangements for serialization” of this work “in Germany, if I would send them a copy of the manuscript. But I do not know,” he adds somewhat disingenuously, “whether the magazine or paper would want to use your translation, or whether they would insist upon having a translator of their own.” If he were on the spot, he would be able to “work these matters out.” As this is not the case, however, “I shall have to leave it in Malik’s hands because they are in Berlin, where they can do the negotiating and get a prompt decision, which of course will be essential in the case.” Sinclair is well aware of the effect his letter will have on Zur Mühlen for he closes, weakly, on an apologetic note: “I hope you will understand this and not be too much disappointed with me. I have for you a very deep appreciation and sincere esteem, and I want you to understand this and not feel that I am failing in loyalty to you.” (69)

Zur Mühlen *was* offended, however, and quite angry. To answer “your accusation of my having translated your books badly,” she writes,

I must do something that sounds like bragging, which I loathe. First of all I am sorry you do not tell me who the friends are, who have attacked me. You know that ever since translating your books begins to mean good business and not a labor of love, many people wanted to get the authorization, some writing to you, some to me. Perhaps some of the ‘friends’ would have liked to translate you or have their wives, sisters or friends translate you. If you still have the old reviews I sent you, you will also see that the translations have been praised by good papers. Besides, please forgive if that sounds like bragging, I can’t help it, I have placed translations of mine in the best German publishing firms like Kurt Wolff, Kiepenheuer (don’t forget he was the first to bring you [out], not the Maliks), the Drei Masken Verlag, and a good many more. My own books have not only been published over here but translated into French, Hungarian, Czech, Japanese, Russian, English and Serbian. I have just placed a novel I translated with the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and your German friend in California will be able to tell you that the *Frankfurter Zeitung*...does not take bad stuff. The same paper has also asked me to write my *Memoires* for it this year. I have always given my best work to your books. At *Oil!* I worked correcting and recorrecting five months.<sup>82</sup>... The whole complication reminds me of what happened with Bernard Shaw and his translator Trebitsch. As soon as Shaw meant good business over here, Trebitsch was attacked all round and a big German review published all his mistakes. But...old B.S. stood up for his translator, saying he translated me before I was famous in Germany, and even if he did make some mistakes,...I’ll stick to him. One more thing in my defense. The Malik-Verlag did a lot for your books, I’m the first to acknowledge it, but it was easier for a firm than for me, and I can tell you honestly that I often put off well paid work so as to translate your books and let the Maliks have them at conditions that were bad for me.

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82 She admits that one book – *The Captain of Industry* – was not well translated. At the time, she explains, she did not have access to a library and could not check the appropriate technical language. Though she asked Comrade Gumperz of the Malik Verlag to go over it and correct it for her, “people told me afterwards that many expressions were wrong.”

Now, as to *Boston*, you know that I cannot, according to my agreement with the Maliks, translate for another publisher or sell any of your books which they have not refused. But the same holds for me; they can only bring [out] a translation of your books by another translator if I have refused to translate the book. It was therefore most incorrect of the Maliks to ask for your Ms. without telling me about it and [I] shall let them know it.

The letter concludes on a note of reproach and disappointment.

As you have been so honest with me I shall be honest too and tell you that your letter was one of the greatest disappointments I ever had, because I felt so sure that you would first hear my side of the whole affair.<sup>83</sup> (77-78)

Matters deteriorated further when, as Zur Mühlen wrote to Sinclair, "I told the Maliks how uncorrect they had been in the case of *Boston*, whereupon they told me that *you* had been the first to wire and propose another translator." She repeats that Malik wants to get rid of her because she insists that "not a single revolutionary phrase of your books...be left out." She now sees and presents herself as the exploited writer up against the capitalist publisher. "I must defend myself as I stand alone against a publishing firm which is, compared to me, the capitalist, so that in holding out against them I fight not only for myself but for all other writers who have anything to do with the firm." For that reason she plans to take the dispute to the Writers League Union [*Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller*]. Perhaps out of genuine concern for Zur Mühlen, perhaps also in order to avoid an unpleasant scandal, even a lawsuit,<sup>84</sup> the Malik Verlag had invited Zur Mühlen to review and correct, for a fee, whatever translation was made of *Boston*. She rejected this olive branch with scorn, however. "If I translate so badly, and can neither write German nor understand English, what's the good of my correcting a Ms.?"<sup>85</sup> Again and again she insists on her commitment to Sinclair's work and to the cause to which he, she, and Malik were all once dedicated. She took up the task of translating him in the first instance as a labor of love, she protests, long before publishing

