

# Familial Love Discourses in Contemporary German-Language Drama and Theater

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*This analysis of familial love discourses in contemporary German-language drama and theater, prefaced by a brief overview mainly of the development of the bourgeois family formation and family-related discourses in German-language drama and theater tradition since the eighteenth century, examines which theatrical and dramatic tradition playwrights resort to in their work and how they modify it under postdramatic conditions. This contribution is also guided by the question of whether contemporary plays, which grotesquely overdraw familial interrelations, treat the subject of love as a phantasm and whether the gloomy family plays written and staged since the 1990s also offer alternative visions of viable and caring love*

Keywords: German drama / family drama / family relations / love / Loher, Dea / Specht, Kerstin / Bärffuss, Lukas / Mayenburg, Marius von / Jonigk, Thomas

## **The Changing Forms of Bourgeois Family, Intimacy, and Morals**

Over the course of history, the institution and notion of the family has been exposed to various changes and modifications. Historical research on family systems offers sufficient evidence to underpin the claim that the family can be considered a sociocultural construct, a lived reality, and subject to myth-building. A definition of the family that accounts for a wide range of family formations emphasizes that the family remains a basic social group of adults and children related to each other by descent, marriage, adoption, or shared commitment, not necessarily inhabiting the same place. The incest taboo is still an integral part of family politics that prohibits mating with close kin. According to the French sociologists François Bourricaud and Raymond Boudon, the family is one of the most significant institutions of human societies, but for them there is no reason to believe that all institutions originate from it or can be explained by it. The family is a system of relationships between married or partnered cou-

ples and relatives that necessarily interacts with and is engaged in other social, economic, and political systems of a society. Boudon and Bourricaud further argue that the family is an open group rather than a self-contained totality, as proposed by Marcel Mauss. Apart from being a legal bond that prescribes economic, religious, sexual, and other rights, obligations, and prohibitions, the family is also considered an emotional community based on love, affection, respect, and care (Boudon and Bourricaud 143–151). Regarding the function of families to respond to the emotional needs of their members, the sociologist Jane Ribbens McCarthy foregrounds the challenge to assess the

emotional features of family lives and relationships, when these encompass variations from love to hate, kindness and altruism to violence and abuse. Part of this difficulty is that actual family experiences may be equivocal and shifting, involving deep paradoxes around such issues as power and love, or care and oppression, and the related feelings may hold much ambivalence. (Edwards and Ribbens McCarthy 5)

From a historical perspective, familial intimacy and emotionality did not advance to become a key component in family conceptions before the formation of the bourgeois nuclear family at the end of the eighteenth century.

Although it was generally believed that the nuclear family came into existence in the wake of industrialization, in recent decades this thesis was corrected by family research scholars and historians (e.g., Laslett 1–90 and 103–124; Mitterauer and Sieder). Nuclear families, comprised of a father, mother, and children, already existed in the pre-industrial period. Basically, they constituted the core of the pre-industrial extended work and household family, which included relatives, servants, maids, their own and illegitimate children, unrelated individuals such as lodgers or orphans, and livestock. Within the preindustrial household formation system, the division into labor and privacy spheres was unfamiliar. Founded as a community of economic interest, the entire extended household family was engaged in joint productive processes to sustain the family's survival under the rule of the *paterfamilias* (e.g., Ariès 469–557; Wunder 89–118). Furthermore, “the family in pre-industrial society was characterized by *sociability* rather than *privacy*” (Hareven 230).

With the emergence of the bourgeois nuclear family at the end of the eighteenth century, the family concept, composition, and structure underwent fundamental transformations. Due to urbanization and industrialization, productive activities that were previously performed in domestic households were outsourced to factories. In the bourgeois concept of the

family, the home was now defined as an intimate and private sphere, a safe harbor for retreat from the demands of the outside world. The cultivation of emotional ties within marriage and family is thus a relatively new social occurrence and the result of major socioeconomic changes. After the introduction of gender-specific labor divisions in bourgeois families, married women were tasked with housekeeping, childcare, securing the emotional wellbeing of family members, providing recreational and leisure activities, and creating a domestic atmosphere of trust and security, whereas the father, as the patriarch, was expected to secure a livelihood for the family and to perform as the disciplinarian and the family's representative in public (e.g., Segalen 13–58). In contrast to preindustrial extended household families, where children were used as a workforce at an early age, enlightenment philosophy and the bourgeois family concept gave advice to view children as unformed human beings in need of protection, emotional attention, guidance, and education (e.g., Ariès 69–91). However, as the educational theorist Ecarius explains, the conception of bourgeois family as an emotional community should be emphasized as a guiding ideal rather than the normal case (Ecarius 137–156). Concerning familial love and intimacy in bourgeois settings, they evolved in the first instance within a highly rigid moral system that was at the same time conceived as a new paradigm for a more humanistic state in declared opposition to the morally disputable courtly society. As Rosenbaum noted in her studies on the history of family, the bourgeois family advanced in the eighteenth century to *the* social center of the upcoming bourgeoisie, which sought political emancipation and public recognition (Rosenbaum *Familie als, Formen*). The bourgeois family concept at the end of the eighteenth century evoked a non-negotiable unity of emotionality, morality, and familial life. Bourgeois family virtues and ethics included requirements such as unquestioned obedience to the paterfamilias, loyalty to family members, monogamy, the incest taboo, and with respect to the daughter the repression of sexuality as well as her virginity. The moral integrity of a bourgeois family was anchored in exactly these ethical principles. Confessions of familial love were given credit only if coded in accordance with the existing moral system.

Although marriage of convenience prevailed at that time, a love marriage, in which individual love and marriage coincide, was by all means a socially accepted option. According to Kornelia Hahn and Günter Burkhardt, it is the bourgeoisie that twinned the institution of marriage with the profession of love, thereby reconciling the irrationality of love with the social rationality of marriage and family (Hahn and Burkhardt 8). However, reciprocal love based on free choice and sexuality came into blossom, as

is generally known, in the nineteenth century's romantic love concept (e.g. Müller-Lyer 39, 47, and 103).

The bourgeois nuclear family finally reached its climax in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the widespread claim that the traditional core family has become obsolete in Western societies today, the bourgeois conjugal family remains the predominant form of intimate coexistence among many other forms, such as patchwork families, single-parent and childless families, same-sex families, non-marital partnerships, and families-in-law. Some researchers propose appraising these new familial arrangements as indicators of change and transformations rather than a crisis because the institution of the family has been subject to alterations since its very existence, which again does not ignore the fact that novel social forms usually cause conflict and anxiety until they become socially accepted (Vaskovics 4–17; Schneider 19–52; Hoffmeister 70–77, 105–111). These heterogeneous forms pay tribute to individualization processes as evolving since the beginning of the twentieth century, to labor market flexibility, and to the pluralization of individual biographies (e.g., Kaufmann; Beck-Gernsheim). These open forms offer a higher degree of adaptiveness because the adults involved, among other things, do not expect or insist on permanency anymore. In addition, “post-bourgeois” families show a less obliging character than traditional core families. Moral obligations and commitments are apparently no longer imposed and uniformly regulated, but instead debated and negotiated (Schenk). The sociologist Gunter Schmidt speaks in this context about a shift from compulsory to negotiation-based morals (Schmidt 180–206). In “post-familial” (Beck-Gernsheim 115–138) settings, one major change seems to be the fact that fathers are no longer the only breadwinners. Under the condition of flexible labor and a significant increase in paid female employment, coordination efforts that absorb a lot of time and energy considerably impact the organization of family life. Time management in consideration of different time requirements and schedules that ought to be consolidated in a manner that is satisfying for all parties surfaces as a new potential for conflict within both traditional and unconventional familial settings. Flexibility offers not only more freedom of choice, but also a higher degree of responsibility in view of the persistent compulsion to make morally acceptable decisions under the premise of a seemingly endless horizon of options and choices. Reflexivity and flexibility thus emerge as the core structural principles of (extra-)familial communication (Pasero 264–296; Kilian and Komfort-Hein 9–24; Löw). Because the concept of love that promises permanency, certainty, and the exceptionality of the other has been depotentialized or disempowered in recent decades, at least from a legal perspective, this change cannot rela-

tivize the emotional, economic, and legal responsibility towards children as the most vulnerable and dependent members of both traditional and unconventional family settings. According to the philosopher Georg Lohmann, parenthood and childcare remain legally defined on the one hand, and on the other hand are still shaped by parental or familial love. Although parental care is considered a cultural construct, Lohmann argues that these obligations mainly result from a loving attitude towards children (Lohmann 201–220). Finally, in contemporary society, family-like settings also remain the first intimate space where personal identity and a sense of belonging are constituted (Hoffmeister 156–167, 232–257; Martinec and Nitschke 9–13).