83 Letter of 27 December 1927, *ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

84 See HZM's letter to Sinclair of 10 April 1928 (p. 115) on the possibility of her bringing a lawsuit against the Maliks.

85 Letter of 9 January 1928, *ibid.*, pp. 82-83. Zur Mühlen apparently did not know that on that same day, 9 January 1928, profiting from the advice that she, as his agent, had given him about the publication of his books in Germany, but bypassing her completely, Sinclair had proposed to Herzfelde that "you agree to publish all my books...Manifestly all of them will not be equally salable, and if I let you have all the salable ones I might find it impossible to get publishers for the others. On the whole I think it would be better for you to have a complete list of my books rather than to have other publishers getting the advantage of the advertising of my books." (*Ibid.*, p. 81)

(and translating) him brought in much money. To the contrary, she turned down better paying contracts in order to devote herself to his books. And for similar disinterested reasons she offered his work to Malik on better terms for them and worse terms for her than she had been offered by other publishers.<sup>86</sup>

In Zur Mühlen's eyes, the management of Malik was without any doubt behind an elaborate scheme to discredit her in order to acquire for the press itself the translation rights that she felt were hers not only by contract but in light of her longstanding efforts on Sinclair's behalf and her demonstrated success in putting him on the map in Germany and turning him into a bestselling author. However, a letter in which she listed her grievances against the press elicited a harsh reply from Sinclair in which he sided with the press and rejected her arguments point by point.<sup>87</sup> The last straw for Zur Mühlen, the former countess and committed socialist, was Sinclair's insinuation that translating his work had been "a profitable matter" for her and that commercial considerations lay behind her work as his translator. "Till *Oil!*," she retorted in a letter dated 6 February 1928, "it was anything but profitable, you can ask Albert Rhys Williams [an American socialist journalist, author of a book on Lenin and the Russian Revolution that Zur Mühlen had translated – L.G.] about...the struggle I had to pay my way." When she first offered Sinclair's work to it, "the Malik Verlag offered me 2% and I accepted it." Though this was a low fee for a translator, she has no regrets, "as I really believe that *Oil!* which has made you known all over Germany would not have had the success [it had] if the other books had not paved the way." "It really was a labor of love translating the books," she insists, adding, not without some malice, that it was all the more a labor of love as "my literary friends told me again and again that I was spoiling all my chances with other publishers by translating books which were in the eyes of 'literary' Germany pure propaganda and not literature."<sup>88</sup>

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86 There may well be truth in this claim. In the late 1920's Zur Mühlen translated several novels of Nathan Asch for the Frankfurt publisher Rütten und Loening and was apparently also acting as Asch's literary agent on the European continent. Many years later, in a letter of February 3, 1949, written from England, she asked Asch if he had any new works for her to translate, citing their "usual terms 50/50." (Louise Pettus Archives & Special Collections, Winthrop University) Presumably this meant that royalties were shared equally by author and translator – terms much more favorable to the translator than those on which she had made her translations of Sinclair.

87 Letter of 25 January 1928, *ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

88 Letter of 6 February 1928, *ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

All the participants in the quarrel tried to occupy the moral high ground. Zur Mühlen, for her part, concluded her letter by thanking Sinclair “for the possibility you have given me of letting the German working people know and love your books. They – and also several well known German critics and authors could tell you that my translation has not hurt your work.” That said, however, their relationship had no future. “That one phrase of yours [the assertion that translating him had been “a profitable matter”] has made everything impossible for me. I shall not bother you again with my letters and take up your time with them. Yours sincerely, Hermynia Zur Mühlen.”<sup>89</sup> Zur Mühlen did not know at this point – or perhaps ever – that Malik, again perhaps out of a genuine desire to help a comrade in difficulty, perhaps to avoid a lawsuit, had drawn up a contract according to which she would always receive 2% of the royalties from books by Sinclair, and that the evidently quite hard-headed Sinclair had refused to sign it.

There is something in these contracts that I would not sign, and that is the agreement to pay Mrs. Zur Mühlen two percent of my royalties, which appears to be a continual promise and without time limit. I may wish to pay her this, and I may not, but certainly there is no reason why I should agree to do so, or feel under obligation to do so. In the case of *Boston*, I will do it gladly, if it will help to restore peace. But what if the arrangement for *Boston* should not work out satisfactorily? Then certainly I do not want to be bound to Mrs. Zur Mühlen for the future. It seems to me that your contract would even give her heirs a claim upon my royalties on books not yet written. I hereby give you the authorization to make the two percent payment to Mrs. Zir Mühlen for *Boston*, and I think you should cut out from this contract the sentence referring to her, and instead specify that the royalties paid to me are to be increased by two percent, in case I should terminate the arrangement of paying two percent to Mrs. Zur Mühlen.<sup>90</sup>

The correspondence of Sinclair and Zur Mühlen did not cease entirely with the latter’s letter of 6 February 1928. The translator wrote the

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>90</sup> Sinclair to Wieland Herzfelde, 20 February 1928, *ibid.*, p. 108. On Sinclair’s preoccupation with royalty issues and with the commercial aspect of the publication of his works in Germany, see Deborah Vietor-Engländer’s 2001 review of *Werter Genosse, die Maliks haben beschlossen* in <http://www.literaturhaus.at/buch/fachbuch/rez/zurmuehlen/?COLOR=NO>. Vietor-Engländer also points to a discrepancy between the tone of the German translations of Sinclair’s letters in this volume and that of the English originals: “Die deutschen Briefe klingen durchweg sehr viel herzlicher, freundlicher und glatter; in den Originalen wird Sinclairs Kälte wesentlich deutlicher, es geht dem Sozialisten vor allem um Rechte, Prozente und um seine eigenen Interessen.” [In German the letters sound altogether warmer, friendlier, and smoother. Sinclair’s coldness is significantly more evident in the originals. This Socialist is chiefly concerned with rights, percentages, and looking after his own interests.]

author three more politely worded letters on business matters, but their collaboration had indeed come to an end. Ironically, a few months later, at the very same time that Herzfelde wrote to Sinclair to inform him of his discovery that Zur Mühlen's reworked translation of *The Jungle* [*Sumpff*] and her own translation of *Love's Pilgrimage* [*Der Liebe Pilgerfahrt*] had been drastically cut in relation to the originals (by over 100 pages, allegedly, in the case of the former and by 350 pages, equivalent to half the book, in the case of the latter!), and that he had persuaded Zur Mühlen to go back over both translations and restore the missing sections,<sup>91</sup> he also sent a telegram to Sinclair telling him that, in order to ensure sales, *Boston* would have to undergo major cuts.

Albeit not unrelated to financial considerations, the core of Zur Mühlen's increasingly contentious relation both to the Malik Verlag and to Sinclair himself may well have been, as she always claimed, her emphasis on the "propaganda value" of Sinclair's work. This could well have led her to pay less attention at times to its textual integrity than the author himself could accept, despite the fact that he shared her unconcealed contempt for the notion of "Art for Art's sake."<sup>92</sup> Given her often expressed conviction of the moral and political responsibility of the artist, it seems not unlikely that Zur Mühlen was willing and in fact felt it was her duty to adapt Sinclair's work to the German reading public, and in particular to that less well off and less educated segment of it that, for moral and political reasons, she