### **Familial Love Discourses in Drama and Theater Tradition from the Domestic Tragedy to the Critical Folk Play**

As Thomas Anz and Christine Kanz have already observed, literary reflections on familial relations became very popular starting in the eighteenth century, as evidenced in the staging of domestic tragedy and the broad reception of family novels (Anz and Kanz 19–44). Therefore, addressing the topic of family and familial love requires a look at the domestic tragedy as developed by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. The domestic tragedy is the genuine dramatic place where, for the first time in theater and drama tradition, the family becomes the focus and subject of dramatic action (Bähr 76–85; Schöblier, *Trauerspiel* 44–51; von der Lühe 202–217; Fischer-Lichte 84–120). In his aesthetic attempt to abandon the request by which the tragic hero of a classical tragedy has to be of aristocratic descent, in his innovative domestic play Lessing introduces a representative of the bourgeoisie as a tragic heroine (Lessing 662–736). The genre-specific concept of character and dramatic action are closely related to the ideal of the bourgeois core family, which now changes from a primarily work and purpose bond to an emotionalized community. The father-daughter relationship configures the central constellation of the tragedy, whereas the mother character is in general marginalized and portrayed as the “saboteur and betrayer of the bourgeois code of ethics” (Bähr 80). In Lessing’s play *Miss Sara Sampson*, for example, the mother has died even before the drama begins (Hart 1–23). In his play *Emilia Galotti* and in Schiller’s *Kabale und Liebe*, the mother, apparently neglectful of her duties and obligations, and consequently considered untrustworthy, seems to present a serious threat to the patriarchal order. The emotionally tense rapport, almost libidinally charged, between the virtuous daughter and the tenderly and

tyrannically loving father<sup>1</sup> predetermines the course of the family conflict, sparked by the daughter's love and sexual desire towards another man, conceived mostly as a rival by the father. Against the backdrop of this tragic dramatic situation, Christine Bähr explains:

Being forced to choose between the father and the lover is the daughter's misfortune that prompts her into suicide or death. The daughters have internalized the code of ethics ... to an extent that they are willing to sacrifice their lives for it. ... Without the maternal support, the daughter remains in a subordinate position to the paternal authority, which is particularly concerned about the integrity and reputation of the family, and completely ignorant of the individual happiness of the individual.<sup>2</sup> (Bähr 84)

Concerning *Sturm und Drang* drama, this continues to tackle family issues and center around the revocability of parental (or only fatherly) love under the constraint of the fatally rigid bourgeois moral system. It is mostly the female child that is driven between the revocable love of the father and unrealizable love for a man of a higher or a lower social status. Unwanted and concealed pregnancy, a recurrent motif in family drama, presents the peak of fear and pity, which again motivates the suicide of the expectant mother or even an infanticide, as in Heinrich Leopold Wanger's tragedy *Die Kindermörderin* (The Child Murderer). Significantly, the mostly self-aggressive behavioral patterns of the daughter figure as a last resort to prevent familial and public defamation, and recur as violent self-assertion of sons against others; for example, as fratricide in Schiller's *Sturm und Drang* tragedy *Die Räuber* (The Robbers; Luserke-Jaqui 218–242; Karthaus 113–122, 123–130).

Following and adapting Darwin's theory of evolution for aesthetic and dramaturgical purposes, the family in naturalistic drama, mostly assembling characters from the working class and lower class, is constituted as a community of fate, in which each member is trapped in his or her social milieu and determined by the inevitable law of heredity and environment. Family as a social place transmutes under naturalism into a space of com-

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<sup>1</sup> In the play *Kabale und Liebe*, the tragic heroine Luise expresses the compelling force in her father's sentimentality with following words: "Daß die Zärtlichkeit noch barbarischer zwingt als Tyrannenwut!" (Schiller 657/V, 1).

<sup>2</sup> "Zwischen Vater und Geliebtem zu wählen wird das tragische Los der Töchter, das sie zuletzt in den Tod treibt. Den Moralkodex, ... , haben die Töchter so weit verinnerlicht, dass sie dafür ihr Leben zu opfern bereit sind. ... Ohne mütterlichen Beistand unterstehen die Töchter der väterlichen Autorität, die vor allem die Integrität und Ehre der bürgerlichen Kleinfamilie im Blick hat und darüber das individuelle Glück des Einzelnen vergessen macht." (All quotes have been translated from German into English by the author of the article.)

mon suffering and misery. It is mostly the mother figures that revoke the ideal of a holy, harmonious family that supposedly grants reciprocal love and respect, self-sacrifice, and physical, emotional, and economic security, as, for example, in Arno Holz's and Johannes Schlaf's stage work *Familie Selicke*, or in Gerhart Hauptmann's family theater piece *Das Friedensfest* (The Peace Festival), ironically subtitled *Eine Familienkatastrophe* (A Family Disaster). The programmatic and ruthless unmasking of bourgeois family ideology leaves emotionally and economically deprived characters behind, unable to fill familial and romantic relationships with invigorating love, remaining paralyzed in their unsatisfied longing for it, and describing a loveless life as a state of numbness and motionlessness (Bähr 98–110; Horstenkamp-Strake 151–199).

Whereas the naturalistic delineation of family decay is still accompanied by the feeling of loss and longing, regardless of its critical stance towards the bourgeois idealization of the nuclear family, the expressionist drama pinpoints its radical rejection of the bourgeois system of values and norms as well as the overarching societal patriarchal order in the subject of patricide; for instance, in the famous play with the self-explanatory title *Vatermord* (Patricide) by Arnolt Bronnen. In ecstatic, highly subjective evocations and declamations, the expressionists envision the creation of a renewed mankind, reassembled in a utopian human community, by blasting the suffocating frame of the traditional family. The belief in love is not given up; the conviction was instead that love can flourish when society frees itself from socio-culturally prescribed roles and identities that narrow full human potential as a universal value.

The critical folk play in the first half of the twentieth century and the new critical folk play in the second half of the twentieth century is another genre that explores family relations. The main feature of critical folk plays is the depiction of the socially underprivileged, who are excluded from the possibilities of a prosperous life, expressing their ineptness, social and familial oppression, and emotional immaturity by means of damaged and dialectically fractured language (Malkin 104–124; Hassel 184–238; Schöblier, *Trauerspiel* 77–94). They all appear in hostile familial settings, in which violence erupts suddenly, carelessly, and without motivation, which exposes brutal behavior as normalcy and routine. Love seems merely to be a borrowed quotation from bourgeois cultural archives—in rural settings with strong biblical references—that starkly contradicts with almost daily demonstrated bestiality and crudeness, as a figure for an extreme form of undignified existence. Major threats to orderly family life, apart from poverty and social exclusion, are perceived in the presence of strangers or foreigners, unexpected pregnancies, mentally or physically disabled family members,

and homosexuals. Strikingly, the act of abortion, as a quite frequent strategy to reestablish family order and peace, is conducted with clinical *froidueur*, lacking the ability to articulate regret and sorrow, such as the young couple Marie and Karl in Franz Xaver Kroetz's play *Michis Blut* (Michi's Blood).

## Love and Family in German-Language Drama and Theater since the 1990s

In German-language drama and theater since the 1990s, the *sujet* of family and labor continue to present one of the key topics. Remarkably, contemporary playwrights resort to the tradition of the domestic tragedy, the drama of *Sturm und Drang*, naturalism, and expressionism as much as the (new) critical folk play, mostly parodically reshaping and grotesquely overdrawing them, as well as hybridizing different genres. The preference for the motif of incest since the 1990s is closely related to reflections on family relations in the context of power hierarchies or asymmetries and ideologies that are deployed to legitimize the violence performed (Bähr; Schöbler *Augenblicke*; Virant).

In Schöbler's opinion, the excessive use of violence in the plays of the last three decades can be explained among other things with the effort to reincorporate arduously demerged phenomena or the abject, in the sense of Julia Kristeva, of the high culture canon. Schöbler further explains that it is only when the ugly, the dirty, and the evil unfold as the other side of the triad of the three great values of truth, beauty, and goodness that the dividing line between high and lower cultures collapses (Schöbler, *Augenblicke* 252), and the mismatches between ideal, reality, and fantasy are disclosed. In addition, the "British Brutalists," particularly the playwrights Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, crucially inspired the manifold extrapolation of the aesthetics of violence within European contemporary drama and theater.

The recourse to the incest *sujet* is accordingly one possible aesthetic strategy to expose the reverse of the bourgeois family idyll. The family as a safe harbor, a place of allegedly unconditioned parental love and personal development, is inverted into a space of horror, fear, and unprotectedness. Especially the fatherly assertion of love is perverted into verbal and sexual violence, as in Dea Loher's drama *Tätowierung* (Tattoo) or in Thomas Jonigk's play *Täter* (Perpetrator), in which the usual constellation of father-daughter incest is extended by introducing the more rarely mentioned incestuous relation between a mother and her son. The stage work *Perpetrator* differs from the mother-son incest plot in Sophocles' *Oedipus*



*the King*, the prototype of ancient drama, insofar as the mother figure in Jonigk's play misuses her son for acting out her sexual fantasies. Violating the incest taboo seems to be "the culminating point of relationships based on dependence and submission within the familial scope"<sup>3</sup> (Schößler, *Augenblicke* 270). Even in dramas in which the father figure is missing, in spite of all expectations, a happier end is barely in sight. In this context I would like to refer to theater texts by Kerstin Specht, written mostly in a very sublime style of the critical folk play. To mention Kerstin Specht seems worthwhile for two reasons. First, she wrote one of the rare family dramas with a happy ending and, second, one of her plays illustrates the effectiveness of the domestic tragedy and at the same time offers an example of an intriguing parodic remodeling of the same.