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91 Wieland Herzfelde to Sinclair, 10 September 1928, *ibid.*, pp. 125-126. I have not been able to check Zur Mühlen's translations of those two works. I did examine her translations of *Hundred Percent*, *King Coal*, and *Oil!*, however, and found them mostly faithful to the originals. She does make short cuts here and there (e.g. the seduction of Bunny by Eunice in *Oil!*, VIII, 1) and her translations do not communicate the colloquial speech of Sinclair's working class characters. (Not, probably, an unconsidered decision; using a German equivalent might have made these characters seem more German than American). On the other hand, the rhyming verses in *King Coal* (Bk. 1, ch. 1), based on the nursery rhyme "Old King Coal"), are quite effectively translated into rhyming German verses, and an allusion that the German reader might not understand is conscientiously explained in a footnote. Thus, "Go on wid ye! 'Tis the blarney-stone ye been kissin'" (Bk. 1, ch. 7) is translated "Hören Sie doch auf. Sie haben den Blarneystein geküßt." A note explains the term "Blarneystein": "Ein Stein in der Mauer des Schlosses Blarney in der irischen Grafschaft Cork, der den, der ihn küßt, zum gewandten Schmeichler macht" [a stone in the wall of Blarney Castle in the Irish county of Cork that turns whoever kisses it into an expert flatterer].

92 Zur Mühlen to Sinclair, 18 November 1927, *ibid.*, p. 64: "Unfortunately the whole Malik-Verlag believes in Art for Art's sake just now and of course that makes them dislike your book [*Mammonart*]."

particularly wanted to reach. Her own life experience, which had brought her into contact with many different social, cultural, and linguistic groups must have made her keenly aware of the specificity of different reading publics and – consistently with her emphasis on “propaganda value” and on getting a message across – of the importance of adapting texts to their target public. That she did have this awareness is clear not only from her sharing the Malik Verlag’s view that Floyd Dell’s biography of Sinclair, good as it was, was not right for the German public and that Herzfelde should write one specifically for that public, or from her ready adoption of a particular style for the socialist children’s fairy tales she was writing in those same years, but from her translations, many years later, of her own German works into English. If she made significant cuts in translating *Jungle* and *Love’s Pilgrimage*, as “the Maliks” alleged, she also made major cuts in her own novel *Ewiges Schattenspiel* as she translated it for publication in Britain in 1943 under the title *We Poor Shadows*.<sup>93</sup> The changes she made or permitted to be made to the original 1933 German text of her comic novel *Nora hat eine famose Idee* for the 1947 English translation, *Guests in the House*, were even more drastic. However contrary to our strict contemporary ideas about translation, Zur Mühlen’s understanding of it was by no means uncommon. Nor is it indefensible. It corresponds in fact, as noted, to the second of the three types of translation outlined by Goethe, albeit not to the type Goethe himself preferred. Besides, Zur Mühlen herself objected to certain kinds of cuts. “The Maliks,” she complained to Sinclair, “did not want to take *Mammonart* because it was too fat, and have shortened it about a quarter.” (71)

It is also true, however, that, having cut herself off, through her politics and her relationship with Klein, from her former husband and her own aristocratic family, Zur Mühlen no longer received any income from those two sources and needed money badly. In the face of continued ill health and medical expenses and of Stefan Klein’s inability to bring in money, she was working like a dog, turning out fairy tales, detective novels, translations, and feuilletons at a dizzying pace. How could she not have cut corners here and there, as her critics alleged? Likewise, when she complains of

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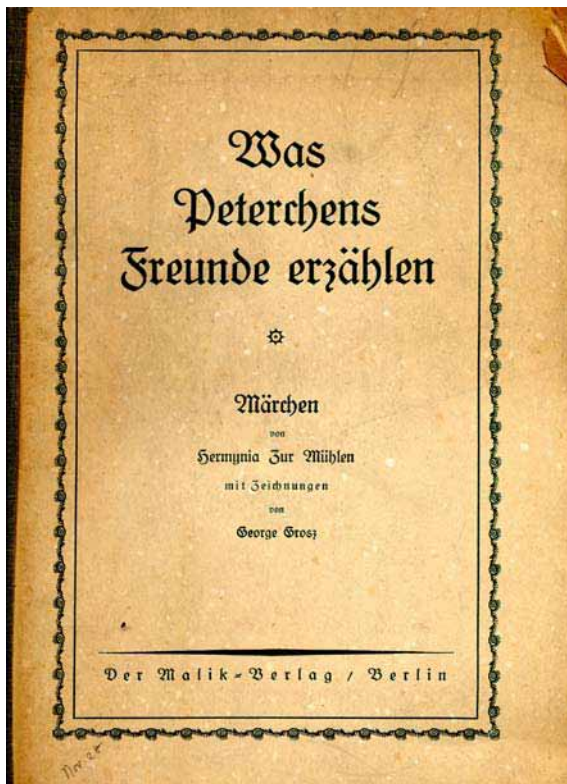
93 As no translator of this text is named and as Zur Mühlen had always known English reasonably well and had by 1943 been living in England for four years, it has been wrongly assumed that she wrote this text in English. This turns out to be not the case. The work was originally written in German. It does seem most likely, however, that even if she used some help from native speakers, Zur Mühlen was herself deeply involved in the translation and adaptation of *Ewiges Schattenspiel*.

foot-dragging on the part of “the Maliks” and of their lack of interest in the less obviously profitable works of Sinclair, it is not unreasonable to assume that she did so at least partly because she herself needed her work to appear quickly, so that she could start collecting her translator’s share of the royalties as soon as possible. As the Countess-Comrade put it herself, she was not in a position to work for nothing.

## VI

*Image Portfolio* (Prepared by L. Gossman)

1. Illustrations from *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen*. Märchen von Hermynia Zur Mühlen mit Zeichnungen von Georg Grosz (Berlin: Der Malik-Verlag, 1921).



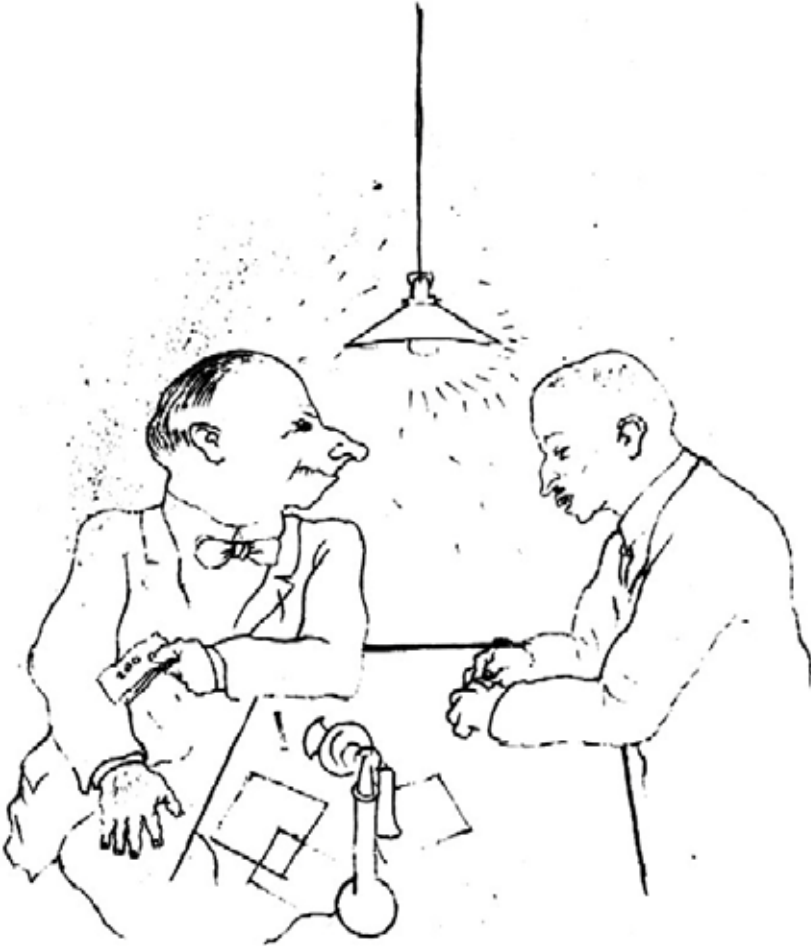




2. Illustrations from Upton Sinclair, *Hundert Prozent*. Autorisierte Übersetzung von Hermynia zur Muehlen, 10 Lithographien von Georg Grosz (Berlin: Der Malik Verlag, 1921. Die Rote Romane).