In the drama *Die Froschkönigin* (The Frog Queen), the financially ruined, self-sacrificing single mother, tyrannized by her two children, who are taking over the empty place of the deceased head of the family, is rescued from her family hell by a loving man that even married her. After she abandoned her home, she merely left a video message for her astonished and depressed children, informing them about her fortune. The subtitle of the drama, *Küchenmärchen* (Kitchen Fairy Tale), however, depotentializes the announced turn of life, leaving open the circumstances of the mother's disappearance and the credibility of her story. The play *Das glühend Männla* (The Flaming Manikin) twists to some extent the plot of a domestic tragedy. The central constellation shifts from the father-daughter to the mother-son relationship in a household consisting only of a mother, son, and maternal grandmother. Throughout the entire play, the mother and the grandmother fight to receive unrestricted love and attention from the (grand)son, fiercely outbidding one another with presents and money. The son profits though from his insight that even openly faked love and care can be monetized. As in a domestic tragedy, the child, here the son, is forced to choose between his overly jealous and clinging mother, who is searching for compensation after been deserted by her husband, and his girlfriend. Unlike the daughter figures in the domestic play, the son does not harm himself. The one that has to pay with her life for a situation that does not seem to be unsolvable (but is presented as such) is his girlfriend Anke. In a grotesque exaggeration, Specht allows the nameless son to garnish his crime with misogynous quotes allegedly borrowed from Nietzsche, celebrating his "emancipation" from the detested and disdained female.

In studies of contemporary drama that focus on the *subject* of the family, the main attention has been paid to violent and damaging aspects of famil-

<sup>3</sup> "Kulminationspunkt familialer Abhängigkeits- und Unterwerfungsverhältnisse."

ial coexistence and communication. This raises the question of whether and how moments of familial love are revealed in prevalently unfriendly staged family settings. Due to this underrepresented dimension of family-like life in research, below I concentrate on three examples that display expressions of familial love, although as brief and lucid intervals in a hostile atmosphere, yet remaining without noticeable consequences and turns.

The first example is Dea Loher's incest drama *Tätowierung* (Tattoo). Loher's theater text is split into three parts, of which the first depicts the life of the petit bourgeois family Wucht (literally, 'stunner') in short scenes. The eldest daughter Anita is regularly exposed to the sexual violence of her father, with the telling name Ofen-Wolf ('Oven-Wolf').<sup>4</sup> The first sequence of the play's first part is entitled "Was sich liebt" (Loving Each Other), showing Anita with her younger sister Lulu, who is still spared the assaults by her father, engaged in an intimate and confidential dialogue where, under the burden of fear, horror, and concern, transient moments of childishness and carelessness flash, illuminating the sharp contrast between the un-lived possibilities of sisterhood and the mortifying and poisonous experience of incestuous abuse. Under the emotional and physical patriarchal terror, the potential and needs for caring and empathetic communication between the two daughters and the mother, called Hunde-Jule ('Doggy Jule'), are coerced into a competitive and antagonistic correlation. The absence of Ofen-Wolf allows mutual affections to arise briefly and diminish instantly when the scenarios of horror are reenacted. Anita's reason to stay and to endure, admitted to herself in a monologue, is the awareness that "[i]f I refuse / [i]t is Lulu's turn"<sup>5</sup> (Loher 94, I, 9). Unlike her mother, who has resigned and given up all attempts to protect herself and her daughters, Anita still tries to figure out ways to minimize the harm for others. Hunde-Jule, whose complicity is metaphorically pinpointed in the mask that she is wearing due to an allergy and that prevents her from speaking and breaking the wall of silence, demonstrates her full consciousness about her joint guilt when she remarks that "a dog is more valuable"<sup>6</sup> than she is (81, I, 5). In this comparison, she expresses the loss of her dignity under the given circumstances. After finding out about her

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<sup>4</sup> The first part of the father's name hints at his profession as a baker. The father figure himself cynically draws an analogy between his success and productivity as a baker with his sexual potency and productivity. The added name evokes a famous figure in fairy tales and fables that denotes menace and fatal violence. With this doubling, the name merges both the father's positive interpretation of his incestuous behavior and the destructive effects on his victims.

<sup>5</sup> "Wenn ich mich weiger / Is die Lulu dran."