*... ein Schlag, der ihn aufhob, als sei er eine Feder (S.13)*



***Mc. Givney nahm das Geld vom Tisch (S.79)***



***Bisher hatte er bei jeder Äußerung des Liebesschmerzes Jennie in die Arme genommen und getröstet, jetzt jedoch ließ er einen Augenblick seine wahren Gefühle sehen. (S. 88)***



***Besser von der Polizei verprügelt werden, als sich von der deutschen Artillerie in Stücke zerreißen zu lassen. (S.111)***



**Ängste peinigten ihn, er stellte sich vor, er werde eingekerkert,  
Guffey foltere die Wahrheit aus ihm heraus. (S. 169)**



**„Gehen Sie sofort zum Richter, vergewissern Sie sich, daß die Leute im Gefängnis sind“ (S.181)**



**Bei jedem Schlag brüllte Glikan einen neuen Fluch (S.209)**



**Häßlicher Hohn verzerrte die Züge des Detektivs; mit bösem Spott grinste er Peter an. (S. 235)**



*Sie streckte die Arme nach ihm aus. „Armer, lieber Peter!  
Du hast ein so schweres Leben gehabt“ (S. 321)*

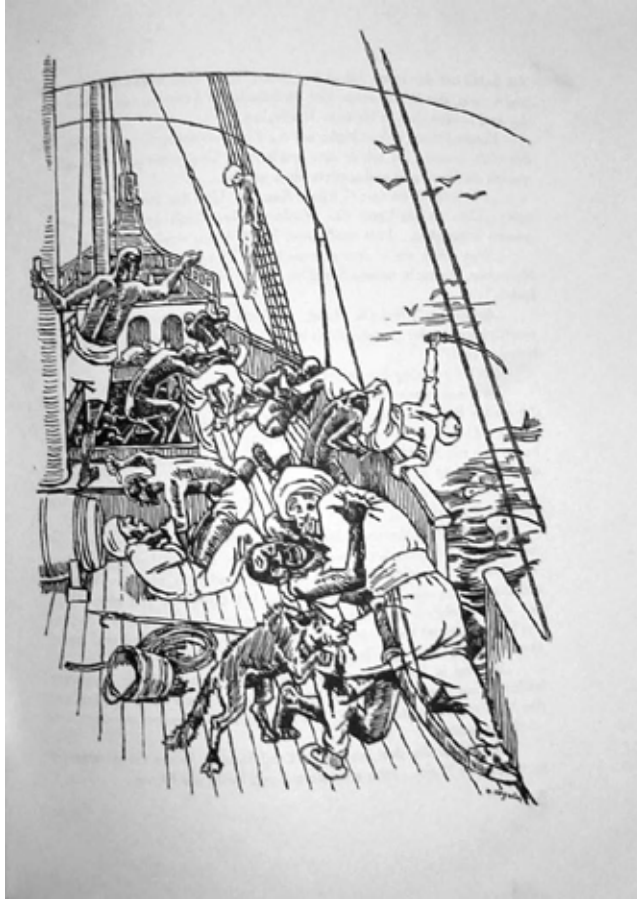


**„Mit Blut ist die Geschichte der Industriearbeiter  
der Welt geschrieben“ (S. 331)**

3. Heinrich Vogeler. Illustrations for Zur Mühlen's children's books *Es war einmal... und es wird sein* (Berlin: Verlag der Jugendinternationale, 1930) and *Schmiede der Zukunft* (Berlin: Verlag der Jugendinternationale, 1933).











## DER MUEZZIN

**D**ie Sonne geht unter. Ihre letzten Strahlen tauchen das alte Kairo in blutrote Farben. Es sieht aus, als wäre irgendwo eine ungeheure Feuersbrunst. Auf einem kleinen Platz staut sich die Menge und umdrängt einen alten Mann, der auf einer Strohmatte sitzt. Englische Soldaten kommen vorüber. Der eine spricht: „Man müßte doch nachsehen, was dort geschieht. Die Zeiten sind unsicher.“

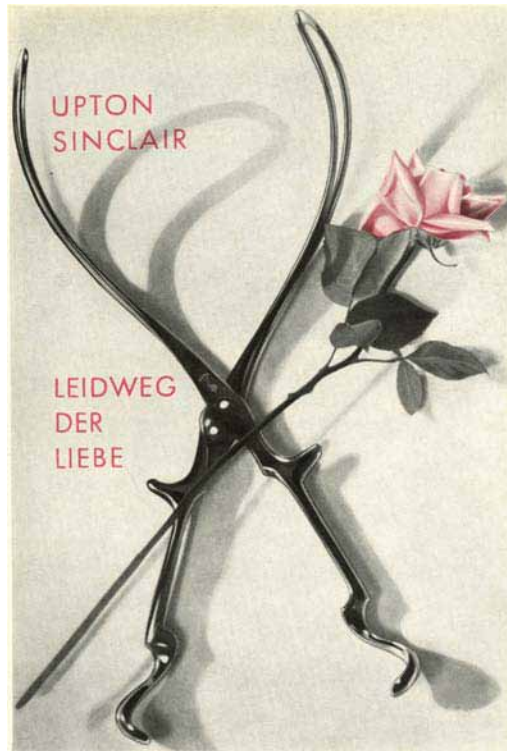
Der andere, ein baumlanger Kerl, reckt sich hoch und meint dann lachend: „Nichts Gefährliches: Ein Märchenerzähler. Ein merkwürdiges Volk, das sich wie die Kinder an Märchen erfreut.“  
Sie gehen weiter.

Mohammed Ali, der alte Märchenerzähler, lächelt verstoßen in den langen grauen Bart und wirft den Soldaten einen seltsamen Blick nach. Dann schweift sein Auge über die Menge. Er sieht die müden, ausgemergelten Fellachen, die ägyptischen Bauern, die heute noch eben so schlecht daran sind wie ihre ferneren Ahnen zur Zeit der Pharaonen, sieht die ägyptischen Arbeiter, die nur wenig vom Segen dieses fruchtbaren Landes kennen. Seine Augen funkeln unter den buschigen Brauen. Er hebt feierlich, Stille gebietend, die braune Hand und beginnt zu erzählen:

„Vor langer, langer Zeit herrschte in einer großen Stadt ein mächtiger Fürst. Sein Reichthum war unermäßig, und seine Hand lastete schwer auf den Bewohnern des Landes, die er mit Steuern überhäufte und zu harter Fron zwang. Er war ein gottesfürchtiger Mann und hatte, als er siegreich aus einem Krieg gegen die Ungläubigen heimkehrte, in der Mitte der Stadt eine wunderbare schneeweiße Marmormoschee erbauen lassen. Wie eine versteinerte Lilie ragte der Turm dieser Moschee in den blauen Himmel

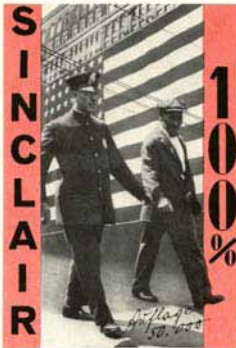
4. Jacket designs by John Heartfield for Zur Mühlen's Translations of Upton Sinclair



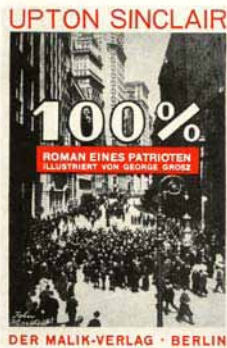




Malik-Verlag, 1923



Malik-Verlag, 1928



1921