<sup>6</sup> "Ein Hund ist mehr wert als ich."

pregnancy, Anita and her boyfriend Paul Würde ('Paul Dignity'), a florist, decide to get married, even though the paternity remains uncertain. To her desperate and enraged mother and sister, Anita explains her step with her maternal responsibility towards the unborn child: "I am pregnant / Something has to change for me"<sup>7</sup> (120, III, 2). When Anita moves out, Hunde-Jule leaves her husband and Lulu, who now serves as a replacement for her sister, a fact that causes severe nightmares for Anita and a lingering feeling of guilt because she is unable to offer her at-risk sister shelter in her new but small home. Finally, the marital love and union did not bring the peace and the opportunity to bury the traumatic past in healing oblivion, as expected by Anita and Paul, who recognizes: "Your father is stronger / than I am / ... Someday / the best care / does not cure a diseased plant anymore / when it is so rotten inside / that the mildest sun / and the smoothest water / only speeds its decay up"<sup>8</sup> (136, III, 7). With Anita, Loher drafted a female figure that is cognizant of the lasting effects of her trauma,<sup>9</sup> especially her love for Paul, and yet willing to remain responsive to the ones in need.

The second example, Marius von Mayenburg's tragicomic family farce *Das kalte Kind* (The Frozen Child) assembles related and unrelated couples and singles that in various, mostly fusing, settings and converging dialogues and monologues lay open their familial and emotional investments and disappointments in the outcome, rampant fantasies, unmet expectations, and deep, unhealed wounds. At this point, I highlight two diverging paternal concepts sketched out in this theater text. One concept is represented by a character simply named "Vati" ('Daddy'). Following the text, the Vati figure embodies a paternal concept with capital investment in education and guaranteeing a future for his children as well as setting high moral standards as the supreme obligation. Within this concept, emotional care and expression are neither demonstrated nor mentioned as a constitutive element of fatherhood. The relationship between the father and the children is deemed satisfying if the outcome of the investment meets the father's expectations. This parental calculation does not leave

<sup>7</sup> "Ich krieg ein Kind / Es muss sich was ändern für mich."

<sup>8</sup> "Irgendwann / schlägt bei einer kranken Pflanze / die beste Pflege / nicht mehr an / wenn sie nämlich / von innen heraus so verfault ist / daß die mildeste Sonne / und das weichste Wasser / sie nur noch schneller / verfaulen lassen."

<sup>9</sup> This awareness is echoed in the following self-knowledge: "As if / will could determine / how one must feel / now that the horror spreads / everywhere in me / and I must carry it with me / wherever I turn / and it weighs heavily on my heart" (Loher 136, III, 7). Original text: "Wie wenn / der Wille bestimmen könnt / wie ein Mensch fühlen muß / wo ich den Schrecken hab / in mir / und ihn überall / mit hin tragen muß / und er sich schwer setzt / auf mein Herz."

space for emotionality because in the father's comprehension it does not meaningfully contribute to the desired result, which would be successfully completed studies, reputable employment, a wealthy spouse, and moral decency. However, Vati's daughter Lena fails to meet her father's requirements, which causes Vati to insinuate that Lena is awaiting his death to secure her future through her inheritance. In order to impede such a parasitic plan, Lena's father declares:

You think: "I can go on for a while studying Egyptology, eventually the old folks will kick the bucket, and all the dough will belong to me." ... The money is mine. It belongs to me and mom. And I will use all of my ambition not to leave anything of it behind when I die.<sup>10</sup> (von Mayenburg 15, I)

In comedic style, von Mayenburg defuses this capitalistically oriented and bigoted understanding of the paternal role by confronting it with the new "soft" type of father, embodied in the figure named Werner, who is married to Silke, a chronic alcoholic, and is the father of their infant child Nina. Unable and uninterested in childcare, Silke engages herself in fantasizing romantic scenes with known and unknown men, in gossiping, and in complaining about her husband's almost exclusive concern for their child. Even though Werner's main focus in the text is his little daughter, lying most of the time in the pram or being held by her father, he does not seclude himself from social life, which implies that he goes out with Silke and Nina in the pram. In his inclusive understanding of being a family father, he does not avoid being seen in public with his drunken and embarrassing wife, nor does he shy away from changing his daughter's diapers while outdoors. Yet, von Mayenburg escapes idealization by modelling a figure that in all his care once in a while acts awkwardly, loses his temper with Silke and threatens to send her to a psychiatrist, or complains to her: "You are not sleeping with me anymore because I stink like diapers full of poo. That's the way it is"<sup>11</sup> (34, II). In spite of Werner's attempts to overcome the traditional gap between private and public, by not reducing family life and childcare to the domestic sphere, and by taking his father role seriously, his wife and others take a dismissive stance toward him. Setting childcare as the highest priority implies ascribing less importance to work, professional ambitions, and success, which tacitly lowers his esteem in the eyes of others. The in-

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<sup>10</sup> "Du denkst, du machst noch eine Weile weiter mit der Ägypterkunde, irgendwann werden die Alten schon abkratzen, und der ganze Schotter gehört mir. ... Dieses Geld is meins. Es gehört mir und Mutti. Und ich setze meinen gesamten Ehrgeiz dran, daß nichts übrig bleibt davon, wenn ich tot bin."

<sup>11</sup> "Du schläfst nicht mehr mit mir, weil ich nach vollgekackter Windel stinke, so ist das doch."

ability to report about job-related success or adventurous travels around the world is devaluated as a fundamental loss of male identity. However, von Mayenburg allows his figure Werner to face these disappointments with humor and self-confidence, as shown in the following quote. Vati reveals to Werner his ambitious plan to travel the world before dying:

VATI: A nightmare, to leave the planet without having seen all of that.

WERNER: Have you already been to the moon?

VATI: A failed life.

WERNER: Excuse me, in this pram there is a state of fecal emergency.<sup>12</sup> (von Mayenburg 39, II)

The third example pertains to Lukas Bärfuss' family drama *Die sexuellen Neurosen unserer Eltern* (The Sexual Neuroses of Our Parents), in which the main character is Dora, a young woman and only child, classified and treated as mentally disadvantaged by her parents, family doctor, and other members of the social environment. Dora resides with her parents.

At a general level, the dramatic text discusses the social implications and questionable discourses that draw demarcation lines between normalcy and deviation, and between healthiness and unsoundness. Classified as mentally disabled, Dora is referred to as socially different and inept. Her conspicuous appearance is perceived as displeasing and frightening. On the other hand, her naivety, ignorance, and benevolence evoke in others religiously charged images of moral innocence, salvation, and consolation, comparing her to the symbolic figures of an angel or a lamb.<sup>13</sup> The pivotal concern of the mother and the family doctor is to identify effective approaches to normalize Dora; that is, to correct deviant occurrences. In their estimation, psychopharmaceutic drugs, social and reproductive control, and employment for the disabled promise to be helpful measures for Dora to conform to social norms. Due to the distorting effects of pharmacology, the mother, however, decides to stop the intake of her prescribed drugs, after which Dora's mother believes that these brightened

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<sup>12</sup> "Verzeihung, in diesem Kinderwagen herrscht fäkaler Notstand."

<sup>13</sup> Dora occasionally sees a man, called the nice gentleman, who involved her in a sexual relationship. They usually meet in hotel rooms. Surprised that Dora was not engaged in sexual encounters prior to dating him, he states: "You offer this gift to me. Kid. To me. And I treat you so rudely, my little angel. I do the dirtiest things and I treat you so poorly. DORA: You don't treat me poorly. ... THE NICE GENTLEMAN: You are an angel. Heaven sent you to me. You will release me" (Bärfuss, 100, 15). "DER FEINE HERR: Du schenkst das mir. Kind. Mir. Und ich bin so grob zu dir, mein kleiner Engel. Stell nur das schmutzigste Zeug an und bin so schlecht zu dir. DORA: Du bist nicht schlecht zu mir. ... DER FEINE HERR: Du bist ein Engel. Der Himmel hat dich geschickt. Du wirst mich erlösen."

her daughter's mood. Dora understood that the removal of medication also applied to her contraceptive pills. This misunderstanding resulted in her pregnancy. At the mother's urging, Dora hesitatingly consents to an abortion. After this medical intervention, her supervising family doctor asks her whether she is sad, upon which Dora replies: "I always feel sad. Except when fucking. DOCTOR: Do you sometimes think of the child. DORA: Gone is gone. DOCTOR: You do not care much about secondary issues. DORA: Correct, doctor, correct"<sup>14</sup> (Bärfuss 105, 16). In addition to the encompassing normalization program, the inability to contest, alter, or even confirm the perception others have of her, and to represent herself in a standardized manner, Bärfuss's Dora retains the ability to focus on what is important to her. Dora's understanding of significance moves beyond the moral standards and norms that dominate her familial setting and social surroundings. When her father explains to her that, if she continues to neglect her personal hygiene, others will not like her anymore, she responds: "The most important thing is that you love me. You love me, don't you. FATHER: You are my daughter"<sup>15</sup> (98, 14). The parental love, as set in the scene in this play, is burdened and disturbed by unacknowledged disappointment and contempt because of Dora's otherness: "MOTHER: I thought it was me who was ill, not Dora. I felt poisoned"<sup>16</sup> (118, 31). Dora's unbiased approach and perception of the world allows her to discover beauty in her mother even in unconventionally intimate situations. Incidentally, Dora watches her mother while sexually involved with another man in the presence of her father. Dora is delighted by the sight and confesses later on to her mother: "In my whole life I have not seen such beauty. You looked like a real angel. ... I had a wonderful feeling, when I saw you, it was even more beautiful than fucking"<sup>17</sup> (116, 30). By comparing her mother to an angel while she makes love to another man, Dora introduces a comprehension of an angel-like appearance that fundamentally differs from the concept of angel she was equalized with, a spiritual being that guards others and releases them from pain and suffering. The "real" angel, in Dora's view, frees herself from heteronomy, at least punctually, and embraces life fearlessly.

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<sup>14</sup> "DORA: Ich fühle mich immer traurig. Außer beim Ficken. ARZT: Denkst du manchmal ans Kind. DORA: Weg ist weg. ARZT: Du machst dir nicht viel aus Nebensächlichkeiten. DORA: Richtig, Herr Doktor, richtig."

<sup>15</sup> "DORA: Hauptsache, du liebst mich. Nicht wahr, du liebst mich. VATER: Du bist meine Tochter."

<sup>16</sup> "MUTTER: Ich glaubte, ich selbst sei krank, nicht Dora. Ich fühlte mich vergiftet."

<sup>17</sup> "In meinem ganzen Leben habe ich nie so etwas Schönes gesehen. Du sahst aus wie ein richtiger Engel. ... Ich hatte ein schönes Gefühl, als ich euch sah, es war noch schöner als ficken."

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## Družinski ljubezenski diskurz v sodobni nemški dramatiki in gledališču

Ključne besede: nemška dramatika / družinska drama / družinski odnosi / ljubezen / Loher, Dea / Specht, Kerstin / Bärfuss, Lukas / Mayenburg, Marius von / Jonigk, Thomas

Raziskava družinskih ljubezenskih diskurzov v sodobni nemški dramatiki in gledališču kaže, da se sodobni dramatiki pri obravnavi družinske ljubezni navezujejo na tradicijo meščanske žaloigre, viharništvu, naturalizma in ekspresionizma ter (nove) kritične ljudske igre, ki jo parodirajo in karikirajo ter pri tem hibridizirajo različne žanre. Vpliv meščanske žaloigre je za sodobno dramsko in gledališko produkcijo še vedno zelo pomemben. Analiza priča o tem, da se večina dramskih del osredotoča na pojave nasilja in destrukcije v družini. Ta težnja je gotovo, a ne izključno, povezana z estetskimi teorijami Gottholda Ephraima Lessinga, ki je zato, da bi meščanski protagonist postal primeren nosilec tragičnega, v meščanski žaloigri upodobil družino in družinske emocionalne vezi. Družinsko dramo lahko označimo kot podzvrst socialne drame, ki načelno raziskuje socialno stisko; tako družinska drama danes razkriva okoliščine, ki ovirajo razcvet ljubezni, in prikazuje, pod kakšnimi pogoji hrepenenje po ljubezni postaja sredstvo za manipulacijo, zlorabo in barantanje v družini. Študije o sodobni dramatiki so se v zadnjem času osredotočale predvsem na destruktivne vidike sobivanja in komunikacije v družini, zato so znanstvena dela doslej spregledala trenutke družinske ljubezni, bližine in naklonjenosti. Naša analiza se osredotoča na bežne trenutke družinske solidarnosti in empatije ter tako pokaže, da dramski liki, upodobljeni kot ljubeče, skrbne in odgovorne osebe, običajno nimajo vplivnega položaja ne v družbi ne v družini. V večini primerov delujejo na robu, so osamljeni in brez pravic. Prikaz represivne plati meščanskega družinskega koncepta, ki se kaže na primer kot samomor ali detomor v predmoderni dramatiki ter kot očeto-

mor v ekspresionistični dramatiki, doseže vrhunec z upodobitvami incesta v dramatiki, ki nastaja od leta 1990. Istočasno je kršenje prepovedi incesta tudi najhujša možna kršitev pravil tradicionalne družinske drame. Upodabljanje obrobnih, ponižanih dramskih likov, ki so še vedno zmožni in odločeni izkazovati ljubezen in naklonjenost v okoliščinah, v katerih se institucija družine in zakonske zveze sooča z radikalnimi izzivi, kaže, da je potreba po ljubezni in po izkazovanju ljubezni neuničljiva.